



Kosovo Community Profiles

2024



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

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Kosovo Albanian Community Profile

Kosovo Ashkali Communities Profile

Kosovo Bosniak Community Profile

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Introduction by the Head of Mission

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Kosovo presents the third edition of its Community Profiles. These ten Profiles, published in the Albanian and Serbian languages as well as in English, offer an updated, comprehensive overview of communities in Kosovo, building on the last edition from 2010. They draw on data regarding Kosovo's diverse communities collected from sources at both municipal and government levels.

Our aim has been to provide comprehensive factual information on communities in Kosovo which, as our experience has shown, can be of use to stakeholders, policy makers and researchers alike. Our hope is that these Profiles will also serve to raise awareness more broadly concerning the diverse composition of society in Kosovo. The core methodology remains consistent with previous editions, and this edition does not aim to examine developments affecting communities in chronological order since the 2010 edition. Instead, our intention has been to offer an overview of all ten communities for the period to December 2023, based on available information. We have sought to highlight progress made in enhancing the enjoyment of community rights, but also to draw out existing challenges faced by different communities.

The qualitative data for this publication were collected from government and municipal-level respondents and community representatives, with OSCE field teams providing additional information through our long-term field monitoring and familiarity with the situation on the ground. To ensure broad coverage, the OSCE Mission drew on existing OSCE documents, open-source databases, statistics and articles from various international and local organizations. Difficulties persist in obtaining accurate data disaggregated by communities and/or gender. For example, information on the size of communities is based on the 2011 census, supplemented by recent OSCE Mission estimates, as well as information provided by community representatives. Our intention is to update the Profiles once more when detailed information is available from the 2024 census. Meanwhile, our tentative assessment of the size of non-majority communities is but one element of what these Community Profiles offer the reader.

More broadly, our publication provides a qualitative and, where applicable, quantitative overview of ten communities: Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Bosniaks, Kosovo Croats, Kosovo Egyptians, Kosovo Gorani, Kosovo Montenegrins, Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Turks.

It focuses on municipalities where they constitute a non-majority community, providing for each an overview of key thematic areas: security and safety; participation and representation; employment and socio-economic situation; access to infrastructure and public utilities; access to social services, health and welfare; access to education; access to justice; language use and media; cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms; property rights; and returns and reintegration. Our inter-sectional approach presents the distinct experiences and concerns of women and girls belonging to non-majority communities. We will welcome feedback from readers on this edition.

While acknowledging the undoubted progress which has been made in some areas, this edition of the Community Profiles also highlights ongoing challenges which continue to hinder many from fully enjoying their rights and freedoms. Kosovo institutions, relevant Serbian institutions, the international community and civil society all have a part to play in resolving outstanding issues and ensuring enhanced co-operation with and between communities. To this end, we need to ensure that relevant structures, such as the Consultative Council for Communities at central level, or Communities Committees and municipal security mechanisms at municipal level, are able to reach their full potential.

Ensuring that all communities can enjoy their rights and freedoms is crucial to building sustainable peace. The OSCE Mission hopes that this edition of the Community Profiles will be a useful resource for those across Kosovo and beyond who are working hard to find creative and durable ways to help all communities in Kosovo to thrive.



Ambassador Michael Davenport
Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj

Community Profile

Kosovo Albanian



Organization for Security and
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Kosovo Albanian Community Profile

The Kosovo Albanian community is the largest in Kosovo, according to the 2011 census.¹

Kosovo Albanians are a majority in most municipalities. They are a non-majority community in 11 municipalities: Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North (around 2,000), Zubin Potok (about 1,200), Zvečan/Zveçan (about 500), and Leposavić/Leposaviq (about 200) in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, as well as in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (about 4,500-5,000),² Štrpce/Shtërpçë (about 3,800³),⁴ Klokot/Klllokot (about 1,600),⁵ Parteš/Partesh,⁶ Ranilug/Ranillug (about 200),⁷ Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša (nearly six per cent), and Gračanica/Gračanicë (about 23 per cent).⁸ This Profile focuses on Kosovo Albanians in the municipalities where they constitute a numerical minority, though it also contains information about areas where this community is in the majority, given their overall majority position in Kosovo.

¹ The 2011 census did not include the four northern municipalities where Kosovo Albanians are a non-majority community. Therefore, the true percentage of the Kosovo Albanian community compared with the total population size may be lower.

² Novo Brdo/Novobërdë Deputy Mayor for Communities (DMC).

³ Some 1,000 Kosovo Albanians live in Ferizaj/Uroševac while having their residency in Štrpce/Shtërpçë. They are not included in the estimate of the community size.

⁴ Štrpce/Shtërpçë DMC.

⁵ Klokot/Klllokot DMC.

⁶ Data on the size of the community are not available.

⁷ Ranilug/Ranillug Community Committee member.

⁸ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles* 2018,

Key facts and issues

- In municipalities where Kosovo Albanians form a non-majority community, security is a concern mainly in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.
- Kosovo Albanian students follow the Albanian-language curriculum.
- Kosovo Albanian students do not have the opportunity to learn the Serbian language in Kosovo-curriculum schools, just as Kosovo Serb students are not offered Albanian-language instruction in Serbian-curriculum schools. The lack of language instruction significantly limits interaction between communities and undermines efforts to foster inter-community dialogue in education.
- Transportation for Kosovo Albanian students continue to be the main challenge in accessing education.
- Difficult return locations were predominantly identified in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.

1. Security and safety

In municipalities where Kosovo Albanians are a non-majority community, security is a significant concern mainly in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, where communities live in close proximity to each other.

Overall, the frequency and severity of security incidents against Kosovo Albanians in municipalities south of the Ibër/Ibar River, where the community is in a numerical minority, are much lower.⁹

In 2017, there was an increase in incidents involving both communities in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, with Kosovo Albanians becoming the second-most affected by inter-community incidents, after the Kosovo Serb community. The number of security incidents affecting the community has fluctuated since then, with a slight increase in 2022 and 2023.¹⁰

Incidents against Kosovo Albanians in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North have been mainly recorded close to the main bridge, on Kralja Petra/Mbreti Petri Street within the pedestrian zone, in the vicinity of the "Three Towers" mixed-community areas, in the "Bosniak Mahala" neighbourhood, and in the ethnically mixed neighbourhood of Suvi Do/Suhodoll.¹¹ These incidents were mainly brawls among young people, and often involved the use of knives. On a few occasions, Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb young people connected via social networks and organized "stone throwing incidents" at the main bridge. A few incidents followed social media "challenges" by Kosovo Albanians to go to Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and take selfies in front of the Tsar Lazar monument. In another incident, the "challenge" was to go to the Zvečan/Zveçan hill and steal a Serbian flag from the top of the medieval ruin. These incidents led to retaliation and perpetuated a cycle of further occurrences. Due to their frequency, closed-circuit television cameras were installed at the main bridge.

⁹ In October 2020, in Plemetin/Plemetina village, Obiliq/Obilić municipality, four Kosovo Serb juvenile suspects physically assaulted a Kosovo Albanian juvenile, causing him injuries. In November 2020, unknown person(s) set fire to a billboard with a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) logo and the slogan "freedom has a name" on the regional road leading to the Kosovo Serb-majority municipality of Gračanica/Gračanicë. In April 2022, media reported that the letter "Z" had been spray-painted on a road and on several doors of properties belonging to Kosovo Albanians in the village of Babin Most/Babimoc, in Obiliq/Obilić. In September 2022, a Kosovo Albanian in Priluzhje/Prelluzhë village, Vushtri/Vučitrn municipality, reported to the Kosovo Police that unknown person(s) had removed a flag from the front of his house and burned it.

¹⁰ According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were 45 incidents in 2013, 36 in 2014, 30 in 2015, 30 in 2016, 43 in 2017, 29 in 2018, 40 in 2019, 52 in 2020, 42 in 2021, 54 in 2022, and 55 in 2023.

¹¹ In June 2017, a Kosovo Albanian was attacked by three persons while riding a bike in the pedestrian zone. He allegedly fell off the bike while the assailants continued to assault him. A Kosovo Albanian man was physically assaulted by two perpetrators in Knjaz Miloš Street in October 2017 and in August 2021 on the promenade along the Ibër/Ibar River, in the ethnically mixed neighbourhood of Suvi Do/Suhodoll. In June 2018, two young Kosovo Albanian men were physically assaulted by several persons in the vicinity of "Three Towers" in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. One of the victims suffered injuries inflicted with a metal rod. In November 2023, Kosovo Police arrested two Kosovo Serbs suspected of physically attacking and insulting two Kosovo Albanians due to their nationality in the mixed-community neighborhood of Bosniak Mahala in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. In December 2023, in Suvi Do/Suhodoll in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, a Kosovo Albanian reported that a house under construction was damaged and vandalised with black inscriptions on the walls (cross with four letters "S" and 2SRB and "tu smo" (we are here) in Cyrillic).

On 24 September 2023, in Banjska/Banjskë village, Zvečan/Zveçan municipality, Kosovo Police units came under attack with firearms; a Kosovo Albanian police officer was killed, and two others sustained injuries.¹² Subsequently, Kosovo Police launched an operation in the area. According to Kosovo Prime Minister, Albin Kurti,¹³ approximately 30 Kosovo Serb attackers confronted the Kosovo Police. Three attackers were killed in the operation, while six were arrested.

In municipalities where Kosovo Albanians are in a numerical minority, they are well represented in the Kosovo Police. In 2023, police checkpoints were opened in Kosovo Serb majority villages in the municipalities of Zubin Potok, Leposavić/Leposaviq, and Zvečan/Zveçan (where nine Kosovo Albanian police officers are employed).

There are 562 members of the Kosovo Albanian community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).¹⁴

¹² See [in Albanian, Serbian and English]: <https://www.facebook.com/KosovoPolice/posts/614030167603912> (Accessed December 2023).

¹³ See [in Serbian]: <https://kossev.info/kurti-u-banjskoj-30-tesko-naoruzanih-ljudi-opkoljeni-su-trazim-od-njih-da-se-predaju/> (Accessed December 2023).

¹⁴ As of November 2023.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Albanian community is represented in the communities' committees (CCs) in 36 municipalities, including in nine of the 11 municipalities where the community constitutes a numerical minority.¹⁵

Kosovo Albanians are CC chairpersons in 14 municipalities, including eight of the 11 municipalities where the community is in a numerical minority.¹⁶ Six of 16 deputy mayors for communities¹⁷ and six of ten deputy chairpersons of the municipal assembly for communities (DCMAC) are Kosovo Albanians (all men).¹⁸

The Kosovo Albanian community is represented in the municipal offices for communities and return (MOCRs) in 22 municipalities, by 34 members (12 women).¹⁹ Kosovo Albanians hold the position of head of MOCR in 12 municipalities.²⁰ Specifically, the Kosovo Albanian community is represented in the MOCRs in seven of the 11 municipalities where the community is in a numerical minority.²¹

There are ten members of the Kosovo Albanian community in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSCs) in the following municipalities where the community is in a numerical minority: four men in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, and a man in each of Klokot/Klllokot, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Gračanica/Gračanicë, and Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša.

¹⁵ Kosovo Albanians are not represented in Parteš/Partesh. No CC was established in Leposavić/Leposaviq after the extraordinary elections of April 2023.

¹⁶ Kosovo Albanian community members are CC chairpersons in Glogoc/Glogovac, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Junik, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Klinë/Klina, Klokot/Klllokot, Malishevë/Mališevo, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zvečan.

¹⁷ Kosovo Albanian deputy mayors for communities (DMCs) are appointed in Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klokot/Klllokot, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Ranilug/Ranillug and Štrpce/Shtërpçë. Of note, the DMC position in Gračanica/Gračanicë remained vacant for the duration of the 2017–2021 mandate. Leutrim Ajeti (of the Albanian Initiative for Gračanica/Gračanicë) was appointed on 2 February 2022. Furthermore, Kosovo Albanians should hold the position of DMC in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, as they represent the largest non-majority community in the municipality (according to the OSCE *Municipal Profiles 2018*). However, no DMC was appointed there during the reporting period.

¹⁸ Kosovo Albanian DCMACs are appointed in Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klokot/Klllokot, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, and Štrpce/Shtërpçë.

¹⁹ In Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Zubin Potok, MOCRs have not been formally established, although offices with similar functions exist, such as the Municipal Communities Offices (MCOs). More specifically, an MCO is operating in Zubin Potok. In Leposavić/Leposaviq and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, the MOCR-like offices (named respectively the MOCR and Municipal Directorate for Communities, Returns and Information) are headed by politically appointed directors. These offices were established under UNMIK Regulation 2007/30 on Self-government of Municipalities in Kosovo, Article 23(11). Kosovo Albanians are represented in MCOs in Leposavić/Leposaviq (five members) and Zubin Potok (six members).

²⁰ Glogoc/Glogovac, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Junik, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Klokot/Klllokot, Malishevë/Mališevo, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prishtinë/Priština, Ranilug/Ranillug, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Zvečan/Zvečan. Kosovo Albanians hold the position of head of MCOs in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok.

²¹ The Kosovo Albanian community is not represented in the MOCR in Gračanica/Gračanicë, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Parteš/Partesh, and Štrpce/Shtërpçë. In Klokot/Klllokot, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Ranilug/Ranillug, and Zvečan/Zvečan Kosovo Albanians hold the position of Head of MOCR. In Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok they are Head of MCOs.

There are no active **Kosovo Albanian** non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in any of the northern municipalities. Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), based in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, occasionally organizes activities for youth in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Zubin Potok. The NGO “Minatori i ri” from Kishnicë/Kišnica village, operates in Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The socio-economic well-being of the Kosovo Albanian community is affected by the overall low employment rate in Kosovo. Employees in Kosovo are likely to find themselves in poverty as on average families have only one working member and 5.3 members. (The in-work poverty rate in the European Union was 9.4 per cent.²²)

In municipalities where **Kosovo Albanians** are not a majority, the economy is primarily based on agriculture and small trade businesses.²³

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, in municipalities where the community resides in urban areas, such as Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, **Kosovo Albanians** often hold positions of responsibility within the municipality or work in the private sector. Construction remains the main private sector category generating employment opportunities for **Kosovo Albanians**. Some own small businesses. Data from the Office for Community Issues in the Office of the Prime Minister show that around 90 percent of **Kosovo Albanian** community members in Leposavić/Leposaviq and 60 per cent in Zubin Potok are unemployed.²⁴ According to these interlocutors, around 30 per cent of the unemployed community members are women. In municipalities where **Kosovo Albanians** reside in rural areas, such as in Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan, Gračanica/Gračanicë, and Ranilug/Ranillug, agriculture is the main source of income. Alternatively, some community members commute to work in nearby cities.

Eight **Kosovo Albanians** are employed at the municipality of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša at all levels (including managerial). Only two of them reside in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, the rest are from surrounding towns and villages.

In Gračanica/Gračanicë, three **Kosovo Albanians** work in the municipal civil service and four in public local enterprises. In the private sector, community members work mainly in the field of gastronomy and trade. Unemployment, according to MOCR, touches mainly women above 35 years old.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, according to the municipal offices in the four northern municipalities where **Kosovo Albanians** are in a numerical minority, around 4 to 30 percent²⁵ of **Kosovo Albanian** community members there are employed in the public

22 European Social Policy Network, "In-work poverty in Kosovo", 2019; available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=21105&langId=en>. (Accessed December 2023).

23 OSCE Report *Municipal Profiles* (2018). Data on private sector employment, including the number of employees by community, are unavailable.

24 There are no exact unemployment figures for Zvečan/Zveçan.

25 Four per cent in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, five per cent in Zubin Potok, 20 per cent in Leposavić/Leposaviq, 30 per cent in Zvečan/Zveçan.

sector, mainly governmental institutions, i.e., the municipality, social welfare offices, education sector and Kosovo Police.

The economic situation of the **Kosovo Albanian** community is also influenced by the geographical position and natural resources in the municipalities where they reside. In Klokot/Klllokot municipality, where the land is fertile and rich in mineral waters, the community is engaged in spa rehabilitation centres, agriculture, and the bottling of potable water industry.²⁶ **Kosovo Albanians** in Štrpce/Shtërpçë mainly engage in cattle farming, raspberry and honey production, bottling of potable water, and tourism - they run the majority of restaurants and cafes in the Brezovica/Brezovicë area. Agriculture is the main activity for the community members who reside in Ranilug/Ranillug, complemented by seasonal construction work in other municipalities. **Kosovo Albanians** in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë own the quarries that operate in Stanišor/Stanišor and Straža/Strazhë villages, and grocery shops, cafés and restaurants.²⁷

About 150 **Kosovo Albanians** are employed in the Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipal service (municipal administration, health, and education sectors, centre for social work, and fire brigade),²⁸ 250 in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipal institutions (including 36 in the municipal administration, 18 in the health sector, and 90 in education, as well as in public utility companies such as the Post and Telekom Kosovo, security sector, Kosovo Electricity Distribution Company (KEDS) and Kosovo Police), three in the Ranilug/Ranillug municipal administration²⁹ and 32 in the municipal administration and education sector in Klokot/Klllokot.³⁰

In total 1,400 **Kosovo Albanians** (including those who de facto reside in Ferizaj/Uroševac) are registered as jobseekers in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality, 130 in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë,³¹ 33 in Viti/Vitina municipal employment office (although they reside in Klokot/Klllokot), and ten in Ranilug/Ranillug.³²

The informal economy in Kosovo is estimated to represent approximately 38 per cent of the GDP.³³ While the phenomenon is widespread, exact numbers of **Kosovo Albanians** involved in informal work are not available; however, due to the prevalence of the informal economy in Kosovo, these numbers are believed to be high. Informal work is particularly prevalent in agriculture (unpaid family members) and construction.³⁴ Data on the number of **Kosovo Albanian** children involved in child labour are unavailable.

²⁶ Klokot/Klllokot deputy mayor for communities.

²⁷ Novo Brdo/Novobërdë deputy mayor for communities.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ranilug/Ranillug municipal office for communities and return.

³⁰ Klokot/Klllokot municipal personnel office.

³¹ Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipal employment office.

³² Ranilug/Ranillug communities committee member. Gender disaggregated data are not available.

³³ IMF Working Paper, *Explaining the Shadow Economy in Europe, Size, Causes and Policy Options* (2019), p. 19.

³⁴ The World Bank, *Job Diagnostics in Kosovo* (2018), p. 42.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Overall access to infrastructure and public utilities has been improving, including through projects that expand road infrastructure and upgrade electricity grids. Yet, recurring issues ranging from power outages, lack of sewage systems in rural areas, poor road infrastructure, and irregular waste collection persist.

In Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, the overall status of road infrastructure in the municipalities of Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Klokot/Klllokot, and Ranilug/Ranillug – where **Kosovo Albanians** are in a numerical minority, is good. In Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality it continues to be poor. Most of the main roads that connect remote villages with the town of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë are not asphalted, or have damaged sidewalks.

Regular supply with potable water remains a persistent issue in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality. Due to a lack of an agreement between the municipality and KEDS over the existing electricity debt, the water system in place in the **Kosovo Albanian** and Kosovo Serb inhabited villages of Klokot/Klllokot and Mogillë/Mogila in this municipality is not operational. The water supply systems in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë do not meet the needs of residents. The worst water shortages affect Bostan/Bostane village and the settlements of Čuljkovci/Qulkovc, Tullar/Tulare, and Makreš/Makresh, inhabited by **Kosovo Albanian**, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Serb residents. Llabjan/Labjane village, considered to be one of the largest **Kosovo Albanian** villages in the municipality, with about 1,400 residents, has a water supply system in place which is not functional due to land disputes over the locations of wells and reservoirs.

Rid neighbourhood in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality has neither a water supply nor a sewage system in place, while residents of Dubovë-Dubovce in this municipality have independently installed a sewage system. In Mogillë/Mogila village, Klokot/Klllokot municipality, street lighting is installed, but it is functional only in the neighbourhoods inhabited by the Kosovo Serb community and around the Serbian Orthodox church.³⁵

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, access of the **Kosovo Albanian** community to potable water and electricity has improved. In 2018, frequent outages were noted in the mixed-community neighbourhood Lagjja e Doktoreve/Dolina Doktora in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, but it improved since then. All local roads are asphalted, including in villages such as Cerajë/Ceranje and Bistricë e Shalës/Šaljska Bistrica in

³⁵ Mogillë/Mogila village leader and the Klokot/Klllokot deputy mayor for communities.

Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality, which were asphalted in 2022-2023. In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, all members of the community have access to the town sewage network, as do the villages of Çabër/Çabra in Zubin Potok and Lipë/Lipa in Zvečan/Zveçan. Residents in the three villages of Leposavić/Leposaviq manage sewage disposal individually as they do not have access to a sewage network.

There is no street lighting in any of the clusters in the other two municipalities of Zvečan/Zveçan and Leposavić/Leposaviq as well as in the mixed settlements of Brdjani/Kroi i Vitakut and parts of Suhodoll/Suvi Do in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

Kosovo Albanians in municipalities where they represent a numerical minority in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region (namely Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zvečan/Zveçan, Zubin Potok, and Leposavić/Leposaviq) mostly utilize Kosovo-run health facilities, in particular the hospital in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South.³⁶

Similarly, community members living in other Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities elsewhere in Kosovo, such as Ranilug/Ranillug, Klokot/Killokot, and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, tend to use Kosovo-run health facilities in neighbouring municipalities. In Štrpce/Shtërpcë, there are Kosovo-run healthcare centres in the villages of Brod/Brod and Dragkovce/Drajkoc, which are used by the Kosovo Albanian community. Whereas Kosovo Albanians living in the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian inhabited village of Jasenovik, use the village Belgrade-run healthcare clinic. Kosovo-run healthcare clinics also exist in Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities, including Gračanica/Graçanicë, Štrpce/Shtërpcë, and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë. In Gračanica/Graçanicë, community members use mainly the health facilities in Prishtinë/Priština.

³⁶ As of December 2020, a Kosovo-run health centre is open in Bistricë e Shalës/Šaljska Bistrica village, which is used by local residents and residents of Koshtovë/Košutovo and Cerajë/Ceranja villages in Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality. The facility is open from Monday to Friday, with a doctor visiting from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South every Thursday. There is one health facility in Çabër/Čabra village in Zubin Potok municipality, which is open on business days, with a visiting doctor from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In Zvečan/Zveçan, there are two health centres, one in Lipë/Lipa and the other in Zhazhë/Žaža villages, both are open to patients from Monday to Friday, while a doctor visits the facility in Lipë/Lipa on Tuesdays and in Zhazhë/Žaža on Thursdays. Kosovo Albanian community members from Boletin/Boljetin visit the health centre in Lipë/Lipa, in Zvečan/Zveçan due to its proximity.

6. Access to education

Kosovo Albanian pupils and students receive education in the Albanian language. During the 2023–2024 academic year, 300,989 Kosovo Albanians were enrolled in the pre-university education in Kosovo.³⁷

Pre-university education in the Albanian language is provided in nine of ten municipalities in which the Kosovo Albanian community is in the numerical minority.³⁸ Kosovo Albanians living in smaller municipalities such as Ranilug/Ranillug, Klokot/Klllokot, and Gračanica/Gračanicë, face difficulties in accessing education in the Albanian language and must travel to neighbouring municipalities. Pre-university education in the Albanian language is not available in Ranilug/Ranillug, but the municipality provides transport for Kosovo Albanian pupils to attend schools in Kamenicë/Kamenica town. With the exceptions of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (Llabjan/Labljane) and Štrpce/Shtërpçë (Firajë/Firaja), Albanian-language education is limited to the primary and lower-secondary levels in the remaining seven municipalities. Kosovo Albanians from these municipalities commute to neighbouring Kosovo Albanian-majority municipalities to pursue upper-secondary education in the Albanian language.

Transport and school infrastructure remain the primary issues that hinder access to education. In Zvečan/Zveçan municipality, there is no school bus for pupils from Lipë/Lipa and Zhazhë/Žaža to attend lower-secondary education in Boletin/Boljetin. The lack of organized and subsidized transport to upper-secondary schools in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South hinders school attendance of pupils from vulnerable families. Transport is also not provided to the school in Mikronaselje/Kodra e Minatorëve (in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North). A similar issue is faced by students in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality who attend the secondary school in Llabjan/Labljane village. In the absence of public transport, private vehicles remain the only means of commuting for students to school, disadvantaging those without vehicles.

³⁷ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Statistical Notes 2023/2024 (2022)*, *Statistical-notes-2023-24-Pre-university-Education.pdf*

³⁸ These municipalities include Gračanica/Gračanicë; Klokot/Klllokot, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mamuşa/Mamushe/Mamuşa, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Štrpce/Shtërpçë; Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan.

Overall, there have been no issues reported in the provision of Albanian-language curriculum textbooks throughout Kosovo. On 24 August 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) announced that parents were requested to purchase school textbooks for grades 1 to 5, and would then be reimbursed based on an online application. The decision triggered several concerns,³⁹ in particular for the most vulnerable communities and families in poor economic conditions.

University education in the Albanian language is provided by seven public universities in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština, and Prizren.

The interaction of **Kosovo Albanian** schoolchildren with students who follow the Serbian-language curriculum is very limited. In Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities north of the Ibër/Ibar River, interaction between **Kosovo Albanian** and Kosovo Serb pupils is close to non-existent due to the lack of “schools sharing premises with two education systems”.⁴⁰ In other regions, 14 such schools that host both curricula under one roof, provide significant potential for enhanced interaction; however, in practice the opportunities are not utilized. One exception is the school in Jasenovik village in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, where interaction between **Kosovo Albanian** and Kosovo Serb students improved significantly following the implementation of the Nansen Dialogue Centre project, supported by the OSCE Mission. However, one of the biggest obstacles to inter-community dialogue is that the Serbian language is not taught in Kosovo-curriculum schools and the Albanian language is not taught in the Serbian-curriculum schools. As to interaction between **Kosovo Albanian** students and those who follow Bosnian- and Turkish-language curricula, the situation varies between municipalities.

³⁹ Most frequently reported concerns included: need for families to travel to other towns due to lack of textbooks in bookstores; limited access to internet and difficulties in submitting the request for reimbursement through the online platform; lack of clear guidelines and delays in receiving subsidies. As a result, numerous students started the school year without textbooks.

⁴⁰ “Schools sharing premises with two education systems” refer to schools operating within the same premises and providing education under two different systems, namely the Kosovo curricula and Serbian curriculum. These schools are sometimes referred to as “mixed schools”, though students and classes are not mixed.

7. Access to justice

OSCE field monitoring suggests that members of the Kosovo Albanian community in general are aware of services provided by the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo (OIK), and the Victims Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO).

The majority of employees of all three institutions are **Kosovo Albanians**: 27 out of 32 employees in the FLAA (19 women); 68 out of 74 employees in the OIK,⁴¹ including four of the five deputy Ombudspersons (two men, two women); and 29 out of 32 employees in the VAAO (22 men, seven women). Moreover, a significant number (1,341 out of 1,383 members) in the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA), are **Kosovo Albanians** (1,032 men, 309 women).

Community members most aware of these services are those who work in or engage with municipal institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, as well as students. The **Kosovo Albanian** community was not reported or observed to face specific challenges in accessing the free legal assistance services. However, interlocutors from the four northern municipalities in Kosovo shared the opinion that the public in general - particularly the **Kosovo Albanian** community in municipalities where they are in a numerical minority - should be better informed about these services.⁴² **Kosovo Albanian** interlocutors from the four northern municipalities indicated that they would seek legal services in **Kosovo Albanian**-majority municipalities. Awareness-raising campaigns that target the wider community, particularly families living in rural areas, could be more effective, for example, efforts to increase the visibility of the FLAA.

The OIK is the only institution that conducts regular monthly and *ad-hoc* outreach visits⁴³ in various municipalities (though not in Prishtinë/Priština region, where the visits are conducted based on identified needs of citizens), giving it better visibility than the other two legal service providers.

Every October, VAAO, under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy, organizes an annual "Crime Victims' Rights Week".

41 OIK has gender-balanced staff (around 50 per cent).

42 According to the OSCE field reporting from the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.

43 Including so-called "Open days", outreach on monthly basis with the aim of direct communication with community members on various human rights challenges.

Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, and the KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) opportunities among **Kosovo Albanians**.

The FLAA mobile teams also contribute to improved access to legal services by reaching out to non-majority communities and implementing information and awareness raising campaigns. In 2023, with the support of USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages, as well as in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid, with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the Albanian and Serbian official languages.

The **Kosovo Albanian** community living in municipalities where they constitute a numerical minority, have unhindered access to all services provided in these municipalities, as services are made available in Albanian language. Across Kosovo, all three institutions have multilingual staff who can communicate and provide services in the Albanian language. The VAAO relies on its multilingual staff to provide translation when needed or uses translation services provided by the respective Basic Prosecution Office.

With regards to the beneficiaries of the services,⁴⁴ in 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 5,214 were members of the **Kosovo Albanian** community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),⁴⁵ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, 1,409 were filed by **Kosovo Albanians**. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, out of which 2,554 victims were **Kosovo Albanians**.⁴⁶ Community members are free to choose their legal representatives. However, in case of *ex-officio* representation in criminal cases, the KBA assigns lawyers according to the order of lawyers listed in their record, who are fluent in the language of the community they represent or members of the respective community.

Kosovo Albanians, including those living in the four northern municipalities, do not face problems in accessing the court system due to any language barrier, nor did they report any discrimination based on their community affiliation. However, concerns have been raised over long commutes to **Kosovo Albanian**–majority municipalities in cases where community members from Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality are involved in court proceedings.

⁴⁴ Information provided by VAAO, FLAA, OIK and KBA in December 2023 and January 2024.

⁴⁵ Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo, *Annual Report 2023*.

⁴⁶ Gender disaggregated data were not provided, though the majority of VAAO beneficiaries are women, victims of domestic violence.

8. Language use and media

In municipalities where Kosovo Albanians are in a numerical minority, the community is generally free to use its language both privately and in public. Albanian is an official language in Kosovo, provided by the Constitution and the 2006 Law on the Use of Languages.⁴⁷

However, despite a solid legal basis, municipal translation services remain poor. Municipalities are generally overburdened with large numbers of documents and meetings that require translation from or to the Albanian language.

In all municipalities in Gjiilan/Gnjilane region in which Kosovo Albanians are a numerical minority, community members use the Albanian language in public spaces and to access municipal or public services. The situation is similar in the municipality of Gračanica/Gračanicë, in Prishtinë/Priština region, where Kosovo Albanians use their mother tongue freely in public. However, there have been reports of challenges in accessing municipal services, particularly with regards to issuance of documents in both official languages.⁴⁸ In Prizren region, particularly in the predominantly Kosovo Turk-inhabited municipality of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, the Kosovo Albanian community also uses the Albanian language in public spheres.

The situation is somewhat different in the four northern municipalities of Kosovo.⁴⁹ In these municipalities, Kosovo Albanians mainly use their mother tongue in their homes, but less frequently in public. Although older Kosovo Albanians in these municipalities speak fluent Serbian, the younger generation is much less conversant. Due to this language barrier and security concerns, interactions with Kosovo Serbs in northern municipalities are rare. Often when requiring municipal services, Kosovo Albanian community members in the four municipalities use municipal communities' offices in community villages to channel requests to various departments.

There have been reports of defaced Albanian-language signs in areas where Kosovo Albanians are in a numerical minority.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Law on the Use of Languages, No. 02/L-37 (2006), <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2440> (Accessed 2023).

⁴⁸ According to OSCE Mission internal monitoring conducted between 2021 and April 2023.

⁴⁹ Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan, and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

⁵⁰ Such cases have been noted in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Gračanica/Gračanicë. In addition, in Klokot/Klllokot there was a case of two defaced inscriptions originally in Albanian in the main street, two signs showing the direction to Klokot/Klllokot, and another indicating the direction to Gjiilan/Gnjilane. In Klokot/Klllokot a multi-ethnic team undertook to clean both defaced signs by youth from Klokot/Klllokot together with the youth from Štrpce/Shtërpçë and Ferizaj/Uroševac to give a message to all residents that both languages in the municipality are equal and thus equally respected.

When incidents such as these occur, local authorities usually do not issue a public condemnation.⁵¹ There have been few complaints by Kosovo Albanians about breaches of linguistic rights.⁵²

Documents for the general public are provided in all official languages, as are most municipal decisions, albeit with some delay. For the Albanian language, 19 municipalities claimed an adequate number of translators, while in 18 municipalities the number of translators was insufficient.⁵³ Translation into the Albanian language is generally available during public sessions, but not in every case.⁵⁴ Additionally, civil servants working in municipalities where Kosovo Albanians are a minority are unable to communicate in all official languages with residents; this inability is especially true with younger persons. In the municipalities of Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan, the lack of translators, interpreters, and personnel who speak both official languages challenges staff to communicate in all official languages. At the village level, Kosovo Albanian community members speak in Albanian at the social welfare offices. Despite challenges, progress has been made in these municipalities.⁵⁵

The Kosovo Albanian community has extensive access to Albanian-language electronic and print media. According to the Independent Media Commission, 73 licensed television and radio stations broadcast in the Albanian language using terrestrial frequencies. In addition, the commission has licensed 108 television channels that broadcast in the Albanian language using the services of 34 licensed cable operators.⁵⁶ Most of the radio and television channels with wide coverage are available in the four northern municipalities.

51 The municipalities of Ranilug/Ranillug, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, and Parteš/Partesh explained that public condemnations were not made because of the lack of municipal supervisory powers over regional roads on which signs are most often defaced.

52 In Ranilug/Ranillug, the Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC) responded to a complaint received by the Ministry of Local Government Administration about this municipality with the recommendation that all official communication should also be issued in the Albanian language. Similarly, Parteš/Partesh municipality received recommendations from the OLC regarding its failure to use both official languages equally.

53 Office of the Language Commissioner, *Annual Report on Language Compliance in Municipalities* (2019).

54 In Parteš/Partesh, for example, interpretation is only provided during MCSC and public meetings in which Kosovo Police members participate because other municipal bodies (such as the committee on returns and reintegration, the policy and finance committee, and municipal assembly) are comprised entirely of Kosovo Serbs.

55 Examples include the recruitment of an interpreter in Zvečan/Zveçan municipality and the appointment of language focal points in Zubin Potok and Leposavić/Leposaviq, while Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North did not yet appoint the language focal point.

56 Independent Media Commission, <http://www.kpm-ks.org/telicencuarit/306/llojet-e-licencave/306> (accessed December 2023).

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

In Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality, Sunni Muslims from the Kosovo Albanian community reside in the villages of Košutovo/Koshtovë, Bistrica/Bistricë, and Ceranje/Cerrajë. In Zvečan/Zveçan municipality, muslim Kosovo Albanians live in the villages of Lipa/Lipë, Boletin/Boljetin, and Žaža/Zhazhë. In Çabër/Čabra village, in Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok municipality, Kosovo Albanians follow Islam.

Kosovo Albanians who follow Islam in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality reside mainly in the villages of Llabjan/Labjane, Pasjak, and Makresh i Ulët/Donji Makreš, in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality, in Crepana/Crep, Duboc/Dubovci, and Rid settlements, and in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality, the Islamic community resides in the villages of Brod, Firajë/Firaja, Drajkovcë/Drajkovce, Kashtanjevë/Kaştanjevo, Izhancë/Ižance, Biti e Poshtme/Donja Bitinja, and Biti e Epërme/Gornja Bitinja.

There are a number of heritage sites of significance for the Kosovo Albanian community in municipalities where they constitute a minority. The preservation, enjoyment, and protection of this cultural heritage is generally unproblematic. In Prizren region, there are no specific cultural or religious heritage sites relevant to Kosovo Albanians in municipalities where they constitute a numerical minority.⁵⁷ Based on field observation, Kosovo Albanians can freely exercise religious beliefs and practices in the Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality, where Kosovo Albanians attend prayers in the same mosques as the Kosovo Turk and Kosovo Roma communities. In the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, the Isa Boletini *kulla* (house tower), in Boletin/Boljetin village in Zvečan/Zveçan municipality, is of particular significance to Kosovo Albanians.⁵⁸ Another important site is the Mazhid mosque built in 1778 by the Ottomans and located in the northern Mitrovica/Mitrovicë; the mosque was destroyed in 1999.

⁵⁷ In the Prizren region, Kosovo Albanians constitute a minority only in the municipality of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, where they make up approximately 5.4 per cent of the total population (Kosovo Turks form the majority).

⁵⁸ The site has been turned into a memorial centre commemorating Isa Boletini, a Kosovo Albanian freedom fighter from the village of Boletin/Boljetin during the struggle for the independence of Albania in 1912.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Albanian community, including where in a numerical minority, faces challenges in this area, including inadequate compensation for expropriated property, insufficient access to social housing and illegal occupation.

This is particularly the case in the northern municipalities, where they have encountered significant difficulties in returning to their homes and accessing their property. Nevertheless, some positive initiatives of the institutions were noted recently.

In 2023, the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North institutions⁵⁹ started the reconstruction of houses that were damaged as a result of the 1999 conflict in Kosovo. The Ministry of Local Self Government is financing the reconstruction of ten houses, while the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure is financing 30 houses.

In the period between 2021 and 2023, municipalities Kosovo-wide issued 7,788 legalization decisions, providing for the affected parties the formal property title through registration in the cadastral registry.

In 2021, one case of illegal occupation was reported in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North.

The Kosovo Albanian community living in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë town faces problems with expropriation of property owing to large infrastructure projects that link Prishtinë/Priština with Gjiilan/Gnjilane region. While expropriation is legitimate and regulated by the legal framework, adequate compensation should be made to the affected owners of all communities. Some property owners found the proposed amounts for compensation insufficient and challenged them in court. In January 2020, 28 claims were filed in the Novo Brdo/Novobërdë Court Branch (Gjiilan/Gnjilane Basic Court) contesting the decisions for compensation of the expropriated property. The property owners claim that the authorities undervalued their properties and requested an increase in compensation.

Illegal occupation and re-occupation of properties remains a challenge for the Kosovo Albanian community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. However, the Kosovo Property Comparison and Verification Agency (KPCVA) has been more successful in addressing this issue than its predecessor.

⁵⁹ Ministry of Local Self Government and Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure in co-operation with Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North municipality.

In 2024, outside the reporting period, the KPCVA issued 24 evictions orders (of a total of 42), that are pending implementation.

In May 2015, the Ministry for Communities and Return established an Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Returns (IMWGR) to encourage the return of **Kosovo Albanian** families to Brđani/Kroi i Vitakut, a mixed-community neighbourhood in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and one of two difficult return areas in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region. So far, the IMWGR has issued

construction permits for three **Kosovo Albanian** houses in Brđani/Kroi i Vitakut of six that were submitted (three requests were pending). However, the reconstruction of **Kosovo Albanian** houses in this neighbourhood remains generally unresolved.

Conversely, **Kosovo Albanians** living in Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality or in the Kosovo Turk-majority municipality of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša enjoy equal and full access to property and housing.

11. Return and reintegration

Security concerns, lack of socio-economic opportunities, and dissatisfaction with the current political climate in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North remain the main disincentives for many Kosovo Albanian displaced persons originating from the northern municipalities to return.

According to UNHCR data, only 158 Kosovo Albanians voluntarily returned to their pre-conflict homes from displacement since 2015.⁶⁰ UNHCR further reported that a total of 6,900 individuals remained internally displaced, all from the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.⁶¹

Construction and reconstruction projects supported by the Danish Refugee Council and the British Embassy were halted in 2016, with a decision issued by the Inspectorate of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.⁶² In 2015 and 2016 a number of protests were held concerning the return of Kosovo Albanian community members to the Brđani/Kroi i Vitakut neighbourhood, especially. In other neighbourhoods such as the Lagjja e Doktorëve/Dolina Doktora, the community continued to face challenges due to the political climate, although a number of houses were constructed or reconstructed.

In 2018, one “Go-and-See”⁶³ activity was organized by the Danish Refugee Council in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality.

In 2023, the Ministry for Communities and Return took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁶⁴ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provision of food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. As a tangible outcome of these efforts, the Ministry supported 25 Kosovo Albanian families, providing them with essential food and non-food items, including construction materials.

60 In 2015, there were in total 20 Kosovo Albanian returnees (in Istog/Istok – 1, in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North – 14 and in Zvečan/Zveçan – 5); in 2016, 39 returnees (in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë – 30 and in Zvečan/Zveçan – 9); in 2017, 11 returnees were reported in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë; in 2018, there were 43 returnees in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë; and in 2019, two returnees were reported in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë. Office of the Chief of Mission in Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview* (December 2019).

61 Ibid.

62 Recorded by OSCE field monitors in 2016.

63 Go-and-See visits provide displaced persons with the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the conditions in their place of origin and to directly interact and engage with the receiving community to make an informed decision about return or other durable solution.

64 Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci compressed compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#), (Accessed December 2023).

In October 2023, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure announced the commencement of the reconstruction of 21 houses and four renovations for **Kosovo Albanian** returnees in Brđani/Kroi i Vitakut, in the Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality.⁶⁵ Similarly, in October 2023, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) began work on the reconstruction and renovation of houses for four **Kosovo Albanian** families in Cerajë/Ceranje and Bistricë e Shalës/Šaljska Bistrica in Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality, as part of its programme "Construction and Renovation of Houses for Non-Majority Communities."⁶⁶ Additionally, in December 2023, the MLGA issued a public call for economic operators to express interest in building houses for non-majority communities in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zvečan/Zveçan, Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok municipalities.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Kossev media outlet report, <https://kossev.info/the-re-construction-of-albanian-owned-houses-in-brdjani-has-begun/?fbclid=IwAR2SjTsWlJaFXEEMVB0uTyQP-WxPw206LGpnznqdkUULI8VG7er0OcrBcEk> (Accessed December 2023).

⁶⁶ Ministry of Local Government Administration announcement, <https://mapl.rks-gov.net/organizimi/departamentet/ndertimi-dhe-renovimi-i-shtepive-per-komunitetet-jo-shumice/> (Accessed December 2023).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Photo Credit: Haris Alija

Community Profile

Kosovo Ashkali



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Ashkali Community Profile

According to the 2011 census, 15,436 Kosovo Ashkali community¹ members reside in Kosovo, constituting 0.89 per cent of the total population.² However, not all Kosovo Ashkali took part in the census, which was not conducted in the four northern municipalities. Based on data from the 2011 census and the 2018 OSCE Municipal Profiles, the community is estimated to constitute roughly 0.83 per cent of the total population.

The Kosovo Ashkali community is not a majority in any region or municipality in Kosovo. Kosovo Ashkali are the second largest community in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, where they constitute some 3.35 per cent of the population, after Kosovo Albanians (about 96 per cent). They are the second largest community also in the municipalities of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, where they constitute about one per cent of the population, Podujevë/Podujevo (less than one per cent), Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (about nine per cent), Lipjan/Lipljan (over three per cent), Shtime/Štimlje (about three per cent), Rahovec/Orahovac³ (less than one per cent), Malishevë/Mališevo (28 community members) and Suharekë/Suva Reka⁴ (about 0.83 per cent of the population).

Smaller numbers of Kosovo Ashkali community members live elsewhere in Kosovo.⁵ In Prishtinë/Priština municipality, in 2021, there were 122 families (about 530 residents), most residing in the peripheral neighbourhood of *Kodra e Trimave*. In Obiliq/Obilić there are about 700 to 800 Kosovo Ashkali community members, most residing in Obiliq/Obilić town and in the villages of Plemetina/Plemetin, Milloshevë/Miloševo and Carravodicë/Crkvena Vodica.

¹ Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians identify themselves as persons belonging to three distinct communities, and are as such recognized by the Kosovo legislative framework, Kosovo institutions, and international organisations. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo fully recognizes the existence of three distinct communities and has in this publication sought to highlight their distinctive characteristics and experiences. However, due to the lack of reliable disaggregated data for the communities in some municipalities, parts of this Profile include figures that represent Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians together.

² European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations*, <https://www.ecmikosovo.org/uploads/3engA.pdf> (accessed January 27, 2022).

³ About 500 community members.

⁴ About 650 community members.

⁵ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018* (2019).

In Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality there are about 150 to 200 Kosovo Ashkali community members, most reside in Gračanica/Gračanicë town and in the villages of Radevo/Radevë, Skulanevo/Skullan, and Suvi Do /Suhadoll. A similar number reside in Shtime/Štimlje municipality, most in Shtime/Štimlje town and in the villages of Gjurkoc/Gjurkovce, Vojnoc/Vojnovce and Davidoc/Davidovce. In Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality there are about 600 Kosovo Ashkali community members, in Klinë/Klina about 80 to 100, and in Deçan/Dečane (42).

About 2,200 Kosovo Ashkali community members reside in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region. In the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipality there are 168 families (600 members) who reside in the Adem Voca neighbourhood, 52 families (about 380 members) in 2 Korriku/Sitničko Naselje neighbourhood, 12 families (90 members) in Shipol/Šipolje, and one family with five members in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South town. In the municipality of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, there are five families with 37 members living in the Bosniak Mahalla neighbourhood. In Podujevë/Podujevo there are 152 families (857 members). In Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality, there are 17 families (96 members) in Priluzhje/Prelluzhë, ten families (50 members) in Vushtrri/Vučitrn, five families (30 members) in Stanoc/Stanovce, and six families (35 members) in Bukosh/Bukoš. In Skënderaj/Srbica municipality (suburbs) there are four families with 20 members.

Key facts and issues

- In several incidents, Kosovo Ashkali properties were affected by fires.
- The Kosovo Ashkali community has been affected also by incidents involving physical assaults.
- As one of the smaller non-majority communities, the Kosovo Ashkali community does not have any ministers in the Government formed in 2021. One of the 120 Assembly members is Kosovo Ashkali.
- Political participation of Kosovo Ashkali community members, particularly women, is generally low.
- The Kosovo Ashkali community struggles with poverty and difficult socio-economic conditions.
- The community struggles with a high unemployment rate and unequal access to job opportunities.
- Child labour, including trafficking of children, affects the Kosovo Ashkali community.
- Kosovo Ashkali are more likely to be excluded from social assistance schemes.
- The community struggles with financial and logistical hurdles in accessing healthcare services, as well as with ethnic discrimination.
- The Kosovo Ashkali community experiences challenges in accessing and enjoying property and housing rights, as many of them do not own land, while others lack property titles, building permits or formal registration of property transactions.

1. Security and safety

The security situation of the Kosovo Ashkali community has gradually improved in the last five years, except in 2019, when the number of incidents affecting this community increased compared to the previous year, and in 2020, when the number of incidents increased at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶

Besides the high number of thefts affecting this community, other serious incidents have been recorded, most involving physical assaults, including use of weapons.⁷ Cases of arson or fire have been relatively frequent. The Kosovo Police rarely provide information on the investigation and prosecution of these cases, in most of which the origin of fires remains unknown. There were two cases of vandalism of a cemetery where Kosovo Ashkali community members are buried.⁸ Other types of reported incidents included discrimination⁹ and gender-based violence, such as sexual assault, rape and human trafficking.¹⁰

Notably, as of 2019 there were 20 Kosovo Ashkali in the Kosovo Police. In 2023, this number remained the same (only men). They are serving Kosovo Police in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Pejë/Peć, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Gjakovë/Djakovica, Rahovec/Orahovac, Malishevë/Malishevo, Suhareke/Suva Reka and in the sub-station in Priluzhë/Prelluzhë in Vustrri/Vučitrn municipality.

There are eight members of Kosovo Ashkali community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).

6 According to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo internal monitoring, there were 13 incidents in 2013; 21 in 2014; 11 in 2015; 11 in 2016; seven in 2017; nine in 2018; 15 in 2019 14 in 2020, 14 in 2021, 15 in 2022 and 12 in 2023.

7 Kosovo Albanians were arrested for stabbing members of the Kosovo Ashkali community in Klinë/Klina in August 2017, in Ferizaj/Uroševac in July 2019, and in the village of Magurë/Magura, Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, in March 2020. In June 2021, in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, a Kosovo Albanian man caused bodily injuries to three Kosovo Ashkali women, using a metal rod and a pepper spray, after which he was arrested. In July 2021, a Kosovo Albanian was arrested for physically assaulting a Kosovo Ashkali juvenile in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In September 2022, in Suharekë/Suva Reka, a Kosovo Albanian assaulted a 9-year-old Kosovo Ashkali community member. In November 2022, in Prishtinë/Priština, a Kosovo Albanian physically attacked a Kosovo Ashkali with a metal rod.

8 In December 2018 in the village of Besi/Besinje, Prishtinë/Priština municipality, a Kosovo Ashkali, reported that a Kosovo Albanian ploughed land with his tractor damaging the graves of his family members. Kosovo Police attended the scene and arrested the suspect.

9 In November 2021, the Minister of Local Government and Administration, Mr. Elbert Krasniqi, reported on his Facebook page that members of the Kosovo Ashkali community were not served in a bar/restaurant in Gjakovë/Djakovica, calling to boycott bars and restaurants where discrimination occurs. His statement was endorsed by the Minister of Justice, Mrs. Albulena Haxhiu, and by several representatives of the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities.

10 In February 2020 in Gjakovë/Djakovica, a Kosovo Albanian male suspect was arrested after he sexually harassed a Kosovo Ashkali underage female victim. In March 2020, Kosovo Police reported that a Kosovo Albanian man sexually harassed two Kosovo Ashkali girls (minors under 14 years old) and arrested the suspect. In November 2020 in Ferizaj/Uroševac, a Kosovo Albanian man was arrested, after he had exploited and manipulated a Kosovo Ashkali woman (with reduced mental capacity), trafficking her with different persons. Five Kosovo Albanians and one citizen of the Republic of Albania were detained on suspicion of sexual exploitation. In May 2021, two Kosovo Albanians were detained for the criminal offense "trafficking in human beings" because they exploited a Kosovo Ashkali woman.

2. Participation and representation

None of the ministers in the Government formed in 2021 are from the Kosovo Ashkali community; however, the Deputy Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, Resul Makreshi, is of the Ashkali Party for Integration (PAI). He previously served as the Deputy Minister of Finance. Egzonit Jakupi serves as the first-ever Kosovo Ashkali advisor to the Prime Minister.

Qazim Brahamani from PAI served as the Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports in the previous government. The community is represented in the Assembly by Bekim Arifi of PAI.

The Democratic Ashkali Party of Kosovo (PDAK) also participated in the 2019 elections. Two men currently hold the two seats reserved for the community in the Consultative Council for Communities.

The community is represented in 19 communities' committees (CC) Kosovo-wide¹¹ with 26 CC members (21 men and five women).¹² Kosovo Ashkali are not represented in CCs in nine municipalities where members of the community reside.¹³ Kosovo Ashkali men are the CC chairperson in seven municipalities: Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Obiliq/Obilić, Podujevë/Podujevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Shtime/Štimlje, and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

While no deputy chairpersons for communities of municipal assemblies (DCMACs) are Kosovo Ashkali, two deputy mayors for communities (DMCs) are men from the community, in Ferizaj/Uroševac and Lipjan/Lipljan.¹⁴

Seven Kosovo Ashkali men are members of the municipal offices for communities and return (MOCRs) in two municipalities.¹⁵

11 Deçan/Dečani, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klinë/Klina, Lipjan/Lipljan, Malishevë/Mališevo, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Obiliq/Obilić, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, Shtime/Štimlje, Skënderaj/Srbica, Suharekë/Suva Reka, Viti/Vitina, Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

12 Kosovo Ashkali women's representation within CCs remains particularly challenging (19 per cent).

13 The community is not represented in Dragash/Dragaš, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Pejë/Peć, Štrpce/Shtërpce. Resident estimates for Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zubin Potok and Zvečan/Zveçan are based on the 2018 Municipal Profiles, due to the lack of official census data.

14 According to the 2011 Census, Kosovo Ashkali represent the largest non-majority community in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and based on the applicable legal framework in force at the time of the appointment, this community should hold the position of deputy mayor for communities (DMC). However, in 2022, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipal assembly appointed Suhat Ademi (Coalition Egyptian-Ashkali Initiative for Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, IFKEA), a Kosovo Egyptian as DMC. The Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) objected, leading to a lawsuit against the municipal assembly. The Court later ruled against the MLGA's objection. Of note, the new Administrative Instruction for the procedure of appointing DMCs in municipalities adopted in December 2023 (AI No.03/2023) removed the requirement for deputy mayor to be from the largest non-majority community residing in the municipality.

15 In Ferizaj/Uroševac and Lipjan/Lipljan.

The position of Head of MOCR is held by a Kosovo Ashkali man in Ferizaj/Uroševac.¹⁶

There are 15 members of the Kosovo Ashkali community in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSC) in the following municipalities: a woman and a man in Ferizaj/Uroševac, a man in each of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Skenderaj/Srbica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Podujevë/Podujevo, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Lipjan/Lipljan, Shtime/Štimlje, Prishtinë/Priština, Malishevë/Mališevo and Suharekë/Suva Reka, and a woman in each of Gjakovë/Đakovica, and Klinë/Klina.

Some of the prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) led by Kosovo Ashkali and/or working on issues affecting the Kosovo Ashkali community are "Roma Versitas Kosovo", "Glas Roma, Aškalija u Egipćana" (Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians) (VoRAE), "Mreža ženskih organizacija kosovskih Roma, Aškalija i Egipćana" (Network of Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations (RROGRAEK)), "Napredujmo zajedno" (Advancing Together), "Terre des Hommes", "The Ideas Partnership", "Roma and Ashkalia Documentation Centre", and "Balkan Sunflowers" NGO. In Ferizaj/Uroševac, "Bashkimi Rinor e Ardhmja e Nditur (BRAN)" (Youth union and bright future) and "Gëzimi Ynë Rinor" (GYR) (Our youthful joy) are active. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, "Zëri i Rinisë Rome dhe Ashkalive të Mitrovicës (ZRRAM)" (The voice of the Roma and Ashkali youth of Mitrovica) and "Perparimi Rinori Ashkalivete Mitrovices (PRAM)" (Youth progress of Mitrovica Ashkali) are active. While in Gjakovë/Đakovica, the NGOs: "Roma in Action", "Bethany Christian Service", "Arena", "Prosperiteti" (Prosperity), "Iniciativa për Veprim" (Initiative for Action), "Ec vetë" (Walk alone) and "Qendra Kreative – Cërmjan" (Creative Centre – Cernjane) are active. In Klinë/Klina, the local NGO "Syri Vizionit" (Eye of Vision) from Pejë/Peć and "JETA" (Life) is active in Deçan/Dečane.

In Podujevë/Podujevo, the Kosovo Ashkali community-led NGO "Qendrimi" (Persistence), "Shpresa Demokratike" (Democratic Hope) and "Një Hap Me Ne" (One step with us) are active. Moreover, the Kosovo Albanian-led NGO "Mundësia" (Opportunity) works on issues affecting women from non-majority communities. "Përparimi i Komuniteteve" (Advancing communities) is active in Suharekë/Suva Reka municipality, mostly focusing on education.

¹⁶ A Kosovo Ashkali man was appointed as Head of the MCO in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North after municipal elections held in April 2023.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

Socio-economic difficulties of the Kosovo Ashkali community derive from high unemployment rates and unequal access to opportunities. Similar to the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptian communities, Kosovo Ashkali suffer from higher rates of poverty compared to other communities in Kosovo.¹⁷

A lack of qualifications and skills among Kosovo Ashkali community members hampers their access to job opportunities and amplifies socio-economic exclusion. In 2023, the unemployment rate within the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali communities was above 90 per cent.¹⁸ Unemployment, while widespread, particularly affects youth and those above 45 years old. In 2018, 95,890 persons from all communities were registered as unemployed, with 2.8 per cent being members of the Kosovo Ashkali community.¹⁹ By the end of 2018, an overall 1,409 Kosovo Ashkali were registered as active job seekers in 17 municipalities.²⁰

A high number of Kosovo Ashkali youth aged 18 to 24 are characterized as “not in education, employment or training (NEET).” Together with Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptians, Kosovo Ashkali constitute 78 per cent of the youth with NEET status. In terms of gender, around 88 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian women are classified as NEET and their employment rate is extremely low – four per cent. Only 37 per cent of women from these three communities have a positive perception of life, as opposed to 51 per cent of women from other communities in Kosovo.²¹ Private sector employment opportunities are limited and Kosovo Ashkali are usually engaged in the informal sector, holding insecure, low-skill, low-pay and low-status jobs,²² such as seasonal construction or agricultural work, woodcutting, and the collection of scrap metals and recyclable materials. Some are involved in traditional small businesses, like handicrafts, or traditional music.²³ Some community members resort to begging to obtain a daily income.

17 European Commission, *Kosovo Report 2019*, p. 31.

18 See European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2023 Report* (2023), p. 100.

19 Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, *Labour and Employment in Kosovo. Annual report 2018* (2019), p. 19.

20 Dečan/Dečani; Ferizaj/Uroševac (Between January and December 2023, 33 Kosovo Ashkali individuals (14 men and 19 women) were newly registered as active job seekers at the regional employment centre, while the total number of Kosovo Ashkali individuals registered as active job seekers, as of December 2023, is 85 (40 men and 45 women); Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje; Gračanica/Gračanicë; Istog/Istok; Kamenicë/Kamenica; Klinë/Klina; Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa; Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South; Obiliq/Obilić; Podujevë/Podujevo; Shtime/Štimlje; Rahovec/Orahovac; Prizren; Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Viti/Vitina (15 individuals).

21 See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth on decent work opportunities and challenges in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.

22 See European Commission, *Kosovo Report*, p. 67.

23 OSCE Report *Overview of Roma*, p. 21.

Few members of the **Kosovo Ashkali** community are employed in the **civil service**, especially at government level. Most hold technical or administrative level jobs, with women being under-represented.²⁴ Apart from the civil service, **Kosovo Ashkali** community members are more engaged in public sector jobs than the Kosovo Roma community, mainly in the healthcare and education sectors, water, utilities and waste companies, and in the Kosovo Customs Office, Kosovo Police and Kosovo Security Forces.²⁵

In **Prizren** municipality, high unemployment rates affect youth and people over 45 years old, both men and women. There are currently 68 active job seekers from the community, half of them women. Two women work at Prizren municipality in maintenance/cleaning jobs and three are nurses at a local hospital, while ten men are employed by the publicly owned company "EcoRegioni", working in cleaning and garbage collection. In the private sector, community members are predominantly employed in supermarkets/gastronomy/services sector as cashiers and cleaners. In rural areas, the community is engaged in agriculture. There are various ministry and NGO-led projects and courses available for community members. In Suharekë/Suva Reka municipality, as of 2023, three men are registered as active job seekers. Several community members are employed in the beverage company "Golden Eagle"; while **Kosovo Ashkali** women work at a bag production factory in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša.

In **Prishtinë/Priştina** region, Lipjan/Lipljan municipality has seen some improvement with regard to employment in the private sector, but not in public institutions. In Shtime/Štimlje, some members of the community are working in the public sector in the municipality, or on garbage collection. About 100-150 are employed in the private sector. In Obiliq/Obilić, seven members of the **Kosovo Ashkali** community are employed in the public sector. In Prishtinë/Priştina, no **Kosovo Ashkali** are employed in the municipality, municipal institutions, or local public enterprises. The vast majority work in the private sector, in particular cleaning companies that may also operate as municipal contractors, and as salespersons in grocery stores. Some **Kosovo Ashkali** in the city gain some small profit from waste collection. In Gračanica/Graçanicë there are no **Kosovo Ashkali** employed in the public sector while there are around 20 men from the community working in the private sector.

The general economic situation of the **Kosovo Ashkali** community in **Ferizaj/Uroševac** is slowly improving.²⁶ There are 64 **Kosovo Ashkali** employed in the public sector, working in the municipality, in hospitals, for the electrical corporation, or as police officers and firefighters. There are also 155 **Kosovo Ashkali** employed in the private sector.²⁷ However, many families still depend on social assistance, with 211 **Kosovo Ashkali** families (1,084 individuals) receiving such assistance.²⁸

24 OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017), p. 17 and 23.

25 Deçan/Dečani; Ferizaj/ Uroševac; Gračanica/Graçanicë; Istog/Istok; Klinë/Klina; Lipjan/Lipljan; Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North; Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South; Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Podujevë/Podujevo; Prishtinë/Priştina; Prizren; Vushtrri/Vučitrn. See: OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2020), p.13.

26 Representative from the Deputy Mayor for Communities and Municipal Office for Communities and Returns.

27 Municipal Office for Communities and Returns.

28 Ferizaj/Uroševac Centre for Social Welfare.

Many women have found employment in markets in the municipality or at the Prishtinë/Priština mall.²⁹

In **Gjilan/Gnjilane** region, according to a **Kosovo Ashkali** community representative, there are no **Kosovo Ashkali** employed in the public sector in Viti/Vitina municipality; only one of the 16 community members who are of working age (38 community members in total) owns a private business. Twenty-three community members receive social assistance and two receive a pension. The **Kosovo Ashkali** community in Pozharan/Požaranje village, Viti/Vitina municipality, live in particularly difficult economic conditions, with inadequate housing and a high unemployment rate. They are mainly engaged in seasonal work such as maintenance and construction or occasionally with NGO projects.³⁰

Unemployment is high in all municipalities where the **Kosovo Ashkali** community resides in the **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica** region. In the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipality, there are no employees in the public sector from the **Kosovo Ashkali** community. There is a very small number of community members that work daily in private companies, mainly in construction. In Podujevë/Podujevo municipality, **Kosovo Ashkali** are employed in both the public and private sectors, but no detailed breakdown by community is available. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality, only three **Kosovo Ashkali** community members (all men) work in the public sector - in the Kosovo Police, in the education sector as a teacher, and as a cleaner.

Income-generation projects have been offered to members of the **Kosovo Ashkali** community, often also targeting the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptian communities, from various international, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The European Union (EU)-Community Stabilization Programme,³¹ now in its fourth phase, has offered over 900 grants³² for new and existing businesses owned by non-majority communities across Kosovo, including **Kosovo Ashkali**. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, for example, the Danish Refugee Council supported the establishment of a “business incubator” in the predominantly **Kosovo Ashkali** and Kosovo Roma inhabited Adem Voca neighbourhood, which consists of approximately ten local businesses, run by and for community members. **Kosovo Ashkali** community members in the region may benefit from the initiatives of the regional employment centre. Some initiatives include a salary subsidy programme, through which community members receive additional payments while working for private partner companies, as well as a programme offering vocational training for repatriated persons and persons on social assistance.

²⁹ NGO BRAN.

³⁰ Viti/Vitina Kosovo Ashkali community representative.

³¹ EU Community Stabilisation Programme, carried out from 2010, is now in its fourth phase, and supported about 900 new and existing micro-enterprises and contributing to the implementation of individual and community development projects. It is an EU-funded programme managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo in partnership with Ministry for Communities and Return (MCR), and implemented by International Organisation for Migration (IOM). See: International Organization for Migration Mission in Kosovo, *EU – Community Stabilization Programme*, <https://kosovo.iom.int/news/eu-community-stabilization-programme> (Accessed December 2023).

³² Ibid.

The Kosovo Ashkali community in the Pejë/Peć region reside mainly in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality. Their economic situation is similar to community members living elsewhere. In Rahovec/Orahovac municipality, for example, only eight (two women) out of about 500 members of the community are registered as active job seekers, while the majority are beneficiaries of social assistance. Those who are employed work in cleaning and maintenance, construction and handicrafts. Those living in rural areas are engaged in agriculture.

Child labour is particularly prevalent among the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities (about 17 per cent compared to 11 per cent for Kosovo wide).³³ Accurate, community disaggregated data is not available. Child labour is closely linked to levels of family poverty, limited attainment of education, as well as lack of parental care and supervision.³⁴ There is a significant gender discrepancy, since more boys are involved in child labour.³⁵ Children collect cans from litterbins, clean car window screens, sell items on the streets and in cafes, as well as beg for money. In addition, 13 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian children are working in hazardous conditions, including physical work in the fields, cutting trees, operating agricultural machinery, spraying pesticides, harvesting, threshing, or working in slaughterhouses and in mining.³⁶ Overall, child labour undermines access to education and has a negative impact on its quality, limiting opportunities and contributing to a persistent chain of social exclusion.

Kosovo Ashkali, together with Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptians, are believed to form the second largest group of asylum seekers from Kosovo to EU countries.³⁷ Many identify poverty, lack of social welfare and health coverage, and lack of employment opportunities as their primary reasons for migration.³⁸ There is also seasonal migration to seek work in both the EU and neighbouring countries such as Albania, North Macedonia, or Montenegro.

In 2022, the Kosovo government established a platform for anti-discrimination against members of the three communities to enable them to report incidents of discrimination based on ethnicity. In 2023, the Government created an inter-institutional team for the promotion of the employment of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to increase employment of the three communities in the civil service and elsewhere.

33 See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma*, p. 24.

34 Office of Good Governance, *Mapping and assessment of child protection system* (2012), p. 25; UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (2017), p. 89.

35 See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma*, p. 23-24.

36 See UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation*, p. 91; International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma*, p. 24; The World Bank, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-14, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* p. 128.

37 See European Asylum Support Office, *Asylum Applicants from the Western Balkans: comparative analysis of trends, push-pull factors and responses – Update* (2015), p. 10; See also, European Asylum Support Office, *Asylum applicants from the Western Balkans* (2013), p. 23.

38 OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report* (2015), p.26.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

The Kosovo Ashkali community has occasional issues of power and potable water outages in areas where they reside. There is not always access to adequate infrastructure, such as asphalted roads and street lighting in rural areas, and there are many villages without a sewage system.

Waste management is irregular and illegal waste disposal sites are often located in the vicinity of Kosovo Ashkali inhabited areas. Nevertheless, there have been notable improvements from municipal investments in recent years in areas inhabited by Kosovo Ashkali across Kosovo.

The Kosovo Ashkali community in **Ferizaj/Uroševac** municipality has good access to infrastructure and public utilities, following investments made based on recommendations by municipal offices and community protection mechanisms, such as the asphaltting of roads and sidewalks in the Halit Ibishi urban quarter.³⁹ In all urban quarters inhabited by the Kosovo Ashkali community (Sallahane/Salahane, Halit Ibishi, Koce Xoxe and Geriq/Gerić) and the villages of Dubravë/Dubrava and Koshare/Košare, street lighting is functional and the water supply is reportedly good. In 2019, the Ferizaj/Uroševac municipal department for public services cleared two illegal waste disposal sites, one in Dubravë/Dubrava and one in Sallahane/Salahana.

However, many community members in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality are in need of housing construction or reconstruction. According to the head of the Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR), approximately 170 requests pertaining to the construction or reconstruction of houses were filed by members of the Kosovo Ashkali community between January 2015 and July 2017.⁴⁰ Some of the requests were accommodated through a partnership of the municipality with NGO VoRAE. Due to a lack of funding, the remaining cases were forwarded to the Ministry for Communities and Return (MCR) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW). In October 2018, the Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the MLSW for the construction of ten houses for Kosovo Ashkali families.

³⁹ MOCR.

⁴⁰ OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo*, p. 12.

In 2019, 37 houses were approved for construction in Ferizaj/Uroševac, 33 were completed in 2019 and four in 2020. As of 31 December 2023, 125 Kosovo Ashkali families in Ferizaj/Uroševac had submitted requests for house construction or reconstruction in response to the MLGA's open call in 2023, but only eight requests for reconstruction and one request for new construction have been approved to date, with the remaining requests pending.⁴¹

In the **Prizren** region, most of the Kosovo Ashkali community members live in mixed-community neighbourhoods in the towns of Prizren, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Rahovec/Orahovac, and in Gejlance/Gelance, Leshan/Lešane, Tërnje/Trnje, Xërxe/Zerze, Ratkovc/Ratkovce, and Radost/Radoste villages. A smaller number live in Malishevë/Mališevo municipality. Access to infrastructure, public utilities and housing is overall good in the region. However, in rural areas the community suffers occasional power and potable water outages. Waste management is irregular and illegal waste disposal sites are often located in the vicinity of inhabited areas. Additionally, a number of Kosovo Ashkali families rely on assistance from municipal offices for communities and return, civil society organizations and public institutions at the municipal and governmental level.⁴²

In the **Pejë/Peć** region, most community members reside in Gjakovë/Đakovica town, and in Brekoc/Brekovac, Skivjan/Skivjane and Piskot/Piskote villages. During 2022 and 2023, infrastructure improvements have been made to the areas in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality where the community resides. Houses were renovated or constructed and streets were paved or constructed in Skivjan/Skivjane village and in "Brekoc/Brekovac", "Mahalla e Sefes" and "Mehmet Hyseni" neighbourhoods.⁴³

In the **Prishtinë/Priština** region, most of the houses in urbanized neighbourhoods where Kosovo Ashkali community members reside have no construction permit and land plots do not belong to their residents. In Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, the Office of the Prime Minister constructed 280 houses for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians; 34 houses were constructed by the MLSW, and there are three ongoing constructions funded by the MCR. However, in neighbourhoods 28 and 29, community members still rely on non-potable water from wells.⁴⁴ Community members in permanent individual housing do have proper access to electricity, water, sewage and functional street lighting, thanks to the support of international organizations and the Ministry for Communities and Return, compensating for the lower municipal budget. In Lipjan/Lipljan, 11 houses are being constructed and financed by the MLSW.⁴⁵ In Shtime/Štimlje, 15 houses were constructed for the Kosovo Ashkali community; the roads and the sewage system are in good condition, while electricity capacity is very weak.

41 Deputy mayor for communities; Communities committee chairperson.

42 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo*, p 90.

43 To note, there are no disaggregated data for these beneficiaries, so there is no final information if they belong to Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma or Kosovo Egyptian communities.

44 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo*, p 16.

45 MoU signed on 16.04.2019 between Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and Lipjan/Lipljan municipality for the construction of houses.

In Plemetina/Plemetin village, Obiliq/Obilić municipality, the road, sewage system and street lighting need repairing. According to community members, they applied for house renovations, but only a few had their houses renovated.

In the **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica** region, access to services, electricity, water and waste collection is generally satisfactory, whereas in some areas, especially in the Adem Voca neighbourhood in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, occasional water and power cuts, waste collection due to non-payment of utility bills, and problems with the sewage and drainage system during flooding, continue to be an issue.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

The Kosovo Ashkali community benefits from social assistance provided by the Government, while a few community members also benefit from social assistance from Belgrade-run institutions. In March 2019, 3,581 Kosovo Ashkali (1,372 men, 2,209 women) received social assistance from the Government.⁴⁶

In Ferizaj/Uroševac, as of December 2023, 211 Kosovo Ashkali families (1,084 individuals) across the municipality received social assistance.⁴⁷ In Viti/Vitina municipality, 23 Kosovo Ashkali individuals receive social assistance and two receive a pension.⁴⁸ In general, current social welfare legislation envisages stricter criteria for families to qualify as eligible for social assistance and a narrow definition of “families who live in a single household” has an adverse effect on multi-generational families of Kosovo Ashkali communities.⁴⁹ According to the Ferizaj/Uroševac MOCR, this removal was in accordance with the requirements set for all communities and not due to discrimination against Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali families.⁵⁰

Community members in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region reported that the majority receive social assistance. According to the head of the MOCR in Podujevë/Podujevo municipality, for example, 66 Kosovo Ashkali families (363 members) receive social assistance.

Lack of personal documentation has traditionally been a challenge for the Kosovo Ashkali community. In total, 93 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian children under the age of five have been reported as registered.⁵¹ Accurate community disaggregated data on the number of unregistered persons is not available. There remains some lack of knowledge in the community about relevant procedures for civil registration.⁵²

Kosovo institutions have implemented several measures aimed at increasing civil registration of the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities,⁵³ including the introduction of free registration days.⁵⁴

46 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo*, pp. 4-5. No reliable data on social assistance provided by Belgrade-run institutions is available

47 Ferizaj/Uroševac Centre for Social Welfare.

48 Kosovo Ashkali community representative.

49 Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 100; OSCE, *Communities rights assessment report – fourth edition* (2015), p. 26.

50 MOCR.

51 World Bank, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013–2014* (2016), p. 126–127.

52 *Id.*

53 OSCE, *Communities rights assessment report – fourth edition*, 2015, pp. 25-26.

54 See Council of Europe, *Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Kosovo* (2017), p. 30.

Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, for example, provides free registration for Kosovo Ashkali community members and regularly implements measures to increase civil registration at no cost.⁵⁵ All births of Kosovo Ashkali babies are registered.⁵⁶ The NGO Civil Rights Program Kosovo (CRPK) has been active across Kosovo in raising awareness and reporting on civil registration challenges, and has been working in close collaboration with MOCRs.

Poorer health among Kosovo Ashkali community members, as in the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptian communities, is largely due to poor living conditions, lack of sanitation, basic hygiene and vaccinations, as well as low use of preventative medical services.⁵⁷ Under-nutrition, malnutrition and reduced life expectancy are recurrent issues.⁵⁸ Moreover, the infant mortality rate among these three communities is three times higher than the Kosovo average.⁵⁹ This reflects a lack of awareness in the community of health priorities such as the importance of vaccination and other preventive measures against diseases and infections.

In 2017, an outbreak of measles disproportionately affected the Kosovo Ashkali community, as well as the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptians, in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje.⁶⁰ In October 2017, doctors and nurses from the main family centre carried out at-home vaccination for a total of 733 children aged 0-15 belonging to the three communities residing in different neighbourhoods in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Between 2021 and 2023, several health information campaigns were organized in the settlements inhabited mainly by the Kosovo Ashkali community, to raise awareness of the importance of immunization in preventing diseases, including by the "Balkan Sunflowers" NGO, supported by UNICEF.⁶¹ Vaccination services are regularly provided by the immunization team, five days a week, in health centres located in the settlements inhabited by the Kosovo Ashkali community.⁶² In Ferizaj/Uroševac, for example, the rate of vaccinated children is the same as for the majority community.

In 2022, the OSCE implemented a campaign to encourage women from non-majority communities to undergo mammogram check-ups in Ferizaj/Uroševac and Gjilan/Gnjilane municipalities, and in 2023 in Istog/Istok municipality. In addition, NGOs and local health care centres have been implementing some health awareness campaigns.⁶³ Between 2020 and 2022, civil society and the Ministry of Health delivered a number of information sessions in community neighbourhoods in Gjakovë/Đakovica on diabetes, hypertension, vaccination, and healthcare for pregnant women and children.

⁵⁵ MOCR.

⁵⁶ MOCR.

⁵⁷ Civil Rights Defenders, *Wall of Anti-Gypsyism: Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.; Office of Good Governance, *Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017–2021*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ See KOSANA, Policy brief 4, Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian access to and use of health care services (November 2015) p.3.

⁵⁹ Kosovo, Office of Good Governance, *Strategy*, p. 27.

⁶⁰ The vaccination started after the measles outbreak spotted during a random survey on access to vaccination for the children belonging to the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities conducted by the CSO Balkan Sunflowers.

⁶¹ NGO BRAN.

⁶² Chief of Immunisation Unit, Ferizaj/Uroševac.

⁶³ NGO BRAN and Chief of Immunisation Unit, Ferizaj/Uroševac.

In addition, in 2023 NGO “Prosperiteti” and MOCR implemented an EU-CoE co-funded activity in Gjakovë/Đakovica, which supported women from the community in accessing gynaecological exams and mammography. Previous campaigns devoted to early detection and prevention of breast cancer (including free check-ups) were conducted in the Prizren region, specifically targeting women, including Kosovo Ashkali women.

Free reproductive healthcare services are provided for women in the majority of municipalities.⁶⁴

Although healthcare services are generally available, the usage of healthcare services is hindered by several factors, such as financial constraints and geographical distance from medical facilities and pharmacies.⁶⁵ Financial hardship in accessing healthcare is aggravated by the absence of universal health coverage and poor socio-economic conditions.⁶⁶ Kosovo Ashkali community members are more vulnerable to being victims of discrimination in the field of healthcare, especially in the delivery of health services.⁶⁷

64 Deçan/Dečani; Ferizaj/Uroševac; Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje; Gjakovë/Đakovica; Gjiilan/Gnjilane; Klinë/Klina; Lipjan/Lipljan; Mitrovica/Mitrovicë South; Obiliq/Obilić; Pejë/Peć; Podujevë/Podujevo; Prishtinë/Priština; Prizren; Rahovec/Orahovac; Shtime/Štimlje; Suharekë/Suva Reka.

65 Kosovo Women's Network, *Access to Healthcare in Kosovo* (2016), p. 51; KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 43; KOSANA, *Policy Brief 4: Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Access to and Use of Health Care Services* (November 2015), p. 3.

66 See European Commission, *Kosovo Report 2019*, p. 31.

67 KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 46.

6. Access to education

The Kosovo Ashkali community predominantly attends Kosovo-curriculum schools.

However, Kosovo Ashkali children residing in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and the vast majority of the school-aged Kosovo Ashkali residing in the mixed-community neighbourhood of Adem Voca in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South attend Serbian-curriculum schools in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.⁶⁸ seven Serbian-curriculum elementary schools are attended by Kosovo Ashkali students, five of which are attended solely by Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Roma students. In the 2019/2020 school year, 365 Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali students enrolled in these schools (198 girls and 167 boys) and all graduated the academic year with no dropouts registered. In Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, Kosovo Ashkali children are enrolled in ethnically mixed schools. No segregation of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali or Kosovo Egyptian children has been reported.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), 4,000 Kosovo Ashkali were enrolled in pre-university education in the 2023/2024 school year.⁶⁹

Throughout their education, Kosovo Ashkali students rely significantly on the support and assistance of learning centres. Learning centres provide complementary education for children who are disadvantaged and suffer from the consequences of socio-economic exclusion. Learning centres have primarily depended on donor support. However, a 2018 administrative instruction⁷⁰ aimed at regulating their work through registration also provides for the allocation of funding from central and local budgets (though without specifying the extent of this obligation). This process has been beset by delays and a lack of timely fulfilment of obligations by government and municipal institutions, where learning centres are threatened by funding shortages and many have been forced to close.⁷¹

68 Serbian-curriculum schools in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region keep community-disaggregated data, however, Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali students are grouped under the same category, i.e., they are all accounted for as 'Kosovo Roma students'.

69 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Statistical Notes 2023/24: Data on Pre-University Education*.

70 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Administrative Instruction (AI) 19/2018 on Establishment and Functioning of the Learning Centres.

71 For more on Learning Centres, see OSCE Report *Overview of Learning Centres in Kosovo and the Implementation of Administrative Instruction 19/201* (2023).

One of the challenges in assessing education provision for the Kosovo Ashkali community is that they are frequently grouped together with Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptians for the purposes of monitoring, policy planning and interventions. Another challenge is the general lack of detailed disaggregated data for the three communities, including in the field of education. Parents' lack of awareness of the importance of school attendance is also considered a strong factor. For these reasons, substantive research about the Kosovo Ashkali community is rendered very difficult. While there are similarities in the positions of the three communities, each of them has its own specificities and challenges requiring different policy approaches and solutions.

According to information provided by municipal authorities and NGOs⁷² working in the field of education, the level of non-enrolment and dropouts in this community has decreased over time. In recent years, cases of school dropouts relate mostly to migration or change of residence. There have been rare cases of abandonment due to family problems or difficult socio-economic conditions.

According to OSCE data on dropouts from compulsory education collected between 2020 and 2023, there were 19 dropouts (nine girls and ten boys) recorded from the Kosovo Ashkali community in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality.⁷³ Through its satellite offices in settlements inhabited by the Kosovo Ashkali community, the MOCR, in cooperation with school Prevention and Response Teams towards Abandonment and Non-Registration (PRTANs) and the Municipal Education Department (MED), organises door-to-door campaigns and meetings with parents of school children if dropout cases are identified. For example, at the beginning of 2019, Ferizaj/Uroševac MED and the MOCR, in co-operation with the school principal, recorded 38 cases of school dropouts among Kosovo Ashkali children enrolled in compulsory education. After a series of meetings organized by the department of education, and local NGO BRAN, as well as a door-to-door campaign organized by the DMC and MOCR, 23 pupils returned to school.

In Gjakovë/Đakovica and Istog/Istok municipalities, PRTANs in Compulsory Education and schools are particularly active in preventing drop-outs, advocating a return to school for students belonging to Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities, and undertaking appropriate mitigation measures (including home visits, advocacy with parents, intensive catch-up classes).

School attendance deteriorated significantly after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the interruption of the regular education process. A considerable number of students in this community were left out of the online learning process, mainly due to lack of adequate technology and the lack of a proper internet connection.

In the Pejë/Peć region, data on Kosovo Ashkali students from MEDs varies between sources. Inconsistent reporting by pupils from the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities on their ethnicity, as well as erroneous data entry by

⁷² Nevo Koncepti and Roma Versitas Prizren branch.

⁷³ Data collected by OSCE field teams between 2020 and 2023 on Kosovo Ashkali dropouts in the Gjiilan/Gnjilane region found 19 total dropouts, three boys from grades I to IX and nine girls and seven boys from grade VI to IX.

teachers is considered part of the problem. In most of the municipalities, the database for enrolment provides disaggregation by age, gender and community. However, disaggregation by community often does not match reality due to inaccurate reporting by pupils and/or teachers.

Girls and women from the Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptian communities face additional challenges in accessing education due to child and/or forced marriages⁷⁴ and traditional gender roles in these communities. Overall, 13.7 per cent of girls in these communities do not proceed from lower to upper-secondary education, compared to 11.3 per cent of boys from these communities.⁷⁵ In addition, four per cent of girls do not proceed from primary to lower-secondary education, compared to 6.1 per cent of boys from the same community.⁷⁶ Discontinuation of education is a consequence of child marriage, among other things.⁷⁷ However, it is difficult to draw a direct link between child marriage and lower attainment of education among girls from the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities. The lack of accurate and comparable community-disaggregated data on the number of children in marital unions before they reach 18 years of age makes it difficult to measure the adverse effect of child marriage on girls' education for all communities. In late 2023, the Government established an inter-institutional working group for the prevention and reporting of early marriages in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Other challenges faced by Kosovo Ashkali pupils and students are their families' generally low socio-economic status, and irregular provision of transport in some cases.

The Kosovo curriculum does not provide any community-specific subjects for Kosovo Ashkali students to learn about their identity and culture.

In August 2023, MESTI announced that parents were requested to purchase school textbooks for grades 1 to 5, and would then be reimbursed based on an online application. The decision triggered several concerns in particular for the most vulnerable communities and families in poor economic conditions, who had to rely on NGO support to access the subsidies, as some community members were without bank accounts or have low computer literacy. Kosovo Ashkali students opt for university education in the Albanian language.⁷⁸ Reserved places for non-Albanian students, including Kosovo Ashkali, are available at existing public universities. Kosovo Ashkali university students, as well as Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptians, have been supported by the NGO "Roma Versitas" and the Roma Education Fund.

74 *Child marriage and early marriage* are overlapping terms. Under the Child Protection Law in Kosovo, a "child" is considered "any human being under the age of eighteen (18)". [Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection, Article 3](#). Legally, "child marriage" and "early marriage" are considered the same: marriage of a child under age 18. *Forced marriage* is a marriage in which one or both spouses, regardless of age, did not consent. In Kosovo Family Law, "a person who has not reached the age of eighteen shall not enter into wedlock" (Article 16), except for justifiable reasons (Article 16b). Article 18 states that a "marriage shall not be valid when the will has been obtained under coercion, threat or by mistake or any other lack of free will of the future spouses". [Law No. 2004/32 Family Law \(2006\)](#) and [Law No. 06/L-077 on Amending and Supplementing the Family Law No. 2004/32](#).

75 UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (2017), Table 16: Pathway Analysis in Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities by Gender; p. 79.

76 Ibid.

77 UNFPA, *Child Marriage in Kosovo (Overview)*, (2014).

78 There are seven public universities in Kosovo with study programmes in Albanian: in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština and Prizren.

To support students from the community in continuing their studies, MESTI, with the aid of donors, provides 500 scholarships to the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian students each year for secondary education.⁷⁹ Some municipalities allocate a reserved number of scholarships for students from non-majority communities. For example, in July 2020 Prizren municipality announced a call for university level scholarships for the 2020/2021 academic year, where 15 out of 80 scholarships were allocated to non-majority community students. Podujevë/Podujevo municipality provides scholarships for secondary school (merit-based) and university students (based on social criteria) from the Kosovo Ashkali community. Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipality funded ten scholarships for secondary school students and three for university students in the academic year 2019/2020. Lipjan/Lipljan municipality updated the municipal regulation on scholarships after the deputy mayor for communities raised the need for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian students to be included in the affirmative measures programme. In 2019, Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality allocated two scholarships for Kosovo Ashkali university students, one woman and one man. However, according to the Ferizaj/Uroševac deputy mayor, the Kosovo Ashkali do not have an allocated number of scholarships and must compete with members of other communities, who may be more likely to meet the criteria. However, in 2023 Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality decided to award a scholarship to all students who register at the University, regardless of community affiliation. NGOs, such as the Roma Education Fund, support Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian students at university level.

The OSCE did not record significant or systematic issues regarding the interaction of Kosovo Ashkali pupils and students with those from other communities.

⁷⁹ [MINISTRY OF EDUCATION COMMITTED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS OF THE ROMA, EGYPTIAN, ASHKALI COMMUNITIES - MASHT \(rks-gov.net\)](#)

7. Access to justice

There are no representatives of the Kosovo Ashkali community employed in any of the non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), Ombudsperson Institution (OiK) and Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, there are no Kosovo Ashkali lawyers licensed by the KBA.

The Kosovo Ashkali community generally enjoys formal access to the justice system. However, there is a general lack of knowledge in the community about their rights as well as the legal procedures and the possibility of free legal assistance. OSCE monitoring indicates that members of the Kosovo Ashkali community residing in urban areas are generally aware of services provided by the FLAA, OIK and VAAO. However, since these institutions are regionally based, so that the Kosovo Ashkali community from some municipalities in Prizren region, and rural areas in particular, are less aware of the services provided.

Poverty is the main impediment to accessing the legal system, as court fees, legal costs, and even transportation can pose a considerable financial burden. Families in remote areas struggle with transportation and related costs in accessing the legal system. Community members most aware of these services are those who work in or engage with municipal institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, as well as students.

Awareness-raising campaigns that target the wider community, particularly families living in rural areas, could be effective; an example is efforts to increase the visibility of the FLAA. In 2023, with the support of USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages, and in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid, with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the Albanian and Serbian official languages. In addition, representatives of these institutions take part in various awareness-raising activities organized by different actors.

In Prizren, Gjiilan/Gnjilane and Prishtinë/Priština, FLAA applies accelerated procedures to accommodate the needs of members from vulnerable categories in society, in terms of their easier access to institution(s) and facilitation of travelling.

Since October 2021, the OIK has been leading the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson and civil society organizations (CSO), including the ones representing [Kosovo Ashkali](#).⁸⁰ In March 2023, together with the NGO "ROMTEGRA", the Ombudsperson visited several [Kosovo Ashkali](#) families in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica with the aim to provide information and to discuss their challenges and concerns. In 2023, in co-operation with the Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture (ACDC) from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North, the Ombudsperson met with CSOs in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Pejë/Peć and held roundtable discussions on the concerns of communities related to respect, protection and promotion of their rights.⁸¹

In 2023, the OIK published an ex-officio report regarding the lack of suitable living conditions for members of the Kosovo Roma, [Kosovo Ashkali](#) and Kosovo Egyptian communities who had returned to Obiliq/Obilić from North Macedonia.⁸²

Every October, VAAO, under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy, organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week". However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year. Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, Ministry of Justice, KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) scheme.

In 2023, FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 213 were members of the [Kosovo Ashkali](#) community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),⁸³ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, 22 were filed by [Kosovo Ashkali](#) community members. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, 19 of which related to members of the [Kosovo Ashkali](#) community and 53 to Kosovo Roma, [Kosovo Ashkali](#) and Kosovo Egyptian communities, as not every region divides them by individual community. The majority of victims were women.

Among the [Kosovo Ashkali](#) community, language is not perceived as a barrier in accessing legal institutions, since their mother tongue is Albanian.

⁸⁰ The aim of the Forum is to create a common platform for co-operation between the OIK and CSOs, for the advancement of protection of human rights, for the identification of challenges and violations of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the development of joint activities on their promotion and protection.

⁸¹ For more information please see: <https://oik-rks.org/en/2023/12/05/the-ombudsperson-met-representatives-of-civil-society-organizations-from-the-region-of-peja/> (Accessed December 2023).

⁸² Ombudsperson Institution, *Lack of suitable living conditions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities returned to Obiliq, from Republic of North Macedonia* (2018).

⁸³ See, Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2023*.

8. Language use and media

The Kosovo Ashkali community's mother tongue is Albanian.

In areas where they form a minority, the community speaks Albanian freely in public spaces and has access to government-level institutions. They also have access to the public service broadcaster – Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) through their newsroom and dedicated program for the community “The Voice of Ashkali”.⁸⁴

The Kosovo Ashkali community has access to print and electronic media in Albanian.

⁸⁴ Radio Television of Kosovo, “The Voice of Ashkali”, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2yggqgSFvmrqUT9ddxmmjM1lHlo1q3Hsr> (Accessed December 2023).

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Ashkali community is predominantly Sunni Muslim, although in Gjakovë/Đakovica in the Pejë/Peć region there is a small number of members of the Bektashi (Sufi) community and Protestant Evangelical Christians. Based on field observations, no issues on expression of religious and cultural beliefs were reported by the community.

In the Pejë/Peć region, the Ashkali community has established good relations with the majority population by virtue of their shared language and religion. Kosovo Ashkali often attend places of worship together with Albanian and non-Albanian communities. Depending on their religion, the Kosovo Ashkali community in the Pejë/Peć region participate in religious services at Sunni mosques, Protestant Evangelical churches, or Bektashi tekkes in Gjakovë/Đakovica.

Due to their diverse religious background, Kosovo Ashkali observe a broad range of religious holy days including Eid-Al-Fitr, Eid-Al-Adha, Nowruz, Ashura, Christmas, Easter, and Reformation Day. The Ashkali Memorial Day on 15 February is also important for the Kosovo Ashkali community and is included in the Law on Official Holidays. The Feast of Saint George (from 6 to 15 May) is also a significant celebration and is widely commemorated by all local communities regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Finally, Kosovo Ashkali also mark the end of winter and the start of summer.

An important cultural heritage site is the Mosque in Sallahane/Salahane in the Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane region, built after 1999 with support from the Ashkali diaspora. The mosque is used by Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Roma, and a small number of Kosovo Egyptians. The cemetery and nearby mosque built in 1989 in Dubravë/Dubrava village in Ferizaj/Uroševac are important religious heritage sites which are used almost exclusively by the Kosovo Ashkali community.

No major incidents against religious and cultural heritage sites of the Kosovo Ashkali community took place during the reporting period. However, since 2013 the Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian cemetery located in Beleg village in Deçan/Dečane municipality, mainly inhabited by Kosovo Albanians, has been subject to severe desecration, i.e., the local residents along with the neighbouring villagers have used this cemetery as a garbage dumpsite. Consequently, five out of 35 graves were covered by waste, causing difficulties in burying the deceased as access to the site and entrance to the cemetery is impeded by the mounting waste.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Ashkali community faces similar challenges regarding property as other non-majority communities living in Kosovo. In the Gjilan/Gnjilane and Pejë/Peć regions, the Kosovo Ashkali community residing in informal settlements⁸⁵ do not have property titles for the properties they live in, and have no adequate access to social housing. However, some small positive changes have been observed.

In 2023, 22 Kosovo Ashkali families' properties were legalized Kosovo-wide providing them with the formalization of property title through registration in the cadastral registry. In 2021, one Kosovo Ashkali family benefitted from allocation of social housing in Prizren municipality.

In Ferizaj/Uroševac town, the main property rights issues affecting the Kosovo Ashkali community are caused by the lack of registered property titles. Due to their poor socio-economic situation, Kosovo Ashkali families are not able to undertake legal and administrative procedures to make changes to property titles on behalf of the current owner in the cadastral records. As such, they do not have an ownership title over the property they use, which makes them vulnerable to any potential initiative of the government such as expropriation or legalization. Moreover, as they have no formalized property titles in the property rights registry, they do not qualify, for example, for government's agricultural subsidies or/and cannot take a loan from the banks, further limiting their chances for economic prosperity and wellbeing. With regard to social housing, in July 2019 the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare initiated the construction of 33 houses for Kosovo Ashkali in Dubravë/Dubrava village in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality to address their housing needs. In addition, in the Prishtinë/Priština region, Kosovo Ashkali community members have property title issues because many of them used to live in informal settlements. In the past years, municipalities have taken concrete steps to regularize such settlements. For instance, municipalities in the Prishtinë/Priština region are engaged in providing housing for Kosovo Ashkali community members through different programs and donations. Furthermore, in the Pejë/Peć region, the housing needs of the Kosovo Ashkali community are being addressed progressively.

⁸⁵ Informal settlements are human settlements, which for a variety of reasons do not meet requirements for legal recognition (and have been constructed without respecting formal procedures of legal ownership, transfer of ownership, as well as construction and urban planning regulations), exist in their respective countries and hamper economic development. While there is significant regional diversity in terms of their manifestation, these settlements are mainly characterised by informal or insecure land tenure, inadequate access to basic services, both social and physical infrastructure and housing finance. See: OSCE, Vienna Declaration (2004), p. 1, point II, <https://locuireinformala.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Declaratia-de-la-Viena-privind-asezarile-informale-2004.pdf> (Accessed December 2023).

As an example, in 2019 three Kosovo Ashkali community members living in Brekoc/Brekovac in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality benefited from house construction through the project “Return and Reintegration in Kosovo - Phase V” (EU-RRK-V), co-funded by the EU and the Ministry of Communities and Return and implemented by IOM. Moreover, some other families have benefited also from the municipal social housing programme.

11. Return and reintegration

There is no disaggregated data regarding voluntary returns of the Kosovo Ashkali community. According to UNHCR estimates, around 7,800 Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians have voluntarily returned to Kosovo from 2000 to May 2023.⁸⁶

According to UNHCR, since 2015, an estimated 292 individuals have returned in the municipalities of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (95), Ferizaj/Uroševac (76), Obiliq/Obilić (64), Gračanica/Gračanicë (14), Pejë/Peć and Gjakovë/Đakovica (12 in each) and Lipjan/Lipljan (11 individuals); while Rahovec/Orahovac, and Prishtinë/Priština recorded fewer than ten individuals returned. While, the Kosovo Ashkali community suffers from low income and insufficient employment opportunities, returnees in particular face economic hardship.

Reliance on donor-funded projects for housing solutions for returnees presents challenges - especially since only a few municipalities participate and potential returnees from other municipalities have to rely on sporadic assistance from the MCR. The EU-funded project, Return and Reintegration, managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo in partnership with the MCR, and implemented by the IOM, reports that 19 residential units have been constructed for Kosovo Ashkali returnees,⁸⁷ while 20 individuals, mostly in the Pejë/Peć region, have received income generation packages to support their reintegration. There have been other initiatives to target marginalized communities, including Kosovo Ashkali, both under the auspices of the EU, Kosovo institutions, and other donor organizations such as the Danish Refugee Council and Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund.

In 2023, the MCR issued a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁸⁸ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities.

⁸⁶ Information shared by the UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission in Prishtinë/Priština. December 2023.

⁸⁷ The number of residential units constructed or reconstructed was: 11 in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, three in Gjakovë/Đakovica, two in Istog/Istok and one in Obiliq/Obilić. Data is provided by the IOM Mission in Kosovo, and included figures are part of the EU Return and Reintegration project in Kosovo.

⁸⁸ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci compressed compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#). (Accessed December 2023).

The impact of these endeavours was tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported 170 Kosovo Ashkali families, providing them with crucial food and non-food items, including construction materials. Notably, the initiative resulted in the construction of three houses, two located in Ferizaj/Uroševac and one in Pejë/Peć. Additionally, the impactful initiatives of the Ministry extended to providing substantial support to five families, amounting to EUR 70,069. This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses. Specifically, five families were supported, two in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and one each in Lipjan/Lipljan, Prishtinë/Priština and Shtime/Štimlje.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

Photo Credit: Šehida Miftari



Community Profile

Kosovo Bosniak



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo



Kosovo Bosniak Community Profile

The Kosovo Bosniak community is one of the largest in Kosovo. By combining the data provided by the 2011 Kosovo census and the OSCE data of the northern municipalities, it is estimated that about 29,000 Kosovo Bosniak community members reside in Kosovo,¹ which is 1.55 per cent of the total population.

The Kosovo Bosniak community is not a majority in any municipality in Kosovo. Prizren municipality, where the community represents around 9.4 per cent of the population, has the largest number of Kosovo Bosniak residents. The second-largest number of Kosovo Bosniak community members is in Dragash/Dragaš, where they represent some 12.1 per cent of the municipality. Furthermore, Kosovo Bosniaks are the second-largest community in Pejë/Peć² municipality, where they constitute some 3.9 per cent of the population. Smaller numbers of Kosovo Bosniaks live elsewhere in Kosovo.³ In Istog/Istok there are some 1,140 Kosovo Bosniak community members, in Gjakovë/Đakovica 73, in Deçan/Dečani 60, and in Obiliq/Obilić around 40. In Prishtinë/Priština municipality there are about 400 Kosovo Bosniak community members, in Gračanica/Gračanicë eight (two families). In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South there are around 500 Kosovo Bosniak residents, in Skenderaj/Srbica 50, in Vushtrri/Vučitrn 50-60, and in Podujevë/Podujevo and Glogoc/Glogovac approximately 50-60 in each. In 2016 there were 477 eligible Kosovo Bosniak voters (18+) in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, while by 2020 the number declined to 447 eligible voters, pointing to a total community population in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North of around 650-700. There are approximately 350 Kosovo Bosniaks who live in Leposavić/Leposaviq.

1 The 2011 Kosovo census did not take part in four northern municipalities.

2 About 4,500 community members.

3 OSCE, Municipal Profiles 2018 (2019).

Key facts and issues

- Thefts and burglaries are the most common type of security incidents affecting **Kosovo Bosniak** community members.
- The **Kosovo Bosniak** community is represented in the government formed in 2021 by the Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights.
- The community has the third-largest number of Assembly members and is generally well represented in the civil service at the governmental and municipal levels, except in Pejë/Peć municipality.
- **Kosovo Bosniaks** generally have access to adequate infrastructure, except in certain rural and mountainous areas such as in Dragash/Dragaš municipality.
- The community is affected by inadequate waste management, illegal dumpsites, and environmental pollution in Leposavić/ Leposaviq and the Gora area in Dragash/ Dragaš municipality.
- Bosnian-language education is available for **Kosovo Bosniak** students under the Kosovo curriculum.
- Issues in accessing education in the Bosnian language include the unavailability of textbooks, a low number of qualified teaching staff, and non-recognition of education qualifications of community members who study in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Bosnian is an official language at the municipal level in Prizren, Dragash/Dragaš, and Pejë/Peć municipalities, and a language in official use in Istog/Istok and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipalities.⁴
- Lack of economic and employment opportunities remains the main challenge for the reintegration of returnees. There is a lack of government support for assisted returns in Dragash/Dragaš municipality.

⁴ In accordance with Article 2 (3) of the Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, in municipalities inhabited by a community whose mother tongue is not an official language, and which constitutes at least five percent of the total population of the municipality, the language of the community shall have the status of an official language in the municipality and shall be in equal use with the official languages.

In accordance with Article 2 (4) of Law No. 02/L-37 on the Use of Languages, in municipalities inhabited by a community whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages in Kosovo and which represents above three per cent of the total population of the municipality, the language of the community shall have the status of a language in official use in the municipality in accordance with the provisions specified in Article 8 and the community will be able to receive services and obtain documents in their own language upon individual request.

1. Security and safety

Prior to 2017, the number of incidents targeting the Kosovo Bosniak community was among the highest in Kosovo, second to the Kosovo Serbs. Since 2017, however, the number of security incidents affecting the Kosovo Bosniak community has been gradually decreasing.⁵

Improvement in the security situation has been noted in Prizren region, where there is a relatively low number of incidents and which usually involve thefts, robberies, and in some cases altercations, not necessarily ethnically related. In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, inter-ethnic incidents are generally decreasing, with the exception of a few sporadic incidents involving the Kosovo Bosniak community, with no major impact on the overall security situation. The same assessment is valid for Prishtinë/Priština, where the Kosovo Bosniak community is well integrated and co-operation with other communities is considered "good." Language barriers may contribute to weaker inter-community dialogue, as not all Kosovo Bosniak community members speak the Albanian language fluently.

Most incidents affecting this community have been reported in Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Prizren municipalities.⁶ Although the vast majority of incidents were thefts in Vitomiricë/Vitimirica village in Pejë/Peć and in Kosovo Bosniak–inhabited Župa/Zhupë valley (Gornje Ljubinj/Lubinje e Epërme, Manastirica/Manastiricë and Donje Ljubinj/Lubinje e Poshtme), as well as the Podgora area (Lubizhdë/Ljubižda) within Prizren municipality, there were a few more serious cases such as arson and threats against Kosovo Bosniak members of the Kosovo Police.⁷

⁵ According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were 75 incidents in 2013, 62 in 2014, 49 in 2015, 53 in 2016, 28 in 2017, 18 in 2018, 24 in 2019, 24 in 2020, 14 in 2021, 20 in 2022, and 12 in 2023.

⁶ In February 2020, a Kosovo Albanian man physically assaulted a Kosovo Bosniak man in Dobrushë/Dobruša village. In February 2020, in Dobrushë/Dobruša and Lubovë/Lubovo villages, unknown perpetrator/s broke into six uninhabited houses belonging to Kosovo Bosniak community members and stole household items. In April 2020, a fire destroyed a house belonging to a Kosovo Bosniak from Zllapek/Zlopek village in Pejë/Peć. Obiliq/Obilić in February 2022, a fire broke at the house of a Kosovo Bosniak family in the mixed village of Plemetin/Plemetina. The family informed the MOCR that they had found a bottle and cloth, which they alleged caused the fire (a homemade "Molotov Cocktail").

⁷ In August 2020, two unknown suspects broke into a house belonging to a Kosovo Bosniak in Prizren, stole 500 euros and physically harmed the victim. In February 2022 in Obiliq/Obilić, a Kosovo Albanian man was arrested as he stabbed in the back a Kosovo Bosniak man after a verbal dispute, who suffered bodily injuries. In October 2022, in Lubovë/Ljubovo village, Istog/Istok municipality, three uninhabited houses belonging to Kosovo Bosniak families were burglarized. In March 2015, an unknown person burglarized and then set on fire the house of a Kosovo Bosniak returnee family in Banjë/Banja village in Istog/Istok. The owner reported that the house had been burglarized three times already since the family returned from Montenegro in 2008. In August 2017, in Istog/Istok, a Kosovo Bosniak police officer on duty was threatened and verbally harassed on the street by a Kosovo Albanian, who allegedly threatened the police officer not to speak in Bosnian/Serbian language. Kosovo Police arrested the suspect. In March 2022, the Kosovo Bosniak deputy mayor for communities in Pejë/Peć reported that he and his family were harassed via social media.

The **Kosovo Bosniak** community residing in the Bosniak Mahala in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, a busy area with many businesses and shops bringing customers from different regions and ethnicities, reported several minor incidents and provocations.

There have also been occasional fights between primary school students in a mixed school under the Kosovo curriculum in Vitomiricë/Vitomiric. Although many **Kosovo Bosniak** young people speak the Albanian language, few incidents have affected **Kosovo Bosniak** community members based on their language choice.⁸

In 2019, 220 **Kosovo Bosniak** community members were employed by the Kosovo Police, stationed in 17 municipalities and in five Kosovo Police departments throughout Kosovo.⁹ By 2023, this number had fallen to 192 (31 women). They are serving in Kosovo Police stations in: Prishtinë/Priština, Gračanica/Graçanicë, Lipjan/Lipljan, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Gjilan/Gnjilane. Police sub-stations are found in Vitomiricë/Vitomirica in Pejë/Peć and in Župa/Zhupë in Prizren, places with a majority of **Kosovo Bosniaks**.

There are 14 members of the **Kosovo Bosniak** community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).

⁸ In December 2019, a Kosovo Bosniak student was beaten by a group of Kosovo Albanian students in a mixed school under the Kosovo curriculum. In May 2021, a Kosovo Bosniak juvenile was attacked and stabbed by unknown persons in Prizren while walking on the street near a school.

⁹ Fifty-four Kosovo Bosniak community members were employed in border crossings. One Kosovo Bosniak member of the Kosovo Police was stationed in Deçan/Dečani, three in Dragash/Dragaš, four in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, one in Gjakovë/Đakovica, two in Gjilan/Gnjilane, one in Gračanica/Graçanicë, five in Istog/Istok, three in Leposavić/Leposaviq, one in Lipjan/Lipljan, two in South Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, ten in North Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, 42 in Pejë/Peć, six in Prishtinë/Priština, 43 in Prizren, one in Rahovec/Orahovac, one in Suharekë/Suva Reka, and one in Vushtrri/Vučitër.

2. Participation and representation

Kosovo Bosniak community members currently hold high functions in the government of Kosovo, including the position of Deputy Prime Minister held by Emilija Redžepi of the New Democratic Party (NDS).

Redžepi previously served as the Minister of Local Government Administration. Also, Almir Veliji of the Social Democratic Union (SDU) serves as the Deputy Minister of Regional Development in the current government. Rexheplar serves as the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Defence and Avdullah Djesević serves as Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Local Government Administration.

The constitution guarantees three seats in the Assembly for parties that represent [Kosovo Bosniaks](#). In the 2019 elections, two seats were won by candidates representing Coalition VAKAT (Duda Balje and Rasim Demiri) and one by Emilija Redžepi. Following Redžepi's appointment as Deputy Prime Minister, she was replaced by another female candidate from NDS, Samra Ilijaz. Following the 2019 elections, Duda Balje left Coalition VAKAT and founded a new party, the Social Democratic Union (SDU). Besides Coalition VAKAT, NDS, and the SDU, a further [Kosovo Bosniak](#) party to participate in the 2019 Assembly elections was the Party for Democratic Action (SDA). In addition, Esmir Kasi ran in the elections as an independent candidate. During the 14 February 2021 elections, SDU candidates Duda Balje and Bahrim Šabani (Coalition VAKAT) won seats in the Assembly, as did NDS candidate Samra Ilijaz.

The [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community has three representatives in the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) within the Office of the President. In October 2022, new [Kosovo Bosniak](#) members of the CCC were selected at a meeting of civil society organizations (one woman and two men).

As of 2017, the [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community constituted 1.21 per cent of the government-level civil service. At the municipal level, the community was under-represented in the civil service in one municipality, Pejë/Peć.¹⁰

¹⁰ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017).

The community is represented in 14 communities committees (CC) throughout Kosovo, with a total of 19 members (ten women and nine men). The Kosovo Bosniak community is represented in the CCs of all municipalities with a significant number of community members.¹¹ However, it is not represented in the CCs in 20 municipalities where relatively few members of the community reside, according to the 2011 census.¹² Community members (two women, two men) hold the position of CC chairperson in four municipalities.¹³

A Kosovo Bosniak man serves as deputy mayor for communities in Pejë/Peć, while two hold the position of deputy chairpersons of the municipal assembly for communities in Dragash/Dragaš and Istog/Istok.¹⁴

Kosovo Bosniak community members are represented in six municipal offices for communities and return (MOCRs), with a total of 13 members (five women).¹⁵ Kosovo Bosniak men hold the position of head of MOCR in four municipalities.¹⁶

There are ten members of the Kosovo Bosniak community in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSCs) in the following municipalities: a woman in each of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Deçan/Dečani, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Pejë/Peć, Obiliq/Obilić, and Prishtinë/Priština and a man in each of Skenderaj/Srbica, Istog/Istok, Dragash/Dragaš and Prizren.

Kosovo Bosniak civil society is not particularly active. The non-governmental organization (NGO) "Jednakost" (Equality), which promotes women's rights and education among the Kosovo Bosniak community in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš, is among the most prominent NGOs. In addition, NGO "Plejada" (Pleiad) and "Vijece Kongresa Bosnjackih Intelektualaca Kosova" (VKBIK) (Council of the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals of Kosovo) are also active in Prizren region, mostly focused on preservation and promotion of cultural values and social inclusion. In Pejë/Peć region, a few small NGOs such as Lejla, Kadin, and "Centar za Integraciju Mladih" (Centre for Youth Integration) serve the community. Moreover, since 2021, "Mladi

11 That is, municipalities with more than 1,000 community members. According to the 2011 census data, these municipalities are Dragash/Dragaš (4,100), Istog/Istok (1,142), Pejë/Peć (3,786), and Prizren (16,896).

12 The Kosovo Bosniak community is not represented in the CCs of the municipalities of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Glogoc/Glogovac, Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Klinë/Klina, Lipjan/Lipljan, Malishevë/Mališevo, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Podujevë/Podujevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Ranilug/Ranillug, Shtime/Štimlje, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Viti/Vitina. Moreover, following extraordinary elections held in April 2023, no CC was established in Leposavić/Leposaviq. Kosovo Bosniaks are the second-most under-represented community within the CCs.

13 Kosovo Bosniaks hold the position of CC chair in Dragash/Dragaš (man), Gračanica/Gračanicë (man), Istog/Istok (woman), and Prishtinë/Priština (woman).

14 According to the 2011 census, Kosovo Bosniaks represent the largest non-majority community in the municipality of Prizren, and based on the relevant legal framework, a community member should then hold the position of deputy mayor for communities (DCM). However, during the reporting period, no DMC had been appointed in Prizren.

15 Moreover, Kosovo Bosniaks are members of the MOCR-like offices in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. Indeed, in Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Zubin Potok, MOCRs have not been formally established, although offices with similar functions exist such as the Municipal Communities Offices. More specifically, a Municipal Communities Office operate in Zubin Potok. In Leposavić/Leposaviq and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, the MOCR-like offices (named respectively Municipal Office for Communities and Return and Municipal Directorate for Communities, Return and Information) are headed by a politically-appointed directors. These offices were established under UNMIK Regulation 2007/30 on Self-government of Municipalities in Kosovo, Article 23(11).

16 Kosovo Bosniak community members serve as heads of MOCRs in Deçan/Dečani, Dragash/Dragaš, Istog/Istok, and Pejë/Peć municipalities. Of note, the position of head of MOCR in Prizren municipality had been vacant between 2019 and 2022. On 11 May 2022, the Mayor of Prizren appointed the MOCR Return Coordinator, a Kosovo Bosniak woman, as Acting Head of MOCR. In December 2022, a Kosovo Turk woman was appointed as head of Prizren MOCR.

Volonteri" (Young volunteers) and "Žena Vaš Kutak" (Women Association Your Nook) have been established by Kosovo Bosniak youth and women respectively, and have been active in supporting community cultural heritage and employment skills of community women. Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South is the home of the NGO "Saraj" (Saraj).

In the Prizren region, in summer 2022, Kosovo Bosniak political representatives requested the creation of a Kosovo Bosniak majority "Rečane/Reçan municipality" in Župa/Zhupë valley.¹⁷

¹⁷ There have been several initiatives by Kosovo Bosniak political movements to establish Rečane/ Reçan municipality in Župa/Zhupë valley. Most recently, in July 2022, collection of signatures was initiated to submit an official request to the responsible institutions.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The socio-economic status of the Kosovo Bosniak community is close to the average in Kosovo. Certain challenging conditions shared by other communities are based on limited employment and economic opportunities.

Additionally, for numerous community members, an inability to communicate in the Albanian language frequently presents a barrier to accessing economic opportunities.¹⁸

The unemployment rate for the Kosovo Bosniak community in Prizren is 50 percent, while in Dragash/Dragaš it is 25-30 percent. Based on data obtained from the municipality, 24 Kosovo Bosniaks (no gender disaggregated data available) are employed in the Prizren municipal administration, and 15 (all men) in Dragash/Dragaš. Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency office in Prizren, there are 330 active job seekers (169 women) registered from the Kosovo Bosniak community. Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency office in Dragash/Dragaš, there are 11 active job seekers (two women) registered from the Kosovo Bosniak community.

In 2018, of 95,890 persons registered as unemployed, 1.70 per cent belonged to the Kosovo Bosniak community.¹⁹

In the public sector, the Kosovo Bosniak community is represented at all government levels. Community members are more present in decision-making functions at the municipal level, holding 23 per cent of managerial posts, than at the government level, with 12 per cent. At the government level, Kosovo Bosniaks are currently represented with the position of Deputy Prime Minister, considered a great advancement of political representation for the community. However, in general terms, Kosovo Bosniaks occupy mostly professional and administrative-level jobs in the government, with women slightly more represented than men. At the municipal level, although women hold a significant proportion of required posts,²⁰ they are poorly represented.²¹

In Prizren municipality, 24 Kosovo Bosniaks are employed in the municipal administration. In Dragash/Dragaš municipality, approximately 15 Kosovo Bosniaks are employed in the public sector.

¹⁸ European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Community profile: Bosniak community*, p. 5.

¹⁹ More recent data are not available.

²⁰ Posts required for proportional representation of communities.

²¹ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo: Follow-Up Report* (2017), pp. 14, 17, 22–23.

In Pejë/Peć, 95 [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) are employed in the public sector (with equal gender representation), including in the municipal civil service and the education and health sectors. In Istog/Istok, 38 [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) are employed in the civil service (19 women and 19 men), and health and education sectors. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Prishtinë/Priština, and Gjiilan/Gnjilane regions, a few community members are employed in the public sector, roughly proportional to the number of inhabitants. However, language barriers sometimes hamper the ability of [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) to work in the civil service. In Obiliq/Obilić there are five [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community members employed in the public sector and three in the private sector. The other members are mostly pensioners, working in agriculture. In Gračanica/Gračanice there is one [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community member employed in the public sector and one member in the Belgrade-run public health service. The other members are unemployed.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, the [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community has very low employment rates in the public sector. [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) are employed in the public sector only in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Leposavić/Leposaviq. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, there is one [Kosovo Bosniak](#) (man) working in the MOCR, two-three others as civil servants, one [Kosovo Bosniak](#) woman is a professor at Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South University and seven or eight women work as nurses in public health facilities. There are around ten [Kosovo Bosniak](#) teachers in primary and secondary schools in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In the current municipal administrations, three [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) work in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North: MA chairperson (man), director of culture, youth and sports (woman), and CC member (woman). In Leposavić/Leposaviq, three [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) work in the municipal administration.

In Prizren municipality, [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) are engaged mostly in the gastronomy sector, as numerous restaurants in the Župa/Zhupë area are owned by them. Community members have also been actively engaged in cultivating raspberries in recent years. The situation is similar in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, where the number of those employed is not very high and most community members are self-employed, mainly in the construction and gastronomy sectors. A hundred [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) (40 per cent women, mostly engaged in collection of herbs and raspberries) are engaged with the "Red Gold" co-operative in Prizren, which offers seasonal contracts yearly. [Kosovo Bosniak](#) women in Prizren villages are mostly involved in handicrafts, food production, caregiving and agriculture. The majority of women highlighted that they work in a private capacity, without registered businesses, and that their engagement has a seasonal character due to the specificity of the above-mentioned economic sectors in which they are engaged. One of the biggest challenges for these women is the lack of available marketplaces to sell their products and, while they opt to promote their work via social media, it is done to a limited extent due to insufficient skills in marketing.

In Pejë/Peć and Istog/Istok municipalities, as well as in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Prishtinë/Priština regions, the community is mainly engaged in the agriculture and gastronomy sectors, as well as in seasonal construction work, the utility services sector, furniture shops, and supermarkets. In Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, [Kosovo](#)

Bosniaks generally work in private businesses or public companies, and less in agriculture and construction.

With regard to income-generation projects, the **Kosovo Bosniak** community has benefited from the Community Stabilization Projects funded by the British Embassy and implemented by the Danish Refugee Council, which have been available in Prizren municipality for a number of years. Swiss Caritas also funded income-generation projects through its Country Programme for Kosovo that mainly focused on agricultural production, both in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš municipalities, through which numerous communities have benefited. In Pejë/Peć and Gjilan/Gnjilane regions, the community has mostly benefited from small-scale income-generation projects related to farming and agriculture and supported by the International Organization for Migration.

No cases of child labour have been reported in the **Kosovo Bosniak** community. On occasion, children help their parents at their small-scale businesses during the summer break, which might include harvesting raspberries, where both boys and girls are engaged. No significant activity in the informal economy has been observed among the **Kosovo Bosniak** community.

As with other communities, **Kosovo Bosniaks** are driven to migrate primarily due to the high unemployment rate and poor economic conditions. Some **Kosovo Bosniaks** emigrate to pursue higher education opportunities elsewhere. Community members migrate mainly to Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of Serbia (such as the Sandžak area and Novi Sad), Slovenia, and Croatia. However, many also migrate to western European countries (mostly Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland). Generally, younger community members migrate, while more elderly individuals remain behind; this phenomenon is especially visible in Dragash/Dragaš and in certain villages in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Kosovo Bosniak community members enjoy mostly satisfactory access to infrastructure and public utilities, except in some rural mountainous areas, especially in the Gora area in Dragash/Dragaš and Župa/Zhupë valley in Prizren, which suffer from outdated infrastructure and poor roads.

In Prizren region, the infrastructure in Kosovo Bosniak—inhabited areas in Prizren town is adequate, as it is for other communities. Major electricity blackouts in Kosovo Bosniak villages in Župa/Zhupë valley have become less frequent in recent years. Nevertheless, smaller urban roads in Prizren represent a traffic and safety risk for all communities, including the Kosovo Bosniaks, as there are no safe sidewalks for pedestrians.

In the mountainous areas of Gora region in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, the Kosovo Bosniak and other communities continue to face shortages of electricity and water due to outdated supply grids, and lack of sewage systems in a number of villages. The construction of a common water supply system for 15 villages started in 2011 but remains uncompleted, and villages rely on their own individual water supply systems.²² However, the Dragash/Dragaš municipal budget for 2024 allocates roughly €4.5 million to capital investment projects, most of which will be spent on the implementation of a water supply project for 15 villages in Gora and Opoja areas and Dragash/Dragaš town, including the construction of a water treatment plant in Radeša/Radesh village. Issues with access to potable water are still present in the villages of Gornja Rapča/Rapqë e Epërme and Donja Rapča/Rapqë e Poshtme, which face shortages due to the old water distribution network, as well as disputes with the neighbouring village of Krstec/Kërstec over the network. The existing infrastructure's weaknesses and outdated transmission pillars cause sporadic interruption in the electricity supply in several villages in Gora area, such as Restelica/Restelicë, Zli Potok/Zllipotoku, Kruševo/Krushëvë, and Globočica/Gllloboçicë, which are particularly affected during the winter season.

For over 30 years, there had been no investment in the electricity distribution grid in Gora region until Dragash/Dragaš municipality reached a written agreement with the utility company Kosovo Energy Distribution Services (KEDS) in October 2020. As a result, the installation of a new main electric power line from Dragash/Dragaš town toward the Kosovo

22 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*.

Bosniak– and Kosovo Gorani–inhabited village of Restelicë/Restelica started in December 2020. It was expected to connect all the villages in the area and improve the quality of the service. However, this intervention has been implemented only in part and has not fully addressed problems related to grid infrastructure in the Gora area. At the end of 2023, KEDS presented a strategic plan for the period 2024-2026, providing a roadmap for the installation of a new power grid in villages in the Gora area.

In addition, waste management issues in the Gora region persist. The municipality of Dragash, in co-operation with the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), has undertaken efforts to cover all of its territory in the municipal waste management plan; however, there are villages not yet covered. This is the case with Leštane/Leshtan, Krstac/Kërstec, Backa/Baçkë, Orcuša/Orqushë, Dikance/Dikancë and Kukuljane/Kukjan,²³ as well as Restelica/Restelicë, where the local NGO *Eco Restelica* tackles waste management with funds obtained from voluntary contributions of residents and businesses.

Finally, frequent rock falls in Župa/Zhupë valley pose safety threats and occasionally block the roads connecting a number of **Kosovo Bosniak**–inhabited villages. These mountainous roads are generally narrow and in poor condition, causing additional risks to the inhabitants. On 3 September 2023, the **Kosovo Bosniak** political party Naša Inicijativa (Our Initiative - NI) organized a protest in Rečane/Rečan village due to safety concerns related to landslides during works to upgrade the regional road Prizren-Brezovica/Brezovicë, which connects several, mainly **Kosovo Bosniak**–inhabited villages in Župa/Zhupë valley. On 26 September 2023, the mayors of Dragash/Dragaš and the municipalities of Mavrovo and Rostuša in North Macedonia met in Skopje to formalize a project to asphalt a six-metre-wide road connecting the cities of Mavrovo and Dragash/Dragaš through a seasonal crossing point, to be completed in the course of 2024.

In Prizren municipality, the issue of waste management in the villages of Rečane/Rečan, Mušnikovo/Mushnikovë and Gornje Selo/Gornjasellë was normalized in 2016 when disputes with service providers were settled. Telecommunication services also improved significantly in the past decade in the Gora region.

Generally speaking, **Kosovo Bosniaks** in Pejë/Peć town have stable access to potable water, electricity, road infrastructure and waste collection, as well as housing. However, in the outlying **Kosovo Bosniak** villages in Pejë/Peć municipality, there are cases of lack of potable water during the summer period (as in many other surrounding villages). Power cuts occur during the winter and in windy conditions due to the old electricity grid and old electrical poles especially in Vitomicë/Vitimirica. Additionally, there is no sewage system in the villages of Vitomicë/Vitimirica in Pejë/Peć, Prapaqan/Prapaćane in Dečan/Dečani, or in several villages in Istog/Istok. During 2021 and 2022, many of the small roads in Vitomicë/Vitimirica and Zlopek/Zlopek were paved, benefitting the **Kosovo**

²³ In Opoja area, the villages of Xërxë/Zrza and Plajnik/Plajnik, predominantly inhabited by Kosovo Albanians, face the same situation. In the case of the latter, a municipal officer reported that the waste management company *Eko Regjioni* is not willing to offer its services due to the distant location of the village and the additional costs that it would cause to the company.

Bosniak communities that live there. In 2023, a road was paved in Prapaqan/Prapaćane village, following a request from the community.

Of the ten **Kosovo Bosniak**–inhabited villages in Istog/Istok municipality, Dobrushë/Dobruša and Banjë/Banja villages have street lighting, and only Dobrushë/Dobruša has sidewalks. The municipality has supported projects such as street lighting and sidewalks in Dobrushë/Dobruša, a village sewage system in Gurrakoc/Đurakovac, road asphaltting in Lubovë/Lubovo village, and paving roads with gravel in all villages, which have slightly improved the access to infrastructure there. Improvements continued in 2022 and 2023, when several roads in Dobrushë/Dobruša were paved or gravelled. Furthermore, projects were begun in 2023 to install sewage systems in Dobrushë/Dobruša and Banjë/Banja villages.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, potable water and electricity supplies have improved considerably over the past decade. The condition of regional roads is assessed as good, while the asphaltting of most local roads is either completed or planned. However, roads in the villages of Kaljin/Kalin, Rvatska/Rëvatskë, and Gornje Jarinje/Jarinjë e Epërme in Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality require maintenance or asphaltting. Additionally, there are issues with the sewage system in the village of Gornje Jarinje/Jarinjë e Epërme. The entire village experiences a problem with bad odour due to sewage-related problems. According to the former head of MOCR, five years ago, the Ministry for Communities and Return (MCR) approved a project to construct a proper sewage system, but the project has not been implemented. Waste management remains the most serious issue throughout the region.

In Obiliq/Obilić, apart from transport specifically from Mazgit to/from Obiliq/Obilić and Prishtinë/Priština, the whole community has satisfactory access to road infrastructure, electricity, waste management, water supply, sewage systems, and street lighting. In Gračanica/Gračanicë, the **Kosovo Bosniak** community members reportedly enjoy mostly satisfactory access to infrastructure and public utilities.

The **Kosovo Bosniak** community has unimpeded access to cemeteries in all municipalities where they reside; members usually use Islamic graveyards with other communities of the same religion.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

The Kosovo Bosniak community generally has good access to social services, health, and welfare.

Community members generally access social services and health care through the Kosovo system, except in Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities such as Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq and Gračanica/Gračanicë, where community members mainly use the services of Belgrade-run institutions.

Additionally, community members who also possess Serbian identification cards, especially those from Dragash/Dragaš and Prizren municipalities, use Belgrade-run healthcare services in Gračanica/Gračanicë and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, while for more serious health issues many use private health centres and clinics in Belgrade and Skopje, North Macedonia.

The health center in Vitomiricë/Vitimirica village, Pejë/Peć municipality, renovated by the municipality and the Ministry of Health in 2022, serves the [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community living there. In 2022 the OSCE and the Ministry of Health delivered presentations on reproductive health and provided free mammograms to community members in Pejë/Peć municipality.

In 2018, 262 [Kosovo Bosniak](#) families (856 individuals) were eligible for social assistance, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.²⁴ Community-specific data indicating the number of [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) who receive pensions and/or disability allowances were unavailable. However, certain difficulties in accessing social services, health, and welfare may exist for some [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) who are not fluent in the Albanian language. This is especially true when the available information in the Bosnian or Serbian languages is scarce, or if the relevant civil servant does not speak or understand these languages.

Vulnerable families from the [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community face difficulties in obtaining medication and other services, particularly those who live in remote villages in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, due to high transportation costs for accessing main health facilities, including private ones. Nevertheless, over the past few years, the physical accessibility and affordability of health care, including emergency services, have improved for [Kosovo Bosniak](#) members living in rural areas, especially in villages in the Gora area in Dragash/Dragaš and in Župa/Zhupë valley in Prizren. Due to municipal investments in healthcare facilities in villages in these areas, the local health centres are now better equipped and provide services to local inhabitants from early

²⁴ Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 100.

morning to late hours every day as part of the municipal primary health care system. The community uses the main family health centres in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš towns in addition to the services provided in the Prizren regional hospital, while several Kosovo Bosniak medical doctors run their own private practices and provide services to different communities in the Prizren region.

In recent years, there has been a lack of public health campaigns targeting the Kosovo Bosniak community.²⁵ However, the community has benefited from health-related campaigns targeting all communities, such as for early breast cancer detection. On 27 October 2023, together with the Kosovo Bosniak NGO Equality and a local obstetrician/gynaecologist, the OSCE organized an informative presentation on breast cancer in Rečane/Rečan village (Prizren municipality) for Kosovo Bosniak women from Župa/Zhupë valley, to discuss prevention, early detection, symptoms and treatment of breast cancer.²⁶ During the event, the chairperson of the Prizren local women's caucus (LWC), Ymran Fusha, shared insights about the LWC's achievements and ongoing efforts to facilitate women's access to healthcare and free-of-charge check-ups in medical facilities of the municipality. In this regard, during October 2023, the LWCs of Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš joined forces to provide free-of-charge mammography check-ups at the main family health centre in Prizren, with the support of the OSCE.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the community benefited from the standard measures provided by the Government, in addition to local-level interventions made available mainly through the MOCRs to the most vulnerable families as well as general assistance provided by municipalities that applied to all communities, including the Kosovo Bosniak community.

²⁵ Kosovo Women's Network, *Access to Healthcare in Kosovo* (2016), pp. 51, 54. (Accessed December 2023).

²⁶ See [in English] at: [We continue to support awareness raising... - OSCE Mission in Kosovo | Facebook](#) (Accessed December 2023).

6. Access to education

Kosovo Bosniak students mostly attend classes in the Bosnian language that follow the Kosovo curriculum. However, a small number of students attend classes in the Albanian, Serbian, and/or Turkish languages for a variety of reasons.

Kosovo-curriculum education in the Bosnian language is available in seven municipalities.²⁷ The community-specific subjects of language, history, music, and arts are available in the Bosnian language. Albanian-language classes are offered as part of the Bosnian-language curriculum.

However, a number of Kosovo Bosnian students follow the Albanian-language curriculum because of the perceived better quality of education as well as additional educational and career opportunities. Additionally, Kosovo Bosniak students are enrolled in Serbian-curriculum schools in Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zvečan/Zveçan, Obiliq/Obilić, and Gračanica/Gračanicë municipalities.

During the 2023–2024 academic year, 2,703²⁸ Kosovo Bosniak community members were enrolled in pre-university education. In Prizren, there were 1,703 Kosovo Bosniak students receiving education in the Bosnian language under the Kosovo curriculum system during the school year 2022/2023.²⁹ While in Dragash/Dragaš, 330 community members attended classes in the Bosnian language.³⁰

In Pejë/Peć region, most Kosovo Bosniak children attend education in the Bosnian language under the Kosovo curriculum. In the school year 2023-2024, in Pejë/Peć municipality, 425 Kosovo Bosniak pupils attend classes, 298 at primary level and 127 at secondary level. In Istog/Istok municipality, 132 Kosovo Bosniak students are enrolled in primary and lower secondary education. In Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, there are no longer any school-aged community members attending classes in the Bosnian language, which were previously provided until the fifth grade, while 18 Kosovo Bosniak students attend classes in the Albanian language. In Deçan/Dečani, two Kosovo Bosniak students receive primary school education in the Bosnian language under the Kosovo system, while three secondary school students from the municipality receive Bosnian language education in Pejë/Peć.

27 Deçan/Deçane, Dragash/Dragaš, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Pristina, and Prizren.

28 Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Statistical Notes 2023/2024. (Accessed December 2023).

29 Pre-school: 12 students; Pre-primary: 79; Primary and lower secondary: 1,314; Upper secondary: 298.

30 Pre-primary: eight; Primary and lower secondary: 283; Upper secondary: 39.

In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë region, **Kosovo Bosniak** students mainly enrol in Serbian-curriculum schools, primarily because of the high number of community members living in the northern part of the region. In addition to proximity, there is also the perceived better quality of education in Serbian curriculum schools. The non-recognition of Kosovo curriculum school diplomas in Serbian curriculum higher education facilities could also be a factor. An additional incentive for some community members to enroll in the Serbian education system is the benefit of social assistance provided by Serbian institutions. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, there is only one primary and one secondary-level school with a small number of pupils offering education in the Bosnian language under the Kosovo curriculum. The number of students keeps decreasing every year, primarily because of the limited options to continue in the Bosnian language under this system at secondary and university levels.

In the Prishtinë/Priština region, **Kosovo Bosniak** children attend education in the Bosnian language in Kosovo curriculum schools; some **Kosovo Bosniak** students from Gračanica/Gračanicë commute to Prishtinë/Priština schools. Some **Kosovo Bosniak** students attend Serbian curriculum schools in Gračanica/Gračanicë and Obiliq/Obilić municipalities. In Gjilan/Gnjilane region, **Kosovo Bosniak** children attend classes in the Albanian language under the Kosovo education system.

In all regions, the community's main challenge in accessing pre-university education in the Bosnian language remains the unavailability of textbooks in the Bosnian language. Many students use photocopies, as not all textbooks are available, particularly for upper secondary education. Textbooks imported from Bosnia and Herzegovina are frequently not adapted to the local context. Translations of textbooks from Albanian into the Bosnian language are of poor quality. Among other consequences, the lack of textbooks negatively impacts students' results in the final Matura exam, thus affecting their chances of enrolment at public universities. In 2023, textbooks were distributed by **Kosovo Bosniak** MP Duda Balje to all primary and lower secondary students in Istog/Istok and Pejë/Peć municipalities. In 2023, in Deçan/Deçane, textbooks in the Bosnian language were provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI). At the start of the 2023-2024 academic year, pupils following the Bosnian language curriculum in the Prizren region faced significant challenges. The primary issue was the unavailability of textbooks for purchase at local bookshops. MESTI announced later that they were transitioning from delivery of textbooks to schools to direct financial support for parents through an online platform.³¹ This, combined with unfamiliarity with the e-Kosova platform and limited access to online resources and banking services created additional uncertainties for many families and schools. In September 2023, MP Duda Balje announced via social media an agreement with the "Dukagjini" publishing house to provide free Bosnian language textbooks for grades 1-5 across Kosovo.

The sustainability of education in the Bosnian language is undermined by the lack of qualified teaching staff. Many teachers have studied in Bosnia and Herzegovina or central Serbia, but their qualifications are not recognized by Kosovo institutions. A

³¹ MESTI opened the application platform on 25 August 2023, announced on the MESTI webpage, <https://masht.rks-gov.net/aplikimin-per-subvencionimin-e-teksteve-shkollore-dhe-materialeve-mesimore/>.

teacher-training university programme in the Bosnian language in Kosovo exists in Prizren. However, the programme lost its accreditation on several occasions in the past due to an insufficient number of academic staff fulfilling the requirements regulating the accreditation of higher education programmes.³² In February 2024, outside the reporting period, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency rejected the re-accreditation of the programme based on the same reasons.

There are a plethora of issues concerning the implementation of the new Kosovo curriculum as well, including lack of translated manuals, new textbooks, or auxiliary educational materials needed for the successful implementation of the new curriculum in the Bosnian language, coupled by a lack of teacher training.

Within the **Kosovo Bosniak** community, no major issues were observed related to physical access to schools and transport, with a few exceptions. For example, in Prizren municipality, **Kosovo Bosniak** secondary school students living in remote areas, mostly in Novo Selo/Novosellë and Grnčare/Gërničar villages, face difficulties as no regular transportation lines covered these two villages.

In some rural areas, especially in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, some **Kosovo Bosniak** girls do not continue with upper secondary and/or university education. The lack of transportation in remote areas and the difficult economic situation of local families play a major role in preventing girls from attending secondary school, suggesting a need for pro-active municipal and school support to ensure the equal right to education for these students and a gender-mainstreamed approach to bridge the gender gaps in education.

Dropout cases among **Kosovo Bosniak** students are uncommon. In the event of dropouts, the main cause is migration. In some rural areas, girls are affected by the issue of child marriages. The relevant municipal and school bodies regularly monitor and address dropout cases on an individual basis. In addition, in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, a considerable number of **Kosovo Bosniak** students abandoned the Kosovo education system to enrol in the Serbian system, due to increased options for upper secondary education and university studies in the Serbian language.

Regarding university education, **Kosovo Bosniak** community members opt for education in either the Bosnian, Albanian (in one of the seven public universities with programmes in Albanian) or Serbian languages (at the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North).³³ Study programmes in the Bosnian language are available at public universities in Prizren, Pejë/Peć, and Prishtinë/Priština (see above on Accreditation). Some **Kosovo Bosniak** students study outside Kosovo, most frequently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, central Serbia, and Turkey.

The registration of **Kosovo Bosniak** students to study in the Albanian language is ensured through the Administrative Instruction on the Application of Affirmative Measures and Quotas for Enrolment of Candidates from the Non-Majority

³² Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

³³ The public universities are in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština, and Prizren.

Communities in the Public Institutions of Higher Education.³⁴ The affirmative measures include a 12 per cent quota for enrolment of non-majority communities' students in all higher education programmes, as well as 12 per cent placement in students' dormitories and canteens.

The total number of [Kosovo Bosniak](#) students studying in the Bosnian language at the University of Prizren was 152 students for the 2023/2024 academic year. Scholarships are available for university-level students from all communities.

For the 2023–2024 academic year at the University in Pejë/Peć, 74 [Kosovo Bosniak](#) students registered in Bachelor studies in Bosnian-language programs, while 24 [Kosovo Bosniak](#) students enrolled in Master studies.

[Kosovo Bosniak](#) students from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region mainly register at the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North as well as the public University in Prizren. In 2022–2023, four [Kosovo Bosniak](#) students were registered at the "Isa Boletini" University in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, in Albanian-language study programmes.

Interaction among schoolchildren in mixed-schools under the Kosovo curriculum in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš is mainly positive. For example, schoolchildren in these mixed schools use the same school entrance door, schoolyard and other school facilities and participate in joint sport and cultural activities. Teaching staff in these schools share one teachers' room, which allows additional opportunities for communication and co-operation. A similar situation was observed at inter-ethnic schools under the Kosovo system in Deçan/Dečane, Istog/Istok, and Pejë/Peć. In contrast, although schools operating in Dragash/Dragaš municipality under the Kosovo and Serbian curricula respectively share premises and playground or sports facilities, interaction between children from different communities is minimal, and activities and initiatives to bring them together by school management are lacking.

In Prishtinë/Priština, the level of interaction between [Kosovo Bosniak](#) students and Serbian-speaking communities (such as Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Roma) is generally higher than that with Albanian-speaking communities. In shared-curricula schools, the level of interaction between the different communities is lower because the education process is organized into different shifts under the Belgrade- and Kosovo-run curricula.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, students studying in the Bosnian language at elementary and secondary levels are not physically divided from their peers who follow classes in the Albanian language. This has led to a comparatively higher level of interaction between the students. The interaction between [Kosovo Bosniak](#) and Kosovo Serb students in Serbian curriculum schools in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North is good and all students are treated equally, with no incidents reported.

³⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology *Administrative Instruction* 09/2016; 2016.

7. Access to justice

The number of Kosovo Bosniak community members employed in non-judicial institutions: the Victims Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO), the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA) and the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK) is very low.

One woman member of the Kosovo Bosniak community is employed at the FLAA regional office in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. There are no Kosovo Bosniaks employed at the OIK. Two out of 33 employees at VAAO are Kosovo Bosniaks, both women (in the regional offices in Prizren and Pejë/Peć). Moreover, out of 1,383 licensed lawyers who are members of the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA), nine individuals, including two women, are Kosovo Bosniaks.

OSCE monitoring indicates that members of the Kosovo Bosniak community are to some extent aware of services provided by the FLAA, OIK, and VAAO. However, the level of awareness differs among municipalities.

The OIK (unlike VAAO or FLAA) conducts regular monthly and ad-hoc outreach visits³⁵ in various municipalities (though not in Prishtinë/Priština region), giving it better visibility than the other two legal service providers.

Every October, VAAO, under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy, organizes an annual "Crime Victims' Rights Week". Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, and the KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) programme.

In addition to its regional offices, one of the FLAA mobile offices covers Dragash/Dragaš municipality, Prizren region. In 2023, with the support of USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages, as well as in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid, with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the Albanian and Serbian official languages.

In the past years, the Ombudsperson organized several general outreach activities to promote communities' rights in general where members of Kosovo Bosniak community were invited.

³⁵ Open days are organized on monthly basis with the aim of direct communication with community members on various human rights challenges.

However, there have been no recent outreach activities targeting the community directly.

In Prizren region, all three institutions have multilingual staff who can communicate and provide services in all official languages, namely in Albanian, Serbian/Bosnian and Turkish languages. However, not all the documents produced by these institutions are available in the language of communities, or their translation has been delayed. A similar situation is noted in Pejë/Peć region, where three out of four Victims Advocacy and Assistance Officers can communicate in both local languages, including one who is a [Kosovo Bosniak](#) native speaker. Whenever needed, translation and interpretation services are available either because of the multilingual staff or use of translation services provided by the respective Basic Prosecution Office in the case of VAAO.

With regards to the beneficiaries of the services³⁶, in 2023, FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 73 were members of the [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),³⁷ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, 23 were filed by [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community members. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, and 97 victims were [Kosovo Bosniaks](#), the majority women.

Community members are free to choose their legal representatives. However, in case of ex-officio representation in criminal cases, the KBA assigns lawyers according to the order of lawyers listed in their record who are fluent in the language of the community they represent or members of the respective community.

In 2023, one [Kosovo Bosniak](#) judge (a woman) started to work as a criminal judge at the Pejë/Peć Basic court.

All interviewed interlocutors stated that members of their community do not face discrimination when accessing the court system. However, some stated that [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) who do not speak Albanian may face obstacles in using the legal system. A few said that court fees and legal expenses are a significant financial burden for some community members.³⁸ According to multiple sources in Pejë/Peć region, the majority of officials are able to communicate in both local languages, while in cases where clients have language issues, the relevant institutions (court, prosecution, VAAO) have available interpreters/translators.

³⁶ Interviews and email exchange with the VAAO, FLAA, OIK and KBA in December 2023 and January 2024.

³⁷ Ombudsperson Institution Annual Report 2023.

³⁸ Interviews conducted with representatives of the Kosovo Bosniak community across Kosovo, including Kosovo Bosniak community members working at the municipal level.

8. Language use and media

Bosnian is an official language in the municipalities of Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš, while it is a language in official use in the municipalities of Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. The provision of interpretation and translation, and the delivery of municipal services and documents in the Bosnian language are mandatory for those municipalities where it is an official language, as well as upon request in municipalities where it is a language in official use.

In municipalities where the community resides in large numbers, [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) generally feel free to use their language in public and private life. In municipalities where a smaller number reside, such as in Prishtinë/Priština, Gjakovë/Đakovica, or in Gjilan/Gnjilane region, [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) opt to use mostly Albanian for public interactions. However, a significant number of elderly community members are not fluent in Albanian, which occasionally hampers communication with institutions and the majority community. Nevertheless, in recent years, the number of young [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community members who speak Albanian has increased, in part because of an increased number of community members who have enrolled at public universities in the Albanian language.

The availability of written documents and services in all official languages varies from region to region. OSCE reporting indicates that the municipalities of Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš are partially compliant with the translation of official documents into the Bosnian language, with approximately 70 per cent of examined municipal decisions and regulations being in compliance. In Pejë/Peć, translation into Serbian is consistently done and translation into the Bosnian language is done upon request. The remaining municipalities where the community resides were found to be compliant (above 80 per cent) with translation requirements, mostly due to available documents and services in the Serbian language. Nevertheless, in Gjilan/Gnjilane region, the community mostly receives public information in Albanian and upon request in Serbian, as well.

The situation of available content in the Bosnian language on municipal websites is not at a satisfactory level, especially related to daily municipal news. In Prizren, for example, between May and December 2023, of 611 news articles that were uploaded in the Albanian language on the municipal website, only 91 were translated into the Serbian and Bosnian languages. Additionally, in Prizren, interpretation in the Bosnian language during official meetings of the municipal assembly has been an ongoing issue due to malfunctioning translation equipment and/or unavailability of translators. Despite continuous complaints from the Kosovo

Turkish community as well as the Kosovo Bosniak community, the problem remains unresolved. Due to delays in receiving documents and services in the Bosnian or Serbian languages, community members sometimes use Albanian in their communication with the local administration to avoid longer procedures.

In relation to public information and public services, the Kosovo Bosniak community receives utility bills, various taxes, and invoices for public services in the Serbian language.

Most street signs are displayed in the Bosnian language in Prizren, Dragash/Dragaš, and Pejë/Peć municipalities. However, issues with defaced signs persist, a problem that needs to be addressed by relevant municipal and government institutions. In Prizren, where most of the Kosovo Bosniak community resides, information is widely available in the Serbian/Bosnian languages at the hospital and local health centres, including from medical and administrative staff. The same applies to other public services and offices of the Municipality.

Kosovo Bosniak community members can access news in the Bosnian language through electronic and print media. The Public Service Broadcaster of Kosovo (RTK 1 and RTK 2) broadcasts special community programmes for non-majority communities, including in the Bosnian language. "Bošnjački Vidici" is a one-hour weekly Bosniak community show broadcast on Mondays on RTK 2, featuring documentaries, informative programmes, and interviews with community members. Radio Kosovo also transmits a programme in the Bosnian language.

Private media outlets also operate at the municipal level. In Prizren region, for example, the community has access to three radio stations: "Radio Omega" and "Radio Astra" in Prizren, and "Radio Gora" in Dragash/Dragaš (it broadcasts for both the Kosovo Bosniak and Kosovo Gorani communities). Additionally, the community has access to the Bosnian-language web portals "Info KS," "Balkan-Plus" from Prizren, and "Gora Press" from Dragash/Dragaš, which are accessible for community members across Kosovo.³⁹

In 2020, the "Kosova.info" portal launched a section with information in the Bosnian and Serbian languages. In Pejë/Peć region, "Radio Peja" broadcasts daily news and a weekly show in the Bosnian language. In addition, Kosovo Bosniak community members use Serbian-language media in Kosovo, as well as electronic media from the region such as from central Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kosovo Bosniak community received information mainly through RTK 1 and RTK 2 as well as from the municipality. At the start of the pandemic, community members from Prizren complained about the lack of available information about COVID-19 in the Bosnian and Serbian languages from relevant institutions, after which the situation improved. Prizren municipality launched a specific website on COVID-19, providing basic information on symptoms, recommendations, and health services, which was also available in the Bosnian language.

³⁹ "Info KS" <https://www.info-ks.net/>; "Balkan Plus" <https://www.balkanplus.net/>; "Gora Press" <http://www.gorapress.net/> (Accessed December 2023).

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Bosniak community is predominantly Sunni Muslim, and religious and cultural sites are shared with Albanian and non-Albanian communities.

Kosovo Bosniak community members participate in religious ceremonies at Sunni mosques regardless of which community manages the mosques or the language of the imams. For example, in Vitomiricë/Vitomirica village in Pejë/Peć, a mosque is run by a Kosovo Bosniak imam. At least two mosques in Prizren town have Bosnian language-speaking imams (one in a Kosovo Bosniak-majority neighbourhood, the other in an ethnically mixed area). All mosques in the villages of the Gora region are led by Bosnian-speaking imams. The town of Dragash/Dragaš has two mosques, one with a Bosnian-speaking imam and the other an Albanian-speaking imam. The community celebrates the officially recognized 28 September, the Day of Bosniaks, as well as Muslim religious celebrations. The Kosovo Bosniak community is generally free to express its cultural identity, religious beliefs, and customs.

10. Property rights

In the Prizren region, there have been issues with access to property owned by Kosovo Bosniak community members.

From 2006 until at least 2020, in the Gornje Selo/Gornjasellë village within the Prevalac/Prevallë protected area in the Prizren region, [Kosovo Bosniak](#) community members have been prevented from accessing their traditional grassland due to encroaching urbanization. Thus, they have not been able to continue with farming.

In 2022, two [Kosovo Bosniaks](#) in the Prizren region received legalization decisions for their properties, formalizing in this way their property titles in the cadastral registry.

11. Return and reintegration

The general lack of economic opportunities and difficulties with accessing employment are the main obstacles to the return and reintegration of Kosovo Bosniak displaced persons. An unknown number of Kosovo Bosniaks were compelled to emigrate during and after the conflict due to security concerns, lack of economic opportunities, and difficulties accessing employment. Returns have been low.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that, since 2011, 238 displaced Kosovo Bosniak community members have voluntarily returned to their pre-conflict homes. The UNHCR report also indicates that there are no remaining internally displaced Kosovo Bosniaks.⁴⁰

Kosovo Bosniak returnees have been able to repossess properties without major difficulties, although there have been reported security incidents linked to property disputes.⁴¹

The European Union (EU)-funded programme Return and Reintegration in Kosovo reported that an estimated 28 residential units of the total of 665 that were constructed or reconstructed, targeted Kosovo Bosniak returnees, and 24 individuals (of 528) were supported with income-generation projects as part of reintegration and promotion of community rights.⁴² As part of the programme, Prizren municipality supported the assisted return of individuals. As a result, in 2019 and 2021, several requests for house construction were approved and commenced in the municipality. In 2021, two projects were implemented in Prizren municipality under the Return and Reintegration in Kosovo and Danish Refugee Council Community Stabilization Project. These initiatives were funded by the United States' Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration and supported by the MCR. The projects encompassed activities related to minor house repairs, income generation grants –primarily in agriculture, including beekeeping–along with the provision of distillery equipment and training for institutions involved in return efforts. However, the number of requests from Kosovo Bosniak community members is low when compared with Kosovo Serb beneficiaries.

40 UNHCR, Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview* (December 2023). In 2015, the number of returns in 18 municipalities: Pejë/Peć nine, Istog/Istok five, Prizren three and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South one. In 2016, the number of returns was 11, Pejë/Peć eight, Prizren two and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South one. In 2017, the number of returns was two, both in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In 2018, the number of returns was ten, Istog/Istok six and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica four. Between 2019 to 2023 UNHCR registered four returns, three in Pejë/Peć and one in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica from the Kosovo Bosniak community.

41 UNHCR, Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview* (December 2019), Section 10, "Property rights."

42 Data provided by IOM Office Mission in Kosovo, EU Return and Reintegration Project in Kosovo; the number of residential units constructed or reconstructed in Prizren was 18, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë three, Pejë/Peć three, Obiliq/Obilić two, and one residential unit each in Štrpce/Shtërpce and Istog/Istok municipalities.

The number of income-generation projects in Prizren was 13, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë three, Obiliq/Obilić two, Pejë/Peć two, and one each in Štrpce/Shtërpce and Istog/Istok municipalities.

In Dragash/Dragaš municipality, there was a lack of institutional funds for return assistance for years, despite many requests. Although 28 individuals returned to Dragash/Dragaš between 2015 and 2019, data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicate that none of the returned individuals benefited from the assistance package.⁴³ While it may be that not all returnees required house construction or reconstruction, most returnees face economic difficulties and would have benefited from income-generation assistance. Dragash/Dragaš has never been included in any Return and Reintegration in Kosovo project, which has led many in the Kosovo Bosniak community to claim that the MCR and EU have prioritized Kosovo Serbian returnees and excluded the smaller communities from benefitting from return assistance under these projects. The municipal authorities have indicated that the primary obstacle to sustainable return in Dragash/Dragaš municipality is the lack of employment opportunities.

However, in 2023, MCR took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁴⁴ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. The impact of these endeavours has been tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported 27 Kosovo Bosniak families, providing them with crucial items, including construction materials. Notably, the initiative resulted in the construction of two houses, one located in Istog/Istok and one in Prizren. Additionally, the impactful initiatives of the Ministry extended to providing substantial support to 20 families, amounting to EUR 222,830. This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses. Specifically, 19 families located in Prizren, and one in Istog/Istok, benefitted from this initiative.⁴⁵

Aside from Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš municipalities, no significant challenges or developments have been noted related to the return and reintegration of Kosovo Bosniaks in other municipalities.

⁴³ Data provided by IOM Office Mission in Kosovo, EU Return and Reintegration project in Kosovo.

⁴⁴ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci_compressed_compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#), (Accessed December 2023).

⁴⁵ Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj

Community Profile

Kosovo Croats



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Croat Community Profile

Although the Kosovo Constitution does not classify Kosovo Croats as a separate community, they are considered one of the communities represented in Kosovo under the Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities.¹

The population of **Kosovo Croats** in Kosovo has decreased dramatically over the past 30 years. According to the 1981 Yugoslavia census, 8,718 Croats were then living in Kosovo (0.6 per cent). The number has significantly declined since that time. This community was not included in the 2011 census.² According to OSCE reporting, the number of **Kosovo Croats** residing in Kosovo is approximately 260 (0.01 per cent), making it the smallest community in Kosovo.³ However, the Croatian Office for Croats Abroad estimated that there were 350 **Kosovo Croats** living in Kosovo in 2013.⁴

The Kosovo Croat community is not a majority in any place in Kosovo. Most of the Kosovo Croat population resides in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality in the Prishtinë/Priština region, and Viti/Vitina municipality in the Gjilan/Gnjilane region. According to OSCE reporting, about 21 **Kosovo Croats** reside in Viti/Vitina municipality, specifically in the villages of Letnicë/Letnica (17), Vërnakollë/Vrnavokolo (two), and Vërnez/Vrnez (one) and in Viti/Vitina town (one). This community comprises mainly persons above the age of 40, and nine are aged 65 or above.⁵

In Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, 0.37 per cent of the municipal population are Kosovo Croat, residing mainly in the village of Janjevë/Janjevo.⁶ Approximately 50 per cent of community members have left the village for Croatia, with currently approximately 150 **Kosovo Croats** living in Janjevë/Janjevo.

¹ Law No. 04/L-020 on amending and supplementing Law No. 03/L-047 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo, which defines communities as national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious groups traditionally present in Kosovo that are not in the majority.

² Gëzim Visoka and Elvin Gjevori, "Census Politics and Ethnicity in the Western Balkans," *East European Politics*, 29(4), 2013, pp. 479–498.

³ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*.

⁴ Office for Croats Abroad, "Status of Croatian Minorities Abroad" (2013). (Accessed December 2023.)

⁵ From 2018 – 2019, around 40 members of this community resided in the Viti/Vitina municipality, specifically in the villages of Letnicë/Letnica, Shashar/Šašare, Vërnakollë/Vrnavokolo and Vërnez/Vrnez. However, during 2019 – 2023, approximately 20 elderly Kosovo Croats have passed away due to their old age and/or illness. Now, only 21 Kosovo Croat men and women live in Viti/Vitina municipality.

⁶ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*.

Key facts and issues

- Thefts from uninhabited houses are the most common security incidents of concern for this community.
- The [Kosovo Croat](#) community does not have a reserved seat in the Assembly of Kosovo.
- Major problems with housing conditions, potable water supply, sewage systems and waste management affect villages inhabited by [Kosovo Croats](#).
- A significant portion of the [Kosovo Croat](#) community are elderly and dependent on pensions and/or social assistance provided by Prishtinë/Priština, Belgrade, and/or Zagreb.⁷
- [Kosovo Croats](#) follow the Serbian curriculum, as education in the Croatian language is unavailable in Kosovo. Community-specific subjects for [Kosovo Croats](#) to learn about their identity and culture also are not available.
- The [Kosovo Croat](#) community has experienced large waves of migration over the past 30 years.

⁷ Office for Croats Abroad, *Status of Croatian minorities*.

1. Security and safety

The security of Kosovo Croats is generally stable, with occasional incidents of thefts and burglaries of female victims in both Janjevë/Janjevo and Letnicë/Letnica.^{8,9}

From at least 2016, a series of security incidents were reported in Janjevë/Janjevo village (Lipjan/Lipljan municipality).¹⁰ In February 2019, following an increased number of unresolved incidents, the Ombudsperson opened an *ex officio* investigation regarding the security of Kosovo Croats and their property in the village of Janjevë/Janjevo. In parallel, the Kosovo Croat community from the village sent an open letter to the Ombudsperson to draw attention to the security situation. The letter, signed by 115 Kosovo Croat community members, claimed that Kosovo Police were ineffective and unable to settle the issue.

In September 2019, after investigating the events and collecting information in the field, the Ombudsperson Institution sent a letter to the Kosovo Police recommending that it increase the number of police officers in Janjevë/Janjevo to adequately respond to incidents and prevent them.¹¹ Then, in October 2019, a fire was reported in three uninhabited houses belonging to Kosovo Croat community members.¹² In November 2019, a representative of Janjevë/Janjevo informed the Ombudsperson Institution that patrols had increased and the security situation had improved there. However, in February 2020 and in December 2021, fires in an uninhabited house belonging to a Kosovo Croat were again reported in the village.¹³

8 According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were three incidents in 2013, two in 2014, none in 2015, two in 2016, none in 2017, six in 2018, six in 2019, eight in 2020, six in 2021, three in 2022 and two in 2023.

9 In May 2020, Kosovo Croat women were victims of thefts and burglaries in two incidents: in Janjevë/Janjevo village someone broke into the house of a Kosovo Croat single mother and stole many valuable items, and in June 2021, a Kosovo Croat woman was the victim of verbal abuse and physical assault by a neighbour, an Albanian man of North Macedonia in Letnicë/Letnica village. In December 2022, the same woman was threatened and insulted by the same neighbour.

10 In January 2016, Kosovo Police reported that two incendiary devices were thrown into the yard of a house belonging to a Kosovo Croat. In May 2018, a 2.5-meter-high cross was removed from its pole and a statue of the Madonna was damaged. It was also reported that a group of 10 to 15 bikers came from Prishtinë/Priština every weekend and drove recklessly in the streets of Janjevë/Janjevo, while verbally harassing people in the Albanian language. In October 2020, an elderly Kosovo Croat couple left the village for Croatia following a severe physical attack during a robbery.

11 As of 16 July 2020, 11 Kosovo Police officers, including the commander, worked at the Janjevë/Janjevo substation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kosovo Police temporarily withdrew additional staff that usually patrolled this village, because, the police claimed, they were busy controlling health measures and some police members were infected with COVID-19.

12 In February 2016, in the same village, an uninhabited house of a Kosovo Croat who does not live in Kosovo was burned down. In June 2018, another uninhabited house of a Kosovo Croat was burned and the case was classified as arson. Additionally, in February 2020 in Janjevë/Janjevo, an uninhabited house owned by a Kosovo Croat caught fire for unknown reasons.

13 Based on monitoring by the OSCE Mission. Outside the reporting period, in March 2024, CCTV cameras were installed in Janjevë/Janjevo with the support of the Mission, in response of a longstanding request from the Kosovo Croat community there.

Three Kosovo Croat community members were employed by the Kosovo Police until 2019, after which this number was reduced to one Kosovo Police woman who is serving in a Kosovo Police sub-station in Janjevë/Janjevo in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality.

One Kosovo Croat woman is a member of the Local Public Safety Committee (LPSC) in Janjevë/Janjevo.¹⁴

Kosovo Croat community members in Janjevë/Janjevo are represented by Don Mate Palić, vicar of St. Nicholas Catholic Church since 1997 and a priest in the same village since 1990.¹⁵ In addition to performing religious duties for his parishioners, Don Mate Palić also organizes cultural events. He represents the Catholic community in the Lipjan/Lipljan Municipal Community Safety Council (MCSC).

¹⁴ As of November 2023.

¹⁵ Oral History Kosovo, "[Don Matej Palić](#)" (August 2019). (Accessed December 2023.)

2. Participation and representation

There have been no ministers or deputy ministers from the Kosovo Croat community in the government formed in 2021, nor have there been any in previous governments. The community does not have a reserved seat in the Assembly, and no Kosovo Croat community members are in the Assembly.

The **Kosovo Croat** community has two reserved seats in the Consultative Council for Communities. The seats are currently held by two members representing the non-governmental organization (NGO) Hrvatska Udruga Sveti Nikola (Croatian Association Saint Nicholas), a man and a woman.

As of 2017, members of the community constituted 0.06 per cent of the government-level civil service.¹⁶

The community is represented in the communities committees (CC) in the two municipalities where most of the **Kosovo Croats** reside: Lipjan/Lipljan and Viti/Vitina.¹⁷ No deputy mayors for communities nor deputy chairpersons of the municipal assembly for communities are from this community. Similarly, **Kosovo Croats** are not represented within Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MOCRs).

There are two members of the **Kosovo Croat** community in the MCSCs: a man each in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities.

¹⁶ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017). Municipal-level civil service representation cannot be evaluated for the Kosovo Croat community as it was not included as a distinct community in the 2011 Census.

¹⁷ Both Kosovo Croat CC members are women. Of note, the Kosovo Croat CC member of Lipjan/Lipljan emigrated to Croatia in mid-2023. As of December 2023, the nomination of a new member had not been officially approved by the MLGA.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The Kosovo Croat community generally shares the same socio-economic concerns as other communities in Kosovo; however, the community's situation is further aggravated by linguistic barriers as well as a very limited labour force owing to the advanced age of Kosovo Croat community members. Many Kosovo Croats live in extremely poor conditions, with inadequate housing and infrastructure.

Reliable data on the unemployment rate among the Kosovo Croat community are not available. In 2018, only 0.1 per cent of Kosovo Croats were registered as unemployed. Neither employment mediation nor vocational training was offered to this community.¹⁸ Income generation for the Kosovo Croat community in Viti/Vitina municipality was scarce as the majority of community members were elderly, and only ten per cent were able to work. Most are engaged in small-scale family businesses and subsistence farming activities.¹⁹

Kosovo Croats have gender parity in the civil service and hold generally professional-level positions; however, they are represented in very low numbers.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, eight Kosovo Croats are employed in the public sector, mainly in education in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality. At the primary school Vladimir Nazor in Janjevë/Janjevo, the deputy director, four teachers, and one support staff are Kosovo Croats.²⁰ A Kosovo Croat woman works as a nurse in a village's health clinic, and another Kosovo Croat woman works as a school clerk in Viti/Vitina municipality.

In both Gjilan/Gnjilane and Prishtinë/Priština regions, Kosovo Croats are generally of advanced age and depend on pension income. There is no evidence that this community is engaged in the informal economy. In Viti/Vitina, Kosovo Croats depend also on free daily lunches funded by the Croatian Embassy in Prishtinë/Priština, and prepared by the community centre and restaurant "Dubrovnik", and the Catholic Church.²¹ This restaurant is owned by a Kosovo Croat family, and provides self-employment for three family members. A restaurant in Letnicë/Letnica is the only privately registered business where Kosovo Croat family members are self-employed.

The Kosovo Croat community has experienced a series of waves of migration over the past 30 years.

¹⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Labour and Employment in Kosovo, *Annual Report 2018*, pp. 19, 34, and 41. Not available in English.

¹⁹ OSCE, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (2011), p. 4.

²⁰ This primary school provides education that follows both the Serbian language curriculum and Kosovo curricula.

²¹ Four Kosovo Croats use the kitchen of the Catholic Church.

According to community representatives in Janjevë/Janjevo, many Kosovo Croat community members moved to Croatia during the 1980s and 1990s, decreasing the number of inhabitants substantially. The most significant wave of migration took place during and after the 1999 conflict. Those who remained in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities have developed strong roots in Kosovo and do not intend to relocate. Of note, most benefit from Croatian social assistance schemes.

There is a trend among young Kosovo Croats to travel every year to Croatia for seasonal work. During 1999 - 2002, a few thousand members of the Kosovo Croat community reportedly emigrated from Kosovo primarily to Croatia. However, some community members chose to stay even though their children and grandchildren fled. Many of these elderly community members have since been invited by their extended families to migrate to Croatia and European Union countries, but they are not interested in leaving their homes in Kosovo.²²

²² MOCR

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Kosovo Croat community members mostly inhabit rural areas of Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities. Community members' limited access to infrastructure and public utilities is among the worst of all communities and a contributing factor to their generally poor socio-economic situation and the remote areas in which many live.

Inadequate housing conditions and lack of a functional potable water supply system remain among the most pressing issues. Additionally, waste collection and the lack of common sewage systems are also among the issues raised by [Kosovo Croats](#) in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities.

In the Gjilan/Gnjilane region, in Letnicë/Letnica village, the water has not been potable for a long time. The water supply system was built almost four decades ago and has been inadequately maintained, thus the water supply lacks sufficient pressure and capacity. According to an assessment conducted in 2007 by the regional public utility company "Hidromorava", the water supply system needed to be completely replaced. More recently, the municipality took steps to mitigate the issue. A project to upgrade the water supply system, co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation, the Kosovo Government and Viti/Vitina municipality started in late 2019 and was finalized in November 2020.²³ Unfortunately, however, in August 2023, a [Kosovo Croat](#) community member reported that the water flow provided by the new water supply network had been polluted due to heavy rainfall and seeping groundwater, and was thus not potable. The public water company "Hidromorava" stated that the issue could not be fixed as the water network was not equipped with a filter to immediately purify the polluted water.

Waste collection and the lack of a common sewage system are also among the issues raised by [Kosovo Croats](#) in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities. In August 2020, following OSCE advocacy, an agreement was reached to include Letnicë/Letnica village in the municipal waste collection system. The municipality installed four waste collection containers in the village, and waste is now collected on a weekly basis. The village representatives agreed to pay the waste collection service tax, while restaurant "Dubrovnik" and the priest of the Catholic Church committed to pay for those households that cannot afford the fee.

²³ OSCE, *Internal Daily Municipal Report: Viti/Vitina Municipality* (9 August 2019).

Hundreds of unattended properties have been left behind by [Kosovo Croats](#) who lived in Gjilan/Gnjilane region until 1999. Many elderly residents live in houses in a state of disrepair, often lacking kitchens and bathrooms. A significant number of houses are used as storage spaces, and some have even been occupied by Albanians emigrating from North Macedonia. Land plots are neglected and often overgrown.²⁴ The power supply is reportedly also weak, with prolonged power cuts, including in the Letnicë/Letnica healthcare centre. Electricity outages are recorded frequently, particularly during winter. In April 2023, one such outage in Letnicë/Letnica lasted three days before the Kosovo Electricity Distribution Services (KEDS) initiated repairs to a fallen electrical pole. Street lighting is available only in the main areas of Letnicë/Letnica village, making travel on rural roads dangerous. The existing street lighting is vulnerable to damage and periods of non-functionality. [Kosovo Croat](#) community members also face difficulties in accessing their cemeteries due to the poor condition or lack of connecting roads and sidewalks.²⁵

In Prishtinë/Priština region, the provision of public services, including water supply, sewage system, and waste management is poor for all communities residing in the area. Frequent leaks and resulting overflows occur, especially in winter, with a permanent solution yet to be found. [Kosovo Croats](#) and other communities living in Janjevë/Janjevo village have appealed to the municipality of Lipjan/Lipljan on repeated occasions to solve this issue. Although the municipality has helped upgrade the infrastructure of the village and the maintenance of water pumps has improved, severe water shortages continue to be a problem. Also, in Janjevë/Janjevo, unpaid electricity bills have led to prolonged cuts in power supply; however, the situation has been steadily improving since 2018. Street lighting is available in most parts of the village, whereas the lack of sidewalks remains an issue for pedestrian safety. According to the [Kosovo Croat](#) community representative, the water supply has significantly improved recently, while the lack of a direct line to and from Prishtine/Prishtina poses a challenge for members of all communities.

²⁴ OSCE, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality: A Vulnerable Community* (2011), p. 4.

²⁵ Cemeteries used by Kosovo Croats are in Letnicë/Letnica, Shashar/Šašare, and Vërnakollë/Vrnavokolo.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

A significant portion of the Kosovo Croat community is elderly and dependent on social assistance provided by Prishtinë/Priština, Belgrade, and/or Zagreb.²⁶ According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, in 2018, 16 Kosovo Croat families (41 individuals) were eligible for social assistance.²⁷

As of December 2023, according to the Viti/Vitina municipal director of the centre for social welfare, three Kosovo Croats receive monthly social assistance, nine receive a monthly pension (which is all the Kosovo Croats aged 65 and above living in Gjilan/Gnjilane region), while the remaining six Kosovo Croat community members who are under 65 years old typically receive financial support from family living abroad.²⁸

Because many Kosovo Croats are elderly and living in isolated and rural areas, the expense of accessing medical services and medication poses a significant barrier for the community, as they would need to travel long distances to the nearest medical facility and public transportation is unavailable (as similarly reported in the OSCE report of 2011).²⁹ The lack of access to health services is further exacerbated by many members' inability to pay for private transport and the cost of medicines. Social assistance does not suffice to cover these costs. In Gjilan/Gnjilane region, the OSCE observed that the community continues to experience issues in accessing healthcare services, but has seen improvements since 2019.³⁰

The healthcare centre in Letnicë/Letnica village is regularly staffed during weekdays by a nurse from the Catholic Church who is paid by the Viti/Vitina municipality. Once a week, a doctor from the hospital in Viti/Vitina visits the clinic. These services were discontinued due to a general shortage of medical staff in 2020 – 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, but have since resumed.

In 2023, the municipality allocated 30 seasonal flu vaccines to the elderly Kosovo Croats in Letnicë/Letnica.³¹ As the elderly had difficulties in obtaining transport to the healthcare centre in Viti/Vitina, a nun from the Letnicë/Letnica Catholic Church volunteered to help with their vaccination. As a result, 18 elderly Kosovo Croats were vaccinated in Letnicë/Letnica. The healthcare centre said they would provide more vaccines, if there was the need.

26 European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, "Community Profile: Croat Community" (2013). (Accessed December 2023.)

27 Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 100.

28 Center for social welfare. Community disaggregated data that would indicate the number of Kosovo Croats who receive pension and/or disability allowance are not available.

29 OSCE, *The Kosovo Croats of Viti/Vitina Municipality*, p. 5.

30 Ibid.

31 Viti/Vitina healthcare centre, on 16 December 2023.

The issue of vaccination of the [Kosovo Croat](#) elderly was flagged initially by the OSCE together with the municipal officer for gender equality and later endorsed by local health authorities.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, the Janjevë/Janjevo village health centre is operational and there have been no significant complaints about access to medical services. However, the village pharmacy is often insufficiently equipped and cannot supply all the necessary medication, so [Kosovo Croats](#) must travel to Lipjan/Lipljan town or Gračanica/Gračanicë to get medication.

Generally, [Kosovo Croats](#) do not face difficulties in obtaining civil registration. According to the Municipal Office for Communities and Return in Viti/Vitina, [Kosovo Croat](#) residents there are provided with personal documents.

In Lipjan/Lipljan – Janjevë/Janjevo, a [Kosovo Croat](#) community representative reported that a significant segment of the community relies on pensions from both the Kosovo and Belgrade-run institutions. Access to health care is adequate, but the only concern was that there are rarely bilingual doctors (with the [Kosovo Croat](#) nurse often having to translate).

6. Access to education

Kosovo Croats receive education in the Serbian language, as education in the Croatian language is not available in Kosovo. In the village of Janjevë/Janjevo, Kosovo Croats attend the Serbian-curriculum primary school “Vladimir Nazor” and share its premises with the Kosovo-curriculum school “Shtjefën Gjeçovi”. Secondary education in the Serbian language is available in Gračanica/Graçanicë.

Institutions have since 2019 provided transportation for **Kosovo Croats** who commute from Janjevë/Janjevo village to Gračanica/Graçanicë to pursue secondary education. Prior to that, access to education was challenging for the affected students. The problem was addressed when, on 28 August 2019, Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality and the Association of Croats living in Kosovo provided funds to repair a minivan that had served as a school bus. Parents contributed to fuel costs, maintenance, and driver compensation.³²

There are no **Kosovo Croats** of school age in the villages of Letnicë/Letnica, Shashar/Šašare, Vërnakollë/Vrnavokolo and Vërnez/Vrnez, in Viti/Vitina municipality.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 22 **Kosovo Croats** were enrolled in pre-university education during the 2019–2020 academic year,³³ while only 12 students were enrolled in the 2023–2024 school year.³⁴

There are no community-specific subjects for **Kosovo Croats** to learn about their identity and culture.

Kosovo Croats pursue higher education either at the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North or at universities in Croatia.

Kosovo Croat children who follow the Serbian curriculum are placed in different classes and playgrounds from the children who follow the Albanian curriculum in the same mixed-curricula school. They tend to socialise with Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Roma children.

Official data and statistics are difficult to obtain for Serbian-curriculum schools. An education officer in Gračanica/Graçanicë informed the OSCE field team that no cases of dropouts from the **Kosovo Croat** community have been recorded.

³² Based on monitoring by the OSCE Mission, August 2019.

³³ Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, *Statistical Notes 2019/2020 (2020)*.

³⁴ Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, *Statistical Notes 2023/2024*. (Accessed December 2023).

7. Access to justice

There are no Kosovo Croat community representatives employed in any of the non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK), and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, there are no Kosovo Croat lawyers licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

OSCE field monitors note that members of the [Kosovo Croat](#) community are generally unaware of services provided by the FLAA and VAAO. For example, most of the interlocutors approached by OSCE field teams in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality were unable to provide any information on behalf of the [Kosovo Croat](#) community as they themselves were unaware of the services offered by these institutions. In addition, most of the [Kosovo Croat](#) community members in Viti/Vitina are elderly persons whose direct communication and interaction with institutions is generally very limited. Children of community members who live outside Kosovo reportedly assist their family members in Kosovo with these institutional issues. Family members commonly hire private lawyers or receive services from the notary office or other institutions rather than approach the above-mentioned non-judicial institutions.

The [Kosovo Croat](#) community in Viti/Vitina municipality reportedly faces challenges when attempting to access services provided by the FLAA, OIK and VAAO. One representative from the Gjilan/Gnjilane regional OIK office visits the municipality once a month. The scheduled visit is posted either on the OIK's website or at the entrance of the municipality. However, [Kosovo Croats](#) who live in remote areas, including elderly persons, have no access to the internet and therefore are unable to obtain information about the schedule. In addition, public transport is unavailable, and most community members use private services for essential needs such as health checks or withdrawing pension funds. Accessibility issues were not reported in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality.

The regional OIK office in Gračanica/Graçanicë noted that members of non-majority communities occasionally experienced language barriers when asked to prepare documents in the Albanian language prior to proceeding with further actions.³⁵ The OIK has also received complaints about court personnel who can communicate only in the Albanian language.

³⁵ According to OSCE Mission field reporting.

Generally, **Kosovo Croat** community members are not aware of the Crime Victim's Compensation programme (CVC), despite the OIK, VAAO, FLA and KBA informing community members about their rights, remedies and benefits, including access to the CVC programme during their interaction with cases.

In October 2023, the Ombudsperson, together with his associates, in accordance with his mandate and responsibilities, visited the village of Janjevë/Janjevo in order to see the situation first hand and to discuss daily problems faced by the **Kosovo Croat** community there.

Every October, VAAO under the auspices of the Chief State Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes the "Crime Victims' Rights Week". However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year.

In 2023, FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), none of whom were members of the **Kosovo Croat** community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women)³⁶, involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, none of which came from the **Kosovo Croat** community. VAAO did not register any **Kosovo Croat** victims.

According to OSCE field reporting, **Kosovo Croats** lack trust in public institutions in general. Many complained that public institutions are apathetic about providing services, especially regarding property-related disputes involving **Kosovo Croat** community members.³⁷ Socio-economic factors also affect the community's access to justice, as they limit the ability to pay for court fees, municipal taxes, and transportation costs.

³⁶ See, OIK 2023 Annual Report, accessible at <https://oik-rks.org/2024/03/29/>

³⁷ According to OSCE Mission field reporting.

8. Language use and media

The mother tongue of the Kosovo Croat community is the Croatian language.³⁸ There are no significant impediments for this community to use this language in public spaces, government institutions, and shops, as well as to access municipal and public services.

Owing to the similarities between the Serbian and Croatian languages, the community uses the Serbian language when interacting with local authorities. At times community members experience difficulties relating to a lack of adequate timely translation and interpretation into the Serbian language in the two municipalities where most of this community resides.

The **Kosovo Croat** community has no access to Kosovo-based print and electronic media in the Croatian language. The community follows media in the Serbian language.

The Albanian and Serbian languages are official languages in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities. Municipal webpages and official social media accounts are increasingly used to convey information to the public, such as press releases, dates of events, and job vacancies. OSCE field teams have noted significant delays in updating municipal webpages and social media accounts in both official languages, up to one month in some cases, because of the excessive workload of municipal translators. Nevertheless, information relevant to communities and inclusion in social affairs, such as employment and job vacancies, is generally available and updated in both languages immediately. Municipal signs are partly displayed in both official languages.

The older generation is more likely to be bilingual; however, younger persons are more likely to speak only one of the official languages. The reliance on a single language by community members is a challenge, especially since civil servants are not always able to offer services in the Serbian language. This language limitation may affect community members' employment opportunities now and in the future. The younger generation increasingly tends to learn Albanian as a result of interactions with Kosovo Albanian peers at shared-premises schools.

³⁸ After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, four languages emerged from its former official language known as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian.

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

Kosovo Croats are Catholic Slavs who are said to have arrived in Kosovo during the 14th century. Religion is a crucial component of this community's cultural identity.

The **Kosovo Croat** community is actively engaged in the preservation of its cultural traditions, which have been safeguarded over centuries. For example, traditional techniques used by **Kosovo Croats** passed across generations are still used to produce goods in a number of workshops in Janjevë/Janjevo.

Cultural heritage sites of significance to the **Kosovo Croat** community are the Roman Catholic Church of the Black Madonna in Letnicë/Letnica and the 15th-century Church of Saint Nicholas in Janjevë/Janjevo. The church in Letnicë/Letnica is revered for the legacy of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who received her religious call there. A distinctive feature of the church is the 300-year-old statue of the Madonna made of blackened wood, which gives the church its name. Every 14 and 15 August, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, a procession is held in honour of the Black Madonna. Thousands participate in this pilgrimage, which includes **Kosovo Croats** returning from elsewhere as well as those still living in Kosovo, Kosovo Albanian Catholics, Orthodox-Christians, and Muslims. The celebration is a rare example of a cross-community religious celebration. Over two days, masses are held in the Croatian and Albanian languages.

The vernacular heritage of the village of Letnicë/Letnica carries considerable significance. In recognition of the village's cultural importance, the OSCE organized workshops there with students in 2018 and 2019 to learn about cultural preservation to protect local architecture and draft a development plan.³⁹

In Prishtinë/Priština region, the 15th-century Church of Saint Nicholas in Janjevë/Janjevo is also an important cultural and religious site for **Kosovo Croats**. It is here that the community gathers to celebrate the religious holiday of the "Summer Feast of Saint Nicholas" on 9 May every year.

³⁹ OSCE, *Heritage Lab Rediscovering the Heritage of Letnicë/Letnica: Development Workshop Report* (2020).

According to OSCE field monitors, [Kosovo Croats](#) are free to express their religious beliefs, with open access to cultural and religious heritage sites. OSCE field teams reported only two notable security incidents over the considered period of time. On 4 February 2018, unknown persons forcibly opened the door of the Roman Catholic Church in the village of Letnicë/Letnica and stole approximately 1,000 euros from two charity boxes at the church altar. Also, in May 2018, the 2.5-meter-tall cross located on the hills of Janjevë/Janjevo was knocked down. Reportedly, the incident was an accident caused by a resident working with his tractor. The Roman Catholic community re-erected the cross within a month.

10. Property rights

As with other communities in Kosovo, Kosovo Croats face challenges to their property rights, such as illegal occupation and lack of registered property titles due to previous informal transactions.

For the mostly elderly [Kosovo Croat](#) community, undertaking complex legal and administrative procedures to change property titles in the cadastral records can be daunting.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, the main concern of the [Kosovo Croat](#) community is unclear property ownership due to older informal transactions in which property transfers were not officially registered. This problem is specifically linked to those with family members or other relatives who have moved to Croatia, as property titles in the cadastral records indicate the previous formal owners, and the confusion often delays or thwarts inheritance procedures.

The OSCE has supported the [Kosovo Croat](#) community members in Lipjan/Lipljan and Viti/Vitina municipalities to discuss challenges related to inheritance procedures and property registration.

11. Return and reintegration

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that between 2010 and 2023, four individuals from the Kosovo Croat community returned to Kosovo.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Data provided by the UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission in Prishtinë/Priština, as of December 2023.

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj

Community Profile

Kosovo Egyptian



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Egyptian Community Profile

The Kosovo Egyptian community¹ is the fourth-smallest community in Kosovo,² representing 0.66 per cent of the population.³

Kosovo Egyptians live predominantly in the west of Kosovo. Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, where the community represents around 5.4 per cent of the municipal population,⁴ has the highest number of Kosovo Egyptian residents. Kosovo Egyptians also reside in Pejë/Peć municipality (nearly 2.8 per cent of the municipal population),⁵ Istog/Istok (nearly 3.8 per cent),⁶ Klinë/Klina (nearly 2.4 per cent,⁷ Deçan/Dečani (about 390 residents), Rahovec/Orahovac (about 300), and in Suharekë/Suva Reka (ten).⁸ Elsewhere in Kosovo, members of the Kosovo Egyptian community reside in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipality (around 1,500), Obiliq/Obilić (approximately 35 to 40), Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South (two families with 12 members in Adem Voca neighborhood, and a family with five members in 2 Korriku/Sitničko Naselje), Podujevë/Podujevo (two families with 11 members), and in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality (22).⁹

1 Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptians identify themselves as persons belonging to three distinct communities and as such are recognized by the Kosovo legislative framework, Kosovo institutions, and international organizations. The OSCE Mission fully recognizes the existence of three distinct communities and has in this publication sought to highlight their distinctive characteristics and experiences. However, due to the lack of reliable disaggregated data for the communities in some municipalities, parts of this profile include figures that represent Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptians in aggregate.

2 Only the Kosovo Gorani, Kosovo Montenegrin, and Kosovo Croat communities are smaller.

3 OSCE, *Overview of the Ashkali, Roma and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (January 2020), p. 4.

4 About 5,120 community members.

5 About 2,700 community members.

6 About 1,545 community members.

7 About 1,189 community members.

8 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018* (2019).

9 Municipal Officer for Communities and Returns.

Key facts and issues

- Incidents against Kosovo Egyptian community members include harassment and discrimination; most cases involve physical assaults.
- The Kosovo Egyptian community is represented by one minister in the Government formed in 2021. One of the 120 Assembly members is Kosovo Egyptian.
- The Kosovo Egyptian community is under-represented in the civil service at all government levels.
- The community suffers from a generally poor socio-economic situation and high unemployment rates.
- Kosovo Egyptian community members in Gjakovë/Đakovica are exposed to pollution, given the lack of a sewage system and their proximity to the municipal landfill.
- The community has a higher vulnerability to exclusion from social assistance schemes.
- The mother tongue of the Kosovo Egyptian community is Albanian. Community members use Albanian in both public and private settings.
- Kosovo Egyptian students generally attend Kosovo-curriculum schools.
- Low-income levels and limited employment opportunities are the major issues that Kosovo Egyptian returnees face upon return to Kosovo.

1. Security and safety

The security situation of the Kosovo Egyptian community has gradually improved over time. However, a single-year increase in the number of incidents involving this community was observed in 2019.¹⁰

If counted together, the number of incidents involving the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities is the second highest, after the Kosovo Serb community.

The Kosovo Egyptian community is affected by a high number of thefts/burglaries¹¹ and other serious incidents, many involving physical assault against community members.¹² Other incidents involved cases of arson,¹³ harassment and rape.¹⁴ Kosovo Egyptian returnees have also been victims in security incidents.¹⁵

In 2023, ten Kosovo Egyptian community members (including one woman) were employed by the Kosovo Police, serving in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Pejë/Peć, Istog/Istok, Kline/Klina, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Rahovec/Orahovac and Suhareke/Suva Reka.

There are no members of Kosovo Egyptian community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSC).

¹⁰ According to OSCE internal monitoring, 25 incidents took place in 2013, 26 in 2014, 21 in 2015, 15 in 2016, seven in 2017, eight in 2018, 28 in 2019, 13 in 2020, 12 in 2021, eight in 2022, and six in 2023.

¹¹ In April 2020, a Kosovo Egyptian man reported the theft of livestock from his stable. In September 2020, unknown person/s stole livestock from the stable of a Kosovo Egyptian. Police initiated investigations in both cases. In April 2021, an unknown individual broke into an elderly Kosovo Egyptian woman's house, stole jewellery and assaulted her, causing minor injuries.

¹² In May 2019, in Treboviq/Trebović village in Pejë/Peć, a Kosovo Albanian man shot at a Kosovo Egyptian woman and a man, wounding both. In August 2019, in Pejë/Peć town, two Kosovo Albanian male suspects were arrested after physically assaulting a Kosovo Egyptian man. In August 2019, a Kosovo Albanian man physically assaulted a seven-year-old Kosovo Egyptian girl in a marketplace in the village of Gurakoc/Đurakovac. The victim suffered injuries and was sent to the hospital for treatment. In November 2019, in Gorazhdec/Gorazhdec village in Pejë/Peć, a Kosovo Albanian man was arrested for deliberately hitting a Kosovo Egyptian man with his car. In March 2022, in Gjakovë/Đakovica, three Kosovo Albanian male suspects (father and two minor sons) were arrested after they physically assaulted a Kosovo Egyptian man.

¹³ Fire incidents affecting Kosovo Egyptians' properties were reported in December 2015 in Zallq/Zaç village, Istog/Istok municipality; in January 2019 in Dobrushë/Dobruša village, Istog/Istok; in May 2019 in Pejë/Peć town; and in March and December 2019, and March 2020, in the Ali Ibra settlement in Gjakovë/Đakovica town. In October 2020, in Banjë/Banja village, Istog/Istok municipality, a Kosovo Egyptian reported that his vehicle was set on fire, which the Kosovo Police classified as arson.

¹⁴ In May 2017, a Kosovo Egyptian woman who worked in the fire brigade in Gjakovë/Đakovica town reported that she was verbally harassed at her workplace by a Kosovo Albanian woman. The suspect was arrested on suspicion that she had repeatedly offended the victim on racial and ethnic grounds and was fired. On 5 June 2019, the defendants reached an agreement and the indictment was dismissed at the Basic Prosecution in Gjakovë/Đakovica. In August 2018, in Gjakovë/Đakovica, a Kosovo Egyptian police officer reported that a Kosovo Albanian man posted inappropriate comments on Facebook about the community and the case was classified as "incitement of national, racial, religious or ethnic hatred, discord or intolerance". In November 2021, in Gorazhdec/Gorazhdevac, Pejë/Peć municipality, a Kosovo Egyptian woman was harassed by a Kosovo Albanian man in the presence of the Kosovo Police. In September 2022, a Kosovo Albanian man was arrested under the suspicion of physical violence and attempted rape of a Kosovo Egyptian minor. In August 2023, in Gjakovë/Đakovica, while driving his vehicle, a Kosovo Albanian suspect harassed several times a Kosovo Egyptian woman on a street.

¹⁵ In January, March, and May 2015, in the Qungur/Ćungur returnee settlement in Nakëll/Naklo village, Pejë/Peć municipality, unknown persons frequently threw stones at several houses belonging to Kosovo Egyptian returnee families who had returned in November 2014. In March 2023, unknown perpetrator(s) burglarized five uninhabited houses belonging to Kosovo Egyptian returnee families in Klinafç/Klinavac village, Klinë/Klina municipality.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Egyptian community is represented by one minister in the Government formed in 2021: Elbert Krasniqi from the New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK) is the Minister of Local Government Administration. Fridon Lala (IRDK) currently represents the community in the Assembly. In the previous mandate, the community was represented by Veton Berisha from the Egyptian Liberal Party (PLE) and Elbert Krasniqi.¹⁶

A woman and a man currently hold the two reserved seats for the community in the Consultative Council for Communities. In addition, a member of the Central Election Commission is Kosovo Egyptian.

As of 2017, the Kosovo Egyptian community was under-represented in the government-level civil service, constituting only 0.03 per cent of the total. It was under-represented also in the municipal civil service in all seven municipalities where the majority of community members resided according to the 2011 census: Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Pejë/Peć, Klinë/Klina, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Deçan/Dečani, and Rahovec/Orahovac.¹⁷

Nine men and six women represent the Kosovo Egyptian community in 13 communities committees (CCs) throughout Kosovo.¹⁸ The community is not represented in the CCs of eight municipalities where community members reside in smaller numbers, according to the 2011 census.¹⁹ In addition, Kosovo Egyptians hold the CC chairperson position in four municipalities: Deçan/Dečani, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, and Pejë/Peć (woman).

¹⁶ The community has two assembly members based on the Constitutional provision that guarantees a fourth seat to the party that obtains the fourth-highest number of votes among parties representing Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Egyptian communities. Several times previously, a representative of the Kosovo Ashkali community held the fourth seat.

¹⁷ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017).

¹⁸ In Deçan/Dečane, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

¹⁹ In Dragash/Dragaš, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Glogoc/Glogovac, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Lipjan/Lipljan, Prishtinë/Priština, Skënderaj/Srbica, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

Kosovo Egyptian men hold the position of deputy mayor for communities (DMC) in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Istog/Istok.²⁰ The deputy chairperson of the municipal assembly in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje is also a Kosovo Egyptian man.

In Gjakovë/Đakovica and Rahovec/Orahovac municipalities, the heads of the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MOCRs) are Kosovo Egyptian community members (both men). Kosovo Egyptians are represented in the MOCRs in Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Pejë/Peć and Rahovec/Orahovac municipalities.²¹

There are eight members of the Kosovo Egyptian community in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSCs) in the following municipalities: a woman in each of Podujevë/Podujevo, Klinë/Klina, and Pejë/Peć and a man in each of Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Rahovec/Orahovac and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

Some of the prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) led by Kosovo Egyptians and/or working on issues affecting the community, include "Roma Versitas Kosovo"; "Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians" (VoRAE); "Network of Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations" (RROGRAEK); "Nevo Koncepti" (New Concept); "Sakuntala"; "Iniciativa 6" (Initiative 6); "Durmish Aslano"; "Rromani Baxt" (Romani Fortune); "Perparimi i Komuniteteve" (Advancing Communities); "Vizioni 02" (Vision 02); "Prosperiteti" (Prosperity); "Syri i Vizionit" (Eye of Vision); "Nisma për Paqe dhe Unitet" (NPU) (Initiative for Peace and Unity); "Era në Dukagjin" (Wind in Dukagjin); "Arena"; "Iniciativa për Veprim" (Initiative for Action); "Roma in Action"; and "Ec Vetë" (Walk alone); as well as the "Ideas Partnership", "Advancing Together", "Balkan Sunflowers", and "Bethany Christian Services". In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South and Podujevë/Podujevo, NGO "Përparimi Rinor i Ashkalinjëve të Mitrovicës" (PRAM) (Youth Progress of Mitrovica Ashkalis), "Zëri i Rinisë Rome dhe Ashkali të Mitrovicës" (ZRRAM) (The Voice of the Roma and Ashkali Youth of Mitrovica (PRAM)), and NGO "Qendrimi" (Persistence) represent the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities.

20 According to the 2011 census, Kosovo Ashkali represent the largest non-majority community in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and based on the applicable legal framework in force at the time of the appointment, this community should hold the position of DMC. However, in 2022, the Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipal assembly appointed a Kosovo Egyptian, Suhat Ademi (Coalition Egyptian-Ashkali Initiative for Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, IFKEA), as DMC. The Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) objected, leading to a lawsuit against the municipal assembly. The Court later ruled against the MLGA's objection. Of note, the new Administrative Instruction for the procedure of appointing DMCs in municipalities adopted in December 2023 (AI No.03/2023) removed the requirement for the deputy mayor to be from the largest non-majority community residing in the municipality.

21 Seven members, including one woman (in Gjakovë/Đakovica).

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The poor socio-economic situation of the Kosovo Egyptian community, as for the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali communities, is due to high unemployment and low-income rates.

Because of limited education and/or vocational training, Kosovo Egyptians often lack certain qualifications and skills, which in turn limits access to job opportunities and amplifies socio-economic exclusion.

In 2018, approximately 95,890 persons registered as unemployed in Kosovo, of those 0.9 per cent belonged to the Kosovo Egyptian community.²² In addition, nearly 250 Kosovo Egyptians were registered as active job seekers at the end of 2018. A high number of Kosovo Egyptians aged between 18 and 24 were qualified as "not in education, employment, or training (NEET)" in 2018. Kosovo Egyptians, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Ashkali together constituted 78 per cent of young persons considered NEET, with young women from the three communities being disproportionately represented (approximately 88 per cent were considered NEET). Young women's employment rate was only four per cent. Perhaps as a reflection in part of the low economic status, only 37 per cent of women from the three communities held a positive perception about their lives, compared to 51 per cent of women from other communities in Kosovo.²³

Kosovo Egyptians, especially women, are poorly represented in the civil service, both at governmental and municipal level.²⁴ Most community members who work in the public sector are employed in the municipalities of Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć and Klinë/Klina. Rahovec/Orahovac, Deçan/Dečani and Prizren municipalities each have only one community member employed in the municipal service. One community member works in the public sector in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South as security officer/handyman and one is the municipal director for communities in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality. The most common positions held by Kosovo Egyptians are in the municipal administration, healthcare, and education. Fewer work in maintenance and some are members of the Kosovo Security Force and Kosovo Police.

²² Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Labour and Employment, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 19.

²³ International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Youth on Decent Work Opportunities and Challenges in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.

²⁴ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo: Follow-Up Report* (2017), p. 21.

In the private sector, Kosovo Egyptians generally hold temporary low-skilled jobs, such as seasonal construction or agricultural work, woodcutting, as well as collection of scrap metal and recyclable materials.²⁵ Some community members own small private or family businesses in traditional crafts, such as blacksmith, carpentry, locksmith, welding, tailoring, shoemaking, hairdressing, and plumbing. Others work in auto repair and various trade shops, or perform traditional music.

Many Kosovo Egyptians in Pejë/Peć region are reported to rely on social assistance, as the unemployment rate is very high. In Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, the opening of the "Comodita" factory has helped to employ a number of community members.

In Prizren municipality, according to the CC representative, the unemployment rate for the Kosovo Egyptian community is at 95 per cent, affecting both men and women of all ages. There are five active job seekers registered in Prizren, including one woman. According to the CC representative, there are many members of the Kosovo Egyptian community with university degrees, and yet unemployed. The situation is similar in Rahovec/Orahovac municipality. Most of the nearly 300 community members rely on social assistance, three are registered as active job seekers and only one is employed in the municipality.

Child labour is particularly prevalent among children from Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities (about 17 per cent compared to 11 per cent Kosovo wide).²⁶ Accurate, community disaggregated data is not available. Child labour is closely linked to levels of family poverty, limited attainment of education, as well as lack of parental care and supervision.²⁷ There is a gender discrepancy, since more boys are involved in child labour than girls.²⁸ Children collect cans from litterbins, clean car window screens, sell items on the streets and in cafes, or beg for money.

Thirteen per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian children – compared to Kosovo-wide (seven per cent) – are working in hazardous conditions, including physical work in the fields, cutting trees, operating agricultural machinery, spraying with pesticides, harvesting, threshing, or working in slaughterhouses and in mining (in tight underground spaces without adequate ventilation).²⁹ Overall, child labour undermines access to education and has a negative impact on its quality, limiting opportunities and contributing to a persistent chain of social exclusion.

There are no income-generation projects that specifically target the Kosovo Egyptian community. However, some community members benefit from international donor-funded income-generation programmes for non-majority communities. For example, the European Union (EU) Community Stabilization Programme targets both start-ups

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian youth on decent work opportunities and challenges in Kosovo* (2018) p. 24.

²⁷ Office of Good Governance, *Mapping and assessment of child protection system* (2012), p. 25; UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (2017), p. 89.

²⁸ See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian youth on decent work opportunities and challenges in Kosovo* (2018) p. 23-24.

²⁹ See UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation*, p. 91; International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma*, p. 24; The World Bank, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013-14*, p. 128.

and existing businesses.³⁰ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported Kosovo Egyptian returnee families with a number of projects. The German NGO HELP has provided the community with tools and equipment for small businesses.

Kosovo Egyptians, together with Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali, are believed to form the second largest group of asylum seekers from Kosovo in EU countries. Many Kosovo Egyptians identify poverty, lack of social welfare and healthcare coverage, as well as lack of employment opportunities, as their primary reasons for migration.³¹ There is also seasonal migration to seek work in both the EU and neighbouring countries, such as Albania, North Macedonia, or Montenegro.

In 2022, the Kosovo government established a platform for anti-discrimination for members of the three communities to enable them to report incidents of discrimination based on ethnicity. In 2023, the Government created an inter-institutional team for the promotion of the employment of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to increase employment of the three communities in the civil service and other employment opportunities.

³⁰ European Union, "EU – Community Stabilization Programme" (6 May 2020). (Accessed December 2023). It has supported about 900 new and existing micro-enterprises and contributes to the implementation of individual and community development projects. The Programme, which is now in its fourth phase, is managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo in partnership with the Ministry for Communities and Return and implemented by IOM.

³¹ OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report* (2015), p.26.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

The Kosovo Egyptian community has inconsistent access to public utilities. Many low-income community members are not connected to municipal sewerage systems, and waste collection is problematic.

A significant number of Kosovo Egyptians in the Pejë/Peć region live in returnee settlements with inadequate, often makeshift housing and with aging and over-capacity infrastructure. High levels of pollution, as well as inadequate waste management and sewage systems are recurrent issues. Sporadic interruptions in water and electricity supply are reported in some areas, especially during specific periods of the year.

In Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, the overall status of infrastructure in the municipality is assessed as "good",³² however, the majority of Kosovo Egyptian-inhabited areas lack functional street lights and sewage systems. This was a longstanding issue especially in the Ali Ibra neighbourhood on the outskirts of Gjakovë/Đakovica town, where 170 families live (165 Kosovo Egyptian and five Kosovo Roma). The situation improved in 2022, when the main roads were paved, a sewage system was constructed and the landfill next to it was cleaned up. A waste transfer station funded by the EU significantly improved the living conditions of the community. Additional roads in the neighbourhood were paved in 2023. During 2022 and 2023, infrastructure improvements were made in other areas in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality where the community resides. Houses were renovated or constructed and roads were paved in Skivjan/Skivjane village, in Piskotë/Piskote, as well as in Brekoc/Brekovac, Mahalla e Sefes and Mehmet Hyseni neighbourhoods.³³

In Pejë/Peć municipality, the Kosovo Egyptian community enjoys full access to infrastructure and public utilities. Between 2021 and 2023, the municipality improved the sewage system and water supply in the town's 7 Shtatori/7 Septembar neighbourhood, paved the main and secondary roads, and installed street lights. In Qungur/Ćungur village, the longstanding issues with septic tanks were resolved in 2023 and there have been no reported issues since.

³² OSCE, *Municipal Profile 2018: Gjakovë/Đakovica* (2018).

³³ To note, there are no disaggregated data for these beneficiaries, so there is no final information if they belong to Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma or Kosovo Egyptian communities.

In Istog/Istok municipality, between 2015 and 2020, the MOCR supported paving of roads in several villages inhabited by the community: Zallq/Žač, Kosh/Koš, Veriq/Verić, Gjurakoc/Đurakovac, and Dragolevc/Dragoljevac. Between 2021 and 2023, roads were gravelled in Serbobran/Srbobrane village and paved in Llukafci i Thatë/Suvi Lukavac, Banjë/Banja, Gurakoc/Đurakovac, Zallq/Žač and Drejë/Drenje. Sewage systems were constructed in Dragolevc/Dragoljevac in 2021 and in Dubravë/Dubrava, Istog i poshtem/Donji Istok, and Banjë/Banja in 2023.

In Klinë/Klina, the municipality is currently supporting infrastructure improvement in areas inhabited by Kosovo Egyptians, particularly in road construction and public utilities. However, the need for road construction remains in parts of Klinafci/Klinavac and Dresnik/Drnsnik villages.³⁴ About ten Kosovo Egyptian families are in urgent need of housing in several villages, and approximately 40 families require assistance with house repair or reconstruction.

In Deçan/Dečani, the main challenge is the community's lack of access to a sewage system and lack of street lights. In September 2020, the mayor and Deputy Minister of Infrastructure announced the construction of a sewage system and road paving in Pemishtë/Pemište neighbourhood in Baballoq/Babaloć village and in Gramaçel/Gramočelj village, mainly inhabited by Kosovo Egyptian and Kosovo Roma. This project was completed in 2023.

In Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Prishtinë/Priština region, four houses have been constructed for Kosovo Egyptian families since 2018, as part of the EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo project. In Lipjan/Lipljan, the majority of houses in urbanized neighbourhoods have no construction permit and the land plots do not belong to the residents of those houses.

³⁴ Road construction started in December 2023.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

Most Kosovo Egyptian community members benefit from social assistance provided by the Government, and a few receive social assistance from Belgrade-run institutions.³⁵ In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, some community members reported that they benefit from both systems.

The community does not face significant issues in accessing social assistance schemes, aside from a few legislative hindrances. Current Kosovo social welfare legislation narrowly defines “families who live in a single household”. This adversely impacted multi-generational Kosovo Egyptian families, who have been removed from the beneficiary list. Information on social assistance specific to the Kosovo Egyptian community is limited, as some municipalities group the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities together. Community disaggregated data indicating the number of Kosovo Egyptians who receive a pension and/or disability allowance are not available.

The Kosovo Egyptian community uses Kosovo healthcare facilities and shares similar concerns as the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali communities. Community members' health is significantly affected by poor living conditions and lack of sanitation, basic hygiene, and immunization, as well as limited use of preventative healthcare services.³⁶ The infant mortality rate among these three communities is three times higher than the Kosovo average.³⁷

Although healthcare services are generally available for this community, including free reproductive healthcare for women in the majority of municipalities,³⁸ their use is hindered by several factors, such as lack of education, economic hardship, and distance from medical facilities and pharmacies.³⁹ In addition, Kosovo Egyptian community members are more vulnerable to discrimination in the delivery of healthcare services, especially those concerning women's reproductive health.⁴⁰

35 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (9 January 2020), pp. 4–5.

36 Civil Rights Defenders, *Wall of Anti-Gypsyism: Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.; Office of Good Governance, *Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017–2021*, p. 26.

37 Office of Good Governance, *Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017–2021* (April 2017), p. 27.

38 Free reproductive healthcare services are provided in the following municipalities: Deçan/Dečane, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Lipjan/Lipljan, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

39 Kosovo Women's Network, *Access to Healthcare in Kosovo* (2016), p. 51; KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 45; KOSANA, *Policy Brief 4: Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Access to and Use of Health Care Services* (November 2015), p. 3.

40 KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 46.

In Ferizaj/Uroševac, the overall health situation of Kosovo Egyptians has significantly improved. From 2021 to 2023, several health information campaigns were organised in the settlements mainly inhabited by the Kosovo Egyptian community, to raise awareness of the importance of immunisation in preventing diseases, including by the “Balkan Sunflowers” NGO, supported by UNICEF.⁴¹ Vaccination services are regularly provided by the immunization team, five days a week, in the health centres located in the settlements inhabited by the Kosovo Egyptian community.⁴² In Ferizaj/Uroševac, for example, the rate of vaccinated children is almost the same as for the majority community.

Barriers to access healthcare services in Ferizaj/Uroševac are low, as local health centres are located in the settlements inhabited by the Kosovo Egyptian community and provide services free of charge without discrimination.⁴³ According to health officials, the infant mortality rate within the Kosovo Egyptian community in Ferizaj/Uroševac has decreased throughout the reporting period.

In 2022, the OSCE implemented a campaign to encourage women from non-majority communities to undergo mammogram check-ups in Ferizaj/Uroševac and Gjilan/Gnjilane municipalities, as well as in Gjakovë/Đakovica and Pejë/Peć towns. In 2023, the OSCE continued with similar presentations for community members in Istog/Istok municipality. In addition, NGOs and local healthcare centres have been implementing some health awareness campaigns.⁴⁴ Between 2020 and 2022, civil society and the Ministry of Health delivered a number of information sessions in community neighbourhoods in Gjakovë/Đakovica on diabetes, hypertension, vaccination, and healthcare for pregnant women and children. Free mammograms devoted to early detection and prevention of breast cancer were also organized in Prizren region in areas inhabited by Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities.

According to reports in the last two years, in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, an estimated 50 per cent of the community's members live on social aid, with generally good access to healthcare services.

Lack of personal documentation remains a challenge for the Kosovo Egyptian community. Some lack of knowledge in the community about civil registration procedures hampers birth registrations.⁴⁵ Kosovo institutions have implemented several measures to increase civil registration in the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities, including by introducing free registration days.⁴⁶

In total, 93 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian children under the age of five have been registered. Accurate community disaggregated data on the number of unregistered community members are not available.

41 NGO BRAN.

42 Chief of Immunisation Unit, Ferizaj/Uroševac.

43 NGO BRAN.

44 NGO BRAN.

45 World Bank, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2013–2014* (2016), p. 126–127.

46 OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report, Fourth Edition* (2015), pp. 25–26; Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, *Fourth Opinion on Kosovo* (2017), §78, p. 30.

Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, for example, provides free registration for Kosovo Egyptian community members and regularly implements measures to increase civil registration, at no cost.⁴⁷ All births of Kosovo Egyptian babies are registered, as are all children under the age of five from the community.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ MOCR.

⁴⁸ MOCR.

6. Access to education

Kosovo Egyptian students receive education in the Albanian language under the Kosovo curriculum. Exceptions are in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, where some parents enrol their children in Serbian-curriculum schools, and in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Prizren, where some parents enrol their children to study in the Turkish or Bosnian languages under the Kosovo curriculum.

Among the most complex challenges Kosovo Egyptian students face in accessing education is their families' generally low socio-economic status. Many Egyptian families can rarely afford basic school textbooks and supplies, contributing to higher numbers of drop outs and the frequent choice of keeping only boys in school.

Given their limited means, Kosovo Egyptian students often rely on the support and assistance of learning centres throughout their education. Learning Centres provide complementary education to disadvantaged children who suffer from the consequences of socio-economic exclusion. They had primarily been dependent on donor support. However, a 2018 administrative instruction aimed at regulating the centres, also provides for funding from the central and local budgets. Yet, delays in fulfilment of obligations by government and municipal institutions, coupled with a lack of clarity over the extent of these funding obligations, have left the learning centres with funding shortages, and many have been forced to close.⁴⁹

Accurate statistical data disaggregated by ethnicity, age, or even gender for students of the Kosovo Egyptian community is not always available at the municipal level. In most cases, data destined for monitoring, policy planning, and interventions are collected and presented jointly for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities. Therefore, substantive research on the Kosovo Egyptian community specifically is challenging. While there are similarities among the three communities, each has its specificities and challenges, requiring different policy approaches and solutions.

Another challenge in some municipalities relates to transportation of students to schools. In the Ali Ibra neighbourhood in Gjakovë/Đakovica, parents had requested transportation for students due to traffic safety concerns. After initially rejecting the request, as students lived within the legal radius excluding them from transport provision, the municipality opened a tender for a transport company, but with no success.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ For more on Learning Centres, see OSCE Report *Overview of Learning Centres in Kosovo and the Implementation of Administrative Instruction 19/201* (2023).

⁵⁰ Due to the lack of profit to be made.

In Serbobran/Srbobran village, in Istog/Istok, although students lived less than four kilometres from the school, the municipality agreed to provide transport help, to encourage regular attendance and prevent school dropouts.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Kosovo Egyptian students who attend Serbian-curriculum schools in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North face challenges in physically accessing the schools, as the foot bridge over the river Ibër/Ibar that connects the two municipalities no longer exists, and crossing the main bridge daily is perceived by the community as a potential security risk for children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kosovo Egyptian, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Ashkali students faced significantly more issues than other communities in accessing the online learning process, owing to inadequate IT tools and internet connection.

Although school dropout rates have decreased notably in recent years, it is still a recurrent issue among Kosovo Egyptian students. In general, the number of Kosovo Egyptian students in secondary schools is significantly smaller than in primary schools, and even smaller at university level. Kosovo Egyptian girls are disproportionately impacted: for example, the number of Kosovo Egyptian girls in upper-secondary schools is much smaller than the number of boys. Low school attendance rates are a result of the poor socio-economic situation of the majority of Kosovo Egyptian families, and migration.

Girls and women from the Kosovo Egyptian, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Ashkali communities face additional challenges in accessing education due to childbirth, forced marriages, and the traditional gender roles in these communities.⁵¹ Overall, 13.7 per cent of girls in these communities do not proceed from lower- to upper-secondary education, compared to 11.3 per cent of boys from these communities. In addition, four per cent of girls do not proceed from primary to lower-secondary education, compared to 6.1 per cent of boys from the same community.⁵² Child marriage is one of the factors contributing to girls dropping out of school.⁵³ However, it is difficult to draw a direct link between child marriage and lower education levels among girls from the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities. The lack of accurate and comparable community-disaggregated data on the number of children married before age 18 represents a significant challenge in measuring the adverse effect of child marriages on girls' education, for all communities.

51 *Child marriage* and *early marriage* are overlapping terms. Under the Child Protection Law in Kosovo, a "child" is considered "any human being under the age of eighteen (18)". Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection, Article 3. Legally, "child marriage" and "early marriage" are considered the same: marriage of a child under age 18. *Forced marriage* is a marriage in which one or both spouses, regardless of age, did not consent. In Kosovo Family Law, "a person who has not reached the age of eighteen shall not enter into wedlock" (Article 16), except for justifiable reasons (Article 16b). Article 18 states that a "marriage shall not be valid when the will has been obtained under coercion, threat or by mistake or any other lack of free will of the future spouses". Law No. 2004/32 Family Law (2006) and Law No. 06/L-077 on Amending and Supplementing the Family Law No. 2004/32.

52 UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (2017), Table 16: Pathway Analysis in Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities by Gender; p. 79.

53 UNFPA, *Child Marriage in Kosovo (Overview)*, (2014).

In late 2023, the Government established an inter-institutional working group for the prevention and reporting of early marriages in the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities.

The Kosovo curriculum does not provide any community-specific subjects for Kosovo Egyptian students to learn about their identity and culture.

To support students from the community in continuing their studies, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), with the aid of donors, provides 500 scholarships for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian students each year for secondary education.⁵⁴ According to the statistics from MESTI, 1,279 Kosovo Egyptians enrolled in pre-university education for the 2023–2024 academic year.⁵⁵

In August 2023, MESTI announced that parents were requested to purchase school textbooks for grades 1 to 5, and would then be reimbursed based on an online application. The decision triggered several concerns, in particular for the most vulnerable communities and families in poor economic conditions. Families had to rely on NGO support to access the subsidies, as some community members were without bank accounts or have low computer literacy.

Kosovo Egyptians choose university education in the Albanian language in public universities in Prishtinë/Priština, Pejë/Peć, and Prizren.⁵⁶ Public universities have reserved places for non-Kosovo Albanian students, including Kosovo Egyptians.

University students from the Kosovo Egyptian community (as well as the Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali communities) have been supported by international donor community funding, in particular by the NGOs “Roma Versitas”, “VORAE”, and the Roma Education Fund. A few scholarships for university students are available also from MESTI. Generally, municipalities do not offer or fund scholarships that specifically target Kosovo Egyptian university students, yet a few municipalities do offer scholarships for students from specific communities, including Kosovo Egyptians. However, there are no data available on the number of scholarship beneficiaries from the Kosovo Egyptian community. According to the MOCR in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, no Kosovo Egyptian students had received a scholarship or other affirmative measures in recent years. Reportedly, students from the community generally do not apply for scholarships or fail to meet the criteria, leading to rejection.

Although instances of harassment and discrimination against Kosovo Egyptian students have been reported in the past, no issues have been observed recently. Kosovo Egyptian students generally interact more frequently with Albanian-speaking students than with Serbian-speaking students, mainly owing to the shared language.

⁵⁴ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/en/ministry-of-education-committed-to-support-students-of-the-roma-egyptian-ashkali-communities/>

⁵⁵ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *Statistical Notes 2023/24: Data on Pre-University Education*.

⁵⁶ There are seven public universities in Kosovo with study programmes in the Albanian language: in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština, and Prizren.

7. Access to justice

There is one Kosovo Egyptian community representative (man) employed in the Ombudsperson's Institution (OIK), but none in any of the other non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA) and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, there are no Kosovo Egyptian lawyers licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

The Kosovo Egyptian community generally enjoys formal access to the justice system. However, there is a general lack of knowledge in the community about its rights or legal procedures and the possibility of free legal assistance. Poverty is the main impediment to accessing the legal system, as court fees, legal costs, and even transportation can pose a considerable financial burden.

OSCE field monitoring reports that members of the Kosovo Egyptian community in general, and in particular families living in rural areas, are to some extent aware of the services provided by the FLAA, OIK, and VAAO. Community members most aware of these services are those who work in or engage with municipal institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, as well as students. Awareness-raising campaigns that target the wider community, particularly families living in rural areas, could be effective; an example is efforts to increase the visibility of the FLAA.

In 2023, with the support of USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages, and in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the Albanian and Serbian official languages. Furthermore, representatives of these institutions take part in various awareness-raising activities organized by different actors.

Since October 2021, the OIK has been leading the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson and civil society organizations (CSOs) that gather different CSOs, including the ones representing the Kosovo Egyptian community.⁵⁷ In March 2023, together with the NGO "ROMTEGRA", the Ombudsperson visited several Kosovo Egyptian families in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica with the aim to inform and discuss their challenges and concerns.

⁵⁷ The aim of the Forum is to create a common platform for cooperation between the OIK and CSOs, for the advancement of protection of human rights, for the identification of challenges and violations of fundamental rights and freedoms and the development of joint activities on their promotion and protection.

In cooperation with the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North, the Ombudsperson met with CSOs in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Pejë/Peć and held roundtables (organized by ACDC) about the concerns of communities regarding the respect, protection and promotion of their rights.⁵⁸

In 2023, the OIK published an ex-officio report regarding the lack of suitable living conditions for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities returned to Obiliq from North Macedonia.⁵⁹

Every October, VAAO under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week". However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year. Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) programme.

In 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), including 156 members of the Kosovo Egyptian community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),⁶⁰ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, seven were filed by Kosovo Egyptian community members. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, 80 relating to Kosovo Egyptians and 53 to Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities (not every region breaks these figures down by individual community). The majority of victims were women.

Among the Kosovo Egyptian community, language is not perceived as a barrier in accessing legal institutions, since they are fluent in Albanian, while many are also fluent in the Turkish and/or Serbian language (mainly those residing in Prizren municipality, especially the older generations).

⁵⁸ For more information please see: <https://oik-rks.org/en/2023/12/05/the-ombudsperson-met-representatives-of-civil-society-organizations-from-the-region-of-peja/> (Accessed December 2023).

⁵⁹ Ombudsperson Institution, *Lack of suitable living conditions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities returned to Obiliq, from Republic of North Macedonia* (2018).

⁶⁰ See, Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2023*.

8. Language use and media

The mother tongue of the Kosovo Egyptian community is the Albanian language. There are no significant impediments for this community to use this language in public spaces or government institutions, as well as to access municipal and public services.

The Kosovo Egyptian community receives public services and information in the Albanian language. Community members have access to print and electronic media in Albanian. Moreover, there is a short programme in the Albanian language dedicated to the Kosovo Egyptian community that airs on the public broadcaster RTK1. The Kosovo Egyptian community also has access to the NGO Radio Prosperiteti based in Gjakovë/Dakovica.⁶¹

⁶¹ The information can be accessed at their social media link: <https://www.facebook.com/Radio.Prosperteti/> (Accessed December 2023).

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Egyptian community is generally free to express its cultural identity, religious beliefs, and customs. This community is predominantly Sunni Muslim, although in Gjakovë/Đakovica and Pejë/Peć municipalities, those who follow Sufi Islam and some Protestants are also present.

Kosovo Egyptians often participate in religious ceremonies in Sunni mosques and Protestant Evangelical churches managed by other communities.

The Kosovo Egyptian community celebrates the "International Day of Balkan Egyptians" on 24 June in memory of the first assembly of Balkan Egyptians held in Ohrid, North Macedonia, in 1970. Kosovo Egyptian Muslims celebrate the religious holidays of Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha, Nowruz, and Ashura, whereas those with Protestant Evangelical background celebrate Christmas, Easter, and Reformation Day. Between 6 and 15 May, the Kosovo Egyptian community celebrates the Feast of Saint George, which is combined with two other traditional holidays that mark the end of winter and the official start of summer.

Religious and cultural sites are shared with other communities. In Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, for example, a Sufi *tekke* and Sunni Mosque are managed by Kosovo Egyptian community religious leaders, but members of other communities also attend. In 2019, a mosque was erected in the Pemishtë/Pemište neighbourhood of Baballoq/Babaloć village in Deçan/Dečani, with funding from the Kosovo Islamic community. The community runs the informal religious site known as *Turbe of Baba Hajdar* located within the Kosovo Egyptian neighbourhood in Veriq/Verić village, Istog/Istok municipality. To note, in 2023, unknown person(s) set fire to the aforementioned Turbe.

In July 2019, the OSCE attended an on-site inspection in Dresnik/Dršnik village in Klinë/Klina organized by the Archaeological Institute of Kosovo and Ministry of Infrastructure to discuss the construction of the Prishtinë/Priština–Pejë/Peć road. The local Serbian Orthodox representative and representatives of the MOCR also attended and expressed concern that the construction might negatively affect certain cemeteries; they requested that the Ministry of Infrastructure consider amending the project to bypass the cemeteries. In November 2020, the MOCR in Klinë/Klina informed the OSCE field team that the new road will not affect the Kosovo Egyptian section of the cemetery.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Egyptian community faces challenges similar to other non-majority communities in Kosovo, such as limited access to housing and the registration of property titles in the cadastral records, particularly in the Gjilan/Gnjilane and Prishtinë/Priština regions.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, the property of many Kosovo Egyptians is not legally registered in municipal cadastral offices. Because most members of this community have lived in settlements in which land is transferred informally without official registration, these community members have no formal ownership rights over their property and homes. As such, the property titles of these families are uncertain.

In the Gjilan/Gnjilane region during 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare initiated the construction of three houses for members of the Kosovo Egyptian community living in Dubravë/Dubrava village of Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality. The project aimed to improve the community's living conditions.

11. Return and reintegration

Many Kosovo Egyptians have returned to Kosovo over the past 20 years. Kosovo Egyptian returnees often struggle upon return with low-income levels and limited housing and employment opportunities.

An estimated 7,800 Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians voluntarily returned to Kosovo between 2000 and May 2023, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁶² Most of the Kosovo Egyptian returnees are from the Pejë/Peć region. Of these, in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, 167 Kosovo Egyptian community members (76 women and 91 men) have returned since 1999, according to the MOCR. From 2015 through December 2023, an estimated 494 individuals returned to the municipalities of Gjakovë/Đakovica (202 individuals), Pejë/Peć (161), Istog/Istok (104), and Klinë/Klina (21), while in Prizren and Ferizaj/Uroševac less than five individuals had returned, according to UNHCR.

The reliance on donor-funded projects that create housing solutions for returnees creates its own challenges, in that only a few municipalities participate in the projects, and potential returnees from other municipalities must rely on sporadic assistance from the Ministry for Communities and Return (MCR). The EU-funded project Return and Reintegration in Kosovo reports that 67 residential units have been constructed for Kosovo Egyptian returnees and 57 individuals have received income-generation packages, mostly in Pejë/Peć and Gjakovë/Đakovica municipalities. The project is managed by the EU Office in Kosovo in partnership with the MCR and is implemented by IOM.⁶³

Other initiatives have targeted marginalized communities, including Kosovo Egyptians, under the auspices of the EU, Kosovo institutions, as well as donor organizations, such as the Danish Refugee Council and Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund.

⁶² UNHCR, 77 (2023). Currently, no disaggregated data regarding voluntary returns of the Kosovo Egyptian community exist.

⁶³ The number of residential units constructed or reconstructed includes 25 in Pejë/Peć, 17 in Gjakovë/Đakovica, 12 in Istog/Istok, eight in Klinë/Klina, and five in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Data provided by IOM office Mission in Kosovo.

In 2023, the MCR took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁶⁴ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. The impact of these endeavours was tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported 150 Kosovo Egyptian families, providing them with crucial items, including construction materials. Notably, the initiative resulted in the construction of one house located in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Additionally, the initiatives of the Ministry extended to providing substantial support to 18 families, amounting to EUR 167,014. This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses. Specifically, ten families located in Istog/Istok, five in Gjakovë/Đakovica and three in Ferizaj/Uroševac benefitted from this initiative.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci_compressed_compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#). (Accessed December 2023).

⁶⁵ Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj

Community Profile

Kosovo Gorani



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Gorani Community Profile

The Kosovo Gorani community is one of the smallest in Kosovo.

Approximately 10,300 Kosovo Gorani members live in Kosovo, accounting for approximately 0.55 per cent of the population of Kosovo, according to the 2011 census.¹

The largest concentration of the Kosovo Gorani community is in Dragash/Dragaš municipality in the Prizren region, where they account for some 26 per cent of the population (8,000-10,000). In Dragash/Dragaš, Kosovo Gorani represent the second largest community in the municipality and the majority community in the town of Dragash/Dragaš (about 51-52 per cent of the town population).² Smaller Kosovo Gorani communities are present in the municipalities of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North (nearly two per cent of the municipal population), Prizren (less than one per cent), Pejë/Peć (less than one per cent), and Prishtinë/Priština (less than one per cent), but also elsewhere across Kosovo. In Gračanica/Gračanicë, there are about 60 community members (ten families).

¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics. https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata_Census%20population_Census%202011_3%20By%20Municipalities/tab%205%204.px/table/tableViewLayout1/. Only the Kosovo Croat and Kosovo Montenegrin communities have fewer members in Kosovo. (Accessed December 2023).

² Kosovo Agency of Statistics. Figures for the 2011 Kosovo Census https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata_Census%20population_Census%202011_3%20By%20Municipalities/tab%205%204.px/table/tableViewLayout1/. The largest community in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, is Kosovo Albanian; Kosovo Bosniaks are the third largest. (Accessed December 2023).

Key facts and issues

- The overall security of the Kosovo Gorani community is currently relatively stable.
- One Kosovo Gorani community member sits in the Assembly.
- The community is under-represented in public administration and municipal levels.
- The Kosovo Gorani community experiences high rates of unemployment.
- Limited economic prospects drive migration of community members.
- Kosovo Gorani generally have stable access to adequate infrastructure, except in the mountainous rural areas of Dragash/Dragaš municipality, where the community faces challenges with water and electricity distribution networks. Occasional issues are observed in accessing civil registry documents.
- Most of the Kosovo Gorani community attend Serbian curriculum schools in the Serbian language, while a smaller number attend Kosovo curriculum schools in the Bosnian, Albanian, or Turkish language.
- Kosovo Gorani students in Dragash/Dragaš municipality experience poor school infrastructure and challenges in physically accessing education.
- More needs to be done to heal divisions between communities in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, thereby helping to enhance Kosovo Gorani participation in public life and facilitate access to education.

1. Security and safety

The security of the Kosovo Gorani community has improved over the past decade and has currently stabilized; the relatively low number of incidents usually includes thefts and robberies.³ Until 2015, the Kosovo Gorani community experienced the third-highest number of incidents (following the Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Bosniak communities), but the numbers have greatly decreased. The Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Montenegrin communities experience the lowest number of security incidents.

The main recurring security concerns of the Kosovo Gorani community are thefts of cattle and burglaries of uninhabited houses by suspects believed to be from Albania. The first recorded increase in such thefts occurred in July 2014, and since then several similar incidents have taken place, including but not limited to burglaries, armed robberies, thefts of livestock and agricultural goods, intimidation, and property damage.⁴ Few incidents classified as physical assaults against Kosovo Gorani community were recorded.⁵

In 2016 and 2017, security cameras were installed in eight locations in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, including in Orčuša/Orçushë village.⁶

Community security concerns as well as limited economic opportunities are considered the most important contributing factors to increased migration of Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniaks from Dragash/Dragaš municipality to western European countries.

To mitigate security concerns, efforts have been made to increase meaningful and effective representation and participation of the Kosovo Gorani community in local security fora and the Kosovo Police. Kosovo Gorani representatives have repeatedly asked for increased numbers of Kosovo Police officers from this community, especially in the understaffed sub-station in Kruševo/Krushevo village in Dragaš/Dragash, to enhance the security of non-majority communities in the area. In 2023, 39 Kosovo Gorani community members (two women) were employed by the Kosovo Police. All of them are serving Kosovo Police in Prizren and in Dragash/Dragaš, including a sub-station in Kruševo/Krushevë.

There are five Kosovo Gorani members in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).⁷

³ According to OSCE internal monitoring there were eight incidents in 2013, 30 incidents in 2014, 25 incidents in 2015, 16 in 2016, 15 in 2017, two in 2018, six in 2019, four in 2020, four in 2021, one in 2022, and five in 2023.

⁴ In November 2016, break-ins were reported at 15 houses while in November 2021 at two houses belonging to Kosovo Gorani families in Restelice/Restelica village in Dragash/Dragaš municipality. In February 2021, a Kosovo Gorani man reported to Kosovo Police that a group of unknown suspects physically assaulted him when crossing from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South to Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

⁵ In June 2023, a Kosovo Gorani reported to Kosovo Police that a Kosovo Albanian threatened and physically attacked him in his shop in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. In August 2023, in Dragash/Dragaš, following a dispute, a Kosovo Albanian suspect physically attacked a Kosovo Gorani victim, who received medical treatment.

⁶ Cameras were installed in the villages of Zaplužje/Zaplluzhe, Brodosan/Brodosane, Belobrad/Bellobrade, Brezna/Brezne, Orčuša/Orçushë, Globočica/Globočicë, and Restelica/Restelicë, as well as Dragash/Dragaš town.

⁷ As of November 2023.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Gorani community was represented in the Government formed in 2021 by Enes Goran from the United Gorani Party (JGP), who previously held the position of the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry. It is also represented by Edison Bećiri, who was appointed advisor to the Prime Minister in the Government formed in 2021.

Previously, the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Environment was the single JGP representative in the 2020-2021 Government.

The one seat guaranteed to the community in the Assembly is currently held by the leader of the United Gorani Party, Adem Hodža. He won this seat also in the previous elections. Other parties representing the community that participated in the 2019 and 2020 extraordinary Assembly elections were Movement for Gora (PZG) and Citizen's Initiative Gora (GIG).

The two seats reserved for the community in the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) are currently held by one woman and one man.⁸

As of 2017,⁹ few members of the Kosovo Gorani community were members of the government-level civil service (0.17 per cent), and as such were under-represented. The community was also significantly under-represented in the civil service in Dragaš/Dragash municipality (where most community members reside), Prizren, and other municipalities where smaller numbers of the community live.¹⁰

The community is represented in six community committees (CCs) throughout Kosovo, which include five women and two men.¹¹ The position of CC chairperson is held by a Kosovo Gorani man in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. However, the community is not represented in CCs in 12 municipalities where persons belonging to the community reside, according to the 2011 census and OSCE monitoring estimates.¹²

The position of deputy mayor for communities in Dragash/Dragaš municipality is held by a Kosovo Gorani.¹³ However, no community member holds the position of deputy chairperson of the municipal assembly for communities in any municipality.

⁸ Amira Mustafa represented the NGO Football Club Dragash/Dragaš Sport and Fehim Sali represented the NGO Neven.

⁹ More recent data are not available.

¹⁰ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017).

¹¹ Due to the prolonged absence of the Kosovo Gorani community representative, in December 2023, Prizren CC chairperson initiated the process for replacement of the CC member, and held consultation meetings with other Kosovo Gorani community representatives to identify a candidate.

¹² The seven CCs with Kosovo Gorani representatives are Dragash/Dragaš, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Prishtinë/Priština, and Prizren. The 12 CCs without Kosovo Gorani representation are in Dečan/Dečani, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Shtime/Štimlje, Viti/Vitina, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn. Resident estimates for Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan are based on data from OSCE *Municipal Profiles 2018* due to the lack of official census data.

¹³ The deputy mayor for communities in Dragash/Dragaš is a man (United Gorani Party, JGP).

Kosovo Gorani are members of three municipal offices for communities and return (MOCRs), and a Kosovo Gorani woman holds the position of head of MOCR in Gračanica/Gračanicë.¹⁴

There are four Kosovo Gorani members in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSCs): one woman in each of the following municipalities: Gračanica/Gračanicë, Prishtinë/Priština and Dragash/Dragaš; and one man in Prizren.

The civil society sector within the Kosovo Gorani community is not well developed and is characterized by a small number of donor-driven non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Indeed, these NGOs' dependence on donor funding often means that they lack funds to function properly. In February 2023, a Kosovo Gorani woman founded NGO "Sensa", the first and the only women's NGO in Dragash/Dragaš municipality, focusing on protecting and promoting the rights of Kosovo Bosniak and Kosovo Gorani girls and women residing in the municipality.

The decision by municipal authorities to install a monument commemorating Adem Jashari in the centre of Dragash/Dragaš town without consulting the Kosovo Gorani community led to political repercussions, including a boycott by Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak representatives of CC meetings in Dragash/Dragaš municipality throughout 2016-2017.¹⁵ Community members questioned the ability of Kosovo institutions and legislation to ensure the protection of non-majority communities' rights and interests. As CC representatives refused to attend the meetings, decreasing their participation, the Gorani community called for amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government to ensure increased protection of communities' rights. More recently, the appointment of a Kosovo Gorani deputy mayor for communities after the municipal elections in late 2021 strengthened the community's representation in the municipality.

Community representatives have sought the establishment of Gora, a municipality in place from 1990 to 1999 where the Kosovo Gorani would hold the majority, with Dragash/Dragaš town as its administrative centre, and the Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak villages of Gora region within its administrative boundaries. In September 2015, representatives of all Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak political parties from Dragash/Dragaš as well as NGOs and diaspora members submitted a request to the Government and the Ministry of Local Government Administration to start consultations on the creation of Gora municipality. However, Kosovo institutions have never responded to the request. Many in the Kosovo Gorani community believe that in a Gora municipality the rights and interests of the non-majority communities would be better protected and respected, while their right to local self-government and decentralization could be better exercised.

¹⁴ The three MOCRs with Kosovo Gorani members are in Dragash/Dragaš, Ferizaj/Uroševac, and Gračanica/Gračanicë.

¹⁵ Adem Jashari was a Kosovo Albanian commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army who was killed in 1998.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The Kosovo Gorani community faces limited employment and economic opportunities. The unemployment rate among the Kosovo Gorani community is 30 per cent, affecting particularly women.

Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency office in Dragash/Dragaš, there are 66 active job seekers (33 women) registered from the K/Gorani community.

Most of the Kosovo Gorani in the private sector are self-employed and earn income. Kosovo Gorani most often engage in small-scale, family-run businesses and are traditionally found in the hospitality sector, such as in sweet shops, confectioners and bakeries, fast food barbeques, coffee shops, and restaurants that prepare local food. A small number work in the construction sector.

In the public sector, the Kosovo Gorani community is under-represented at government- and local-level positions. Most Kosovo Gorani civil servants hold professional-level positions at the government level, whereas at the municipal level they perform technical and administrative duties.¹⁶ Although under-represented in Kosovo institutions at both levels, a significant number of Kosovo Gorani were employed in various Belgrade-run institutions at the local level, especially in Dragaš/Dragash municipality, including in the health and education sectors. In 2021, only 27 Kosovo Gorani were employed in the Kosovo public sector in Dragaš/Dragash, while more than 200 were employed in various Belgrade-run institutions in the same municipality.¹⁷ A significant impediment for the community is that Kosovo institutions do not recognize Serbian curriculum diplomas, especially in Dragash/Dragaš.

In Prishtinë/Priština, there is one Kosovo Gorani woman who works within the Municipal Directorate of Finance, and one man in the public enterprise *Termokos*.

In Gračanica/Gračanicë there are 20-25 community members employed in the private sector, mostly men, 30-60 years old, in the field of handicrafts. The unemployment rate is about 30 per cent.

¹⁶ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017), pp. 13, 17, 24.

¹⁷ Sixteen Kosovo Gorani were employed in the Provisional Council of Gora Municipality, 16 were on Serbian government payroll in the health sector, while approximately 180 to 200 were employed in the six primary and one secondary Serbian-curriculum schools in Dragash/Dragaš municipality.

Pensions and social welfare assistance from both Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade-run institutions also provide income for the Kosovo Gorani community. Unemployed community members, generally elderly persons and women, often receive funds from close relatives who live and work abroad.

Numerous Kosovo Gorani members receive financial support from Belgrade-run institutions, including pensions, social assistance, minimal Serbian government-guaranteed wage, and child allowance for all students attending Serbian curriculum schools.¹⁸ This support is much needed for the community, considering the high unemployment rate and challenging socio-economic situation, especially in Dragaš/Dragash municipality.

The very serious economic situation of the Kosovo Gorani community has attracted several income-generation projects, such as those sponsored by the EU-funded Community Stabilization Programme that provide assistance to community dairy farmers. Swiss Caritas and Dragash/Dragaš municipality have jointly funded income-generation projects that mainly focus on agricultural production in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš municipalities (including of berries and medicinal herbs).

Among the Kosovo Gorani community, no cases of child labour have been observed, except rare instances when children help their parents in small-scale family businesses during the summer months. The informal economy is also not prevalent within the community.

Members of the Kosovo Gorani community have migrated in large numbers since 1999 in search of economic opportunity. Community members have mainly settled within the region, but a significant number have migrated to western European countries such as Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, and Sweden. In recent years, Kosovo Gorani youth have migrated for educational purposes, mainly to Turkey and Bulgaria.

¹⁸ Following the Kosovo Central Bank's adoption of a regulation in December 2023, establishing the euro as the only currency allowed for cash transactions in Kosovo, which took effect on 1 February 2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo field teams received reports that this change has affected the community relying on financial support from the government of Serbia.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

In Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć, Gračanica/Gračanicë, and Prishtinë/Priština municipalities, Kosovo Gorani community members reside in urban areas in mixed neighbourhoods, enjoying full and equal access to potable water, sewage systems, waste collection services, reliable electricity, and paved roads, as do all other residents.

The majority of Kosovo Gorani community members reside in mountainous areas of Dragash/Dragaš municipality, where access to public utilities is aggravated by difficult terrain, outdated electricity and water supply grids, and lack of sewage systems in a number of villages. For example, although most Kosovo Gorani community members have access to potable water, residents in the villages of Gornja Rapča/Rapqë e Epërme and Donja Rapča/Rapqë e Poshtme still face water shortages due to an outdated water distribution network.¹⁹ Persons in older homes not connected to a sewage system rely on septic tanks or open canals. To improve the infrastructure, the Dragash/Dragaš municipal assembly budget for 2024 allocates roughly €4.5 million to capital investment projects, most of which will be spent on the implementation of a water supply project for 15 villages in Gora and Opoja areas and Dragash/Dragaš town, including the construction of a water treatment plant in Radeša/Radesh village.

In Gračanica/Gračanicë, the infrastructure (road, electricity, sewage, water) is poor and the number of official complaints has recently increased.

Aging and weak transmission systems cause sporadic electrical service interruptions in Gora-area villages, especially during the winter. Although four working hydropower plants generate electricity in the Gora region, minimal investment in the distribution grid in the region for over 30 years – despite repeated community requests – has led to persistent outages, especially in the villages of Restelica/Restelicë, Zli Potok/Zllipotoku, Kruševo/Krushevë, and Globočica/Glloboçicë. The Kosovo Gorani community and others are wholly reliant on the Kosovo Electricity Distribution Company (KEDS) for electricity. In December 2020, the installation of a new main electric power line from Dragash/Dragaš town toward the Kosovo Bosniak– and Kosovo Gorani–inhabited village of Restelicë/Restelica started. It was expected to connect all the villages in the area and improve the quality of the service.

¹⁹ In addition, disputes with the neighbouring village of Krstec/Kërstec prevented access by the villages of Gornja Rapča/Rapqë e Epërme and Donja Rapča/Rapqë e Poshtme to natural springs in their cadastral zone. In 2019, the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš tried to mediate in this matter, without success.

However, this intervention was only implemented in part and did not fully address the problems related to grid infrastructure in the Gora area. At the end of 2023, KEDS presented a strategic plan for the period 2024-2026, providing a roadmap for the installation of a new power grid in the villages in Gora area.

In addition, waste management issues in the Gora region persist. The municipality of Dragash/Dragaš, in co-operation with the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), has undertaken efforts to cover all of its territory in the municipal waste management plan; however, there are villages not yet covered. This is the case with Leštane/Leshtan, Krstac/Kërstec, Backa/Baçkë, Orcuša/Orqushë, Dikance/Dikancë and Kukuljane/Kukjan,²⁰ and Restelica/Restelicë, where the local NGO *Eco Restelica* is tackling waste management issues with funds obtained from voluntary contributions of residents and businesses.

On a positive note, street lighting has improved significantly in recent years in most rural areas of Dragash/Dragaš municipality, thus improving the overall security and safety conditions of the community. Sidewalks are present in all main villages.

The quality of road infrastructure in areas inhabited by Kosovo Gorani in Dragash/Dragaš municipality has improved significantly over the past decade. The roads to all villages in the Gora region are paved. The main regional road from Prizren to Dragash/Dragaš has been widened in parts, and the remaining section of the road reconstructed, while the road from Dragash/Dragaš town to Brod village has been widened and rebuilt.

However, the mountainous terrain in the Gora area poses additional challenges to the community. Rockfalls, landslides, and avalanches pose a safety threat and cause occasional blockages of local roads connecting the Kosovo Gorani inhabited villages, especially during the winter season.

In general, the Kosovo Gorani community does not face housing issues, as most community members own their homes, while some also own apartments. Additionally, Kosovo Gorani community members generally do not have large, accumulated utility bills.

The Kosovo Gorani community has unimpeded access to graveyards of their preference in all municipalities where they reside, and generally use Islamic graveyards with other communities.

²⁰ In Opoja area, the villages of Xërxë/Zrza and Plajnik/Plajnik, predominantly inhabited by Kosovo Albanians, face the same situation. In the case of the later, a municipal officer reported that the waste management company *Eko Regjioni* is not willing to offer its services due to the distant location of the village and the additional costs that it would cause to the company.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

The Kosovo Gorani community accesses social and healthcare services through both Kosovo and Belgrade-run institutions, depending on the availability of local services. For example, in Dragash/Dragaš, Gjilan/Gnjilane, and Kamenicë/Kamenica, the community uses both social services, healthcare, and welfare systems.

In Prishtinë/Priština, Pejë/Peć, and Ferizaj/Uroševac, the Kosovo Gorani community rely on Kosovo institutions to access services, while in Gračanica/Gračanicë the community tends to mostly use Belgrade-run healthcare facilities, as they are reportedly cheaper.

In 2018, 168 Kosovo Gorani families, comprising 463 individuals, were eligible for social assistance.²¹ Data indicating the number of Kosovo Gorani who receive a pension and/or a disability allowance are unavailable.

In recent years, the physical accessibility and affordability of health care, as well as availability of emergency services, have improved, especially in the Kosovo Gorani villages in the Gora area.²² However, owing to the area's remote location, this community is the most geographically disadvantaged group in Kosovo. Most use taxi services or walk to receive necessary health care. Therefore, obstacles to physical accessibility can increase financial costs.

Several Kosovo Gorani medical doctors run private practices and provide services to local inhabitants. Moreover, community members who possess Serbian identification cards and health insurance cards also have access to Belgrade-run healthcare providers in Gračanica/Gračanicë and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, while for more serious health issues the community also uses the health centres and clinics in Belgrade.

However, Kosovo Gorani are the least likely to carry out general health screenings as part of preventive care compared with other non-majority communities. This reluctance is due to cultural barriers, lack of health-related campaigns, and a general unawareness of health-related rights among the community.²³

21 Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 100.

22 Kosovo Women's Network, *Access to Healthcare in Kosovo* (2016), p. 54. (Accessed December 2023).

23 Ibid, pp. 52, 54.

The Kosovo Gorani community has voiced concerns related to accessing civil registry documents for persons born outside of Kosovo. In 2017, new procedures were implemented to simplify the process of obtaining official Kosovo documents. However, the civil registry office in Dragash/Dragaš continues to require community members to follow the previous procedure, and thus many Kosovo Gorani could not obtain registration documents. Such misinterpretations of existing legal provisions cause difficulties and legal uncertainty for Kosovo Gorani community members and hamper their rights to obtain personal documents.

6. Access to education

Kosovo Gorani students are enrolled in both Kosovo and Serbian curricula schools. They mainly attend Serbian curriculum schools in the Serbian language in Dragash/Dragaš, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Kamenicë/Kamenica municipalities.

Kosovo Gorani students attend Kosovo curriculum schools, mainly in the Bosnian language but occasionally in the Albanian and Turkish languages, in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Prishtinë/Priština, Pejë/Peć, and Prizren. Education in the Gorani dialect is unavailable.

According to data from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, 314 Kosovo Gorani students were enrolled in pre-university education in the 2023/24 school year.²⁴

In Prishtinë/Priština municipality Kosovo Gorani pupils or students attend school or studies in the Albanian or Turkish language. In Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality around 30-40 Kosovo Gorani pupils attend Serbian curriculum schools.

In Dragash/Dragaš municipality, where most Kosovo Gorani live, 590 students were registered in the Serbian curriculum schools for primary and secondary education for the school year 2023/24. A smaller number of community members attend classes in the Bosnian language following the Kosovo curriculum.

In Dragash/Dragaš municipality, schools that follow both curricula mainly serve Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak pupils, respectively. Over half the Kosovo Gorani students in Dragash/Dragaš attended four schools with shared curricula in the villages of Restelica/Restelicë, Brod, Rapča/Rapçë, and Vranište/Vranishtë. In the past, Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak educators competed for limited resources, including space in shared classrooms, cabinets, and even firewood, leading to competition and overall lack of trust and co-operation between the teachers, as well as creating tension between the two communities. However, both systems now appear to have more satisfactory resources. Since 2017, personnel from the schools sharing premises in Brod and Restelica/Restelicë, which faced the most issues, improved their co-operation on these issues and managed to reduce tensions and enhance Kosovo Gorani access to education.

²⁴ Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Statistical Notes 2023/2024. (Accessed December 2023).

However, the overall situation regarding co-operation between schools following the two different curricula in this municipality remains fragile.

In recent years the primary and secondary schools in Dragash/Dragaš town, where many Kosovo Gorani were concentrated, were moved to Ljubovište/Lubovishtë and Mlike/Mlikë and have now been modernised.

Given the Gora region's mountainous terrain, challenges related to transport of students created issues of access to schools, especially in winter. The municipality has hired a contractor to provide transportation for Kosovo Gorani students who attend Kosovo curriculum schools. Transportation for students attending Serbian curriculum schools has been supported by Belgrade-run institutions, through an external company. In some cases, especially during winter months, parents made their own travel arrangements for their children.

Dropout cases are rare among Kosovo Gorani students, and most commonly result from migration by the family. Dropouts are usually monitored by the schools and, when necessary, addressed on a case-by-case basis.

For schools that follow Serbian curriculum programmes, the Serbian ministry of education provides textbooks. Kosovo Gorani students who follow the Kosovo curriculum, particularly in the Turkish and Bosnian languages, face challenges linked to scarcity of manuals and textbooks in the Bosnian and Turkish languages, lack of teacher training, and reliance on old textbooks that do not follow the new curriculum.

University education in Serbian is available at the University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, where many Kosovo Gorani students enrol. A smaller number opt to follow the Kosovo curriculum, mostly in the Bosnian language but also in Albanian and Turkish, at universities in Prizren, Pejë/Peć, and Prishtinë/Priština. In 2019–2020, 303 Kosovo Gorani were enrolled in universities.²⁵

As for higher education, Kosovo Gorani students face many challenges in accessing university education under the Kosovo curriculum, ranging from language barriers, unavailability of admission tests in the language of preference, or lack of reserved places for community members at universities, which in theory are guaranteed by existing legislation.²⁶ Additionally, pre-university diplomas that follow the Serbian curriculum obtained in Kosovo are often not recognized, further hindering access to university education under the Kosovo curriculum. Thus, many Kosovo Gorani students prefer to study outside of Kosovo in Serbian universities, but also in North Macedonia, Turkey, and Bulgaria.

No structural obstacles to equal access to compulsory education for Kosovo Gorani boys and girls exist. Nevertheless, many fewer females are enrolled in secondary and university education than males, most notably in Dragash/Dragaš municipality.

²⁵Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Statistical Notes 2019/2020.

²⁶ Non-majority university students are guaranteed 12 per cent of the places in higher education programmes as well as in students' dormitories and canteens. Additionally, the law allows community members to take university entry exams in their mother tongue, and it regulates the scholarship and social assistance distribution for such students.

The interaction between Kosovo Gorani students and students of different communities is satisfactory, without any recent security incidents or issues. Nevertheless, school and university managers do not generally promote initiatives to bring students from different communities together.

7. Access to justice

There are no representatives of the Kosovo Gorani community employed in any of the non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK), and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, two Kosovo Gorani lawyers, both men, are licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

OSCE monitoring indicates that members of the Kosovo Gorani community are to some extent aware of services provided by the FLAA, OIK, and VAAO. However, the level of awareness differs among municipalities. Notably, Kosovo Gorani community members in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš municipalities have limited knowledge of the services provided by the FLAA, OIK and VAAO, due to these institutions being regionally based, and the lack of awareness raising activities and outreach by these institutions targeting the Kosovo Gorani community in these municipalities. In 2023, the FLAA hired an officer to cover the municipalities of Suharekë/Suva Reka and Dragash/Dragaš in order to offer free legal advice to rural areas for communities with low income.

The OIK (unlike VAAO or FLAA) conducts regular monthly and ad-hoc outreach visits²⁷ in various municipalities and therefore has better visibility than the other two legal service providers. However, it was reported that the OIK no longer conducts monthly visits to municipalities in the Prishtinë/Priština region; they are instead conducted based on the needs and interest of citizens.

VAAO under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week" in October, every year. However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year.

Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, the KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) programme.

In 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 54 were members of the Kosovo Gorani community. Reportedly, in Prizren, Kosovo Gorani members rarely utilize OIK services.²⁸ In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women)²⁹, involving 4,296 persons.

²⁷ Open days are organized on monthly basis with the aim of direct communication with community members on various human rights challenges.

²⁸ According to interlocutors from Prizren.

²⁹ Ombudsperson Institution Annual Report 2023.

Of the total number of complaints, two came from the Kosovo Gorani community. VAAO addressed 1,009 cases in 2023, where two victims were Kosovo Gorani.

Community members are free to choose their legal representatives. However, in case of ex-officio representation in criminal cases, the KBA assigns lawyers according to the order of lawyers listed in their record who are fluent in the language of the community they represent or members of the respective community.

The Kosovo Gorani community does not face challenges in accessing courts and legal services. Notably, all three institutions provide their services free of charge and have multilingual / multi-ethnic staff who can communicate and provide services in all official languages, as required in Prizren region, namely in Albanian, Serbian/Bosnian and Turkish languages. Language is generally not a barrier when accessing legal services.

Notably, the Prizren Basic Court has three permanently employed court interpreters for Bosnian/Serbian, which is generally spoken among the Kosovo Gorani community. The Prizren Basic Prosecution Office has one permanently employed interpreter for Serbian/Bosnian. However, court and legal fees as well as travel costs can create obstacles for vulnerable families without regular income and can prevent access to courts to resolve civil cases.

8. Language use and media

In their daily life and private interactions, the Kosovo Gorani community speak Gorani, a Slavic dialect. The Kosovo Gorani community feels fairly free to use the dialect in daily interactions, while most use the Serbian and Albanian languages in formal communication with institutions.

Younger generations, in particular in Prishtinë/Priština, are more inclined towards learning Albanian.

The Gorani dialect has been traditionally used mainly in the region of Gora in Dragash/Dragaš municipality. The dialect is not recognized as an official language or language in official use in any Kosovo municipality, and the community has never pursued such a request. Because written forms of the dialect are not in widespread use, it is mainly preserved through daily speech and traditional folk songs.

Many Kosovo Gorani in the Gora area of Dragash/Dragaš municipality and other regions – especially women – do not speak or understand Albanian, which limits their ability to communicate with the majority community as well as local and government institutions. For instance, in Prishtinë/Priština the situation is especially difficult for Kosovo Gorani women who do not speak the Albanian language and experience high unemployment rates, often despite having university degrees. For this reason, Kosovo Gorani community members have expressed interest in learning the Albanian language to improve public interactions, particularly with teachers and civil servants.

In Dragash/Dragaš municipality, all topographical and street signs use both the Albanian and Serbian/Bosnian languages. Moreover, some street and settlement names in villages are written in the Gorani dialect, including some traditional local place names. Members of each village in the Gora area were consulted before the municipality approved and installed the new street signs.

For those who view municipal websites, the Kosovo Gorani community relies on information published in Serbian and/or Bosnian, which are generally widespread on municipal websites.

The Kosovo Gorani community uses the Serbian language to receive public information and services, including utility bills, various taxes, and invoices. In this regard, the community has had relatively good access to public documents, especially in Dragash/Dragaš municipality.

The Kosovo Gorani community has access to several local media outlets in their mother tongue. These include "Radio Gora" (which broadcasts in Serbian/Bosnian and the Gorani dialect) and the local web portal "Gora Press," which follows mainly local developments.³⁰ Public television station RTK broadcasts a special community programme in the Gorani dialect, "Svetlo Gore" (Light of Gora), which is broadcast on the last Saturday of each month. The programming is mostly news reports or subtitled documentaries that have been shown on RTK2 and RTK3. Additionally, Kosovo Gorani community members have full access to Serbian and Bosnian language media in Kosovo and the region.

³⁰ The web portal "[Gora Press](#)" played an important role in transmitting and translating news during the COVID-19 pandemic, when information in community languages was not easily available.

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Gorani are a Muslim community that shares religious facilities with the Kosovo Albanian community. In general, the community is free to express its religious and cultural beliefs. No recent security incidents have been reported.

An important religious monument for the Kosovo Gorani is the 19th-century mosque in Mlike/Mlikë village in Dragash/Dragaš, which is on the list of cultural heritage sites under temporary protection of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. It is one of the oldest mosques in the region.

As well as traditional Muslim holidays, the Kosovo Gorani community celebrate the beginning of spring, Đurđevdan/Shën Gjergji (St. George's Day), on 5 to 6 May, an official holiday in Kosovo. Cultural events are organized for the occasion, mainly in Prizren region. Traditional Gorani music is also an important component of the community's cultural heritage, and the famous Gorani circle dance *kolo* ("circle") accompanied by instrumental music is widely practiced in Kosovo.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Gorani community faces property-related challenges similar to those of other non-majority communities in Kosovo, particularly in Gjilan/Gnjilane and Prizren regions, such as uncertainty caused by potential demolition of business premises, privatization of publicly owned land, and expropriation of privately owned land, all of which significantly impact community members' economic status.

In December 2019, municipal authorities in Kamenicë/Kamenica informed a Kosovo Gorani family that their business, a sweet shop built in 1970 on municipal land, would be demolished to make way for capital improvement projects. At the request of the Deputy Mayor for Communities, the mayor halted the demolition order; however, in April 2020, the sweet shop and several Kosovo Albanian-owned shops were demolished to create the main public square of Kamenicë/Kamenica and to level the river bed.

In February 2012, institutions expropriated private property for the construction of six hydropower plants in Dragash/Dragaš municipality. The expropriation was disputed by the Kosovo Gorani community, reportedly for lack of consultation with the local population and illegal expropriation. The property owners' representatives filed several lawsuits against Dragash/Dragaš municipality at the Basic Court in Prizren; however, later they withdrew their lawsuits in exchange for compensation.

Municipal authorities in Dragash/Dragaš have prevented Kosovo Gorani community members from accessing grazing land due to its attempted privatization since 2006. The land had been owned by a Socially Owned Enterprise. The case is still unresolved, pending a ruling of the Kosovo Supreme Court since 2010. The privatization of the grassland jeopardizes cattle grazing, an important source of income for the Kosovo Gorani community.³¹

³¹ The case is before the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo on Privatization Agency Related Matters.

11. Return and reintegration

Following the 1999 conflict, many Kosovo Gorani left Kosovo for reasons of security as well as improved long-term economic and social opportunities.

Most migrated to Belgrade and other parts of the region, and many others went to western Europe. Accurate data on the number of Kosovo Gorani displaced persons are not available.

Limited access to employment and better livelihoods, as well as challenges in relation to the choice of an educational system, are the primary obstacles to the sustainable return and reintegration of Kosovo Gorani displaced persons. Since 1999, 1,464 Kosovo Gorani have returned to Kosovo, according to the UNHCR. However, between 2015 and 2023, only 29 individuals returned, mostly to Dragash/Dragaš municipality.³²

Despite repeated requests over many years, the Government and the Ministry for Communities and Return have failed to provide any funds for return assistance to Dragash/Dragaš municipality, where most Kosovo Gorani have traditionally lived. Thus, "Go-and-See" or "Go-and-Inform" visits have not been organized for this community in the municipality.³³ Moreover, no active return projects that target the Kosovo Gorani community currently exist, and EU projects on Returns and Reintegration have never included Dragash/Dragaš municipality. The lack of institutional support for facilitating returns of Kosovo Gorani has led many community representatives to assert that Kosovo Serbs, the largest non-majority community in Kosovo, receive most of the return assistance due to political manoeuvring, while displaced persons and returnees from smaller communities are neglected. In 2023, however, the Ministry for Communities and Return took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.³⁴

³² In 2015 and 2018, 28 individuals returned to Dragash/Dragaš municipality, and one individual returned to Prizren municipality in 2017. UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission, Prishtinë/Priština, Statistical Overview (December 2023).

³³ Go-and-See visits provide displaced persons with the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the conditions in their place of origin and to directly interact and engage with the receiving community to make an informed decision about return or other durable solution.

³⁴ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci compressed compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#), (Accessed December 2023).

The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. As a result of the call, the Ministry supported one Kosovo Gorani family in Dragash/Dragaš by providing support for a small-scale business amounting to EUR 13,200.³⁵

Besides institutional obstacles, Kosovo Gorani returnees face unemployment and economic instability. These economic challenges are especially prevalent among young people, who struggle with access to education programmes in their preferred language.

³⁵ Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

Photo Credit: Christophe Quirion

Community Profile

Kosovo Montenegrin



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Monte- negrin Community Profile

The Kosovo Montenegrin community is one of the smallest communities in Kosovo. Thousands of community members have emigrated over the past 30 years, most especially after the 1999 conflict, and few of those have returned.

Although the Kosovo Constitution does not classify **Kosovo Montenegrins** as a separate community, they are considered one of the communities in Kosovo under the Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities.¹

No official population figures for the **Kosovo Montenegrin** community exist, as it was not included as a separate group in the 2011 census.² In the 1981 census of Yugoslavia, the last official estimate in which the **Kosovo Montenegrin** community in Kosovo was included, 27,028 persons of all Kosovo residents (or 1.7 per cent) declared themselves as Montenegrin. Current estimates indicate that the **Kosovo Montenegrin** community in Kosovo amounts approximately to 265 persons (0.01 per cent of the population), making **Kosovo Montenegrins** the second-smallest community in Kosovo.³

The **Kosovo Montenegrin** community is not a majority in any settlement in Kosovo. Its members are primarily concentrated in the western Pejë/Peć region, where they represent 0.2 per cent of residents in Istog/Istok municipality,⁴ 0.03 per cent in Pejë/Peć, 0.007 per cent in Deçan/Deçani, and 0.005 per cent in Klinë/Klina. In Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipality, 0.28 per cent of the population is **Kosovo Montenegrin**. In Lipjan/Lipljan, the **Kosovo Montenegrin** community mainly resides in town and in Staro Gradsko/Grackë e Vjetër village. Their total number is 45, including six primary school children and 13 low/high secondary pupils.

1 Article 1.4 of the Law No. 04/L-020 on Amending and Supplementing the Law No. 03/L-047 on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo defines communities as national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups traditionally present in Kosovo that are not in the majority.

2 The 2011 census was the first to be held since 1981 and was conducted through the legal framework established by the 2010 census law. Gëzim Visoka and Elvin Gjevori, "Census Politics and Ethnicity in the Western Balkans," *East European Politics*, 29(4), 2013, pp. 479–498.

3 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles* 2018. The estimate is based on OSCE data and estimates by community representatives. Only the Kosovo Croat community in Kosovo is smaller.

4 Fourteen community members.

Key facts and issues

- Given its small size, the Kosovo Montenegrin community does not have guaranteed seats in the Assembly.
- Most reported security incidents against members of the Kosovo Montenegrin community involve illegal occupation of property, all of which were reported in Pejë/Pec region by returnees and displaced persons.
- Kosovo Montenegrins follow the Serbian language curriculum. As such, Montenegrin language speakers have similar experiences regarding language rights as Serbian language speakers.
- The mostly rural Kosovo Montenegrin community is beset by high unemployment rates and linguistic barriers related to learning Albanian as one of two official languages.

1. Security and safety

In general, the Kosovo Montenegrin community shares the same security concerns as the Kosovo Serb community.⁵

The majority of security incidents involving this community relate to property of displaced **Kosovo Montenegrins** that is occupied by majority communities. For example, in December 2016 a serious incident occurred during a “Go-and-See visit”⁶ to the properties of four elderly **Kosovo Montenegrins** and four Kosovo Serb displaced persons (three were women), and which culminated in the evacuation of the eight persons from Deçan/Dečani municipality after tensions arose.⁷

Kosovo Montenegrins were represented in the Kosovo Police with two employees in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and one in Pejë/Peć until 2019. In 2023, there was only one member of this community serving in the Kosovo Police in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

There are no members of **Kosovo Montenegrin** community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).⁸

5 According to OSCE internal monitoring there was one incident in 2013, three in 2014, four in 2015, two in 2016, three in 2017, one in 2018, two in 2019, none in 2020, one in 2021, and none in 2022 and 2023.

Illegal occupation of land owned by Kosovo Montenegrin community were reported in June 2015, in Vitomiricë/Vitomirica, in September 2015, in Pejë/Peć, in June 2016, in the village of Serbobran/Srbobran, in Istog/Istok, in May 2018 and in March 2019 in Pejë/Peć, and in 2021 in Klinë/Klina.

6 Go-and-See visits provide displaced persons with the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the conditions in their place of origin and to directly interact and engage with the receiving community to make an informed decision about return or other durable solutions.

7 The properties at issue are in Dashinoc/Dašinovac, Pozhar/Požare, and Lumbardh/Ljumbarda. During the meeting, a Kosovo Albanian employee of the municipality stated that the visit was seen as a “direct provocation” against those whose family members were killed or missing as a result of the conflict in 1998–1999. Since that meeting, there have been no new returnees to Deçan/Dečani municipality.

In September 2017, a Kosovo Montenegrin woman returnee reported to an officer in the Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCR) in Deçan/Dečani that while exiting her apartment, she was harassed several days in a row by a young Kosovo Albanian.

8 As of November 2023.

2. Participation and representation

There have been no ministers from the Kosovo Montenegrin community in the Government formed in 2021. There is one deputy minister from this community.⁹

The community does not have a guaranteed seat in the Assembly, and there are no Assembly members from the community. However, the Kosovo Montenegrin community was not completely absent from government structures; for example, a Kosovo Montenegrin woman was an adviser to the Minister for Communities and Return from 2008 to 2020.

The Kosovo Montenegrin community has had two reserved seats in the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) since its establishment. In the CCC's most recent two-year term, from September 2022, the seats were held by a woman and a man.¹⁰

As of 2017, members of the community constituted 0.03 per cent of government-level public servants.¹¹

The community is represented in the communities' committees of three municipalities: Deçan/Dečani, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and Lipjan/Lipljan.¹² Moreover, three Kosovo Montenegrins (a man and two women) are members of the MOCRs in Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć, and Rahovec/Orahovac. There are no Kosovo Montenegrin deputy mayors for communities or deputy chairpersons of the municipal assembly for communities.

There are two Kosovo Montenegrins represented in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSCs): a woman in Obiliq/Obilić and a man in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje.

Several Kosovo Montenegrin civil society organizations operate in Kosovo, including Udruženje Crnogoraca Kosova (Association of Montenegrins of Kosovo), the cultural organization Udruženje Kosovskih Crnogoraca MATICA (Association of Kosovo Montenegrins MATICA), Udruženje žena porijeklom iz Crne Gore (Association of Women Originally from Montenegro), and Udruženje Crnogoraca Lovćen (Association of Montenegrins Lovćen).

⁹ Mr. Lazar Radulović was appointed as Deputy Minister of Agriculture by Prime Minister Kurti in January 2023, after previously serving as an advisor to the Minister of Communities and Return.

¹⁰ The woman represented the non-governmental organization (NGO) Udruženje žena porijeklom iz Crne Gore, and the man represented NGO Udruženje Crnogoraca Kosova.

¹¹ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (May 2017).

¹² Of the three members of the communities committees, two are women.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The Kosovo Montenegrin community has been experiencing high levels of unemployment and linguistic barriers in formal education.¹³ Community members' participation in the active labour market is quite limited. Kosovo Montenegrins generally live in rural areas and engage in agriculture. Reliable data on the unemployment rate for this community are unavailable.

In 2018, only nine persons belonging to the Kosovo Montenegrin community were registered as unemployed (eight women and one man). No Kosovo Montenegrin community member was involved in employment mediations and/or vocational training organized by Kosovo institutions.¹⁴

Very few members of the Kosovo Montenegrin community have been employed in the public service sector. As of 2017, those employed in this sector held administrative or technical-level posts.¹⁵

In Prishtinë/Priština region, one Kosovo Montenegrin woman works as a human rights officer in the municipality of Obiliq/Obilić. In Lipjan/Lipljan, ten Kosovo Montenegrins work in the education sector, and ten have been employed in the health sector (12 women and eight men).

In Pejë/Peć region, three Kosovo Montenegrins are employed in the public sector. Two Kosovo Montenegrin women worked at the municipal offices for communities and return of Pejë/Peć and Istog/Istok municipalities. One Kosovo Montenegrin man worked as a Kosovo Police commander in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec village in Pejë/Peć municipality.

Community members, particularly returnees, are beneficiaries of income-generation projects provided by donor organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These projects mainly consist of funding agricultural machinery and other working tools. For example, the Kosovo Montenegrin commander of the police station in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec benefitted from such a scheme, as well as from the house reconstruction project Return and Reintegration in Kosovo financed by the European Commission Office and implemented by the IOM. Another Kosovo Montenegrin from Obiliq/Obilić municipality benefitted from an income-generation project aimed at enhancing reintegration of returnees.

No cases of child labour or engagement with the informal economy have been reported for this community.

¹³ OSCE, *Communities Access to Pre-University Education in Kosovo* (December 2018).

¹⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Labour and Employment, *Annual Report 2018*, pp. 19, 34, and 41. Unavailable in English.

¹⁵ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (2017), pp. 14, 17, and 23.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Kosovo Montenegrins generally have access to infrastructure and public utilities, although challenges remain, including inadequate waste management and sewage systems.

In Pejë/Peć region, Kosovo Montenegrin community members reside in small numbers in rural villages of Istog/Istok municipality, mostly in Serbobran/Srbobrane, Shalinovicë/Šaljinovica, Osojane/Osojan, Dragolevc/Dragoljevac, and Zallq/Žaç. All the main roads that lead from the municipality's urban centre to these villages are paved. The power supply has improved, but occasionally during bad weather outages occur. Occasional issues related to the lack of common sewage systems in rural areas are observed. Although Istog/Istok town and almost all villages are connected to the water supply system, none of the villages in Istog/Istok have access to the sewage system,¹⁶ with the exception of Dragolevc/Dragoljevac, where the sewage system was constructed in 2021. In 2020, the MOCR supported paving of roads in Dragolevc/Dragoljevac and of the road between Osojane/Osojan and Kosh/Koš. Streetlights were installed in Dragolevc/Dragoljevac and Osojane/Osojan villages. In 2020, they were repaired and expanded by IOM/MOCR. Streetlights were also installed in Serbobran/Srbobrane in 2022. In Osojane/Osojan, electricity poles were replaced by KEDS in 2022.

In Pejë/Peć municipality, in Deçan/Dečani town and in the village of Goraždevac/Gorazhdec, the most common recurring issues affecting the community are inadequate waste management and the lack of a functional sewage system.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, several Kosovo Montenegrin community members reside in rural areas in the municipalities of Gračanica/Gračanicë, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (Mašinski Park neighbourhood and villages of Bresje and Kuzmin), and Lipjan/Lipljan (in the Novo Naselje neighbourhood and in the Staro Gracko/Grackë e Vjetër village).

In both municipalities, road infrastructure is present. The power supply has stabilized in recent years, although serious problems remain with waste management and the sewage system.

¹⁶ OSCE, *Municipal Profile 2018: Istog/Istok* p. 6.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

Kosovo Montenegrins access social assistance, health care, and pensions from both Belgrade-run as well as Kosovo institutions.¹⁷

In 2018, four Kosovo Montenegrin families (nine individuals) were eligible for social assistance, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.¹⁸ Community disaggregated data indicating the number of Kosovo Montenegrins who receive pension and/or disability allowance is unavailable.

Kosovo Montenegrins do not face significant difficulties in accessing healthcare facilities and services. Health facilities are available in the municipalities and villages where they reside. Kosovo Montenegrins generally do not have financial difficulties that prevent access to health care, and as such, there have been no public health awareness campaigns that target this community.

Generally, Kosovo Montenegrins do not face any issues with civil registration.

¹⁷ European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, "Community Profile: Montenegrin Community" (December 2013), p. 59. (Accessed December 2023.) OSCE, "Kosovo Montenegrins," *Kosovo Communities Profiles 2010* (2011), p. 6.

¹⁸ Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 100.

6. Access to education

Kosovo Montenegrins receive education in the Serbian language. It is assessed that Kosovo Montenegrin children do not face significant obstacles to access education based on community affiliation, gender, or age. There are no official data on the exact numbers of Kosovo Montenegrin youth enrolled in the education system.

Kosovo Montenegrin students in Lipjan/Lipljan and Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje attend Serbian curriculum schools (at the Aca Marović school, which shares the premises with the Daut Bogujevci school in the Kosovo curriculum, in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje). However, they attend secondary education in Gračanica/Gračanicë. Both the municipality and parents contribute to the cost of student transport. Kosovo Montenegrin children who follow the Serbian curriculum are grouped with Kosovo Serb children in classes and playgrounds separate from the students who follow the Kosovo curriculum in the same building. The Kosovo Montenegrin students tend to socialize more with Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Roma students for linguistic and other reasons.

In Pejë/Peć region, Kosovo Montenegrins attend Serbian curriculum schools with no observed impediments to education. The school in Istog/Istok municipality provides transport for students. In addition, the Serbian government reimburses fuel costs to individual parents, similar to its practice with Kosovo Serb students. In Pejë/Peć municipality, the school is in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec, where the Kosovo Montenegrin students reside, and thus there is no need for transport.

In general, drop-outs are not considered an issue for the Kosovo Montenegrin community. However, data and statistics are difficult to attain for Serbian curriculum schools, especially in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Lipjan/Lipljan municipalities. The Gračanica/Gračanicë Municipal Education Officer reported monitoring the attendance of Kosovo Montenegrin students and indicated there are no dropouts from this community. The Pejë/Peć municipal education directorate does not possess data on students attending Serbian curriculum schools. In Istog/Istok, the municipality has total numbers of students attending Serbian curriculum schools but without community-disaggregated data. However, the school director states that there are Kosovo Montenegrin students studying there.

There are no community-specific subjects for Kosovo Montenegrin students to learn about their identity and culture.

Kosovo Montenegrin students pursue higher education primarily at the university in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and in Serbia.

7. Access to justice

There are no representatives of the Kosovo Montenegrin community employed in any of the non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK), and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, there are no Kosovo Montenegrin lawyers licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

Kosovo Montenegrin community members generally have wide access to legal offices and institutions. They reportedly enjoy unrestricted access to authorized free legal assistance services. However, Kosovo Montenegrin community members are reported to be generally unaware of the FLAA, OIK, and VAAO. Accessing these services and other legal institutions can present difficulties for Kosovo Montenegrins living in remote areas, who may be more socially vulnerable and/or cannot afford transportation.

Reports from the field highlight the need for awareness-raising campaigns about these legal assistance services. In Pejë/Peć region, Kosovo Montenegrins' awareness is described as "moderate," as community members are observed using similar alternative services available in northern municipalities.¹⁹ Also, a representative of the Kosovo Montenegrin community from Lipjan/Lipljan noted that community members are highly unlikely to be adequately aware of these institutions and the services they offer.

Generally, Kosovo Montenegrin community members are not aware of the Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) programme, despite the OIK, VAAO, FLA and KBA informing community members about their rights, remedies and benefits, including access to the CVC programme, during their interaction with cases. Thus, insufficient information about the CVC programme denotes a genuine need for informational sessions to educate individuals about victims' rights, as evidenced by the absence of applications for compensation.

The OIK is the only institution that conducts regular monthly and ad-hoc outreach visits in various municipalities and therefore has better visibility than the other two legal service providers. However, it was reported that the OIK no longer conducts monthly visits to municipalities in the Prishtinë/Priština region; they are instead conducted based on the needs and interest of citizens.

¹⁹ OIK 2023 Annual Report, <https://oik-rks.org/2024/03/29/> (Accessed December 2023). Montenegrin community and representatives of MOCR in Pejë/Peć region.

In Pejë/Peć and Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, the FLAA had conducted awareness-raising campaigns, targeting all non-majority communities, by distributing leaflets explaining their services, available in both Albanian and Serbian languages.

Every October, VAAO under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week". However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year.

In 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), none of whom were members of the Kosovo Montenegrin community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women)²⁰, involving 4,296 persons, none of which came from the Kosovo Montenegrin community (based on the number of cases in which the community was declared; there were 13 cases in which the community was not declared). VAAO did not register any Kosovo Montenegrin victim.

Kosovo Montenegrins are not reported to experience language barriers when using the legal system. When needed, they are provided with translation services at courts or other judicial or non-judicial institutions such as the OIK. Some struggle to pay court fees, but the law provides an exemption on the basis of economic hardship.²¹

²⁰ See, OIK 2023 Annual Report, <https://oik-rks.org/2024/03/29/> (Accessed December 2023)

²¹ See Articles 449–466 (procedural costs), Law No. 03/L-006 on Contested Procedure, 20 September 2008 and Law No. 04/L-118 on Amending and Supplementing the Law No. 03/L-006 on Contested Procedure, 16 October 2012.

8. Language use and media

Kosovo Montenegrins' mother tongue is the Montenegrin language.²² There are no significant impediments for this community to use their language in public spaces, government institutions, and shops, as well as to access municipal and public services. Because the Montenegrin language is quite similar to the Serbian language, community members use the Montenegrin language to interact with public authorities.

The Kosovo Montenegrin community has some access to Kosovo-sourced media in the Montenegrin language. "Crnogorski mozaik" broadcasts every Friday at 6 00 p.m. on Public Service Broadcaster of Kosovo (RTK 2). Additionally, due to the similarity of Montenegrin and Serbian languages, according to community representatives, Kosovo Montenegrin community has access to Serbian language-media in Kosovo.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, municipal webpages and social media accounts are used to convey information to the public, including press releases, events, and job announcements. The OSCE noted significant delays in updating the municipal webpages and social media accounts in both official languages, owing to poor translation capacity in municipal administration, particularly in Lipjan/Lipljan, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and Prishtinë/Priština municipalities. Nevertheless, information relevant to communities and their inclusion in social affairs, such as employment and job vacancies, is generally available and updated in both official languages. Municipal signs are partly displayed in both official languages.

The older generation is most likely to be bilingual; however, younger persons are more likely to speak only one of the official languages. Members of communities whose mother tongue is not an official language may have to learn one of the official languages depending on the municipality.

²² After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, four languages emerged from its former official language known as Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian.

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

In general, **Kosovo Montenegrins** enjoy freedom of religion and join Kosovo Serbs in the celebration of the Orthodox festivities in places of worship. Incidents involving the Serbian Orthodox Church and Orthodox graveyards may also affect the **Kosovo Montenegrin** community.²³

Kosovo Montenegrins are largely Christian Orthodox who share much of their religious and cultural heritage with Kosovo Serbs, including religious sites of the Serbian Orthodox Church and Orthodox cemeteries.

²³ Further information is provided in the Kosovo Serb community profile.

10. Property rights

Despite improvements in the policy and legislative framework on property rights in Kosovo, issues persist.

As with all other communities, **Kosovo Montenegrins** face challenges in exercising their property rights. Although some communities are more affected by institutions that violate or fail to protect their property rights, such as inadequate compensation for expropriated property or demolition of houses, **Kosovo Montenegrins** are mostly impacted by the illegal occupation of property and inadequate access to social housing.

The persistent practice of illegal occupation of the property of vulnerable communities warrants action by Kosovo law enforcement institutions.²⁴

In 2019 in Pejë/Peć town, a **Kosovo Montenegrin** reported to Kosovo Police the usurpation of his land parcel.

In 2019, the government approved a request from the Deçan/Dečani municipality to finance the reconstruction of a building in town for eight families, including one **Kosovo Montenegrin** family.²⁵

²⁴ In 2018, a Kosovo Montenegrin displaced person reported a case of illegal property occupation in Pejë/Peć town. Kosovo Police arrested the suspect, who claimed that he was aware the house did not belong to him, but he moved in because he did not have any other place to live. The prosecutor was informed of the case and ordered the suspect released through regular procedure. The case was resolved several years later when the owner sold the property.

²⁵ This information was provided by the Municipal Officer for Communities and Returns in Deçan/Dečani municipality.

11. Return and reintegration

Thousands of Montenegrins migrated over the past 20 years, and relatively few have returned. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that, between 2010 and 2023, 21 individuals from the Kosovo Montenegrin community returned to Kosovo.²⁶

²⁶ UNHCR, Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview* (December 2023). Five persons returned to Pejë/Peć, two to Istog/Istok, and one to Klinë/Klina.

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj

Community Profile

Kosovo Roma



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Roma Community Profile

The Kosovo Roma community¹ is the sixth-largest community in Kosovo.²

According to the 2011 census, 8,824 Kosovo Roma live in Kosovo, representing 0.51 per cent of the total population.³

Prizren municipality has the highest number of Kosovo Roma residents, where they constitute about 1.63 per cent of the total population, followed by the western municipalities of Pejë/Peć (about one per cent⁴) and Gjakovë/Đakovica (about 0.8 per cent⁵), as well as other municipalities like Gračanica/Gračanicë (nearly seven per cent⁶), Obiliq/Obilić (three per cent⁷), Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (300-400 residents), Lipjan/Lipljan⁸, Klinë/Klina (116), Rahovec/Orahovac (84), Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša (70), Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South (less than one per cent - 112 families with 400 members in the Adem Voca neighborhood), and Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality (38 families with 224 members in Priluzhë/Prelluzhë).

Smaller Kosovo Roma communities are located elsewhere in Kosovo: Shtime/Štimlje (20-25 residents), Malishevë/Mališevo (28), Suharekë/Suva Reka (20), Istog/Istok (39), and Deçan/Dečane (33).⁹ In Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality, there are five families with 23 members in the town and 14 families with 68 members in Kamen village. Ten families with 45 members are in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and nine families with 67 members in Podujevë/Podujevo.

¹ Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians identify themselves as persons belonging to three distinct communities, and are as such recognized by the Kosovo legislative framework, Kosovo institutions, and international organisations. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo fully recognizes the existence of three distinct communities and has in this publication sought to highlight their distinctive characteristics and experiences. However, due to the lack of reliable disaggregated data for the communities in some municipalities parts of this Profile include figures that represent Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians together.

² Statistical Agency of Kosovo, *Demographic Changes of the Kosovo Population 1948–2006* (2008).

³ However, the 2011 census was partially boycotted by the Kosovo Roma community.

⁴ About 1,300 community members.

⁵ About 740 community members.

⁶ Around 2,500 to 3,000. They mainly live in Gračanica/Gračanicë town, Laplje Selo/Llapllasellë, Preoce/Preoc, Čaglavica/Çagllavicë, Lepina/Lepi, Radevo/Radevë, Skulanevo/Skullan Suvi DO /Suhadoll, Gustrica/Gushtericë.

⁷ About 1,000 community members - mainly in Plemetina/Plemetin, Carravodicë/Crkvena Vodica and in the town.

⁸ Approximately 45 families/230 individuals, residing in the mixed-community village of Janjevë/Janjevo, and around ten families in Lipjan/Lipljan town.

⁹ OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018* (2019).

Approximately 407 (263 men and 144 women) reside in Gjilan/Gnjilane town,¹⁰ 357 in Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality (no gender disaggregated data is available),¹¹ 256 (130 men and 126 women) in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality,¹² 50 (23 women and 27 men) in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality,¹³ and nine families with 44 members (23 men and 21 women), in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality.¹⁴

¹⁰ Kosovo Roma employee in MOCR.

¹¹ Municipal Office for Communities and Return (MOCR).

¹² MOCR and Kosovo Roma community representative.

¹³ Kosovo Roma Community Committee (CC) member.

¹⁴ MOCR and Community representative.

Key facts and issues

- The number of security incidents that affect the Kosovo Roma community has generally declined, despite fluctuations.
- There is one deputy minister from the Kosovo Roma community in the Government formed in 2021: Sylejman Elshani, Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Of the 120 Assembly members, two are Kosovo Roma men.
- The Kosovo Roma community generally have open access to infrastructure and public utilities. Most infrastructure issues that impact this community involve insufficient capacity and overloaded systems at informal settlements throughout Kosovo.
- Kosovo Roma community members are more vulnerable to exclusion from social assistance schemes than other communities.
- Financial and geographic barriers in accessing healthcare services exist, as well as lack of awareness of the importance of preventative health care.
- Kosovo Roma students attend either Albanian or Serbian curriculum schools.
- The low socio-economic status of Kosovo Roma families affects children's access to education.
- Kosovo Roma most often speak the Romani language in private settings, and Albanian or Serbian to communicate with members of other communities and to request public services.

1. Security and safety

Over time, incidents against the Kosovo Roma community have generally decreased, except in 2019, when the number of incidents significantly increased compared to the previous year, to then return to a decreasing trend.¹⁵

Along with a high number of thefts and cases of fire or arson, there have been other serious incidents recorded,¹⁶ including incidents that involve sexual harassment, rape, and human trafficking,¹⁷ with Kosovo Roma children often being among the victims.¹⁸

In some recorded incidents involving physical assaults against Kosovo Roma community members, the perpetrators were juveniles.¹⁹ Kosovo Roma returnees have also been the targets of incidents.

In 2023, 16 Kosovo Roma community members (four women) were employed by the Kosovo Police, serving in Kosovo Police stations in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Shtime/Štimlje, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Novo Brdo/Novo-Bërdë, Pejë/Peć, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Rahovec/Orahovac, Malishevë/Malishevo, Prizren, Suhareke/Suvareka and in the sub-station Priluzhë/Prelluzhë in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality.

¹⁵ According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were 30 incidents in 2013, 27 in 2014, 22 in 2015, 15 in 2016, 16 in 2017, 11 in 2018, 21 in 2019, 11 in 2020, nine in 2021, 14 in 2022 and three in 2023.

¹⁶ In separate incidents that occurred in April 2015 and March 2017 in Prizren town, assailants stabbed Kosovo Roma community members. In the second case, the victim was a Kosovo Roma juvenile. The Kosovo Police identified and arrested three Kosovo Albanian juveniles. In March 2021, a 12-year-old Kosovo Roma boy was beaten in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In June 2021, a Kosovo Roma man was wounded with a firearm in Lisicë/Lisica village in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In November 2021, a Kosovo Roma young man was physically attacked and verbally insulted by the security personnel of a shopping mall in Prizren, allegedly for not wearing a Covid-19 protective mask. The incident was condemned by Kosovo Roma CSOs, and reported by the local media outlets. In October 2022, a Kosovo Roma reported to Kosovo Police that a Kosovo Albanian man had beaten him up in Pestovë/Pestovo village, Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality. Reportedly, the victim worked as a labour worker at the suspect's field.

¹⁷ In August 2017, a Kosovo Roma woman was raped in Prizren by a citizen of Albania. The Kosovo Police arrested a suspect.

¹⁸ In July 2017, a fight between several young Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Roma occurred in Rahovec/Orahovac town, where Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Roma reside. Two Kosovo Albanian juveniles were arrested for causing bodily injuries. In July 2019, a nine-year-old boy from Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje was raped and killed. The boy's mother had reported his rape by the suspect to police, but the suspect was released after questioning. Six months later, the child was found dead. The suspect was then arrested for rape and aggravated murder. Disciplinary investigations were initiated against two prosecutors involved in the case over suspicion that they failed to address claims of abuse in a timely and efficient manner. One of the prosecutors was disciplined by the Prosecutorial Council. A human rights lawyer took up the case and sought to hold officials accountable for inaction. (See the U.S. Department of State, Kosovo 2020 Human Rights Report.) In September 2019, three Kosovo Serb juveniles assaulted two Kosovo Roma juveniles at a school in Gračanica/Gračanicë. One Kosovo Roma sustained slight injuries, and one of the Kosovo Serb youths suspected of the assault was detained. In August 2021, in Prizren, a juvenile Kosovo Roma girl was physically abused and raped for three days by three Kosovo Albanian suspects, who kidnapped the victim from the street and took her to an uninhabited house.

¹⁹ In March 2017, in Zahaq/Zahač village, Pejë/Peć municipality, a Kosovo Roma community member was physically attacked by a Kosovo Albanian minor, causing slight injuries. In May and June 2019, a Kosovo Roma woman was physically assaulted twice by juveniles, in Lipjan/Lipljan and Ferizaj/Uroševac. After the second incident, the victim received medical treatment, and a Kosovo Albanian juvenile was arrested. The OSCE, the Ombudsperson in Kosovo, and European Centre for Minority Issues condemned the incidents. In January 2021 in Janjevo/Janjevë, Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, a Kosovo Roma reported that he was assaulted with dangerous weapons by two Kosovo Albanian juveniles.

Kosovo Police sub-stations are found in Kosovo Roma-inhabited areas such as Janjevë/Janjevo (Lipjan/Lipljan), Priluzhë/Prelluzhë (Vushtrri/Vučitrn), and Vitomiricë/Vitimirica (Pejë/Peć).

There are 14 members of the Kosovo Roma community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).²⁰

²⁰ As of November 2023.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Roma community is represented by one deputy minister in the Government formed in 2021: Sylejman Elshani is the Deputy Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports.

In the Government in place before March 2021, Erxhan Galushi of the United Roma Party of Kosovo (PREBK) served as the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and Gazmen Salijević was the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Communities and Return. Salijević continued in this role in the Government formed in 2021, until May 2023.

Erxhan Galushi and Fadil Gashi from the Romani Initiative (RI) currently represent the community in the Assembly. In the previous mandate, the community was represented by the leader of PREBK, Albert Kinolli, who also served as leader of the 6+ Caucus.²¹ Another Kosovo Roma party that participated in the 2019 Assembly elections was the New Kosovo Roma Party (KNRP).

The two seats reserved for the Kosovo Roma community in the Consultative Council for Communities are held by a woman and a man.

Kosovo Roma community members constituted 0.14 per cent of the government-level civil service, as of 2017.²² The community was under-represented in the municipal civil service in eight out of ten municipalities where it should have held at least one post according to the 2011 census (Pejë/Peć, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Obiliq/Obilić, Prizren, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, and Kamenicë/Kamenica).²³

The Kosovo Roma community is represented in communities' committees (CCs) in 24 municipalities, by 18 men and six women. It is currently not represented in the CCs in six municipalities where the community resides, according to the 2011 census.²⁴ No Kosovo Roma community member is appointed as CC chairperson, deputy mayor for communities or deputy municipal assembly chairperson for communities.²⁵

²¹ The 6+ Caucus is a parliamentary group comprised of non-Kosovo Serb MPs from non-majority communities.

²² More recent data are not available.

²³ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo: Follow-Up Report* (May 2017).

²⁴ CCs in Dragash/Dragaš, Istog/Istok, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Leposaviq/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Viti/Vitina municipalities. Population estimates for the four northern municipalities are based on the OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2018 *Municipal Profiles*, due to unavailability of census data. Kosovo Roma women's representation within CCs remains particularly challenging (23 per cent).

²⁵ In Obiliq/Obilić, although the largest non-majority community is Kosovo Roma (based on the 2011 census), the deputy mayor for communities is a Kosovo Serb. The Ministry of Local Government Administration did not object to the appointment, as the mechanism is not mandatory in the municipality (see also Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian Profiles).

The Kosovo Roma community is represented in eight municipal offices for communities and returns (MOCRs) by eight men.²⁶

There are 21 Kosovo Roma members represented in the Municipal Community Safety Councils (MCSCs)²⁷ in the following municipalities: a woman in each of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Pejë/Peć and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa, and a man in each of Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Podujevë/Podujevo, Deçan/Dečane, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Lipjan/Lipljan, Obiliq/Obilić, Shtime/Štimlje, Prishtinë/Priština, Malishevë/Mališevo, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

Prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) led by Kosovo Roma and/or working on issues affecting the Kosovo Roma community include Roma "Versitas Kosovo"; "Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians" (VoRAE); "Network of Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations" (RROGRAEK); "Advancing Together"; "Roma Ashkalia Documentation Centre"; and "Balkan Sunflowers". Other active NGOs include the "Ideas Partnership" in the Prishtinë/Priština region; "Roma in Action", "Syri i Vizionit" (Eye of the vision), "JETA" (Life)²⁸, "Vizioni 02" (Vision 02), "Bethany Christian Services" and "Prosperiteti" (Prosperity) in the Pejë/Peć region; "Zëri i Rinisë Rome dhe Ashkalive të Mitrovicës" (ZRRAM) (Voice of the Roma and Ashkali of Mitrovica), "Shukarno Talenti" (Beautiful Talents), "Gjuvlljano Mangipe" (Broad knowledge), "Roma Road", "Romano Anglunipe" and "Qendrimi" (Persistence) in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region; and "Nevo Koncepti" (New concept) "Durmish Asllano", "Sakuntala", "Rromani Baxt" (Romani Luck), "Iniciativa 6" (Initiative 6) and "Concordia Tranzit Centre" in Prizren. In 2023, the OSCE supported Kosovo Roma youth from Kamenicë/Kamenica to establish the "Luludi" NGO.

26 In Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Prizren. Of note, in Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje, the Kosovo Roma officer is not on the municipal payroll, but currently remunerated through a donor-funded project.

27 The aim of MCSCs is to institutionalize co-operation between municipal institutions, communities, and Kosovo Police. Each community residing in the municipality should have a representative in the MSCS, regardless of the size or sense of ethnic belonging of the population. For communities with very small population at the municipal level, this representation can be difficult to achieve. MSCSs were established by Administrative Instruction No. 27/2012 of MIA (Article 4), and their composition by Administrative Instruction No. 03/2012 of the Ministry of Local Government Administration.

28 Run by a Kosovo Albanian woman, provides vocational and handicrafts training and other project activities to non-majority communities, including Kosovo Roma.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The socio-economic situation of the Kosovo Roma community is of serious concern. Poverty levels in the community remain significantly higher compared to other communities in Kosovo.

Unequal opportunities resulting from deeply rooted structural discrimination, high unemployment rates, and often poor and insecure infrastructure, make this community extremely vulnerable. Due to limited education and vocational training, many Kosovo Roma community members lack the qualifications and skills that could create economic opportunities, thus amplifying socio-economic exclusion.

The **unemployment rate** within the Kosovo Roma community is above 90 per cent.²⁹ Officially, in 2018, 1.8 per cent of the Kosovo Roma community was registered as unemployed from a total of 95,890 unemployed persons; and 1,269 Kosovo Roma were registered as active job seekers. However, official unemployment statistics about this community are limited and do not portray the true extent of the employment situation.³⁰ The community's access to employment services and vocational training provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and other organizations is limited due to its weak access to information on job opportunities.³¹ Some municipalities, notably in Pejë/Peć and Gjiilan/Gnjilane regions, offer income-generating programs for community members, as does the European Union (EU) through its Community Stabilization Programme along with a number of NGOs.

A high number of Kosovo Roma between ages 18 and 24 were qualified as "not in education, employment, or training (NEET)" in 2018. Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians, made up 78 per cent of young persons considered NEET.³²

Kosovo Roma women face even higher unemployment rates. Women in Kosovo generally face discrimination regardless of ethnicity; however, due to multiple discrimination and entrenched notions of gender roles, Kosovo Roma women remain particularly vulnerable.³³

²⁹ European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2023 Report* (2023), p. 100.

³⁰ Kosovo Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 19.

³¹ European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2020 Report* (2020), p. 38.

³² International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Youth on Decent Work Opportunities and Challenges in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.

³³ Ibid., p. 42.

Kosovo Center for Gender Studies, *Position of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (2018), pp. 4 and 15

Kosovo Education and Employment Network, *Towards a New Policy: Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo 2016–2020* (2020), p. 15.

Young women were disproportionately represented among those classified as NEET; up to 88 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian young women were considered NEET in 2018. In addition, young women's employment rate was quite low: only four per cent. Perhaps as a partial reflection of a low economic status, only 37 per cent of women from the three communities held a positive perception of their lives, compared with 51 per cent of women from other communities in Kosovo.³⁴

Securing a job in the private sector is a challenge for the Kosovo Roma community. Community members generally work in the informal sector in insecure, low-skilled, and low-status jobs, such as seasonal construction and agricultural work, woodcutting, and collection of scrap metal and recyclable materials.³⁵ The presence of Kosovo Roma in the informal job market in Kosovo is higher compared with elsewhere in the region.³⁶ A number of community members own small businesses, such as car repair, textile, and handicraft shops.

The Kosovo Roma community has been poorly represented in the **civil service**, especially at the government level. Most Kosovo Roma community members employed in the civil service hold technical or administrative jobs; women outnumber men in this category.³⁷ Apart from those few civil service positions, fewer than 100 Kosovo Roma community members hold jobs in the public sector, including in health care, education, utility and waste companies, as well as in the Kosovo Customs, Kosovo Police, and Kosovo Security Force.³⁸ Kosovo Roma also often work in community-based learning centres that provide educational support to students from the community, as well as in numerous local and regional NGOs.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, only 18 of about 407 Kosovo Roma individuals are officially registered as employed, across both the public and private sectors. Thirty-four Kosovo Roma individuals are active job seekers and 37 families receive social assistance, as of end of 2023. In Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, only seven of the 357 Kosovo Roma individuals, are officially registered as employed across the public and private sectors. Forty-five Kosovo Roma community members are active job seekers, while 50 families benefit social assistance.

In Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, only two Kosovo Roma community members, a woman and a man, are registered as active job seekers. Eight families (30 individuals) receive social assistance. Only six individuals are employed in the public sector. According to the MOCR and the Kosovo Roma community representative, 20 Kosovo Roma individuals are employed in the private sector as blacksmiths, and 10 to 15 men work as rope makers or in construction. Of the 44 Kosovo Roma residing in Štrpce/Shtërpce municipality, 18 are children. One Kosovo Roma community member is employed in the public utility company, three Kosovo Roma families own

34 International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Youth on Decent Work Opportunities and Challenges in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21.

35 European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2020 Report* (2020), p. 79.
OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2020).

36 European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2019 Report*, p. 31.

37 OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo: Follow-Up Report* (2017), pp. 17 and 23.

38 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2020).

private businesses (a shop and two welding workshops), and 11 individuals receive social assistance. One Kosovo Roma displaced family benefited from the construction of a house as a part of an EU project.

In **Prizren**, the age groups most affected by the very high unemployment rate are the 20-30 age bracket and those over 50, both men and women. Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency in Prizren, there are currently 238 active job seekers from the Roma community, including 100 women. Two Kosovo Roma work at the Prizren municipality, two at family health centres and some at Prizren hospital, mainly as nurses and administrative/support staff. Some community members are employed on a project basis by NGOs, where a few are led by Roma activists.

In **Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša** municipality, three Kosovo Roma women are engaged in cleaning and maintenance of municipal premises through a private company. Kosovo Roma community members who work privately are predominantly employed in supermarkets and shops. Some also work in NGOs as project staff, volunteers or collaborators.

In **Rahovec/Orahovac** municipality, most of the 84 Kosovo Roma residents are beneficiaries of social assistance, with only one registered as an active job seeker. While projects are available from the MCR, the Kosovo Roma community members are not eligible as they are beneficiaries of social assistance.

The general economic situation is largely unchanged throughout the **Pejë/Peć** region, with unemployment exceptionally high and those who work have low-income jobs. Many community members receive social assistance.

In **Gračanica/Gračanicë** municipality, there are 20 Kosovo Roma (three women and 17 men) employed in the public sector, mainly health, education and administration, while there are around 30 to 40 men working in the public service company for garbage collection. According to the Kosovo Roma community representative, the number of residents receiving social assistance is very low. There have been many complaints from community members about cases rejected by the social welfare centre. In **Lipjan/Lipljan** municipality, most of the community members are unemployed and receive social assistance from both the Kosovo and Belgrade-run institutions. In **Novo Brdo/Novobërdë** municipality, nine of the 58 Kosovo Roma individuals are employed in the public sector and none in the private sector, seven are registered as active job seekers - an increase from just one in 2020, and six Kosovo Roma families receive social assistance.

In **Obiliq/Obilić**, there is one Kosovo Roma working in the municipality and three in the education sector (Serbian curriculum) and in Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Kosovo Roma community members reported to have not recently benefitted from projects to facilitate their employment. In Shtime/Štimlje and in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipalities, there are no community members employed in the public sector. In the latter municipality almost half of the community is engaged in waste collection for recycling purposes. According to a Kosovo Roma community representative, around 80 per cent of Kosovo Roma households receive social assistance from both systems, alongside educational subsidies for children.

In **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica** region, as in other regions, most working age community members are unemployed or engaged in private businesses such as construction, agriculture, and collection of plastic recyclable materials. In Priluzhë/Prelluzhë village in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality, there are four **Kosovo Roma** men employed by the Belgrade-run educational institutions. In Adem Voca neighborhood in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipality, there are a few companies active in a business incubator established a few years ago by the NGO Danish Refugee Council. A few **Kosovo Roma** community members run small businesses, such as barber shops, electronic service stores, recycling collection, and small cafeterias.

Child labour is particularly prevalent among **Kosovo Roma**, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities. Accurate, community disaggregated data is not available. However, 17 per cent³⁹ of **Kosovo Roma**, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian children are estimated to be involved in child labour. Children collect cans from litterbins, clean car window screens, sell items on the streets and in cafes, or beg for money. Child labour is closely linked to levels of family poverty, limited attainment of education, and lack of parental care and supervision.⁴⁰ There is a gender discrepancy, since more boys are involved in child labour than girls.⁴¹

Thirteen per cent of **Kosovo Roma**, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian children work in hazardous conditions, including performing physical labour in the fields, cutting trees, operating agricultural machinery, working in underground mines, spraying pesticides, dumpster diving, or working in slaughterhouses. In some cases, children work to financially assist their families. Organized criminal groups take advantage of these children, especially in forced begging.⁴² It is widely believed, based on OSCE reporting, that many children engaged in child begging and child labour come from the Republic of Albania or other places within Kosovo.

Overall, child labour undermines access to education and negatively impacts its quality. The practice leads to a significant number of school dropouts, which in turn limits future opportunities and consequently contributes to a persistent cycle of social exclusion. However, in Gjilan/Gnjilane region, for example, child labour is not as prevalent as in previous years, following awareness-raising campaigns run by the centre for social work.

Kosovo Roma, together with the Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities, constitute the second-largest group among those from Kosovo seeking asylum in EU member states.⁴³ Many **Kosovo Roma** identify poverty, lack of social welfare and health care coverage, and unemployment as the primary reasons for migration.⁴⁴

39 See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Youth on Decent Work Opportunities and challenges in Kosovo* (2018) p. 24.

40 Office of Good Governance, *Mapping and assessment of child protection system* (2012), p. 25; UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (2017), p. 89.

41 See International Labour Organization, *Perspectives of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Youth on Decent Work Opportunities and challenges in Kosovo* (2018) p. 23-24.

42 UNICEF, *Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo* (October 2017), p. 92.

43 European Union, European Asylum Support Office, *Asylum Applicants from the Western Balkans: Comparative Analysis of Trends, Push-Pull Factors and Responses – Update* (May 2015), p. 10; European Asylum Support Office, *Asylum Applicants from the Western Balkans: Comparative Analysis of Trends, Push-Pull Factors and Responses* (2013), p. 23.

44 OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report* (2015), p. 26.

There is also seasonal migration to seek work in both the EU and neighbouring countries, such as Albania, North Macedonia, or Montenegro.

In 2022, the Kosovo government established a platform for anti-discrimination against members of the three communities to enable them to report incidents of discrimination based on ethnicity. In 2023, the Government created an inter-institutional team for the promotion of the employment of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities to increase employment of the three communities in the civil service and other employment opportunities.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

The generally poor socio-economic situation of the Kosovo Roma impedes access to infrastructure and public utilities. The community faces a plethora of serious issues: irregular waste collection, absence of basic infrastructure in informal settlements, poor housing conditions, and accumulated electricity bills.

The highest number of Kosovo Roma is in the Prizren region, where almost all live in mixed-community neighbourhoods, with access to reliable electricity, water, and sewage systems. Nevertheless, numerous houses are in need of repair, and some are in substandard condition. In 2017, the Prizren municipality allocated 20,000 euros for house repairs, and in co-operation with the NGO VoRAE, financed an additional 24 house renovations. In 2019, the Prizren Municipal Directorate of Labour and Social Welfare financed the construction or partial rehabilitation of 15 houses of vulnerable Kosovo Roma families and, through a project co-financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, constructed 15 houses for Kosovo Roma families. In 2020 and 2021, the municipal office for communities and returns renovated ten houses. In the Jeta e Re neighbourhood, Kosovo Roma NGOs "Nevi Koncepti" and "Durmish Asllano" advocated for improvements to the sewage system, which was reportedly solved by the Municipality.⁴⁵

In the Pejë/Peć region, the community's access to infrastructure and public utilities is mixed. For those living in the villages of Vitomiricë/Vitimirica and Brestovik, where infrastructure is generally satisfactory, the poor condition of some houses is the main concern, as in Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok and Deçan/Dečane municipalities. Through a ROMACTED project with the support of the MOCR, a new sewage system was completed in September 2020 in the Kosovo Roma-inhabited village of Serbobran/Srbobran, Istog/Istok municipality.

In 2022, in the "Ali Ibra" neighbourhood in Gjakovë/Đakovica town, the main roads were paved, a sewage system was constructed and the landfill next to it was cleaned up. A waste transfer station funded by the EU significantly improved the living conditions of the community. Road paving continued in 2023. During 2022 and 2023 infrastructure improvements were also made in other areas in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality where the community resides. In Skivjan/Skivjane village, four houses were constructed and several roads were paved.

45 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2020), pp. 78-79.

In Piskotë/Piskote, one house was constructed and three were renovated, and several streets were constructed or paved. In “Brekoc/Brekovac” neighbourhood, two houses were constructed and three were renovated. In the “Mahalla e Sefes” neighbourhood, a house was renovated and roads were either paved or constructed in that and “Mehmet Hyseni” neighbourhoods.⁴⁶

Access to potable water remains an issue for Kosovo Roma in Klinë/Klina municipality, where they rely on private wells, except for in Klinafç/Klinavac village in the municipality.

Between 2021 and 2023, in Pejë/Peć municipality, several of the roads in “7 Shtatori/7 Septembar” neighbourhood in Pejë/Peć town and Vitomiricë/Vitomirica village, were paved, and the longstanding issue with septic tanks in the village of Qungur/Ćungur was solved.

In Prishtinë/Priština region, community members mainly reside in semi-formal settlements in individual permanent housing, generally with satisfactory access to electricity, water, street lights and sewage systems. However, poorly constructed sewage systems in Kosovo Roma areas in Janjevë/Janjevo and Lipjan/Lipljan pose health hazards to the community. In Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, the municipality made efforts to connect all Kosovo Roma families in the two neighbourhoods where Kosova Roma reside (28 and 29) to the water supply system.

In Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality, the water supply system is very old, road conditions are poor and the sewage system does not function properly. In Obiliq/Obilić municipality, in 2018, the OSCE Mission and the Embassy of Luxemburg invested in the repair of a Kosovo Roma-inhabited building in Plemetin/Plemetina village that had been destroyed by strong winds. Kosovo Roma community members reported to have not benefitted from any renovation support from the municipality.

In Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, Gjilan/Gnjilane region, water supply and poor housing conditions remain an issue affecting the Kosovo Roma community. In 2018, the regional water company in this municipality connected all households in Berivojcë/Berivojce village to the water network, including seven Kosovo Roma returnee families. However, as of December 2023, the tap water was still not potable due to contamination of water wells in 2020.⁴⁷ Residents in Berivojcë/Berivojce mostly rely on private water wells, and residents in Kamenicë/Kamenica town buy bottled water. The Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality also worked to clear an illegal waste disposal site in the Abdullah Presheva/Abdulah Preševo neighbourhood.⁴⁸

In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, the Kosovo Roma community reside in dedicated return sites with access to potable water, electricity, sewage networks, and adequate housing. In the Adem Voca neighborhood in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, the municipality provided land for housing and, together with international organizations, it provided funds for building houses for community

⁴⁶ To note, there are no disaggregated data for these beneficiaries, so there is no final information if they belong to Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma or Kosovo Egyptian communities.

⁴⁷ MOCR.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

members. Their dwellings are owned by the municipality and contracted to community members to use them free of charge for up to 20 years. In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, the municipality and international donors constructed a 5-story apartment complex, owned by the municipality but contracted to Kosovo Roma community members free of charge.

In Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality, most of the Kosovo Roma reside in an informal settlement in the Kosovo Serb-majority village of Priluzhje/Prelluzhë. The houses are constructed on municipal land, and some are in poor condition. Roads in the Roma Mahalla settlement in the village remain unpaved and unlit. In Leposavić/Leposaviq municipality, the Kosovo Roma reside in the former Serbian Red Cross facility in Leposavić/Leposaviq town and Kamen village where houses and roads are in poor condition. Some roads lack street lighting. In 2019, a sewage system and a well were built in the village. In Podujevë/Podujevo town, Kosovo Roma community reside in two settlements that require repairs to the sewage systems.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

The Kosovo Roma community benefit from social assistance provided by Prishtinë/Priština, Belgrade,⁴⁹ or both.

In general, current social welfare legislation has created stricter criteria for families to qualify as eligible for social assistance. A narrow definition of “families who live in a single household” has adversely impacted multi-generational families in the Kosovo Roma community. In Lipjan/Lipljan and in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipalities, according to community representatives, the majority of community members receive social assistance through both the Kosovo system and Belgrade-run institutions, alongside education subsidies for children. In Gračanica/Gračanicë, the number of Kosovo Roma receiving social assistance is reportedly very low. Community members complained about cases rejected by the social welfare centre. In Obiliq/Obilić, community members reported that the change of criteria in the attribution of social benefit had excluded families in need from social welfare.

As of March 2019, 2,000 Kosovo Roma were eligible to receive social assistance from Prishtinë/Priština (813 men and 1,187 women). Reliable data on social assistance from Belgrade are unavailable.⁵⁰

According to the head of the MOCR in Podujevë/Podujevo municipality, there are five Kosovo Roma families, with 37 members, receiving social assistance. In the other municipalities in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, the majority of Kosovo Roma community members reportedly receive social assistance.

Health care is available but underutilized in the case of the Kosovo Roma community. Poverty and distance from medical facilities are two obstacles.⁵¹ Financial hardship in accessing health care is aggravated by the absence of universal healthcare coverage and poverty.⁵² In addition, the Kosovo Roma community is often subject to discrimination, which can express itself in the delivery of poor-quality health services.⁵³

49 Following the Kosovo Central Bank’s adoption of a regulation in December 2023, establishing the euro as the only currency allowed for cash transactions in Kosovo, which took effect on 1 February 2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo field teams received reports that this change has affected the community relying on financial support from the government of Serbia.

50 OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2020), pp. 4–5.

51 KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo’s Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 46.

52 European Commission, Working Document, *Kosovo 2019 Report*, p. 31.

53 KOSANA, *New National Insurance Will Save Lives: Life Expectancy and Health in Kosovo’s Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities* (2016), p. 46.

The poor health of Kosovo Roma community members compared with the general population is largely a result of unhealthy living conditions; lack of sanitation and basic hygiene, and immunization; and limited use of preventative healthcare services.⁵⁴ A single stark statistic highlights the discrepancy between the Kosovo Roma and the larger community: although free reproductive healthcare services are provided for women in most municipalities,⁵⁵ the infant mortality rate among Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities is three times higher than the Kosovo average, and community members are insufficiently aware that such health services exist.⁵⁶

In Ferizaj/Uroševac, the Kosovo Roma community uses and has good access to Kosovo healthcare facilities in close proximity to where they reside.⁵⁷ From 2021 to 2023, several health awareness campaigns were organised in the settlements mainly inhabited by the Kosovo Roma community, to raise awareness of the importance of immunisation in preventing diseases. The campaigns informed community members about the new calendar of vaccination for children up to 18 years old. The Balkan Sunflowers NGO, supported by UNICEF, also organized several health awareness raising campaigns related to vaccination and immunization.⁵⁸ Together with the health centre in the municipality, they organized additional immunization days targeting members of the Kosovo Roma community. As part of this campaign, two mobile teams have been established who organize door-to-door campaigns. Vaccination services are regularly provided by the immunization team, five days a week, in the health centres located in the settlements inhabited by Kosovo Roma.⁵⁹ According to health officials, the infant mortality rate within the Kosovo Roma community in Ferizaj/Uroševac has decreased throughout the reporting period.

The rate of vaccinated children from the Kosovo Roma community across the Gjilan/Gnjilane region has greatly improved: it is now approximately the same as the majority community.

In 2022, the OSCE implemented a campaign to encourage women from non-majority communities to undergo mammogram check-ups in Ferizaj/Uroševac and Gjilan/Gnjilane municipalities, and delivered presentations on reproductive health and provided free mammograms to community members in Gjakovë/Đakovica and Pejë/Peć towns. It held a campaign specifically targeting Kosovo Roma women from Priluzhje/Prelluzhë in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality and Adem Voca neighbourhood in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South for breast cancer awareness and testing. In 2023, the OSCE implemented health awareness campaigns targeting non-majority communities in Gjilan/Gnjilane on breast cancer, in Istog/Istok on reproductive

⁵⁴ Civil Rights Defenders, *Wall of Anti-Gypsyism: Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo* (2018), p. 21; Kosovo Office of Good Governance, *Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017–2021* (2017), p. 26.

⁵⁵ Free reproductive health care is provided to all communities in the following municipalities: Deçan/Dečane, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Lipjan/Lipljan, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka.

⁵⁶ Kosovo Office of Good Governance, *Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017–2021* (April 2017), p. 27.

⁵⁷ Chief of Immunisation Unit, Ferizaj/Uroševac.

⁵⁸ NGO BRAN.

⁵⁹ Chief of Immunisation Unit, Ferizaj/Uroševac.

health, and in Kamenicë/Kamenica on infectious diseases, healthy nutrition and chronic illnesses.

The health centres located in the settlements inhabited by the Kosovo Roma community organise regular information sessions to raise awareness among men, women and youth on a variety of health-related topics. NGOs are also implementing some health awareness campaigns, including on HIV/AIDS, narcotics use, vaccinations, reproductive health, breast cancer prevention and lead poisoning, among other topics, in Gjakovë/Đakovica, Pejë/Peć, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, and Rahovec/Orahovac.⁶⁰ Between 2020 and 2022, civil society and the Ministry of Health delivered a number of information sessions in community neighbourhoods in Gjakovë/Đakovica on diabetes, hypertension, vaccination, and healthcare for pregnant women and children.

Lack of personal documentation remains a recurring problem for the Kosovo Roma community. It is reported that 93 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian children under the age of five are registered. Birth registration is hampered by lack of awareness of civil registration procedures.⁶¹ Kosovo institutions have implemented several measures aimed at increasing civil registration in the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities, including introducing free registration days to facilitate civil registration.⁶² Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, for example, provides free registration for Kosovo Roma community members and regularly implements measures to increase civil registration of the Kosovo Roma community, at no cost.⁶³ Across the Gjilan/Gnjilane region, all births of Kosovo Roma babies are registered.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ NGO BRAN.

⁶¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics, *2013–2014 Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (2014), pp. 126–127.

Accurate community-specific data on the number of unregistered persons are unavailable.

⁶² OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report* (2015), pp. 25–26; Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, *Fourth Opinion on Kosovo* (2017), p. 30.

⁶³ MOCR

⁶⁴ MOCR

6. Access to education

Kosovo Roma students attend classes in the Albanian and Serbian languages in both curriculum schools. Generally, Kosovo Roma parents tend to choose Serbian-curriculum schools for their children when they are available and easily accessible.

One of the challenges in assessing education provision for the Kosovo Roma community is that they are frequently grouped together with Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians for the purposes of monitoring, policy planning and interventions.

Until 2019 in Strezoc/Strezovce village, Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, Kosovo Roma students were attending a Kosovo curriculum school which closed following education reforms by the municipality. Subsequently, they moved to a Serbian curriculum school, and as of December 2023, there are no Kosovo Roma students in the Kosovo curriculum schools in the municipality.

Since 2011, the Kosovo curriculum has provided an optional Romani-language subject module that includes history and culture elements for students in schools that choose to offer it. Currently, the Romani-language class is offered in Prizren and Lipjan/Lipljan, while Serbian curriculum schools provide Romani language tuition for Kosovo Roma students in Kamenicë/Kamenica and Gjilan/Gnjilane municipalities.

Many Kosovo Roma students greatly rely on the support and assistance of learning centres throughout their education. Learning centres provide complementary education for children who suffer the consequences of socio-economic exclusion. These centres had primarily been dependent on donor support, although a 2018 administrative instruction aimed at regulating the centres also provides for funding from central and local budgets. However, delays by government and municipal institutions in providing the funds, coupled with lack of clarity about the extent of funding to be made available, have left learning centres underfunded, and many were forced to close.⁶⁵

In August 2023, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) announced that parents were requested to purchase school textbooks for grades 1 to 5, and would then be reimbursed based on an online application.

⁶⁵ For more on Learning Centres, see OSCE Report *Overview of Learning Centres in Kosovo and the Implementation of Administrative Instruction 19/201* (2023).

The decision triggered several concerns, in particular for the most vulnerable communities and families in poor economic conditions who had to rely on NGO support to access the subsidies, as some community members were without bank accounts or have low computer literacy.

To encourage students to stay enrolled in school beyond the first years of compulsory education, MESTI provides 500 scholarships to secondary school students each year in the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities who attend Kosovo curriculum schools. The funding is supported by donors, including the European Commission and Roma Education Fund.

Kosovo Roma students who attend Kosovo-curriculum schools are more likely to proceed to university than those who attend Serbian-curriculum schools. Reserved places for non-Albanian students, including Kosovo Roma, are available at public universities. Further, the NGOs Roma Versitas, VoRAE, and Roma Education Fund support university students from the Kosovo Roma community, as well as Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian students.

According to MESTI, 1,157 Kosovo Roma students were enrolled in pre-university education during the 2023–2024 school year. However, information that is available about education specific to the Kosovo Roma community is extremely limited. In addition, the provision of education for Kosovo Roma by Serbian-curriculum schools in Kosovo is not systematically monitored.⁶⁶

Among the most complex challenges Kosovo Roma students face is their families' marginalization and generally very limited financial resources, which often lead to child labour and school truancy. For example, with the onset of distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic, Kosovo Roma students faced many more challenges than other communities in accessing the online learning process, due to the lack of or inadequate IT tools and internet connections. However, school dropout rates among Kosovo Roma children are decreasing.

Irregular student transport has been the cause of some dropouts in the community. For example, in Janjevë/Janjevo village in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, Kosovo Roma students who commuted to Gračanica/Graçanicë to attend Serbian-curriculum secondary schools reported transportation issues. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Kosovo Roma students who attend Serbian-curriculum schools in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North face challenges in physically accessing the schools, as the foot bridge over the river Ibër/Ibar that connects the two municipalities no longer exists and crossing the main bridge daily is perceived by the community as a potential security risk for children.

Some municipalities, however, responded to complaints by parents from the community. Children in Serbobran/Srbobran village in Istog/Istok municipality had been forced to walk in heavy traffic along streets without sidewalks to school in

⁶⁶ Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, *Education Statistics in 2023/2024* (2023).

In most cases, data used for monitoring, policy planning, and interventions are collected and presented jointly for the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptian communities. The general lack of detailed community-specific data is particularly problematic when examining education and school attendance.

Gjurakoc/Đurakovac and to Llukaft i Thatë/Suvi Lukavac, so municipal institutions in Istog/Istok responded to parents' concerns by providing transport for students.

Girls and women from the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities face additional challenges in accessing education due to child and/or early marriages⁶⁷ and traditional gender roles in these communities. Overall, 13.7 per cent of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian girls do not proceed from lower to upper-secondary education, compared to 11.3 per cent of boys from their communities.⁶⁸ In addition, four per cent of girls do not proceed from primary to lower-secondary education, compared to 6.1 per cent of boys from the same community.⁶⁹ Child marriages are one factor in discontinuation of education,⁷⁰ but it is difficult to draw a direct link between child marriages and lower attainment of education among girls from the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities. The lack of accurate and comparable community-disaggregated data on the number of children getting married before they reach 18 years complicates efforts to measure the adverse effect of child marriages on girls' education, not only for these three but for all the other communities as well.

In late 2023, the Government established an inter-institutional working group for the prevention and reporting of early marriages in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Kosovo Roma students generally interact with students from other communities without incidents. However, in some Serbian-curriculum schools, especially in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Serb students are taught separately, allowing virtually no interaction between communities. This segregation led to complaints from Kosovo Roma parents and community representatives, who alleged the students received education inferior to that of the majority community. In municipalities such as Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica and Štrpce/Shtërpçë, positive interactions between Kosovo Roma students and their Kosovo Serb peers were reported.

⁶⁷ *Child marriage and early marriage* are overlapping terms. Under the Child Protection Law in Kosovo, a "child" is considered "any human being under the age of eighteen (18)". [Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection, Article 3](#). Legally, "child marriage" and "early marriage" are considered the same: marriage of a child under age 18. *Forced marriage* is a marriage in which one or both spouses, regardless of age, did not consent. In Kosovo Family Law, "a person who has not reached the age of eighteen shall not enter into wedlock" (Article 16), except for justifiable reasons (Article 16b). Article 18 states that a "marriage shall not be valid when the will has been obtained under coercion, threat or by mistake or any other lack of free will of the future spouses". Law No. 2004/32 Family Law (2006) and [Law No. 06/L-077 on Amending and Supplementing the Family Law No. 2004/32](#).

⁶⁸ UNICEF, [Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo](#) (2017), Table 16: Pathway Analysis in Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities by Gender; p. 79.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ UNFPA, [Child Marriage in Kosovo \(Overview\)](#), (2014).

7. Access to justice

There are no representatives of the Kosovo Roma community employed in any of the non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK), and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO). Furthermore, there are no Kosovo Roma lawyers licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

OSCE field monitoring reports that members of the Kosovo Roma community generally enjoy formal access to the justice system. However, there is a general lack of knowledge in the community about its rights as well as legal procedures and the possibility of free legal assistance. Poverty is the main impediment to accessing the legal system, as court fees, legal costs, and even transportation can pose a considerable financial burden.

Kosovo Roma community members are generally unaware of the services provided through the FLAA, OIK and VAAO. Community members most aware of these services are those who work in or engage with municipal institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, as well as students. Awareness-raising campaigns that target the wider community, particularly families living in rural areas, could be effective; an example is efforts to increase the visibility of the FLAA.

Generally, the Kosovo Roma community does not face challenges in accessing free legal services. However, families in remote areas struggle with transportation and related costs in accessing them. Representatives of Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Egyptian communities in Pejë/Peć region stated that the level of knowledge of the OIK, FLAA, and VAAO services is quite low, despite some activities having been carried out by these respective institutions and their representatives taking part in various awareness raising activities organized by different actors. In general, Kosovo Roma living in Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities perceive their access to legal mechanisms as less hindered than Kosovo Roma residing in Kosovo Albanian-majority municipalities. Nevertheless, financial constraints remain a concern for the entire community.

In 2023, with the support of the USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages as well as in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the official languages.

Since October 2021, the OIK is leading the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson and CSOs that gathers different CSOs, including the ones representing Kosovo Roma.⁷¹ In March 2023, together with the NGO "ROMTEGRA", the Ombudsperson visited several Kosovo Roma families in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica with the aim to provide information and to discuss their challenges and concerns. In co-operation with the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North, the Ombudsperson also met with CSOs in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Pejë/Peć and held roundtable discussions, organized by the ACDC, about the concerns of communities related to respect, protection and promotion of their rights.⁷²

In 2023, the OIK published an ex-officio report regarding the lack of suitable living conditions for Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities returned to Obiliq from North Macedonia.⁷³

VAAO under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week" in October, every year. However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year.

Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) programme.

In addition, Kosovo Roma community members from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South recently alleged discriminatory treatment by the OIK. Community members said that when financial assistance payments stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic, they had submitted a complaint but never received a reply.

In 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 506 were members of the Kosovo Roma community. In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),⁷⁴ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, 19 were filed by the Kosovo Roma community. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, 26 victims were Kosovo Roma and 53 members of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities (not every region provides a breakdown by individual community). The majority of victims were women.

Among the Kosovo Roma community, language is not perceived as a barrier in accessing legal institutions, as the vast majority of community members are fluent in either the Albanian or the Serbian language.

⁷¹ The aim of the Forum is to create a common platform for cooperation between the OIK and CSOs, for the advancement of protection of human rights, for the identification of challenges and violations of fundamental rights and freedoms and the development of joint activities on their promotion and protection.

⁷² For more information please see: <https://oik-rks.org/en/2023/12/05/the-ombudsperson-met-representatives-of-civil-society-organizations-from-the-region-of-peja/> (Accessed December 2023).

⁷³ Ombudsperson Institution, *Lack of suitable living conditions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities returned to Obiliq, from Republic of North Macedonia* (2018).

⁷⁴ See Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2023*.

8. Language use and media

Kosovo Roma communities speak the Romani language, and several Romani dialects are found within Kosovo. Kosovo Roma feel free to use their mother tongue in private settings and rely on the Albanian or Serbian languages for public or formal communication.

Most Roma are multilingual, often also speaking Serbian, Albanian, or both languages. The use of the Romani language seems to be declining among young people, many of whom prefer to speak either Albanian or Serbian even in private settings.

The Romani language has been traditionally spoken in the municipality of Prizren, which also remains one of the most important cultural hubs for the Roma community. In general, the Kosovo Roma community in the Prizren region uses the Romani language only in the private sphere, and most use Albanian in public life. However, the Kosovo Roma community in the Kosovo Serb-majority areas of upper Rahovec/Orahovac and Velika Hoča/Hoçë e Madhe generally use the Serbian language in public settings.

In 2022, the “Coalition for Romani language” was created in Prizren by local NGO “Nevo Koncepti” with the support of the Council of Europe. The main goal of the coalition was to promote the recognition of Romani language by the Municipality of Prizren. On 31 October 2022, Romani was recognized as a language in official use in Prizren. The coalition has continued its work to advance the use of Romani. In 2024, with the financial support of IOM, the municipality of Prizren recruited a temporary translator for Romani language for six-months. On 8 February 2024, outside the reporting period, several Kosovo Roma NGOs from Prizren organized a promotional event with the support of the Office of the Language Commissioner that marked the first occasion where Romani language was heard and spoken at the municipality of Prizren, as well as translated into other official languages. In December 2014, Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality had designated Romani as a language in official use at the municipal level by changing its statute. In practice, however, a lack of translators, negatively impacts the community members' access to services in the Romani language.

In Gjakovë/Đakovica, members of the Kosovo Roma community have expressed interest in having the Romani language recognized as a language in official use, but no official request has been submitted to the municipality.

Kosovo Roma generally use the Romani language when communicating with each other outside of public life, and the Albanian language when interacting with institutions. In the rest of Pejë/Peć region, the community uses mostly Albanian in both private and public, except among the elderly.

In the municipalities of Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Gjiilan/Gnjilane and Kamenicë/Kamenica, Kosovo Roma prefer to use Serbian in their communication with institutions, with a few exceptions. In the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, Roma residing in Kosovo Serb-majority areas use the Serbian language. In Prishtinë/Priština region, Kosovo Roma community members generally speak fluent Albanian and communicate with local institutions without major concern, while speaking their mother tongue in private settings.

Since 2003, state television RTK has broadcast special programmes for non-majority communities, including those in the Romani language. RTK airs a 15-minute Romani-language news bulletin every working day. "Yekiphe" is a weekly information show broadcast on RTK 2 that includes a lengthy informative debate, and it is often rerun.

Commercial television stations and media outlets also offer programming in the Romani language at the municipal level. In Prizren, the radio station "Romano Avazo" broadcasts 24 hours a day in the Romani language, and it has been active since 2007. Radio "Romano Avazo" is also available online through its website and social media.⁷⁵ In Gjakovë/Đakovica, Romani language radio and TV programmes "Jivdipe Tumenca" are produced by the NGO Roma in Action and broadcast on TV Syri and Radio Gjakovë/Đakovica. Radio Programmes are also broadcast on Radio Gračanica/Gračanicë. In Ferizaj/Uroševac, the local station "TV Most" airs a daily 30-minute television programme in the Romani language that is supported by the MOCR, and the local station "Radio Kontakt Plus" occasionally also broadcasts programmes in Romani. In addition, in Prizren region, the cultural magazine "Yekhiphe" and a theatre offer Romani-language content.

⁷⁵ <http://radiatoromanoavazo.com/?fbclid=IwAR1mNI5ClyjpQUBmrKqI0Ncuc-QZp7bWw1X5Cit3DNjgAkAxVfj2HZIUtYM> and <https://www.facebook.com/radiatoromanoavazo> (Accessed December 2023).

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Roma community is generally free to express its cultural identity, religious beliefs, and customs, and religious and cultural heritage sites are shared with Albanian and non-Albanian communities.

The Kosovo Roma community is predominantly Sunni Muslim. However, a small percentage follow Sufism and Protestantism in Gjakovë/Đakovica, and Orthodox Christianity in Prishtinë/Priština, and some Kosovo Roma members in Kamenicë/Kamenica are Jehovah's Witnesses. The Roma community attends religious services at different Sunni mosques, Sufi *tekke*, and Christian Orthodox and Protestant Evangelical churches regardless of which community manages them. For example, Kosovo Roma believers frequent the Kosovo Egyptian-run Sufi *tekke* and Sunni Mosque in Gjakovë/Đakovica.

The community marks International Roma Day (8 April) to celebrate Romani culture and raise awareness of the issues faced by the Roma. From 6 to 15 May, Kosovo Roma celebrate the Feast of Saint George, which is combined with traditional holidays that celebrate the end of winter and official start of summer.

Despite a generally open and tolerant environment, in April 2020 approximately 30 tombstones were damaged in a cemetery in Rahovec/Orahovac town; most of the headstones belonged to the Kosovo Roma community and others to Kosovo Egyptians and Kosovo Ashkali community members.

The Kosovo Roma residents of Gračanica/Graçanicë municipality for many years have been facing challenges in accessing the cemetery in Preoce/Preoc village. The road is divided between Gračanica/Graçanicë and Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipalities and is frequently blocked by solid waste at the entrance.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Roma community faces challenges similar to other non-majority communities in Kosovo, such as access to housing and the lack of legal documentation that establish property ownership.

Many community members do not have contracts or other legal evidence to prove their right to property. Access to housing is often limited by lack of information on the opportunities provided by municipalities.

In Prishtinë/Priština, many in the Kosovo Roma community live in informal settlements without proof of ownership of their homes and land. Because many land and property transfers have taken place informally, no records of ownership exist in municipal offices.

In Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, access to housing is still a problem, even though some initiatives have been undertaken to address the issue. For example, in 2019 the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare constructed a house for a Roma family in the village of Dubravë/Dubrava in Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality. In 2013, the Danish Refugee Council constructed seven houses for Kosovo Roma returnees in Berivojcë/Berivojce village in Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, with the support of the Ministry for Communities and Return and the European Commission.

11. Return and reintegration

Many displaced persons from the Kosovo Roma community who live outside Kosovo are reluctant to return due to poor living conditions and fear of being subjected to hate crimes.

Moreover, resistance from the receiving community is an obstacle to sustainable return, hampering reintegration of returnees. Despite efforts to support Kosovo Roma inclusion, many community members still face problems in securing fundamental rights such as access to health care and social assistance.⁷⁶

Between 2011 and 2023, 946 Kosovo Roma individuals voluntarily returned to their pre-conflict homes, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, bringing the total number of Kosovo Roma returnees since 2000 to 4,077. However, the data available per municipality from 2015 to 2023 shows that in practice only 502 individuals voluntarily returned during that period.⁷⁷ The decreasing number of returnees is reflected in lower municipal Go-and-See and Go-and-Inform visits, and only a few municipalities conducted such visits in recent years. An estimated 152 persons remained displaced within Kosovo, according to the UNHCR.⁷⁸

Donor-funded projects have sought to mitigate housing challenges faced by the community. The EU Return and Reintegration programme reported that an estimated 80 residential units had been constructed for Kosovo Roma returnees in Kosovo, and 96 community members had received income-generation packages to support their reintegration.⁷⁹ Other initiatives have aimed at marginalized communities, especially the Kosovo Roma, under the auspices of the EU, Kosovo institutions, and donor organizations such as the Danish Refugee Council and Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund.

However, reliance on donor-funded projects to create housing solutions for returnees creates its own challenges, in that only a few municipalities participate in these projects.

⁷⁶ OSCE, *Overview of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo* (2019).

⁷⁷ UNHCR, Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, statistical overview conducted as of December 2023. In 2023, Kosovo Roma community members returned (13 Pejë/Peć).

⁷⁸ Go-and-See visits provide displaced persons with the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the conditions in their place of origin and to directly interact and engage with the receiving community to make an informed decision about return or other durable solution.

⁷⁹ The number of residential units constructed or reconstructed in Obiliq/Obilić 37, Pejë/Peć 16, Kamenicë/Kamenica eight, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje seven, Prizren four, Gračanica/Gračanicë three, Gjakovë/Đakovica and Gjiilan/Gnjilane two and Klinë/Klina one. Data provided by IOM Kosovo. Figures are part of the *EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo* programme; the project is managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo in partnership with the MOCR and implemented by IOM.

Potential returnees in other municipalities must rely on sporadic assistance from the Ministry for Communities and Return (MCR).

In Obiliq/Obilić municipality, the MCR has approved funding for the construction of five houses for Kosovo Roma. However, the project hit obstacles due to administrative hurdles and awaits the issuance of building permits.

In 2023, the MCR took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁸⁰ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. The impact of these endeavours was tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported 132 Kosovo Roma families, providing them with crucial food and non-food items, including construction materials. Notably, the initiative resulted in the construction of two houses located in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Istog/Istok. Additionally, the initiatives of the MCR extended to providing substantial support to four families (three in Prizren and one in Zvečan/Zveçan).⁸¹ This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses.

Resistance from some receiving communities can be an obstacle to sustainable return, hampering reintegration of returnees. However, a few municipalities have undertaken initiatives to support the return of Kosovo Roma. For example, municipal authorities in Kamenicë/Kamenica facilitated the cleaning of the sewage system at a Kosovo Roma return site in Berivojcë/Berivojce. In Suharekë/Suva Reka, the mayor organized and hosted an event where Kosovo Roma community activists delivered a presentation on stereotypes, bias motivation, hate speech, and discrimination as negative phenomena impeding inter-community relations.

In May 2017, the European Roma Rights Centre⁸² called on the UN to issue a public apology, individual compensation and medical treatment for, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian community members who suffered lead poisoning while residing in a displacement camp situated on contaminated land in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

⁸⁰ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci_compressed_compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#). (Accessed December 2023).

⁸¹ Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

⁸² See European Roma Rights Centre, *ERRC Demands Justice for Kosovo Victims of Lead Poisoning* (2017), <http://www.errc.org/press-releases/errc-demands-justice-for-kosovo-victims-of-lead-poisoning> (Accessed December 2023).

Photo Credit: Yllka Fetahaj



Community Profile

Kosovo Serb



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Serb Community Profile

The Kosovo Serb community is the second-largest community in Kosovo.¹ The number of Kosovo Serbs presented in this report is estimated on the basis of combined data from the 2018 OSCE Municipal Profiles² and the OSCE 2010 Community Profiles.³

Kosovo Serbs constitute a majority community in ten municipalities in Kosovo: Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North (about 22,530 community members);⁴ Gračanica/Gračanicë (nearly 7,210);⁵ Leposavić/Leposaviq (about 18,000);⁶ Ranilug/Ranillug (about 3,600),⁷ where 13 villages are inhabited with Kosovo Serbs only;⁸ Zvečan/Zveçan (about 16,000);⁹ Zubin Potok (about 13,900);¹⁰ Parteš/Partesh (about 3,580,¹¹ residing in three villages inhabited by Kosovo Serbs only);¹² Klokot/Klllokot (about 3,700);¹³ Štrpce/Shtërpcë (7,000-8,000);¹⁴ and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (about 5,500 residents,¹⁵ with more than one-third living in Gornje Kusce/Kufcë e Epërme).¹⁶

They represent a non-majority community in several other municipalities across Kosovo. In the southern part of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, the Kosovo Serb community resides in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality: in the villages of Priluzhje/Prelluzhë (about 1,700), Banjska/Bajskë (about 50), Grace/Gracë (about 100), and Gojbulja/Gojbulë (about 120); and in Skenderaj/Srbica municipality: in the villages of Banja/Bajë (about 185) and Suvo Grlo/Syriganë (about 150).

1 The 2011 census did not include the four northern municipalities. With few exceptions, Kosovo Serbs did not participate in the census throughout Kosovo.

2 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018* (2019).

3 OSCE, *Community Profiles 2010* (2011).

4 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/9/122119_1.pdf

5 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/88762_1.pdf

6 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/c/13120_1.pdf

7 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/c/88760_1.pdf

8 Information office in Ranilug/Ranillug.

9 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/7/13136_1.pdf

10 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/b/13135_1.pdf

11 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/4/88761_1.pdf

12 NGO "Opštinska Parteška Inicijativa" in Parteš/Partesh; and school representatives in Donja Budriga/Budrigë e Poshtme.

13 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/88759_0.pdf

14 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/6/13130_1.pdf

15 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/9/13122_1.pdf

16 MOCR in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, and Kosovo Serb community representatives from Gornje Kusce/Kufcë e Epërme.

In Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, **Kosovo Serbs** reside in the following municipalities: Gjiilan/Gnjilane (around 620 community members),¹⁷ Viti/Vitina (nearly 115),¹⁸ and Kamenicë/Kamenica (about 2,000 **Kosovo Serbs** living in 19 villages where they constitute the majority¹⁹). In Pejë/Peć region, **Kosovo Serbs** reside in the municipalities of Istog/Istok (about 195),²⁰ Klinë/Klina (nearly 100),²¹ and Pejë/Peć (nearly 340²²). In Prishtinë/Priština region, **Kosovo Serbs** reside in the following municipalities: Prishtinë/Priština (about 430),²³ Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (about 320),²⁴ Lipjan/Lipljan (nearly 515),²⁵ and Obiliq/Obilić (nearly 280²⁶). Other municipalities **Kosovo Serbs** reside in are: Prizren (nearly 240),²⁷ Rahovec/Orahovac (nearly 135),²⁸ and Ferizaj/Uroševac (32).²⁹

17 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/0/13113_1.pdf

18 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/c/13133_1.pdf

19 MOCR in Kamenicë/Kamenica.

20 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/6/13119_1.pdf

21 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/6/13119_1.pdf

22 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/3/13125_1.pdf

23 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/2/13127_1.pdf

24 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/3/13118_1.pdf

25 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/13121_1.pdf

26 https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/7/13123_0.pdf

27 OSCE, *Municipal Profiles 2018*: <https://www.osce.org/files/Prizren.pdf>

28 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/d/13124_1.pdf

29 Ibid: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/8/13132_1.pdf

Key facts and issues

- The number of security incidents targeting Kosovo Serbs has been decreasing gradually, but Kosovo Serbs and their properties continue to experience the highest number of incidents compared to all other communities.
- The Kosovo Serb community has ten guaranteed seats in the Assembly and at least one ministerial position in the Government. There are Kosovo Serb mayors in six municipalities, while Kosovo Serbs have been the most represented in municipalities where they are in a numerical minority, compared with other non-majority communities.
- The overall economic situation for the Kosovo Serb community is unstable. The community is poorly integrated into the wider society.
- Belgrade-run institutions have been generating the majority of jobs for Kosovo Serbs employed in the education, health, social welfare, postal delivery, and other sectors run by these institutions.
- Since 2000, more than 12,000 Kosovo Serbs have found a durable solution to return to Kosovo.
- The community is generally free to express its cultural identity, religious beliefs, and customs. However, in some Kosovo Albanian-majority areas, the community and Serbian Orthodox Church clergy still feel unsafe to visit certain religious sites (such as churches, monasteries, and cemeteries)
- In early November 2022, Kosovo Serb mayors, municipal assembly members, police officers, judges, and prosecutors from the four northern municipalities³⁰ resigned in protest over government policies. The Minister for Communities and Return and the ten members of the Assembly of Kosovo from the Serbian List (SL) also resigned.

³⁰ Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan.

1. Security and safety

Although the overall number of security incidents targeting the Kosovo Serb community has decreased gradually, Kosovo Serbs and their properties continue to experience the highest number of incidents compared to all other communities.³¹

Until 2017, Kosovo Serb returnees were the most affected. The most common incidents against returnees included theft of cattle, poultry, cars, tractors, agricultural machinery, and water pumps; burglaries of uninhabited returnee houses, illegal woodcutting; and illegal occupation of property, but there have been arson cases as well. Most incidents affecting Kosovo Serb returnees and their properties have been recorded in the Pejë/Peć region, particularly in Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, and Pejë/Peć municipalities, where property-related incidents such as thefts, illegal occupation, and incidents involving arson or fire have been most frequent (see below).

In 2019, of 8,861 Kosovo Police officers (both civil and uniformed staff), 1,037 were Kosovo Serb community members.³² This number decreased to 457 (61 women) in 2023. Almost half of the Kosovo Serb police officers worked in the Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North regional directorate, where 466 Kosovo Serb police officers were deployed until 2022, when they resigned from the Kosovo Police. The remaining officers are in the Kosovo Police stations in: Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Lipjan/Lipljan (including a sub-station in Janjevë/Janjevo), Prishtinë/Priština (including a sub-station in Bërnice/Brnica), Gračanica/Graçanicë, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosove/Kosovo Polje, Shtime/Štimlje, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Viti/Vitina, Novo Brdo/Novo-Bërdë, Klokot/Klllokot, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Pejë/Peć (including a sub-station in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec), Istog/Istok, Kline/Klina, Rahovec/Orahovac and a sub-station in Priluzhje/Prelluzhë in Vushtri/Vučitrn municipality.³³ Only four Kosovo Serbs served in the police in the Pejë/Peć region, two in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec in Pejë/Peć police sub-station and one each in Istog/Istok and Klinë/Klina.

It is important for the effectiveness of community policing that the composition of the Kosovo Police reflects the diversity of the population in Kosovo and that a sufficient number of police officers are proficient in both languages.

³¹ According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were: 360 incidents in 2013, 309 in 2014; 281 in 2015; 242 in 2016; 194 in 2017; 249 in 2018; 178 in 2019; 181 in 2020; 150 in 2021; 120 in 2022; and 120 in 2023.

³² Kosovo Centre for Security Studies, *Challenges and Practices of Inclusiveness in Kosovo Security Sector* (2020).

³³ Ibid.

While the Kosovo Police remains proactive in responding to incidents affecting communities, there remains a perception among the Kosovo Serb community that cases involving them can face delays or obstruction.

There are 182 Kosovo Serbs in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).³⁴

Pejë/Peć had been the region with the highest number of security incidents affecting the Kosovo Serb returnee community until January 2021, since when the highest number of security incidents has been recorded in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. The Kosovo Serb community in the Pejë/Peć region, where most of the returnees are elderly, has been disproportionately affected by security incidents, given that fewer Kosovo Serbs reside in this region compared with elsewhere.³⁵ Arson cases negatively affect the perception of returnees and potential returnees, and they are the incidents most reported by the media.³⁶

The most common incidents affecting the community in Gjiilan/Gnjilane have been repetitive thefts, mainly from rural properties. These were particularly prevalent in 2018 and the beginning of 2019. Other more serious incidents have included physical assaults, graffiti with hate speech, and arson.³⁷ Between 2016 and March 2019, the Gjiilan/Gnjilane regional Kosovo Police reported an increase in organized, co-ordinated raids in villages by criminal gangs that disproportionately targeted the Kosovo Serb community. After a suspected criminal gang from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South was arrested in March 2019, thefts abruptly stopped.

³⁴ As of November 2023.

³⁵ In November 2020, in Drenoc/Drenovac, Klinë/Klina municipality, stones were thrown at the house of an elderly Kosovo Serb returnee, and one window was broken. In May 2022, regular night-time disturbance of an elderly Kosovo Serb returnee couple from the Klinafç/Klinavac village, Klinë/Klina municipality, was reported. In Istog/Istok municipality, stones were thrown twice at a house belonging to a Kosovo Serb returnee in Lubozhdë/Ljubožda, first in May 2020 and again in June 2020. In May 2021, unknown perpetrators threw stones at two Kosovo Serb returnee houses, damaging a door and breaking three windows in Dubravë/Dubrava village. In February 2021, in Gorazhdëvc/Goraždevac village in Pejë/Peć municipality, "UÇK Kosovo" was sprayed on a wall of a Kosovo Serb house. In July 2021, a Kosovo Serb returnee man reported that an unknown perpetrator physically assaulted him in Dolle/Dolac village in Klinë/Klina. The Kosovo Police attended the site. The victim was transported to the Regional Hospital in Pejë/Peć, where he was treated for light bodily injuries.

³⁶ In May 2018, an explosion occurred at the house of a returnee in Dragolec/Dragoljevac, only three days after the returnee received keys of the reconstructed house. In October 2018, a house belonging to a Kosovo Serb returnee family was set on fire in Belo Polje/Bellopojë village, Pejë/Peć municipality. In May 2020, in Berkovë/Berkovo village, Klinë/Klina municipality, a house belonging to a Kosovo Serb, who was temporary absent, was set on fire by unknown person(s). In September 2021, a fire of unknown origin burned down six hectares of field and forest belonging to a Kosovo Serb returnee family in Drenoc/Drenovac village, Klinë/Klina municipality, while someone set on fire garbage disposed next to a plum orchard owned by a Kosovo Serb in Klinë/Klina town. The fire spread out, damaging around 150 plum trees. In December 2023, an uninhabited house belonging to a Kosovo Serb family in Belo Polje/Bellopojë village in Pejë/Peć caught fire.

³⁷ In February 2017, in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, a group of 15 to 20 young Kosovo Albanians entered a Kosovo-Serb-inhabited street where a Serbian Orthodox Church and a shop run by Kosovo Serbs were also located; they shouted anti-Serb slogans and spray-painted anti-Serb graffiti. In March 2017, in the mixed Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian village of Mogila/Mogillë in Klokot/Kllkot municipality, two Kosovo Albanian male teenagers assaulted a 17-year-old Kosovo Serb. In Cërrnicë/Cernica village, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, in December 2019, a Kosovo Albanian man stabbed a Kosovo Serb neighbour. In May 2021, properties of Kosovo Serb community members and the Serbian Orthodox Church in Viti/Vitina were hit with stones on three occasions. In August 2021, an eleven-year-old Kosovo Serb boy was physically assaulted, allegedly by two Kosovo Albanian boys aged in Kamenicë/Kamenica town. In July 2022, a Kosovo Serb in the mixed village of Mogila/Mogillë, Klokot/Kllkot municipality, reported that unknown person(s) threw an explosive device in his yard from a car in motion.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, the most common incidents have been verbal assaults and brawls in the vicinity of the main Ibar bridge, dividing Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and in mixed settlements in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.³⁸ Kosovo Serbs living in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality were often targets of incidents, including a case of intimidation and unlawful property occupation.³⁹

In Prishtinë/Priština region, there have been fewer serious incidents compared to other regions. They usually take place in mixed community areas.⁴⁰ However, Prishtinë/Priština region has a higher number of graffiti-related incidents and incidents in schools sharing premises with two education systems,⁴¹ compared to other regions.⁴²

Prizren region has had the lowest number of security incidents, which have also generally been less severe, compared with other regions. Security incidents most commonly involved property among the Kosovo Serb returnee community, particularly in the Novak/Novake returnee village in Prizren municipality and the upper part of Rahovec/Orahovac town.⁴³

38 In February 2021 in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, a Kosovo Albanian approached three Kosovo Serb men standing in the street, then stabbed one of them several times. In March 2021, unknown perpetrators sprayed graffiti reading "UÇK" ("KLA") on a wall of the Belgrade-run clinic in the mixed-community village of Suhodoll/Suvi Do in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. In October 2022, the driver of the bus line from Goraždevac/Gorazhdec, Pejë/Peć municipality to Belgrade reported to Kosovo Police that unknown person(s) broke one of the windows on his vehicle in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. Reportedly, the bus was transporting around 30 Kosovo Serb passengers, among them several children, at the time of the incident. In January 2023, on Orthodox Christmas day, in Çabër/Çabra, Zubin Potok municipality, a house and a barn belonging to a Kosovo Serb were set on fire. In October 2023, fans of the Trepça basketball team from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South created a large banner depicting an Orthodox cemetery, a church, and a tree on which people, allegedly Serbs, are hanged, as well as the date 24/09/2023.

39 In June 2022, in Gojbulë/Gojbulja village, Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality, unknown perpetrators threw stones at the Belgrade-run elementary school "November 21", breaking a classroom window and damaging the doors of the new and the old school buildings. In January 2022, a Kosovo Serb from Banjë/Banja village, Skenderaj/Srbica municipality, was verbally and then physically attacked by a Kosovo Albanian in Runik/Rudnik village while shopping, and asked to leave the shop. In September 2023, a house owned by a Kosovo Serb in Maxhunaj/Novo Selo Mađunsko village, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, was reportedly set on fire. The house had previously been burnt in 1999 and was subsequently renovated by an international NGO in 2004.

40 In March and April 2020, in Carravodicë/Črkvena Vodica village, Obiliq/Obilić municipality, the Kosovo Police received reports of two houses that were set on fire. In August 2020, in the mixed village of Babin Most/Babimoc, four Kosovo Serb young people reported that they had been attacked by a group of six Kosovo Albanians. In Prishtinë/Priština municipality, in October 2020, four Kosovo Serb juveniles reported that unknown persons fired shots in the air from the entrance gate of the schoolyard in Donja Brnjica/Bërnice e Poshtme village. In April 2021, a Kosovo Serb juvenile reported that he was attacked by a group of Kosovo Albanian youth members in Babin Most/Babimoc village, Obiliq/Obilić.

41 "Schools sharing premises with two education systems" refer to schools operating within the same premises and providing education under two different systems, namely the Kosovo curricula and Serbian curriculum. These schools are sometimes referred to as "mixed schools", though students and classes are not mixed.

42 In September 2016, unknown persons damaged a plaque in memory of 14 Kosovo Serb harvesters who were killed in July 1999 in Grackë e Vjetër/Staro Gracko village, Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, and wrote graffiti next to it (*hakmarrja*, Albanian for "revenge"). In November 2017, a group of Kosovo Albanians from Grackë e Vjetër/Staro Gracko and the surrounding villages broke into the yard of the Kosovo Serb primary school Braća Aksić and damaged its playground. In June 2022, in Kishnicë/Kišnica village, Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality, a Kosovo Serb reported to Kosovo Police that unknown person(s) hanged a white cloth with "UÇK" inscription on the fence of his property.

43 In May and October 2018, unknown suspects broke the windows of the health facility located in Novak/Novake. In March 2020, ten returnee houses in Novak/Novake were broken into. In April 2020, an uninhabited returnee house in the same village was set on fire. In December 2021, a memorial plaque commemorating two Kosovo Serb journalists who disappeared on 21 August 1998 near Zočište/Zoqishtë village, was damaged and removed for the eighth time since 2013, by unknown perpetrators. In January 2021, a Kosovo Serb reported break-ins at 13 unattended houses and an auto maintenance shop in Bogosëvci/Bogoshevcë village in Prizren.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Serb community is represented both in the Government and the Assembly. Nenad Rašić, who is the leader of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDS), serves as the Minister for Communities and Return.

Three **Kosovo Serbs** serve as deputy ministers: Nenad Stanojević as Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Economy; Lazar Radulović as Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development; and Radoica Radomirović as Deputy Minister at the Ministry for Communities and Return.

The constitution guarantees ten seats in the Assembly to the **Kosovo Serb** community. In the 2021 extraordinary elections, all ten seats were won by candidates from the Serbian List (SL). The SL members of parliament (MPs) submitted their resignations from the positions as MPs in November 2022. The new SL MPs took up their mandates ten days after their predecessors resigned.⁴⁴ The current MPs representing the **Kosovo Serb** community are: Biljana Maksić, Ksenjia Bozović, Milan Joksimović, Milan Kostić, Nenad Radenković, Olivera Zdravković, Rados Mihajlović, Svetislav Jokić, Zoran Maksimović (all SL) and Cvetko Veljković as an independent candidate. Other parties representing the interests of the **Kosovo Serb** community that participated in the 2021 elections included the Citizens' Initiative for Freedom, Justice and Survival (GI SPO). In earlier elections, the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), the Party of **Kosovo Serbs** (PKS) and Freedom (Sloboda) also took part. In this mandate, the SL was supported by the Kosovo Gorani representative, Adem Hodža. The SL also held the ten guaranteed seats in the 2019 elections.

The **Kosovo Serb** community has five representatives in the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) under the umbrella of the President. As of November 2022, the representatives were four men and one woman.⁴⁵ In addition, **Kosovo Serbs** serving in senior official positions include Srdjan Sentić as Deputy Ombudsperson, Gordana Laban-Zuvić as a member of the Central Election Commission, Slaviša Mladenović as Language Commissioner in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Radojica Mrđinac as a Board member at the Radio Television of Kosovo.

⁴⁴ The MPs from SL that took up their mandates have not formed a Parliamentary group and they do not attend the working bodies of the Assembly of Kosovo. They attend occasionally to maintain their mandates.

⁴⁵ Of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) "Mlada aktivna Gračanica" (Young active Gračanica); "Centar za prava manjinskih zajednica" (Centre for the Rights of Minority Communities); "Prijateljstvo bez granica" (Friendship without borders); and "Omladinska Parteška aktivnost" (Youth Parteš activity), respectively.

As of the end of 2023, the community is represented in 23 communities' committees (CCs) throughout Kosovo,⁴⁶ with 44 members in total (17 women and 27 men). In 11 municipalities the community is not represented in CCs, (despite appearing in the 2011 census).⁴⁷ Four **Kosovo Serbs** hold the position of CC chairperson.⁴⁸

Three **Kosovo Serb** men are deputy mayors for communities, in Kamenicë/Kamenica, Obiliq/Obilić⁴⁹ and Zvečan/Zvečan municipalities.⁵⁰ No community representative holds the position of deputy chairperson of the municipal assembly for communities in any municipality.

Kosovo Serbs are members of 22 municipal offices for communities and return (MOCRs), with 52 members in total (25 women and 27 men).⁵¹ Additionally, **Kosovo Serb** community members hold the position of head of MOCR in 13 municipalities.⁵²

There are 20 **Kosovo Serbs** in Municipal Community Safety Councils (MCSCs) in the following municipalities: one man in each of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Klokot/Klokot, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Viti/Vitina, Skenderaj/Srbica, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Klinë/Klina, Pejë/Peć, Lipjan/Lipljan, Obiliq/Obilić, Prishtinë/Priština and Prizren, and a woman in each of Dečan/Dečani, Istog/Istok, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Rahovec/Orahovac.

Some of the more prominent NGOs within the community include the NGO Aktiv, "Nova društvena inicijativa" (New Social Initiative) (NSI), NGO "Centar za zastupanje demokratske kulture" (Advocacy Centre for Democratic Culture) (ACDC), "Centar za afirmativne društvene akcije" (Centre for Affirmative Social Actions) (CASA), and Žensko Pravo (Women's Rights), in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. In Prishtinë/Priština region, the "Centar za mir i toleranciju i komunikacija za društveni razvoj" (Centre for Peace and Tolerance and Communication for Social Development) is in Gračanica/Gračanicë, while a cultural and artistic society "Sveti Sava" (Saint Sava)) is found in Grackë e vjetër/Staro Gracko, in Lipjan/Lipljan.

46 Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Istog/Istok, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Klinë/Klina, Klokot/Klokot, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Obiliq/Obilić, Parteš/Partesh, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, Ranilug/Ranillug, Skenderaj/Srbica, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zvečan. Of note, following extraordinary elections held in April 2023, no CC was established in Leposavić/Leposaviq.

47 Kosovo Serbs are not represented in the CC in Dečan/Dečani, Dragash/Dragaš, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Glogoc/Glogovac, Kačanik/Kaçanik, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Podujevë/Podujevo, Shtime/Štimlje, Suharekë/Suva Reka and Viti/Vitina.

48 Kamenicë/Kamenica (man), Parteš/Partesh (man), Skenderaj/Srbica (woman), and Vushtrri/Vučitrn (man).

49 In Obiliq/Obilić, although the largest non-majority community is Kosovo Roma (based on the 2011 census), the deputy mayor for communities is a Kosovo Serb. The Ministry of Local Government Administration did not object to the appointment, as the mechanism is not mandatory in the municipality (see also Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian Profiles).

50 In Zvečan/Zvečan, following the extraordinary elections of April 2023, the position was filled by a Kosovo Serb.

51 In Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Zubin Potok, MOCRs have not been formally established, although offices with similar functions exist, such as the municipal communities' offices (MCOs). MCOs were established under UNMIK Regulation 2007/30 on Self-government of Municipalities in Kosovo, Article 23 (11). Kosovo Serbs are represented in MCOs in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok.

52 Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Klinë/Klina, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Obiliq/Obilić, Parteš/Partesh, Skenderaj/Srbica, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Viti/Vitina, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane region, prominent NGOs include "Udruženje žena naš dom" (Women Association Our Home), "Centar za depolitizaciju kosovskog društva" (Centre for Depolitization of Kosovo Society), "Prijateljstvo bez granica" (Friendship without Borders), "Naša Budućnost" (Our future), "Omladinska Inicijativa" (Youth Initiative), "Fuzija" (Fusion), Rebus, and "Moravski biser" (Morava Pearl). In Pejë/Peć region, the Kosovo Serb-led "Centar za prava manj Centre" (Centre for the Rights of Minority Communities) works with Kosovo Serb young people in Osojane/Osojan and Goraždevac/Gorazhdec villages. Others include the women's NGO Briga (Care) and media outlet "Radio Goraždevac", both in the Kosovo Serb village of Goraždevac/Gorazhdec. In Istog/Istok municipality, NGO "Jefimija" was established in 2022 by a Kosovo Serb woman in the youth centre in Osojane/Osojan village.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The socio-economic situation of the Kosovo Serb community is affected by the restricted socio-economic opportunities in Kosovo, high unemployment rates and low-income levels.⁵³

Some members of the community are still affected by illegal occupation of their agricultural land by members of the majority community, which hinders access to self-employment in agricultural work.⁵⁴ The Government of Serbia provides financial support⁵⁵ to the Kosovo Serb community, including salaries, pensions, and social assistance.⁵⁶ In addition, subsidies are available from Kosovo institutions and international donors. However, the Kosovo Serb community faces unsustainable livelihoods due to political instability.

In 2018, of the 95,890 persons registered as unemployed, 7.7 per cent were Kosovo Serbs, and more than half the total were women.⁵⁷ More recent data shows that the overall unemployment rate among the Kosovo population in 2022 was 58,081 or 12.6 per cent (36,184 men and 21,897 women). Youth unemployment rates were particularly concerning, standing at 21.4 per cent, with young women disproportionately affected at 27 per cent, compared to 18.6 per cent for young men.⁵⁸

With regards to employment in the public service, Kosovo Serbs have been better placed than other non-majority communities. Kosovo Serbs serve in the majority of posts filled by non-Albanian communities in government institutions.⁵⁹ Members of the Kosovo Serb community constituted 5.17 per cent of the civil service, as of 2022.⁶⁰ At the municipal level, Kosovo Serbs have been the most represented in municipalities where they are in a numerical minority, compared with other non-majority communities.⁶¹ Community members mostly occupy professional and technical/administrative positions.⁶²

⁵³ Embassy of Sweden, *Multidimensional poverty analysis – Kosovo 2017*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ OSCE, *Communities rights assessment report – fourth edition*, (2015), p. 23. See also: Council of Europe Advisory Committee on Framework Convention for the National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Kosovo, 2017, §108, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Following the Kosovo Central Bank's adoption of a regulation in December 2023, establishing the euro as the only currency allowed for cash transactions in Kosovo, which took effect on 1 February 2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo field teams received reports that this change has affected the community relying on financial support from the government of Serbia.

⁵⁶ Embassy of Sweden, *Multidimensional poverty analysis – Kosovo*, p. 4;. See, for example, NGO Aktiv, *Opportunities and obstacles for Northern Kosovo Businesses*, 2017; p. 6.

⁵⁷ OSCE, *Communities Rights Assessment Report 5th Edition*, (2021) p. 52.

⁵⁸ <https://ask.rks-gov.net/Releases/Details/6714> (Breakdown by community is not available.)

⁵⁹ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo*, (2017), p. 13.

⁶⁰ Independent Oversight Board of the Civil Service of Kosovo: *Raporti vjetor 2022-anglisht.docx(1).pdf* (rks-gov.net)

⁶¹ Except for Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, where the Kosovo Serb community has been under-represented; OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo*, (2017), pp. 21-22.

⁶² OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo*, (2017), pp. 17, 24.

However, accurately determining the actual number of employees in the public service is challenging. This difficulty arises because, in many cases, the same individuals are on the payrolls of both Kosovo municipal administration and Belgrade-run institutions. Similarly, it is nearly impossible to ascertain the real number of unemployed **Kosovo Serb** adults, as those registered as unemployed in the Kosovo system may be employed in Belgrade-run institutions and, vice-versa.

Community employment across Kosovo

In **Prishtinë/Priština region**, in Obiliq/Obilić municipality, about 80 **Kosovo Serbs** are employed in the public sector: 13 in the municipality, 15 in the Kosovo Police, 12 in the health sector and 40 in the education field. However, in 2023, the unemployment rate for the **Kosovo Serb** community in this municipality was 85 per cent,⁶³ due to a lack of job opportunities and the reported difficulty to get employed in public-private enterprises. No one from the **Kosovo Serb** community benefitted from any income generation projects in the past three years. Unemployment rate is high also in Prishtinë/Priština municipality.

In Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, a **Kosovo Serb** woman works in the civil registry office, a **Kosovo Serb** man works in the directorate of agriculture and two **Kosovo Serb** men are firefighters. In Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality, 50 per cent of the population (mostly youth and women) is unemployed, some even despite qualifications. Every year, 40 to 55 families receive some sort of support (from the municipality or donors).

In **Gjilan/Gnjilane region**, **Kosovo Serbs** are dispersed across various municipalities and experience diverse living conditions and economic situations. Some are employed in Kosovo Albanian-owned enterprises, such as mushroom farms and sponge factories, as well as quarries in Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality and brick production in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality.

In Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, 18 **Kosovo Serbs** are employed in the municipal administration, primarily as civil servants, six in the Basic Court, nine in the Kosovo Police, one in the post office, and nearly 110 in the education sector. Two senior positions held by **Kosovo Serbs** include the deputy mayor for communities and the head of MOCR. According to the MOCR, nearly 40 per cent of adult **Kosovo Serbs** are privately engaged in agriculture. Around 100 **Kosovo Serbs**, predominantly young men, work in construction. They also engage in seasonal work in Belgrade. There are 15 private businesses owned by **Kosovo Serbs** (grocery shops, car repair and restaurants) that employ 33 people. There are 85 registered **Kosovo Serb** job seekers at the Kamenicë/Kamenica municipal employment office. This number, however, does not reflect the total number of unemployed **Kosovo Serbs**, because they typically prefer to be registered as unemployed in the Belgrade-run employment service offices, believing that it would help them find jobs sooner. There are 40 **Kosovo Serb** families who receive social financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, 14 **Kosovo Serbs** are employed in the municipal administration as civil servants working in departments of urban planning,

⁶³ MOCR in Obiliq/Obilić municipality.

agriculture and economic development/business registration. One Kosovo Serb is the head of the MOCR. Sixteen Kosovo Serbs are employed in various other public sector positions, including: tax department, electricity distributing company (KEDS), Postal office, regional water company "Hidromorava", microenterprise bank and public utility company "Eco-higijena". In Gjilan/Gnjilane, there are nearly 1,300 Kosovo Serb job seekers. Among the Kosovo Serb population there are fewer unemployed women than men, because the institutions where they mostly work, which are financed by Belgrade, offer more jobs that have traditionally been considered appropriate for women, such as education and healthcare. In Gjilan/Gnjilane, there are 25 Kosovo Serb families who receive social financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare. The MOCR noted that it is challenging to start a private business, given the language barrier and lack of information about relevant legal procedures, import and export rules, and in-demand market goods.

Šilovo/Shillovë village is the seat of Belgrade-run institutions but also the centre of social and cultural development of Kosovo Serbs living across Gjilan/Gnjilane region. There are about 20 successful businesses there, employing more than 60 Kosovo Serbs, such as the radio and television RTV Puls, a paediatric health clinic, restaurants, cafes, etc.

International organizations (IOM, CARE International, and CARITAS) have implemented several income-generating projects targeting the Kosovo Serb community, including in Kamenicë/Kamenica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Ranilug/Ranilug, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, and Štrpce/Shtërpçë.

The economic situation in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality remains challenging because about 40 per cent of working-age individuals (amounting to 450 Kosovo Serbs) are officially registered as unemployed.⁶⁴ The difficult economic situation is mitigated by those employed in the municipal administration (59), and in the education and healthcare sectors. All senior positions in the municipal administration are held by Kosovo Serbs. More than 90 per cent of Kosovo Serb families are engaged in agriculture. However, only one-third of the farmers produce quantities large enough for the market, and they sell their products at the green markets in Kamenicë/Kamenica or Bujanovac, Serbia. There are 180 registered private businesses in the municipality owned by Kosovo Serb community members, of which 120 are active. Seven Kosovo Serbs are employed in a Kosovo Albanian owned enterprise in Korminjane/Korminjan village. Most of the unemployed are women and men between 18 and 40 years old. There are nearly 150 Kosovo Serb families who receive financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare.

The economic situation of the Kosovo Serb community in Parteš/Partesh municipality is reported to be generally good, as more than 1,000 Kosovo Serbs working in western Europe (predominantly in Germany and Switzerland) invest in the municipality through construction of houses.⁶⁵ There is a growing trend in the municipality for Kosovo Serbs to find employment in Kosovo-Albanian-run

⁶⁴ MOCR

⁶⁵ CSO representative.

businesses. A Kosovo Albanian factory owner has hired nearly 40 Kosovo Serbs in the last three years in Pasjane/Pasjan village.⁶⁶ Fifty-six community members are employed in the municipal administration, 76 in the education sector, and eight in the health care sector. All senior positions in the municipal administration are held by Kosovo Serbs. Eighty percent of the Kosovo Serb families in the municipality work in agriculture, some work in construction or in private businesses (such as cake shops, car mechanics, and preparing wedding decorations). There are 110 registered businesses owned by Kosovo Serbs, of which 75 are active. There are 617 Kosovo Serb job seekers from this municipality registered in Gjilan/Gnjilane regional employment office. Most of the unemployed are women and men between 18 and 35 years old. In 2023, there were 44 Kosovo Serb families who receive financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare.

Over 300 Kosovo Serbs in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality work in the Kosovo public sector. Also, some 50 Kosovo Serbs are employed in Kosovo-Albanian-owned quarries in Straža/Strazhë village. The centre of the economic, cultural and social development of the Kosovo Serbs in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality is located in Gornje Kusce/Kufcë e Epërme village with nearly 2,000 inhabitants. There are 62 Kosovo Serbs employed in the municipal administration, 86 in education, and 69 in health care. All senior municipal positions are led by Kosovo Serbs. The majority of the Kosovo Serbs in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, are engaged in agriculture. Approximately 120 Kosovo Serbs are engaged in construction activities. "Majka Devet Jugovića" NGO from Gračanica/Gračanicë which operates the soup kitchens in Gjilan/Gnjilane region, operates also farmland in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, with several cattle farms in Prekovce/Prekoc and Zebince/Zebinc villages, all of which employ local Kosovo Serbs. In Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, around 700 Kosovo Serbs are registered as job seekers (either in the Kosovo run regional employment office in Bostane/Bostan or the Belgrade-run employment service, located in Gornje Kusce/Kufcë e Epërme).⁶⁷ There are 185 Kosovo Serb families who receive financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare.

In Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality the Brezovica/Brezovicë ski centre is one of the main job-generating businesses. In addition, there are about 400 Kosovo Serb registered businesses in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, of which half relate to the gastronomy sector. Approximately 800 Kosovo Serbs are employed either in the Kosovo municipal administration (320) or in Belgrade-run institutions (480).⁶⁸ The Štrpce/Shtërpçë employment offices (both the Kosovo and Belgrade-run) have registered 2,500 Kosovo Serb jobseekers. However, as mentioned above, it is reportedly difficult to determine the real numbers of employment in the public service and of those registered as unemployed. There are 119 Kosovo Serb families who receive financial assistance from the municipal centre for social welfare.

In Klokot/Klllokot municipality, Kosovo Serb residents, much like other communities, depend on agriculture. In addition, there are around ten small shops and cafés in Vrbovac/Vërboc village and Klokot/Klllokot town, owned by Kosovo Serbs.

⁶⁶ The Kosovo Albanian factory owner received the land from the municipality on the condition that he hires Kosovo Serbs to work in the factory.

⁶⁷ Specific figures on how many in each office are not available.

⁶⁸ Mayor's Office.

There are 100 **Kosovo Serb** civil servants working in the public sector, including 40 in the municipal administration, where they hold different positions and 60 in the health and education sector.⁶⁹ There are around 600 **Kosovo Serbs** registered as jobseekers in the municipality.⁷⁰

After decentralisation in Kosovo between 2008 and 2010, Binçë/Binač was the only village inhabited by **Kosovo Serbs** that remained part of Viti/Vitina municipality.⁷¹ In the recent years, **Kosovo Serb** farmers have reportedly not been included in municipal-funded programs aimed at supporting agricultural enterprises. The calls for applications were being issued only in the Albanian language on the municipal website, and/or at the physical entrance of the municipality, thus making it difficult for the community members who reside in rural areas to access the information in time. The situation slightly improved in 2023, following OSCE Mission advocacy, which led to the municipality posting public announcements for allocation of subsidies in Serbian language in Binçë/Binač village. There are 62 **Kosovo Serbs** (26 women and 36 men) who work in the education sector in the Viti/Vitina Serbian curriculum primary school "Mladen Marković" and the satellite school in Binçë/Binač village.⁷² Six **Kosovo Serbs** from Viti/Vitina are employed in the public sector.

In Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality, most of the 25 **Kosovo Serbs** are retired and receive pensions from both Kosovo and Belgrade-run institutions. One **Kosovo Serb** works as a communities' rights officer within the MOCR.

In **Prizren region**, **Kosovo Serbs** reside in Prizren municipality (around 60-70, mostly elderly who depend on pensions and social assistance which they receive from Belgrade-run or Kosovo institutions, or both) and in Rahovec/Orahovac municipality. Eight **Kosovo Serbs** are employed in the public sector; one in Prizren MOCR and seven in Rahovec/Orahovac MOCR. Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency office in Prizren municipality, there are six active job seekers (three women). A few families reside in Novak/Novake village, Prizren municipality, mainly engaged in agriculture. In Rahovec/Orahovec municipality, some community members live in the town (about 250) and others in Velika Hoča /Hoçë e Madhe village (about 600). The latter are mainly engaged in agriculture (cultivation of vineyards, wheat and corn). Some run small groceries or traditional crafts shops.

In **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region**, **Kosovo Serbs** from Skenderaj/Srbica and Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipalities greatly rely on financial support from Serbia. Some are employed by the Belgrade-run institutions (schools, post-office, healthcare), while others receive some social support (minimal salary, pension, money support for children, etc.).

As they do not have other significant sources of income, most of the **Kosovo Serb** community members experience some form of poverty. The community has been also affected by the current ban on the import of Serbian goods.

69 Municipal Employment Office in Klokot/Klllokot

70 Municipal Employment Office in Viti/Vitina.

71 The other villages became part of Klokot/Klllokot municipality.

72 Former director of the Serbian curriculum primary school "Mladen Marković" in Viti/Vitina.

In Skenderaj/Srbica, there are five **Kosovo Serbs** in MOCR, one in the Kosovo Police and one in the forestry service. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn, there are eight **Kosovo Serbs** in the MOCR, and seven in the Kosovo Police, all working in the Priluzje/Prilluzhe Sub-station. In the northern municipalities, **Kosovo Serbs'** employment in the public sector changed drastically after 5 November 2022, as nearly all **Kosovo Serbs** resigned from their positions in Kosovo institutions – including municipality, Kosovo Police, customs courts and prosecution - initially in reaction to the suspension of the **Kosovo Serb** director of the Kosovo Police Regional Directorate for the northern region. Those who resigned, among them 24 judges and ten prosecutors, reportedly receive a salary from funds provided by Serbia. Although some **Kosovo Serbs** are employed in the northern municipalities or Kosovo Police, OSCE monitoring indicates that these individuals are newly hired and were not employed by these institutions prior to November 2022. In some municipalities, **Kosovo Serbs** who held positions in both the municipalities and Belgrade-run interim councils, have kept their positions in the latter.

Reportedly, the unemployment rate is around 50 per cent in Vushtrri/Vučitrn and Skenderaj/Srbica municipalities, according to the MOCR heads, as well as other interlocutors in these municipalities.

Kosovo Serb returnees in general are beneficiaries of income-generation projects (mainly agricultural machinery, livestock, and seeds) provided by international donors, such as the IOM, Danish Refugee Council, European Union, as well as the Ministry for Communities and Return, Belgrade-run-institutions, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and municipalities.

Overall, the **migration dynamics in Kosovo Serb communities** cannot be comprehensively assessed due to lack of information on migration flows. Community representatives claim that due to limited economic opportunities, some **Kosovo Serbs** migrate to central Serbia or western European countries to seek better jobs, education, and secure and sustainable livelihoods. Over the past two years, the OSCE Mission field teams received reports of significantly increased migration rates among **Kosovo Serbs** from the northern municipalities, in particular.

The MOCRs in the municipalities of Kamenicë/Kamenica, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Ranilug/Ranillug, Parteš/Partesh, and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë reported that, in the last three to four years, between 100 and 400 young **Kosovo Serbs** have migrated from each of these municipalities to Niš, Jagodina and Belgrade, Serbia, or other European countries.

In the last four to five years, between 800 and 1,000 young **Kosovo Serbs** emigrated from Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality, reportedly due to a lack of employment opportunities as well as to better quality higher education opportunities in Niš and Belgrade, Serbia. Every year, about 60 percent of high school graduates enrol in colleges in Serbia, and after completing their studies, they do not return to Štrpce/Shtërpçë.⁷³

⁷³ Mayor's Office in Štrpce/Shtërpçë.

Employment in Belgrade-run institutions

Employment of **Kosovo Serbs** in Kosovo is significantly influenced by the presence and operation of the Serbian government-run institutions. These institutions, particularly in education, healthcare and municipal services, provide employment opportunities. Many **Kosovo Serbs** work in schools that follow the Serbian curriculum, which are funded and administered by the Ministry of Education in Serbia. Teachers and administrative staff are employed by the Serbian-run institutions, ensuring alignment with Serbian standards. Similarly, healthcare facilities in Serb-majority areas are often run by Serbian institutions, with hospitals and clinics receiving funding, oversight and staffing - including doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals - from Serbia. In areas with significant Serb populations, local governance structures sometimes operate under the auspices of Serbian institutions, with employees receiving salaries and support from the Serbian government.

According to the head of the MOCR in Kamenicë/Kamenica, the Serbian Government Office for Kosovo and Metohija (OKiM) funded the employment of nearly 150 young **Kosovo Serbs** from 2020 to 2023 in the Serbian-run education and health sectors, and the Belgrade-run interim council. In the Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, about 340 employees work in Belgrade-run institutions, according to MOCR. Similarly, in Ranilug/Ranillug approximately 450 employees work in Belgrade-run institutions, with 80 recruited between 2020 and 2023. In Parteš/Partesh, the main employment generator is the Belgrade-run maternity hospital in Pasjane/Pasjane, with least 100 **Kosovo Serbs** on the staff. Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality has about 1,000 **Kosovo Serbs** working in Belgrade-run institutions, with around 400 young **Kosovo Serbs** employed since March 2020, according to MOCR. Four **Kosovo Serbs** work in a small clinic in Babush/Babuš village, Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality. In the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, since 2015 Belgrade-run institutions have supported small businesses run by **Kosovo Serbs** in Skenderaj/Srbica and Vushtrri/Vučitrn by providing agricultural machinery and other support assistance.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Upgraded road infrastructure over the years and development in the energy sector have benefitted the Kosovo Serb community. Nevertheless, issues affecting the community include frequent power cuts, lack of water supply in mountainous rural areas, roads exposed to frequent rockfalls and landslides, lack of sidewalks and poorly asphalted roads, as well as inadequate waste management, such as the sporadic collection of waste.

The ongoing expropriation process for the Prishtinë/Priština–Gjilan/Gnjilane-Dheu i Bardhë/Bela Zemlja motorway was characterized by grievances of **Kosovo Serb** owners in Gjilan/Gnjilane and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipalities. In January 2020, the Novo Brdo/Novobërdë Court Branch received 161 claims contesting compensation decisions, of which 102 pertained to **Kosovo Serb** property owners. The Branch Court in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë referred all cases to mediation proceedings at the Gjilan/Gnjilane Basic Court.⁷⁴ However, the parties did not agree to engage in mediation proceedings. Subsequently, the Branch Court in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë received the cases back, court hearings took place and some cases have since been settled through agreement between the litigants.

In the **Prishtinë/Priština** region, where access to infrastructure is generally good, sporadic issues include severe water cuts, pollution of the Gračanka/Gračanka river, and unrepaired roads. In Prishtinë/Priština municipality, language is reported to be the only barrier to receiving full services with regards to public utilities. Some of the officials in the public services do not speak Serbian, although it is required that services be provided in both Serbian and Albanian languages. On the other hand, only a small percentage of **Kosovo Serbs** speak Albanian. Individuals who speak the Albanian language reported receiving services without any problems. In Obiliq/Obilić municipality, there were reports that a large part of the **Kosovo Serb** community regularly encounters water supply disruptions and malfunctions, especially in Babin Most/Babimoc village. The main roads are in good condition, whereas smaller streets and roads leading to the neighbourhood inhabited by **Kosovo Serb** families, are in poor condition.

In **Gjilan/Gnjilane** region, in certain areas of Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality, roads connecting the town with Bosce/Boscë, Leshtarë/Lještar, Grizimë/Grizime, Kostadince/Kostadincë, and Donje Močare/Moçarë i Ultë villages are not paved, despite longstanding requests made to the responsible

⁷⁴ In accordance with Regulation No. 4/2019 issued by the Judicial Council on Mediation Procedures for Court Cases, dated May 2019.

municipal bodies. In November 2022, the Kamenicë/Kamenica communities committee presented a list of desired local infrastructure projects, namely the paving of these roads. While the municipality accepted this list and prioritized these projects for 2023, as of December none of them were completed, and were instead slated for 2024. The rural roads of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë and the mountainous roads of Ranilug/Ranillug are in a similar condition, however, in 2020, efforts were made to pave rural roads connecting Veliko Ropotovo/Ropotovë e Madhe and Rajanovce/Rajnoc villages. In 2023, through intermunicipal co-operation, a bike path was constructed between Novo Brdo/Novobërdë and Kamenicë/Kamenica municipalities, and 6km of bike path was constructed within Ranilug/Ranillug municipality. **Kosovo Serb** residents of Binçë/Binač village, Viti/Vitina municipality, complained on several occasions about the lack of sidewalks from the village centre to the primary school.

In the past few years in Ranilug/Ranillug and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipalities, KEDS has been slowly improving the quality of the electrical network, replacing broken older wooden poles with newer concrete models that also have capacity for greater voltages. During March and April 2020, KEDS and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality made improvements to the power network of seven quarries located in Straža/Strazhë village, which positively affected the power supply in Stanišor/Stanišhor village.

In some areas, water and sewage systems exist. However, in other areas, households still rely on water wells and septic tanks⁷⁵ Other villages of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality, such as Bostane/Bostan, Čuljkovci/Qulkoc, Tullar/Tulare, and Makresh i Ulët/Donji Makreš, have irregular potable water supplies, mainly due to accumulated unpaid electricity bills. This happens more often in the summer months, when large volumes of water are used for irrigation of agricultural gardens. Klokot/Kllokot municipality faces challenges with the water system due to its failure to reach agreement with KEDS on reimbursing existing electricity debts. In Ranilug/Ranillug, despite the presence of three water supply systems, poor maintenance has rendered two of them only partially functional and one completely unusable (Tomance/Tomanc and Pančelo/Pančell villages). In most of the villages there is now a sewage system.

There are no longer reports of “informal” waste disposal sites in the **Gjilan/Gnjilane** region. However, many households from Viti/Vitina, Parteš/Partesh, Gjilan/Gnjilane down to Ranilug/Ranillug, use the Binačka Morava/Moravë e Binçes river as a wastewater destination. Sewage pipes from these areas lead to the river. After heavy rains, the Binačka Morava/Moravë e Binçes overflows, flooding the fields and crops of **Kosovo Serb** inhabited villages of Ranilug/Ranillug, Glogovce/Glogovc, Donje and Gornje Korminjane/Korminjan i Poshtëm and Ulët and Tomance/Tomanc in Ranilug/Ranillug municipality.

⁷⁵ Močare/Močarë, Grizimë/Grizime, Bosce/Boscë, and Ajnovce/Hajnoc villages in Kamenicë/Kamenica municipality; Rajanovce/Rajanovc, Boževce/Bozhevc, Drenovac/Drenovc, Tomance/Tomanc, Pančelo/Pančell, and Malo Ropotovo/Ropotovë e Vogel, as well as in Straža/Strazhë, Gornji Makreš/Makresh i Epërm, Jasenovik, Prekovce/Prekoc, and Izvor villages in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality.

The construction of mini-hydropower plants in many locations in Štrpce/Shtërpce municipality, including the area of the Sharri/Šara Park, triggered other issues related to environmental protection and water supply in the past several years. Despite the reaction of residents who regularly protested the hydropower development and environmental degradation, construction works were finalized. The hydropower plant construction and diversion of water from local rivers and streams into pipes also impacted the quantity and the quality of the water supply for residents in Donja Bitinja/Biti e Poshtme village.

In the **Pejë/Peć** region, issues vary from municipality to municipality, most tied to weak infrastructure, old installations, and reliance on water wells that are not operational during power cuts. These issues affect both settlements and religious sites in the region. Waste is often disposed of illegally in open spaces, and inhabitants resort to organizing their own collection systems. In Istog/Istok municipality, there have been efforts to improve road infrastructure in Kosovo Serb-inhabited areas.⁷⁶ In addition, streetlights were installed in Dragolevc/Dragoljevac and Osojane/Osojan villages, and later expanded in the same villages in 2020 by IOM/MOCR, as well as in Dobrushë/Dobruša and Kashicë/Kašica. Street lights were also installed in Serbobran/Srbobrane in 2022. In Osojane/Osojan and Lubozhdë/Ljubožda villages, electricity poles were replaced by KEDS in 2022. In addition, a sewage system was constructed in Dragolevc/Dragoljevac in 2021. Most Kosovo Serb-inhabited villages are connected to the water supply system, except for Tuqep/Tučep and Oprashkë/Oprašk, where the communities rely on water wells. However, there are still recurrent power cuts due to old electricity transmission poles.

In **Klinë/Klina** municipality, in rural areas, the community mostly uses water wells, as some villages, such as Binxhë/Biča, are not connected to potable water supply systems. During 2022 and 2023, sewage systems and roads were built in the villages of Berkovë/Berkovo, Drenoc/Drenovac, Dresnik/Drnsnik, Dollc/Dolac, Rudicë/Rudice, Dugajevë/Dugenjive and Videjë/Vidanje.

In **Pejë/Peć** municipality, the Kosovo Serb returnee site of Ljevoša/Levoshë is the only village facing problems with the sewage system. In 2022 and 2023, the municipality repaired faulty streetlights in the village. The ethnically-mixed Brestovik village has also faced problems with the water supply, together with other villages in the surrounding area and the town itself, as well as an accumulated electricity debt for the use of water pumps. The village lacks adequate and regular waste management. The municipality and the regional waste company have undertaken measures, but waste collection remains infrequent. In Goraždevac/Gorazhdec village, the municipality paved several roads in 2022 after requests from Kosovo Serb community members, and the regional water supply company "Hidrodrini" installed around 50 water meters at houses and public buildings.

⁷⁶ In 2020, the MCR asphalted the school yard and installed a playground at the "Jedinstvo" school in Čerkolez/Crkolez village. The MOCR support continued in 2020 with paving in Čerkolez/Crkolez and Dragolevc/Dragoljevac, and the road between Osojane/Osojan and Kosh/Koš, and further in 2023 in Muzhevinë/Muževine, Lubozhdë/Ljubožda, and Čerkolez/Crkolez. In 2020, the main road in the Blagaq/Blagače neighborhood in Gurakoc/Đurakovac village was covered with gravel.

In **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica** region, the **Kosovo Serb** community's access to electricity and asphalted roads in rural areas is generally good. The road leading to the **Kosovo Serb**–majority village of Banja/Bajë (Skënderaj/Srbica) remains in poor condition despite repeated advocacy efforts by the community to repair it. Garbage collection and waste management in **Kosovo Serb**–inhabited areas in municipalities in which they are in a numerical minority is functioning. All areas have access to the sewage system.

In **Prizren** region, the majority of the main roads connecting the **Kosovo Serb**–inhabited areas are asphalted. In Velika Hoča/Hoçë e Madhe village, lack of streetlights is a longstanding problem and residents requested municipal support several times. Due to delays in municipal response, in August 2022, residents installed streetlights on their own initiative at three locations in the village. In addition, in December 2022, OKiM installed lamp posts in the main street of the village.⁷⁷ In 2023, the Rahovec/Orahovac municipality entered into a public-private partnership with a Slovenian energy service company (ESCO) for the implementation of a five-year project to digitalize the electric network and make efficient use of energy; however, throughout 2023 there were no developments. Since October 2023, at the initiative of the **Kosovo Serb** residents, with funding from individuals and the Belgrade-run interim council in Rahovec/Orahovac, new street lights were being installed in the secondary streets of the village. In July 2023, the Prizren municipality started asphaltting sections of the road in Novake/Novakë village. Additionally, **Kosovo Serbs** who reside in the multi-ethnic Župa/Zhupë valley are often affected by landslides and rockfalls, which threaten the community's safety and occasionally block the road from Prizren to Štrpce/Shtërpçë, where a significant number of **Kosovo Serbs** from Prizren region have been displaced.

In Rahovec/Orahovac municipality, the lack of potable water for the residents of Velika Hoča/Hoçë e Madhe has been an ongoing issue since 2009. For years, residents of the village have used water from wells, which is non-potable. Various efforts have been made to connect this village and the villages of Zoqishtë/Zočiste and Opterushë/Opteruša to the Rahovec/Orahovac water supply system; however, no solution has yet been found. In January 2024, outside the reporting period, the Ministry of Economy allocated €500,000 for the water supply project in Rahovec/Orahovac.

⁷⁷ See [in Serbian] at: <https://kim.gov.rs/v5023.php>. (Accessed December 2023).

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

The Kosovo Serb community generally accesses social services provided by both Kosovo institutions and Belgrade-run institutions. In 2018, 2,422 Kosovo Serb families (6,176 individuals) received social assistance, constituting 9.5 per cent of total beneficiaries, according to statistics of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.⁷⁸

The Centre for Social Work in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North collaborates with the Belgrade-run social system, thus receiving financial contributions from both systems; the total number of beneficiaries it supports under the Belgrade-run institutions is approximately 3,000 individuals per year in six municipalities: Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Pejë/Peć, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Zvečan/Zveçan.

Across the Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, many elderly **Kosovo Serbs** receive pensions from both Kosovo institutions and Belgrade-run institutions. In Gjiilan/Gnjilane municipality, 370 **Kosovo Serbs** receive pensions from Serbia, 90 per cent of whom also reportedly receive the Kosovo basic pension in the amount of €100. Many elderly **Kosovo Serbs** were negatively impacted by a shortage in Serbian Dinar currency in late 2023, when ATMs in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Šilovo/Shillovë, and Klokot/Klllokot were delayed in restocking due to closure of the Jarinje/Jarinjë crossing point on 24 September. This disruption of the normal flow of money coming from Serbia caused delays of up to two weeks for the resupply of currency.⁷⁹

Kosovo Serbs residing in Gračanica/Gračanicë, Prizren, and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipalities have been facing some challenges in claiming their pensions from the competent institutions in Kosovo; in particular, concerning requests from the pension administration for additional documents.⁸⁰ Persons with disabilities experience obstacles in accessing their disability allowance, including inadequate transportation for the required travel from the four northern municipalities to Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In addition to barriers owing to physical accessibility, persons with disabilities residing in the northern municipalities must re-apply every year despite their permanent disability.⁸¹ Community representatives reported that persons with disability receive allowances from Belgrade-run institutions as well.

⁷⁸ Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 100.

⁷⁹ Following the Central Bank of Kosovo (CBK)'s adoption of a regulation in December 2023, establishing the euro as the only currency allowed for cash transactions in Kosovo, which took effect on 1 February 2024, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo field teams received reports that this change has affected the community relying on financial support from the government of Serbia.

⁸⁰ Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018*, pp. 98-99.

⁸¹ See USAID, *Gender, LGBTI and Persons with Disabilities Assessment*, 2018, p. 54.

Kosovo Serbs mostly use Belgrade-run healthcare facilities.⁸² In the majority of municipalities where **Kosovo Serbs** are in a numerical minority, Belgrade-run health facilities and/or smaller healthcare centres (*ambulanta*) exist.⁸³ However, it is increasingly common for community members to use Gračanica/Gračanicë or Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North based Belgrade-run healthcare facilities for secondary care services,⁸⁴ which requires long-distance travel and additional financial costs, and may lead to deterioration of health in case of emergency.⁸⁵

Generally, **Kosovo Serbs** who reside in **Kosovo Serb**–majority municipalities have lower financial barriers in accessing health care compared with other communities in Kosovo; however, in municipalities where they constitute a numerical minority, financial hurdles exist.⁸⁶ Financial obstacles are believed to be harsher for women due to low employment rates and existing societal gender roles, which limit their access to health care.⁸⁷

In Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, during 2022 and 2023, the mayor has hired an additional 40 nurses to make house calls for the elderly population, as most live in rural areas with few transportation options to independently visit health clinics. To further support this, UNMIK donated two minivans and the Ministry of Health donated one minivan. In Kamenicë/Kamenica, the Belgrade-run health unit organized a similar outreach for medical services for pensioners in the past two years.

In the Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, the Belgrade-run healthcare system has organized various awareness-raising campaigns. The hospital in Pasjane/Pasjan is important as the primary healthcare provider for **Kosovo Serbs** living across Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, and regularly promotes health-related information campaigns and provides free-of-charge check-ups for a wide range of health needs. In Klokot/Klllokot, following a recommendation from the communities committee in October 2023, the Ministry of Health conducted health examinations with a mobile mammography for rural Kosovo Albanian and **Kosovo Serb** women in the multi-ethnic village of Mogillë/Mogila over three days.⁸⁸

Since 2023, several Belgrade-run health centres have been reported to suffer from being undersupplied with medicines and other materials. As a result, **Kosovo Serb** community members are sometimes forced to purchase these privately or travel to Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North or central Serbia to seek treatment.

There are no licensed Belgrade-run pharmacies in Kosovo. Therefore, **Kosovo Serbs** rely on Belgrade-run hospitals, ambulances, and health centres to obtain prescription medicines, which are supplied mainly from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North or Belgrade.

⁸² OSCE, *Communities rights assessment report – fourth edition*, 2015, p. 24.

⁸³ Gjiilan/Gnjilane; Kamenicë/Kamenica; Klokot/Klllokot; Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Skenderaj/Srbica; Vushtrri/Vučitrn; Istog/Istok; Klinë/Klina; Pejë/Peć; Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje; Obiliq/Obilić; Pristinë/Priština; Prizren; Rahovec/Orahovec; See: OSCE, *Municipal profiles 2018*.

⁸⁴ Ibid. See OSCE, *Municipal profiles 2018*: Gjiilan/Gnjilane; Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Pejë/Peć; Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje; Obiliq/Obilić; Pristinë/Priština; Prizren; Rahovec/Orahovac.

⁸⁵ See Council of Europe Advisory Committee on Framework Convention for the National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Kosovo, 2017, §110, p. 40.

⁸⁶ See Kosovo Women's Network, *Access to healthcare in Kosovo*, 2016 p. 51.

⁸⁷ Ibid. See p. 44.

⁸⁸ Mayor of Klokot/Klllokot.

This limits the supply of medicines to medical facilities used by Kosovo Serbs. In fact, in October 2023, access to pharmaceutical products across Belgrade-run health clinics in Gjilan/Gnjilane region was limited, owing to a several-years long issue regarding certification of importing Serbian medical products. This resulted in a lack of critical medical supplies at Belgrade-run health clinics, including oxygen tanks and prescription medications. It forced many Kosovo Serbs to travel across the administrative boundary line to purchase medicine and other medical services.

6. Access to education

Kosovo Serb students follow the Serbian curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MESTD) of Serbia.⁸⁹ There is no Kosovo curriculum in the Serbian language, nor is Serbian taught as an official language subject or as a specific “community” subject in Kosovo-curriculum schools.

There are 131 elementary and secondary schools in 24 municipalities offering classes in the Serbian curriculum, including pre-school and vocational education and training schools.⁹⁰ In addition, in nine municipalities, there are 14 Serbian curriculum elementary schools sharing premises with Kosovo curriculum schools.⁹¹ Many municipalities support the Serbian-curriculum schools financially or in other ways, for example, by providing transport for students, funding construction work, and hiring support staff.⁹²

The Kosovo Serb community has faced a number of challenges in accessing education in the Serbian language. Since 2015, numerous bans on importing textbooks and educational materials from Serbia have been implemented, creating significant obstacles for students. These restrictions have limited access to essential learning resources, hindering educational progress and creating substantial challenges in academic pursuits.

Serbian-curriculum schools frequently operate in shifts, while one building hosts several elementary and secondary schools, which creates congestion and affects access to quality education. The lack of qualified teaching staff is also an additional concern. In addition, in some cases there is no adequate organized transport to Serbian-curriculum secondary schools, in particular from villages.⁹³

The only Serbian-language institution of higher education in Kosovo is the university in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North. Kosovo Serb students usually attend this university or universities outside of Kosovo. The Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North encompasses ten faculties, including the Faculty of Technical Sciences, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Philosophy, Teacher Education Faculty, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, and the Faculty of Arts.

⁸⁹ Serbian curriculum schools are attended also by other communities, mostly Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Gorani and Kosovo Bosniak.

⁹⁰ OSCE, *Non-majority Communities' Access to Pre-University Education in Kosovo*, (2018).

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 32.

⁹² For example, in 2020 Pejë/Peć municipality supported the Serbian curriculum school in Goraždevac/Gorazhdec by renovating the toilets.

⁹³ For example, transport is not provided for Kosovo Serb students residing in Vushtrri/Vučitrn and Skenderaj/Srbica.

The University offers a diverse range of study programs, such as architecture, civil engineering, electrical and computer engineering, philosophy, environmental protection and safety engineering, and mechanical engineering. Following the worsening security situation throughout 2022 and 2023, an increasing number of Kosovo Serb students decide to pursue higher education in Niš or Belgrade, Serbia.

The degrees issued by the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North can be submitted for verification to the Commission for Verification of Diplomas⁹⁴ for job applications, professional exams, and licenses in public institutions. The Kosovo government re-established the Commission in February 2023 and, in October 2023, it extended the Commission's mandate from 12 to 18 months, while also expanding its scope to include diplomas issued by Serbian-curriculum secondary schools. In addition to Gračanica/Gračanicë and Ranilug/Ranillug, in January 2024, the Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality started accepting applications for the verification of diplomas issued by the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.⁹⁵ In 2023, the Commission received 296 verification requests, of which 220 were verified, while the rest required additional information or were incomplete. The Commission's mandate is expected to be extended into 2025.

The verification of education qualifications obtained in central Serbia is a subject of the EU-facilitated Dialogue,⁹⁶ the Washington Agreement and the Berlin Process.⁹⁷ The technical agreement on mutual diploma recognition between Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade has not been implemented to date. At times, this has created difficulties for Kosovo Serbs' access to employment in public institutions.

Inter-community dialogue and interaction with students from other communities is limited by separate education systems and linguistic barriers between Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian children. International and local civil society organizations have supported and organized extracurricular activities, mainly in the schools from the two education systems which share premises with one another. Initiatives include teachers' training and the implementation of the Nansen Dialogue project⁹⁸ - in schools sharing premises in Jasenovik village (Novo Brdo/Novobërdë), in Ponesh/Poneš (Gjilan/Gnjilane) and in Binçë/Binač (Viti/Vitina) - and which contributed to the improvement of interactions between Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb students.

94 In 2015, under the mediation of the NGO European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Kosovo, MESTI and UMN reached an agreement for the verification of diplomas. The government regulation (No. 21/2015) stipulated the establishment of a commission for verification of Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North -issued diplomas seated in MESTI, allowing for diplomas to be verified for employment purposes. After a prolonged period of inactivity, the Commission was re-established in February 2023 by a new government decision (No. 01/130). In October 2023, the previous decision was amended with the purpose to extend the mandate of the Commission from 12 to 18 months and expand its scope to diplomas issued by Serbian-curriculum secondary schools. In addition to the municipalities of Gračanica/Gračanicë and Ranilug/Ranillug, on 15 January 2024, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality also started accepting applications for the verification of diplomas issued by the Serbian-language University in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

95 Radio 'Kontakt Plus' article: <https://radiokontaktplus.org/en/News/Verification-of-university-diplomas-in-northern-Mitrovica-will-soon-be-possible-again%2C-and-high-school-diplomas-will-soon-be-verified/60706/>

96 European Union External Action, Official website, https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/eu-facilitated-dialogue-belgrade-pristina-relations/349/dialogue-between-belgrade-and-pristina_en (accessed November 9, 2020).

97 The Berlin Process Agreement on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications in the Western Balkans was ratified by the Assembly of Kosovo on 8 February 2023 and by the Parliament of Serbia on 28 April 2023. However, to date the agreement is not operational.

98 For more information see: <https://nansen.peace.no/> (Accessed December 2023).

7. Access to justice

A minority of employees of the three non-judicial institutions: Ombudsperson Institution (OIK), the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), and the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO), are members of the Kosovo Serb community.

In the OIK, five of the 74 employees are **Kosovo Serbs**: four women and one man, the latter being one of the five deputy Ombudspersons; in the FLAA, two of the 32 employees are **Kosovo Serbs** (both women); none of the 32 employees of VAAO are **Kosovo Serb**. In addition, 29 of the 1,383 licensed lawyers, members of the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA) are **Kosovo Serbs** (25 men, four women).

OSCE field monitoring reports that members of the **Kosovo Serb** community have varying levels of awareness of the services provided by the FLAA, OIK, and VAAO. Community members most aware of these services are those who work in or engage with municipal institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, as well as students. Awareness-raising campaigns that target the wider community, particularly families living in rural areas, could be effective; an example is efforts to increase the visibility of the FLAA. The level of awareness differs also among municipalities. In Prizren and Rahovec/Orahovac, the **Kosovo Serb** community has limited knowledge of the services provided by the above-mentioned institutions as they are regionally based and due to a lack of awareness-raising activities and outreach by these institutions, targeting the community in these municipalities.⁹⁹ A similar observation was denoted in Pejë/Peć, where the need for targeted awareness-raising and information-sharing campaigns on judicial services was raised by community representatives.¹⁰⁰

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North and Gračanica/Graçanicë there are awareness-raising and information campaigns targeting the **Kosovo Serb** community to advance access to justice for residents and knowledge of judicial services.¹⁰¹

The OIK is the only institution that conducts regular monthly and ad-hoc outreach visits in various municipalities and therefore has better visibility than the other two legal service providers. Even though the OIK no longer conducts monthly visits to municipalities in the Prishtinë/Priština region, its Gračanica/Graçanicë regional office conducts

⁹⁹ According to the OSCE field reports from the Prizren region.

¹⁰⁰ According to the OSCE field reports from the region.

¹⁰¹ According to the OSCE field reports from the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.

awareness-raising campaigns consistently in areas inhabited by Kosovo Serbs. Additionally, the OIK organizes roundtable discussions in collaboration also with NGOs and with the OSCE Mission, aimed at informing residents on how to reach out to the OIK.¹⁰² The Kosovo Serb Deputy Ombudsperson on several occasions visited Kosovo Serb inhabited areas of Pejë/Peć, Istog/Istok and Klinë/Klina municipalities, and shared information on the work of the OIK. In addition, regional OIK offices conduct occasional visits to those areas.

Since October 2021, the OIK has been leading the Forum for Dialogue between the Ombudsperson and civil society organizations (CSO) that gather different CSOs, including those representing Kosovo Serbs.¹⁰³

VAAO, under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy, organizes an annual "Crime Victims' Rights Week" in October. Despite several information campaigns conducted by various institutions, including VAAO, the Ministry of Justice, KBA, and information shared with victims when seeking services, there is limited or no understanding of the crime victims' compensation (CVC) opportunities among Kosovo Serbs. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, insufficient information about the CVC program impacting communities' members denotes a genuine need for informational sessions to educate individuals about victims' rights, as evidenced by the absence of applications for compensation. In Pejë/Peć the OSCE observed that leaflets on CVC program are displayed in visible locations in basic and branch courts, in Albanian, Serbian and English language.

Five of the FLAA regional offices¹⁰⁴ and nine mobile offices¹⁰⁵ cover municipalities inhabited by Kosovo Serbs. The FLAA mobile teams also contribute to awareness-raising campaigns by reaching out to non-majority communities and implementing information and awareness raising campaigns. In 2023, with the support of the USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages as well as in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid with the motto "Protect your Rights" were delivered in the official language.

Across Kosovo, most institutions have multilingual staff in their regional offices who can communicate and provide services in the Serbian language. In Prizren, all institutions have multilingual staff who can provide services in official languages. However, in Prishtinë/Priština, VAAO does not have interpreters from Albanian to Serbian or vice-versa. The same is true in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, where the office occasionally resorts to the Prosecution or Court interpreters when needed. Moreover, not all of the documents produced by these institutions are available in the language of communities or their translation is delayed. In Pejë/Peć region, according to multiple sources, the majority of officials are able to communicate in both local languages. For example, three out of four VAO Officers can communicate in both local languages, including one officer, who is a Kosovo Bosniak/native speaker. In cases

¹⁰² According to the OSCE field reports from the region.

¹⁰³ The aim of the Forum is to create a common platform for cooperation between the OIK and CSOs, for the advancement of protection of human rights, for the identification of challenges and violations of fundamental rights and freedoms and the development of joint activities on their promotion and protection.

¹⁰⁴ Prishtina/Pristina, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Peć, Prizren/Prizren, Gjiilan/Gnjilane

¹⁰⁵ Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Istog/Istok, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zvečan, Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Graçanica, Skënderaj

where clients have language issues, the relevant institutions (court, prosecution, VAAO) have available interpreters to support non-Albanian speakers or to translate relevant documents. However, the quality and timeliness of translations has been cited as a concern by judicial counterparts in court proceedings.

With regard to the beneficiaries of the services¹⁰⁶, in 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 164 were members of the Kosovo Serb community. The OIK received 1,595 complaints in 2022, with 77 coming from Kosovo Serb community members.¹⁰⁷ VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, where 98 victims were Kosovo Serbs, most of them women.

Community members are free to choose their legal representatives. However, in case of ex-officio representation in criminal cases, the KBA assigns lawyers according to the order of lawyers listed in their record who are fluent in the language of the community they represent or are members of the respective community.

Kosovo Serb Judge and Prosecutor Resignations

Based on the 2013 Brussels Agreement and the 2015 Justice Agreement, Kosovo Serb judges, prosecutors, and administrative staff completed their integration into the Kosovo justice system on 24 October 2017. The Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Basic Court and its newly established branches in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok received the assignment of 25 Kosovo Serb judges, the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Basic Prosecution Office received the assignment of nine Kosovo Serb prosecutors, and the Court of Appeals Division in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North received the assignment of five Kosovo Serb judges. In early November 2022, all Kosovo Serb judges and administrative staff of the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Basic Court and the Court of Appeals Division in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North submitted their resignations from their posts in the integrated judiciary in the region. All Kosovo Serb prosecutors and administrative staff of the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Basic Prosecution Office offered their resignations from their posts in the integrated prosecution in the region.¹⁰⁸ As of the end of the reporting period, the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) and Kosovo Prosecutorial Council (KPC) had not accepted the submitted resignations, stating that they are not considered voluntary and the justice officials may return. Both the KJC and KPC Chairs have stated that they are committed to ensuring that Kosovo has a multi-ethnic justice system, and have also been discussing recruitment strategies aimed at increasing the representation of non-majority communities therein.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews and email exchange with the VAAO, FLAA, OIK and KBA in December 2023 and January 2024.

¹⁰⁷ There are no data available yet for 2023, pending publication of annual report on 31 March 2024. Preliminary data published by the Ombudsperson on 26 December 2023 do not provide community breakdown.

¹⁰⁸ Outside the reporting period, on 5 February 2024, on the request of the KJC, the OSCE Mission monitored the qualification test for recruitment of vacant positions reserved for Kosovo Serb judges. All three candidates who applied passed the test. Generally, however, there is a lack of Kosovo Serb judge applicants, which apparently is in part due to non-recognition of academic degrees.

8. Language use and media

The ability of Kosovo Serb community members to freely use the Serbian language has improved over the years, as members use it in both daily interactions and in official settings.

Both the Albanian and Serbian languages and their respective alphabets were established as official languages of Kosovo in both the 2006 Law on the Use of Languages¹⁰⁹ and the Constitution.¹¹⁰

The Serbian language is an official language at all levels. All documents and communications issued from institutions must comply with the legal provisions. At the governmental level, the Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC) was established in 2012.¹¹¹ The responsibilities of the OLC include monitoring compliance by any institution under its jurisdiction with the relevant legislation, including in particular the Law on the Use of Languages, and taking necessary measures within its authority, including through mediation, to ensure compliance with the legislation by any institution under its jurisdiction. OLC reviews and makes recommendations regarding regulations or administrative instructions, carries out investigations, whether on its initiative or pursuant to a complaint made by any natural or legal person into any failure of any institution to comply with legislation relating to the status and use of the official languages as well as to other languages of communities whose language is not an official language in Kosovo.

Despite positive progress in the use of the Serbian language where bilingualism has generally become a standard in municipal administration and courts, the Kosovo Serb community's enjoyment of language rights and use of their mother tongue continue to be limited by insufficient financial resources for quality and professional translation services, limited possibilities for language learning through the education system, municipal officials' lack of knowledge of the Serbian language, and lack of understanding of the Serbian language by younger persons.

¹⁰⁹ Article 2 of the Law No.02/L-37 on Use of Languages, March 2007.

¹¹⁰ Article 5 of the Constitution, 15 June 2008, and the Amendments on the Constitution, 07 September 2012; 26 March 2013; 05 August 2015; 11 March 2016 and 25 September 2020.

¹¹¹ The Office is established with Regulation No. 07/2012 on the Office of the Language Commissioner, available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=8364>, accessed 29 July, 2024.

The 2019 OLC report¹¹² noted that, in general, Kosovo municipalities have made positive progress in language equality; however, shortcomings exist in the fulfilment of their legal obligations, including lack of human capacity, high turnover of translators, lack of equipment, lack of clear criteria on requirements for the positions of translators, and the lack of accountability handling citizen's complaints.¹¹³

Over the years, the number of complaints received by the OLC increased substantially. In the first half of 2024, outside the reporting period, the OLC received 15 complaints, several of them in the process of being resolved.¹¹⁴ The municipal websites were not properly updated in Serbian, which prevented the community from accessing information about job vacancies and grants.

In several municipalities, road signs, including settlement and street names as well as road directions, are displayed in all official languages.¹¹⁵ In certain municipalities, the defacement of road signs continues to be an issue, typically with Serbian-language versions of town or village names covered with spray paint. There is a general lack of effort by local structures to invest in replacing defaced road signs, particularly in villages. Especially concerning is the situation in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality, where the number of spray-painted signs of towns and villages is very high, both outside (specifically on the road connecting Gjakovë/Đakovica and Deçan/Dečani) and in town. A similar situation is found in Deçan/Dečani municipality, especially in rural areas. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, a number of inconsistent and lacking road signs have been noted.¹¹⁶

In general, the **Kosovo Serb** community receives public information and services in Serbian, as an official language. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, in particular at the municipal level.¹¹⁷ Between 2017 and 2019, 22 of 38 municipalities made public information documents available on their municipal bulletin boards, such as advertisements of public meetings, leaflets, information brochures, and notifications in official languages as well as other languages in official use, where relevant.¹¹⁸ Between 2021 and 2023, Prizren, Dragash/Dragaš and Rahovec/Orahovac issued public information documents in Serbian language. Although all 38 municipalities have municipal websites and have made efforts to include relevant information for their residents, only the websites of 14 municipalities

¹¹² Office of the Language Commissioner, *Annual Report on Language Compliance in Municipalities*, Office of the Language Commissioner, March 2019.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Internal report and information exchange by the Office of the Language Commissioner, July 2024.

¹¹⁵ These are Ferizaj/Uroševac, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Viti/Vitina, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Vushtri/Vučitrn, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zvečan, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Lipjan/ Lipljan, FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje, Obiliq/Obilić, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, Klinë/Klina, Istog/Istok, and Junik.

¹¹⁶ OSCE Mission has observed that the names of places on the new road signs placed along the newly constructed road in the area of Vushtri/Vučitrn municipality (going from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South towards Prishtinë/Priština) are written in Albanian language only. In March 2024, outside the reporting period, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI) replaced toponym signs on the main road between Zvečan/Zvečan and Leposavić/Leposaviq with new bilingual signs. While the previous signs had names of the towns and villages written in Serbian (using both Cyrillic and Latin alphabets), these new signs were written in the Albanian language first, and below in Serbian in the Latin alphabet. While there is no explicit specification in the legislation as to which language should be placed first, the Language Commissioner stated that 'legal framework provides for the equality of official languages, but topographic signs should also take into account the ethnic composition of the inhabited places themselves and that the arrangement of the language on these signs has to be reversed'. Statement available at: <https://kossev.info/kosovo-vesti-srpske-table-uklanjanje-cirilica-aljiju/>, accessed 15 March 2024.

¹¹⁷ Based on regular monitoring by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Office of the Language Commissioner.

¹¹⁸ Prishtinë/Priština, Shtime/Štimlje, FushëKosovë/Kosovo Polje, Obiliq/Obilić, Klinë/Klina, Istog/Istok, Pejë/Peć, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Podujevë/Podujevo, Vushtri/Vučitrn, Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Viti/Vitina, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Klokot/Kllokot, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Ranilug/Ranillug, Novo Brdo/Novëbrdë, Parteš/Partesh, and Kamenicë/Kamenica.

offer information in all official languages, with content and updates presented in the same or similar manner in the Serbian language.¹¹⁹ Prizren, Dragash/Dragaš and Rahovec/Orahovac offer more information in all official languages. In Dragash/Dragas, all content is available in all official languages, as instructed by the mayor since 2021. While in Prizren and Rahovec/Orahovac, relevant information is provided in both official languages, but there are differences among the amount of translated content. Additionally, only eight of 38 municipalities organized outreach or information events to inform their communities about the Law on the Use of Languages and linguistic rights. Public utility bills are available in the Serbian language. However, in Gračanica/Gračanicë, community members reported difficulties in accessing documents or services from public service-providers in the Serbian language.

Almost all municipalities provide interpretation and translation services.¹²⁰ However, only three municipalities reported that the number of translators employed was sufficient to fully cover the existing workload and needs (Leposavić/Leposaviq, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša municipalities). In the remaining municipalities, efforts were made to cope with the lack of sufficient translators and interpreters; for example, by asking other municipal staff to provide translation and interpretation services on needs basis. Four municipalities reported that they had not employed any translation or interpretation staff at all.¹²¹ Following the OSCE Mission's advocacy efforts to enhance municipalities' compliance with the Law on the Use of Languages, Viti/Vitina municipality finalized the selection of a municipal translator/interpreter after a three-year open vacancy. The new translator/interpreter took up the position on 1 September 2023, which had been vacant since the retirement of the previous translator/interpreter in 2020.

Complaints about a lack of translated material are mainly raised by CSOs and journalists on behalf of the Kosovo Serb community as they notice a delay in the publication of information in the Serbian language. They accentuate the need for more awareness raising and promotion of institutional multilingualism and official language learning, including offering Serbian as an option as a second language in school curricula. Although civil society groups have a stake in promoting language learning, they have focused on pushing the Government and municipalities to enforce existing laws, not promoting the languages themselves.

The Kosovo Serb community has access to media on different platforms in Serbian language. The public service media, Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) operates its own Serbian-language channel program (RTK2). According to the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo, RTK is obliged to provide 15 per cent of its programme scheme in the languages of other communities of Kosovo.¹²²

119 Gjilan/Gnjilane, Novo Brdo/NovëBrdë, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Viti/Vitina, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Klokot/Klllokot, Prishtinë/Priština, Shtime/Štimlje, Obiliq/Obilić, Klinë/Klina, Istog/Istok, and Pejë/Peć.

120 Twenty-five of 38 municipalities have employed translators and interpreters in line with the numbers foreseen in their municipal organograms. In 14 of 38 municipalities, translation units exist as part of the municipal organigram.

121 Hani i Elezit/Elez Han, Glogoc/Glogovac, Malishevë/Mališevo, and Shtime/Štimlje.

122 Law on Radio Television of Kosovo, Article 8, point 3 "These two channels are obliged to share 15 per cent of their programme scheme with the languages of other communities of Kosovo."

Additionally, RTK1 broadcasts special community programmes for non-majority communities, including programmes in the Serbian language.¹²³ However, a “Public Assessment on the State of Media in Kosovo,” commissioned by the OSCE Mission in 2017, suggests that Kosovo Serb community members mainly watch Belgrade-based TV stations.¹²⁴ The assessment indicated that 59.20 per cent of those interviewed said that they watched Belgrade-based TV stations “every day,” while 64.10 per cent stated that they never watched RTK2. In October 2022, a survey was conducted by the Mission with Kosovo Serb community members across 23 municipalities in Kosovo following monitoring of their viewership behaviour between July and October 2022.¹²⁵ RTS was the most watched channel, as chosen in 32.82 percent of the cases. Overall, community affiliation and language skills determine which media sources the Kosovo Serb community regularly accesses and consumes.

The community has access to 27 private television and radio stations with terrestrial frequencies, five TV channels carried through cable operators and six cable TV operators licensed by the Independent Media Commission (IMC).¹²⁶ Several online news portals and other media outlets operate at the municipal level. Due to a limited advertising market in Kosovo, most struggle to remain self-sustaining and depend mainly on foreign donations.¹²⁷ A few operate regionally and receive certain financial support.¹²⁸ In general, media outlets operating in the Serbian language report challenges related to access to information in their own language. In addition, a majority of media outlets in Kosovo still operate solely in the languages of their respective communities and thus prevalently report about issues concerning only one community group.¹²⁹ A joint approach toward transforming media into multi-ethnic sources would reflect a diverse society and contribute to societal integration.

All municipalities have provided language training programs to strengthen the language competencies of civil servants in municipalities.¹³⁰ However, these courses are mainly provided by international and local organizations. At the initiative of the Language Commissioner, an Albanian-Serbian language-learning platform named Vocup has been developed and is available online.¹³¹ The platform provides courses for learning the Albanian and Serbian languages, and its use has increased over time. In 2023, the Mission jointly with the Language Centre within the Faculty of Philology of the University of Prishtinë/Priština, started a pilot project to offer courses for Serbian and Albanian languages to various target groups, including municipal civil servants and translators.

¹²³ RTK reported in 2020 that its program schedule is as follows: a 45-minute program, “Nedeljni Kolaž,” in the Serbian language on Monday from 15:15 to 16:00, and a 45-minute program by Serbian journalist Budimir Ničić on Wednesday from the Serbian-language media centre. The “community programs” are broadcast on RTK1 and available via satellite. Neither the program schedule nor the program content is available online.

¹²⁴ The sample size was 1,507 residents across Kosovo, and the Kosovo Serb community was oversampled.

¹²⁵ Kosovo Television Audience Measurement Study, UBO Consulting for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, November 2022.

¹²⁶ <https://kpm-ks.org/telencuarit/306/llojet-e-licencave/306> (Accessed December 2023).

¹²⁷ According to the IREX Media Sustainability Index for 2019, Serbian-language media are generally small and registered as NGOs.

¹²⁸ For example, TV Most from Zvečan/Zveçan, Radio and TV Puls from Šilovo/Shillovë, Radio and TV Gračanica from Gračanica/Gračanica, and Radio Kosovska Mitrovica from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North are a part of the Belgrade-based public company Mreža Most, founded and financially supported by the Serbian government. More information is available at: <https://mrezamost.rs/naslovna/>. (Accessed December 2023).

¹²⁹ The 2020 Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders states that “the access to information is often limited to one ethnic or political group, with the majority of media reporting predominantly on issues concerning their own nationality.” The findings are available at: <https://rsf.org/en/kosovo>. (Accessed December 2023).

¹³⁰ Office of the Language Commissioner, 2019 Annual Report of the Office of the Language Commissioner.

¹³¹ The platform is available at <https://www.voc-up.com/> (Accessed December 2023).

The courses, offering both basic and advanced level classes, continue to contribute to enhancing the capacity of the University to respond to the growing need for language professionals in the public administration. This is essential to ensuring institutional language compliance and multilingualism.

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

Kosovo Serbs are predominantly Orthodox Christians. The community is generally free to express its cultural identity, religious beliefs, and customs. However, in Kosovo Albanian-majority areas, the community and the clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church still feel unsafe to visit sites such as churches, monasteries, and cemeteries.

The community celebrates the main Orthodox holidays, including Orthodox Christmas (7 January), Orthodox Easter, Orthodox New Year (13 January), Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day on 28 June), Feast of Assumption of the Holy Virgin (28 August), and All Souls Days (four times a year).

There are also a number of local celebrations that are dedicated to local patrons or saints (Slava). For example, Saint Sava Day (27 January) and Saint Vitus Day (28 June) are celebrated across Kosovo. **Kosovo Serbs** also celebrate the Pejë/Peć patriarchate patrons' days: Protecting the Veil of the Most Holy Mother of God (14 October) and the feast of Saint Arsenije Sremac (10 November). On 14 May, Goraždevac/Gorazhdec village pays homage to the patron Saint Jeremiah and celebrates the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin on 21 September. On 10 April, the **Kosovo Serb** community celebrates the Belo Polje/Bellopojë village feast. The feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (19 August) is celebrated in Istog/Istok and Klinë/Klina. On 24 November, **Kosovo Serbs** in Deçan/Dečani celebrate Saint Stephen of Dečani, Patron of Visoki Dečani Monastery. Other celebrations include the feast of Saint Nikola (19 December and 22 May), the feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul (12 July), and the feast of Saint Archangel Gabriel (26 July), as well as commemoration of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist (11 September).

There are numerous cultural and religious heritage sites that are significant for the **Kosovo Serb** community. More than 40 sites are classified as Special Protective Zones (SPZ), while four sites form part of the UNESCO World Heritage property "Medieval sites in Kosovo." The Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate of Pejë/Peć, the Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Visoki Dečani (in Deçan/Dečani municipality)¹³² and the Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Gračanica (in Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality) are inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Heritage.

¹³² In 2021, the Visoki Dečani Monastery was included in the List of 'Seven Most Endangered Monuments of Europe' for 2021 by the pan-European federation of non-governmental organizations active in the field of cultural heritage, known as EUROPA NOSTRA. Among the justification for selecting the Deçan/Dečani Monastery in the List was the planned regional road – connecting the municipalities of Deçan/Dečani in Kosovo and Plav in Montenegro – that would cross the special protected zone and pass next to the monastery gates, in violation of SPZ legislation along the 2016 ruling of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo – confirming that the property of 24 hectares of surrounding land belongs to the Dečani Monastery.

Prizren also has a number of medieval churches and monasteries, including the World Heritage site “Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša.” Apart from the sites with SPZ status or UNESCO labels, many churches and monasteries of local relevance contribute to the specific character of towns and landscapes. The Gazimestan Memorial (in Obiliq/Obilić, also an SPZ) marks a battle that is significant for the community.

A number of security incidents involving cultural and religious properties were reported between 2019 and 2023, including thefts, burglaries, and robberies at Serbian Orthodox churches. There was one threat toward a Serbian Orthodox priest, and one case of harassment toward nuns. There were also incidents of graffiti and property damage. Arson, fire, vandalism, and desecration of cemeteries were observed in 2019, 2020, and 2021. In 2023, two Kosovo Serbs were wounded on Orthodox Christmas Eve.¹³³

The OSCE observed a range of incidents in previous years. For example, in the Gjilan/Gnjilane region, there were incidents of provocative graffiti, break-ins and thefts targeting Serbian Orthodox churches.¹³⁴ Similarly, in the Pejë/Peć region, recorded incidents affecting Serbian Orthodox religious sites ranged from break-ins and thefts, verbal assaults and threats, to painting of provocative graffiti.¹³⁵ To note, with the support of the OSCE Mission, some municipalities responded to several reported incidents by discussing them in municipal security forums or publicly condemning them. The Mission continues to advocate for condemnation of security incidents.

In the Prishtinë/Priština region, repeated security incidents were reported at the Orthodox cemetery in Lipjan/Lipljan, resulting in the desecration of graves and a general lack of security within the community. Following the OSCE’s advocacy, surveillance cameras, connected to the Kosovo Police, were installed in February 2020. Since then, no incidents were reported.

Security incidents affecting Serbian Orthodox churches in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region were mostly classified as “aggravated thefts” or “grievous thefts.” As the majority of affected Serbian Orthodox churches do not have closed circuit television cameras in place, it was difficult to identify the suspects, and therefore, the cases remained under investigation.

¹³³ In January 2023, two Kosovo Serbs (an 11-year-old child and a 21-year-old man), were wounded by a firearm, reportedly by a Kosovo Albanian member of the Kosovo Security Force, in Gotovuša/Gotovushë village, Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality.

¹³⁴ In February 2017, the Gjilan/Gnjilane municipal community safety council held an extraordinary meeting and strongly condemned the offensive anti-Serb graffiti on buildings surrounding the Serbian Orthodox Church in Gjilan/Gnjilane town.

¹³⁵ In May 2018, a group of Kosovo Albanian protestors interrupted a religious ceremony organized by the SOC and displaced Kosovo Serbs in the yard of the destroyed Church of Holy Trinity in Poterq i Ulët/Donji Petrić in Klinë/Klina by throwing stones. In 2014 and 2018, a monk of Visoki Decani Monastery and a priest of the SOC in Osojane/Osojan village in Istog/Istok were threatened by groups of Kosovo Albanians. In 2021 and 2022 the Church of Beheading of Saint John the Baptist in Pejë/Peć town and the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Istog/Istok town were stoned by unknown persons.

Offensive inscriptions were reported in late 2020 on the ruins of the local Serbian Orthodox church in Suvo Grlo/Syriganë village in Skenderaj/Srbica municipality.¹³⁶ A number of security incidents affecting religious sites have been reported in the Prizren region. These ranged from verbal assaults to desecration, stone throwing, thefts, and burglary.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ In 2019, several break-ins and burglaries targeted Serbian Orthodox churches in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality. In December 2020, Kosovo Police informed that two monument signs reading Kisha Jonë ("Our Church") and Qyteti Keshtjellë ("Castle City"), which is on the list of cultural heritage sites, were removed by unknown persons. In December 2020, Kosovo Serb residents of Suvo Grlo/Syriganë reported that a signpost reading "Kisha Jonë" in Albanian and "Our Church" in English was placed at the ruins of the local Serbian Orthodox church. In February 2023, a Kosovo Serb guard of the Belgrade-run elementary school "21. November" in the mixed populated village of Gojbulë/Gojbulja, was attacked by a group of young Kosovo Albanians in the schoolyard. Reportedly, the youngsters took out some woods from the school warehouse and set a fire in the schoolyard, wrote some graffiti on the school wall, and attacked the guard in unclear circumstances.

¹³⁷ In May 2018, four tombstones at the Rahovec/Orahovac Serbian Orthodox graveyard were desecrated. In August 2018, stones were thrown at the vehicle of the Serbian Orthodox priest from Prizren on the road Prizren–Prishtinë/Prishtina. In May 2019, the yard entrance door of the Serbian Orthodox church in Serbicë e Ulët/Donja Srbica in Prizren was stolen. In February 2020, the Serbian Orthodox churches in Gornje Selo/Gornjasellë and in Novak/Novake villages, Prizren, were broken into. In July 2020, the lock on the Serbian Orthodox church in Novak/Novake was damaged.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Serbian community faces substantially more challenges than other non-majority communities living in Kosovo, in the Gjilan/Gnjilane, Prishtinë/Priština, Pejë/Peć, and Prizren regions, such as interference with private property, expropriation of property, limited access to housing, illegal occupation of property,¹³⁸ non-registration of property titles, and fraudulent property transactions.

Between 2021 and 2023, six properties of the Kosovo Serb community were the subjects of illegal occupation in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Pejë/Peć and Gjilan/Gnjilane regions. Furthermore, in between 2022 and 2024, 251 properties (parcels) of the Kosovo Serb community were the subjects of expropriation by the institutions in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica regions.

In the Gjilan/Gnjilane region, in 2019, three Kosovo Serb owners faced problems after the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane started road construction on their agricultural land without initiating the expropriation process or consulting the property owners. In response, the owners filed a lawsuit at the Basic Court in Gjilan/Gnjilane. However, the court found the lawsuit unclear and rejected the complaint. In Parteš/Partesh municipality, also in 2019, the Ministry of Infrastructure began construction of a regional road affecting 98 properties owned by Kosovo Serb community members without initiating the expropriation process and without the owners' permission or knowledge. The works were halted after the Parteš/Partesh municipality reacted.

Community members in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë municipality were affected by expropriation, as well. Kosovo Serb owners contested the compensation decisions for expropriated property (for example, during January 2020, the Novo Brdo/Novobërdë Court Branch received 102 claims by Kosovo Serb owners against decisions for compensation of property expropriations). Furthermore, they had complaints about the language of the notification.

On the other hand, Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality built four apartment blocks several years ago to satisfy the social housing needs of the Kosovo Serb community. However, these apartments are not yet allocated due to the pending request from the Kosovo Privatization Agency to the municipality for reinstatement of ownership of the land where the apartments were built.

¹³⁸ OSCE, *Property Rights Mass-Claim Mechanism: Kosovo experience*, (2020); and OSCE, *Review of Illegal Occupation Cases in Kosovo*, (2015).

In 2019, in the Prishtinë/Priština region, the Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality, initiated construction of 36 apartments in the village of Laplje Selo/Llapnasellë for vulnerable families and young married couples. By the end of the year, 24 apartments had been allocated to Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Roma community members.

During 2022, nine Kosovo Serb families Kosovo-wide received legalization certificates formalizing their property titles through registration in the cadastral registry.

Nevertheless, the Kosovo Serb community continues to face challenges in the Pejë/Peć and Prizren regions in terms of access to and free enjoyment of property rights, with their properties being subject to illegal occupation and fraudulent property transaction cases. Moreover, extensive and prolonged court proceedings in cases of illegal occupation and fraudulent property transactions are an additional impediment for this community to have uninterrupted access to and use of their property. The most prominent case was in the Pejë/Peć region, where the Constitutional Court passed judgment in 2016 that the property rights of the Visoki Dečani Monastery over 24 hectares of land should be recorded in the cadastral registry.¹³⁹ In March 2024 (outside the reporting period), the Kosovo Cadastral Agency registered the land in the name of the Visoki Dečani Monastery.

¹³⁹ Constitutional Court Judgment No. KI132/15, 20 May 2016. https://gjk-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/vendimet/KI132_15_ANG.pdf (Accessed December 2023).

11. Return and reintegration

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 12,000 Kosovo Serbs have voluntarily returned to Kosovo since 2000.¹⁴⁰ Between 2010 and 2023, 4,369 Kosovo Serbs returned to Kosovo, around 49 per cent of whom were women.¹⁴¹

Overall, Kosovo Serbs had a higher number of returns than other communities, although over time the number of returnees has declined.¹⁴² Kosovo Serb displaced persons have been returning to all regions in Kosovo; however, between 2015 and 2023, the majority of returns happened in the Gjilan/Gnjilane region, followed by the Prishtinë/Priština, Pejë/Peć and Prizren regions.¹⁴³

In total, 164 Kosovo Serb families, or 365 individuals, lived in collective centres.¹⁴⁴ Several collective centres that accommodate the Kosovo Serb community's internally displaced persons remain. They are located in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North (16 families), Leposavić/Leposaviq (21 families), Zubin Potok (six families), and Zvečan/Zvečan (six families).¹⁴⁵ Many families in collective centres are considered vulnerable, and they rely on assistance from the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and donor organization projects, including EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo and the Danish Refugee Council.

Despite the presence of relevant legal and policy measures, Kosovo Serb returnees face significant challenges in the exercise of property rights. Illegal re-occupation of properties and obstacles to land allocation for housing assistance programs hamper efforts for sustainable return.

Safety and security are also prevalent concerns for Kosovo Serb returnees. Although most security incidents involve petty crimes, they still negatively affect returnees' perception of safety. This is especially true when reported cases remain unresolved, and perpetrators remain unidentified. Damage to doors and windows, stolen household appliances, furniture, as well as food supplies, are frequently reported.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview*, December 2023.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Numbers of Kosovo Serb returnees: 895 (2010); 474 (2011); 375 (2012); 345 (2013); 398 (2014); 429 (2015); 299 (2016); 148 (2017); 133 (2018); 123 (2019); 238 (2020); 269 (2021); 155 (2022) and 87 (2023). See UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview*, December 2023.

¹⁴³ About 783 Kosovo Serb returnees in Gjilan/Gnjilane region; 349 in Prishtinë/Priština region, 231 in Pejë/Peć region; 76 in Prizren region and 23 in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region.

¹⁴⁴ Collective centres are pre-existing buildings and structures where a group of displaced persons finds shelter for a short time while durable solutions are pursued. A variety of facilities in Kosovo are used as collective centres, such as community centres, hotels, and unfinished buildings.

¹⁴⁵ UNHCR Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview*, December 2023.

On a few occasions, arson cases, the destruction of wells, yard fences, and other objects around houses have been registered, mostly in Klinë/Klina, Pejë/Peć, and Istog/Istok municipalities.

The return process of **Kosovo Serbs** is often met with resistance from receiving communities, a dynamic that has not experienced any significant improvement in recent years. In some municipalities, receiving communities openly express opposition to returnees. Receiving communities are sometimes unwilling to interact with potential returnees, and also sometimes object to the organization of any returns initiatives, including “Go and See”¹⁴⁶ or “Go and Inform” visits.¹⁴⁷ Apart from public protests, there have also been instances when village councils have petitioned against **Kosovo Serb** returns, namely in the village of Reçak/Račak in Shtime/Štimlje municipality, as well as in the village of Lubozhdë/Ljubožda in Istog/Istok municipality, where 13 **Kosovo Serbs** spontaneously returned to the village.¹⁴⁸ Despite municipal authorities’ favorable position on returns in Istog/Istok, Prizren and Rahovec/Orahovac municipalities, public resistance has had a negative impact on the process. The return process of **Kosovo Serbs** in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South¹⁴⁹ and Gjakovë/Đakovica became the subject of political and media interest.¹⁵⁰

A total of 20 municipalities conducted “Go and See” and “Go and Inform” visits, mainly led by international organizations.¹⁵¹ In addition, some municipalities engaged in outreach and information campaigns, as well as needs assessments of returnees.¹⁵²

Despite the absence of recorded return activity in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality between 2020 and 2023, in December 2023, the municipal authorities received requests for assistance from five **Kosovo Serb** families. The requests for assistance submitted were pending evaluation, which extended well beyond the stipulated timeframe outlined in the Kosovo government regulation 2018/01.¹⁵³ Despite two attempts to convene a meeting, the municipal commission on return failed to reach a quorum on both occasions, preventing the initiation of a review meeting.¹⁵⁴ The five potential returnee families had expressed their interest in returning to Gjilan/Gnjilane

¹⁴⁶ Go-and-See visits provide displaced persons with the opportunity to gather first-hand information on the conditions in their place of origin and to directly interact and engage with the receiving community to make an informed decision about return or other durable solution.

¹⁴⁷ Talinoc i Muhaxherëve/Muhadger Talinovac (Ferizaj/Uroševac municipality); Shtupel/Štupelj (Klinë/Klina municipality); Korishë/Koriša (Prizren municipality); Opterushë/Opteršua (Rahovec/Orahovac municipality); Lubozhdë/Ljubožda (Istog/Istok municipality). See: OSCE report *Assessment of Voluntary Return in Kosovo*, December 2014, available at: <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/129321>, accessed on 5 May 2020.

¹⁴⁸ OSCE, *Assessment of voluntary returns in Kosovo*, (2019), p.27.

¹⁴⁹ In addition to Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, the following difficult return locations were recorded: Vërnice/Vrnica (Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality), Kroi Vitakut/Brdjani (Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North municipality), and Runik/Rudnik and Kuqicë/Kučica villages (Skenderaj/Srbica municipality). See OSCE Report *An Assessment of the Voluntary Returns Process in Kosovo* (2012), [An Assessment of the Voluntary Returns Process in Kosovo](#) | OSCE (accessed September 1, 2022).

¹⁵⁰ For example, the return of Ms. Dragica Gašić in June 2021 in Gjakovë/Đakovica municipality.

¹⁵¹ Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Klokot/Klllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranilluga, Štrpce/Shtërpçë; Viti/Vitina; Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Skenderaj/Srbica; Vushtrri/Vučitrn; Deçan/Dečani, Istog/Istok, Klinë/Klina; Pejë/Peć; Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Lipjan/Lipljan; Obiliq/Obilić.

¹⁵² Overall, 149 outreach activities were conducted in Gjilan/Gnjilane and Prishtinë/Priština regions.

¹⁵³ Kosovo Government regulation on the return and durable solutions, [RREGULLORE \(QRK\) - NR. 01/2018 PËR KTHIMIN E PERSONAVE TË ZHVENDOSUR DHE ZGJIDHJE TË QËNDRUESHME](#) (rks-gov.net), approved January 2018. (Accessed December 2023).

¹⁵⁴ The Municipal Commission on Return in Kosovo plays a crucial role in addressing diverse needs by reviewing requests for housing, social support, and essential items. It compiles recommendations based on assessed needs and forwarding them to the higher-level Central Review Commission managed by the Ministry for Communities and Return.

municipality through the UNHCR in mid-2023. A request for return to Skenderaj/Srbica municipality, Banja/Bajë village, from a Kosovo Serb woman, which was submitted in 2023, was similarly delayed.

As of December 2023, there were 310 requests for return in Obiliq/Obilić municipality. Of these, 150 have been officially registered in the MCR database, while the remaining 160 cases could not be processed due to a lack of required documents. The issuance of building permits poses administrative hurdles, creating difficulties for individuals willing to return to Obiliq/Obilić. Additionally, a notable challenge is the high number of requests coupled with insufficient space allocated for the construction of houses, particularly in Plemetina/Plemetin village.

In the municipalities of Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka, the primary challenge hindering sustainable return is the lack of employment opportunities. Additionally, the prolonged displacement of individuals for over 20 years, coupled with security concerns, stands as a major obstacle to their return. Limited availability of essential services, such as higher education and health and social assistance, poses additional barriers.

In Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, and Suharekë/Suva Reka municipalities, those who have been displaced for an extended period have already established themselves in their current locations, gaining access to housing and employment. This established connection has led to reluctance among many to return. In Prizren municipality, displaced individuals without property ownership encounter challenges accessing durable housing solutions, as they lack the financial means to acquire property and receive assistance for house construction or renovation. These situations highlight the challenges faced in facilitating returns and underscore the need for effective coordination among local authorities to ensure timely and transparent processes for potential returnees.

Housing solutions for Kosovo Serb returnees are mostly provided through donor assistance. The EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo project is important in the field of return and reintegration. It is funded by the EU, co-funded by the MCR, and implemented by IOM in Kosovo. The project aims to increase the capacity of governmental and local institutions as well as non-governmental actors to facilitate the dignified, sustainable return and reintegration of up to 400 families displaced in the region.¹⁵⁵ By the end of 2020, 11 municipalities¹⁵⁶ were involved in the latest phase of the EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo project. Twenty municipalities¹⁵⁷ were not engaged in any of the support projects. The project has achieved considerable results for Kosovo Serb returnees, with an estimated 700 residential units constructed or reconstructed, and 640 individuals supported with income-generation projects. EU Return and Reintegration Kosovo is also engaged in small-

¹⁵⁵ IOM, EU Return and Reintegration in Kosovo project phase V project factsheet (2021).

¹⁵⁶ Novo Brdo/Novobërdë; Strpce/Shtërpçë; Gjakovë/Đakovica; Istog/Istok; Klinë/Klina; Pejë/Peć; Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje; Gračanica/Gračanicë; Obiliq/Obilić; Prizren; and Rahovec/Orahovac.

¹⁵⁷ Ferizaj/Uroševac; Hani i Elezit/Elez Han; Kaçanik/Kaçanik; Klokot/Kllokot; Partësh/Partesh; Ranilug/Ranillug; Viti/Vitina; Mitrovicë/Mitrovica; Skenderaj/Srbica; Vushtrri/Vučitër; Glogoc/Glogovac; Podujevë/Podujevo; Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North; Deçan/Deçane; Pejë/Peć; Lipjan/Lipljan; Prishtinë/Priština; Shtime/Štimlje; Malishevë/Mališevo; and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša.

scale projects to address and improve the infrastructure needs of both returnees and the receiving community.

In addition, , the EU-Community Stabilization III project, implemented by IOM, facilitates communities' access to economic opportunities and enables the creation of sustainable livelihoods.¹⁵⁸ The project "Supporting Durable Solutions for Collective Centre Residents in Kosovo" was co-funded by the MCR and implemented by the Danish Refugee Council and it targeted housing solutions, improvement of socio-economic conditions, and the capacity of Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality to provide adequate conditions for a successful integration of Kosovo Serb displaced persons and vulnerable families residing in collective centres.¹⁵⁹

Several additional support projects were implemented by the Danish Refugee Council; the CSSP; U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VoRAE); and the UNHCR.

In addition, the Danish Refugee Council implemented the project "Reintegration and Community Stabilization Kosovo" funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. The project focused on assisting returns through funding minor shelter repairs, harmonizing assistance packages and income generation grants, creating opportunities for returnees through economic stabilization initiatives, as well as assisting with sustainable return by enhancing returnees' access to basic services.¹⁶⁰

The "Sunny Valley" project, which envisages the construction of 225 to 300 residential units in Zvečan/Zvečan municipality, started construction in mid-2018.¹⁶¹ In June 2019, the Serbian government launched an open call to accommodate the first tenants, and priority was given to persons displaced in Serbia and Montenegro.¹⁶²

In 2023, the MCR took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.¹⁶³ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. The impact of these endeavours was tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported 218 Kosovo Serb families, providing them with crucial food and non-food items, including construction materials.

¹⁵⁸ EU-Community Stabilization III project (<http://kosovo.iom.int/eu-community-stabilization-programme-iii>). (Accessed 2023).

¹⁵⁹ Danish Refugee Council, *Project Supporting durable solution for collective centre residents in Kosovo*; <http://drc-kosovo.org/supporting-durable-solutions-for-collective-centre-residents-in-kosovo-1>. (Accessed December 2023).

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ The Sunny Valley project, funded by Belgrade, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNd03F4nTUc>. (Accessed December 2023).

¹⁶² Open call published in media outlet Jedinstvo, June 2019, <https://jedinstvo.rs/javni-poziv-za-dodelu-stanova-za-socijalno-stanovanje-u-naselju-suncana-dolina-u-zvecanu/> (Accessed December 2023).

¹⁶³ Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for Communities and Return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: *Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruznja pomoci*_compressed_compressed-compressed (1).pdf (rks-gov.net) (Accessed December 2023).

Notably, the initiative resulted in the construction of 26 houses, ten located in Istog/Istok, nine in Gračanica/Gračanicë, two in Klinë/Klina, Ranilug/Ranillug and Prizren and one located in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, and one house reconstructed in Istog/Istok. Additionally, the impactful initiatives of the Ministry extended to providing substantial support to four families, amounting to EUR 1,102,329. This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses. Specifically, 121 families benefited from this initiative.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Sixty-four families located in Gračanica/Gračanicë, 15 in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, nine in Leposavić/Leposaviq, seven in Klokot/Kllokot, six in Ranilug/Ranillug, five in Kamenicë/Kamenica, three in Lipjan/Lipljan, two each in Obiliq/Obilić, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan, and one each in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Prizren, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North and Prishtinë/Priština. Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

Photo Credit: Arben Llapashtica



Community Profile

Kosovo Turk



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe
Mission in Kosovo

Kosovo Turk Community Profile

The Kosovo Turk community is the fourth largest in Kosovo. Unlike other non-majority communities, the Kosovo Turk community experienced an increase in population after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and continued to grow after the conflict in 1999.¹ The 1981 census counted 12,513 (0.8 per cent) Kosovo Turks,² while the 2011 Kosovo census estimated that the Kosovo Turk community represent around 1.02 per cent of the population.³

Most Kosovo Turks live in south-central Kosovo, in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipalities.⁴ In Prishtinë/Priština, the estimated number of Kosovo Turk population living in the capital, without surrounding villages or towns, is around 2,000. The largest concentration of Kosovo Turks is in Prizren, where they represent around 5.06 per cent of the municipal population. In the much smaller Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality, Kosovo Turks are a majority community, representing approximately 92.35 per cent of the municipality.⁵ A smaller number of Kosovo Turk community members reside in other municipalities. In Gjakovë/Đakovica there are 16 Kosovo Turks and 59 in Pejë/Peć. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South there are 100 families with 450 members; in Mitrovica/ Mitrovicë North there are 15 families with 50 members; and in Vushtrri/Vučitrn there are 50 families with 290 members. According to OSCE reports, 1,187 Kosovo Turks reside in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, of whom 987 reside in Gjilan/Gnjilane town and approximately 200 in Dobërçan/Dobrčane village.⁶

¹ The Kosovo Turk community is the fourth largest in Kosovo, after the Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb, and Kosovo Bosniak communities.

² OSCE Report 2018 *Municipal Profiles*, (January 2019).

³ Kosovo Agency of Statistics, figures for the 2011 Kosovo Census.

⁴ Five thousand in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša and 7,500-9,000 in Prizren.

⁵ OSCE, *Municipal Profile 2018: Prizren* (January 2019).

⁶ Deputy mayor for communities; Civil registry office in Dobërçan/Dobrčane village and the regional employment centre.

Key facts and issues

- The overall security of the Kosovo Turk community is considered good.
- The Kosovo Turk community is represented by one minister in the Government and two representatives in the Assembly.
- The community is relatively well represented in the civil service at both government and municipal levels, as well as in various municipal bodies and institutions.
- A significant number of women are engaged in the informal economy; in particular, in household farming.
- In general, the Kosovo Turk community does not face any issues in accessing social and health services.
- The mother tongue of the Kosovo Turk community is Turkish. Community members use their mother tongue in public spaces. It is not uncommon for other communities to speak or at least understand Turkish as a second or third language.
- Turkish is an official language in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipalities. It has the status of a "language in official use" in Prishtinë/Priština, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipalities.
- Access to Turkish-language documents and services remains problematic in municipalities where the language is in official use.
- Turkish-language education is available for Kosovo Turk pupils and students.
- The availability and quality of textbooks in the Turkish language, especially for upper secondary education, remain a challenge.

1. Security and safety

The security of the Kosovo Turk community is generally good.⁷ Occasionally, the community has been a target of thefts, robberies and hate messages, and these incidents usually occur in the Prizren region, where most members reside.

A notable recurring incident is the removal or defacement of Turkish flags displayed in public, before certain holidays.⁸ Although such incidents mainly target the Turkish government, they can have a negative impact on **Kosovo Turks'** perception of security. Incidents targeting the Turkish state and Turkish citizens' businesses have also taken place outside of the Prizren region.⁹

In 2018 and 2019, some local media outlets and journalists reacted adversely to a **Kosovo Turk** imam who spoke in the Turkish language at a mosque in the city centre of Prizren.¹⁰

In 2023, Kosovo Police employed 72 **Kosovo Turk** community members, both civilian and uniformed staff (including ten women).¹¹

There are no members of the **Kosovo Turkish** community in Local Public Safety Committees (LPSCs).¹²

UNDP funded the installation of CCTV cameras in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša in 2017. CCTV cameras were also installed throughout Prizren, but have not been well maintained. Cameras were installed to improve the general security and safety of all Prizren residents and were not linked to incidents targeting this community in particular.

⁷ According to OSCE internal monitoring, there were 17 incidents in 2013, 26 in 2014, one in 2015, nine in 2016, ten in 2017, ten in 2018, seven in 2019, three in 2020, six in 2021, three in 2022, and four in 2023.

⁸ In November 2016 and in February 2018, a group of Kosovo Albanian youngsters removed a Turkish flag from a pole in Prizren city centre, recorded the act, and shared it on social media. In November 2016, five young Kosovo Albanians were arrested for having thrown a Molotov cocktail at the Turkish consulate in the centre of Prizren, which was inaugurated in April of that year. In November 2017, the Basic Court in Prizren sentenced all five defendants to one year of imprisonment. On 17 February 2022 in Prizren, unidentified suspects removed and threw in the river Lumbardhë a Turkish flag, placed on an electric pole by Prizren Municipal Assembly to celebrate Independence Day. Four juveniles and one adult suspect were identified.

⁹ In August 2018, in Gjakovë/Đakovica, two Kosovo Albanians posted a video on social media of them burning a Turkish flag. In August 2018, unknown persons removed the logo of a Turkish sponsor company from the tents in a trade fair in Prishtinë/Priština. Additionally, there were messages vandalizing the pavilions at the same event. Two days later, unknown persons attempted to burn the pavilion of the Turkish organizer of the handmade products fair (TIKA) and damaged the billboard at the entrance. On the same day, unknown suspects placed pamphlets with anti-Turkish content on the office fence of the Turkish Trade Bureau reading "with sword, silence and shield, with pen and justice, always anti-Ottoman resistance, down neo-Ottomanism."

¹⁰ The imam at Sinan Pasha mosque was criticized for not preaching in the Albanian language. Similarly, some local media outlets condemned a Kosovo Turk imam in Prizren who prayed for Turkish soldiers in Syria, inciting anti-Turkish sentiments. In April 2019, local representatives of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) publicly reacted to a banner displayed in Prizren on which the Turkish language was used before the Albanian language.

¹¹ Until 2023, Kosovo Turk community members employed by Kosovo Police included 25 in Prizren, 12 in Gjiilan/Gnjilane, five in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, four in Prishtinë/Priština, two in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, and two in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North.

¹² As of November 2023.

2. Participation and representation

The Kosovo Turk community was represented by one minister in the government formed in 2021: the Minister of Regional Development, Fikrim Damka, a Kosovo Turk from the Democratic Turkish Party of Kosovo (KDTP). Additionally, a Kosovo Turk, Yildiray Bayram, was the Chief of Cabinet in the Ministry of Regional Development.

In the previous government, this ministry was administered by Enis Kervan (KDTP), also party leader. Additionally, the community was represented by two deputy ministers in the previous government: Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Yildiray Bayram and Deputy Minister of Economy and Environment Ergin Bunyak (both KDTP).

The community maintains two guaranteed seats in the Assembly. Currently, the seats are held by Fidan Brina-Jilta and Enis Kervan (both KDTP).

Currently, three **Kosovo Turk** political entities exist in Kosovo: KDTP, Turkish Justice Party of Kosovo (KTAP), and Innovative Turkish Movement Party (YTHP).

The community has had three representatives in the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) within the Office of the President. In the current mandate, the community is represented by two men and one woman.¹³ In addition, the Chairperson of the CCC Secretariat is led by a woman from the Turkish community (Nafiye Gaş). A member of the Central Election Commission is a **Kosovo Turk** woman, Müfera Srbica – Şinik, while a Board member at Radio Television of Kosovo is a **Kosovo Turk** man, Biroll Urcan.

As of 2017, **Kosovo Turks** were well represented in the civil service, constituting 1.47 per cent of government-level civil service positions. The community was also generally well represented at the municipal level in most of the municipalities where **Kosovo Turks** reside, except in Prishtinë/Priştina, where the community was under-represented in the civil service.¹⁴

The **Kosovo Turk** community is one of the most under-represented in municipal communities' committees (CCs).¹⁵ The community is represented in eight CCs throughout Kosovo, with 12 members in total (five women and seven men).

¹³ Atakan Koro is the chairperson of the CCC and represents Kosova Türk Hekimler Derneği (KTHD) while Sevim Birvenik represents the non-governmental organization (NGO) Resim Salih KS Derneği. Also Ibrahim Ömer ran as an independent candidate.

¹⁴ OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (May 2017).

¹⁵ Alongside with the Kosovo Bosniak community.

However, **Kosovo Turks** are not represented in the CCs of 20 other municipalities where community members reside.¹⁶ In Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Lipjan/Lipljan, and Prizren, **Kosovo Turk** community members hold the position of CC chairperson (all are men).

In Gjiilan/Gnjilane, a **Kosovo Turk** was the appointed deputy mayor for communities, while in Prizren a community member holds the position of deputy chairperson of the municipal assembly for communities (both are men).

Additionally, five community members (three women and two men) are employed as civil servants in the municipal offices for communities and return in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Prizren and Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

Kosovo Turk community members are currently represented with seven members in Municipal Community Security Councils (MCSC): Gjiilan/Gnjilane (one man), Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South (two women), Prishtinë/Priština (two men) and Prizren (two men). **Kosovo Turks** are not represented in Dragash/Dragaš, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Pejë/Peć.

The largest concentration of prominent **Kosovo Turk** non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is in the Prizren region.

Nine NGOs are active in the Prizren municipality: "Genç Birlik Derneği" (Young Unity Association), "Türkiye Mezunları Derneği" (Turkey Alumni Association), "Kosova Türk Yazarlar Birliği" (**Kosovo Turkish** Writers Association), "Esnaf" (Craftsmen and Businessman Association of Prizren), "Çok Uluslu Kosova Derneği" (Multinational Kosovo Association), "Doğru Yol" (Right Path), "Tüm Gençler El Ele" (All Young Hand in Hand), "Balkan Turk Muziği Derneği" (Balkan Turkish Music Association), and Association of Youth Scouts of Kosovo. "Aşık Ferki", working on cultural and educational development and "Mamuşa Emekçi Kadınlar Derneği" (Mamuşa Working Women's Association), mainly focusing on women's economic empowerment, are two important NGOs active in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša. In Gjiilan/Gnjilane region, there are three prominent **Kosovo Turk** NGOs: "Gilan" (Gjiilan/Gnjilane) which mainly organizes sewing courses for women of all communities, "Halit Gaš" from Dobërçan/Dobrčane village, which mainly deals with cultural and humanitarian activities, and "Yarın" (Tomorrow) which mainly deals with cultural and sports activities. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region, there are also three prominent NGOs: the cultural and dancing NGO "Birlik" (Unity) and the **Kosovo Turk** woman NGO "Dostluk Kadınları" (Women of Friendship), both from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, as well as the cultural and dancing NGO "Çeşme" (Fountain) from Vushtrri/Vučitrn. In Prishtinë/Priština, there is one prominent **Kosovo Turk** NGO, "Gerçek" (Truth), which was established in 1950 as a cultural organization.

¹⁶ The eight CCs where Kosovo Turks are represented include Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Vushtrri/Vučitrn.

The communities committees where Kosovo Turks are not represented include Dragash/Dragaš, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Glogoc/Glogovac, Gračanica/Gračanice, Istog/Istok, Kaçanik/Kaçanik, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Klinë/Klina, Klokot/Kllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Obiliq/Obilić, Pejë/Peć, Podujevë/Podujevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Shtime/Štimlje, Skenderaj/Srbica, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Viti/Vitina. Resident estimates for Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, Zubin Potok, and Zvečan/Zveçan are based on the OSCE's *Municipal Profiles of 2018*, as no official census data exist for northern municipalities.

3. Employment and socio-economic situation

The Kosovo Turk community faces the same limited employment and economic opportunities common to all communities in Kosovo. However, the economic challenges are less present for this community than others in Kosovo.

Although the linguistic barrier sometimes is an issue in accessing opportunities, many community members run successful private enterprises, and a significant number are employed in the public sector.¹⁷

In Prizren municipality, 246 Kosovo Turks were employed in the public sector. From these, 170 were civil servants, of whom 112 were employed in the education sector, 32 in the main family health centre, and 26 in the directorate of administration. The most common public sector positions held by community members were as civil servants in different directorates, including in senior positions, such as the co-ordinator for education in Turkish language, municipal director of economic development, and acting head of the municipal office for communities and return. Additionally, 76 community members were employed in the regional hospital of Prizren, including five doctors, 64 nurses, three administrative employees, and four technical support employees. In the private sector, the Kosovo Turk community members in Prizren mainly run private businesses (import-export; textiles; furniture, jewellery). Furthermore, the community is engaged in private consultancies in the area of finance and IT services. Several large enterprises manufacture home furniture, as well. In 2020, in Prizren municipality, 525 persons from the Kosovo Turk community were registered as unemployed.

In Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality, the public sector employs approximately 10 per cent of the community members. Some public sector positions are filled by employees living outside the municipality, mostly in Prizren.¹⁸ In total, Kosovo Turks accounted for 135 civil servants, including in the health and education sectors. In this municipality, all department directors, senior officers, as well as the chiefs of sections (except the chief of finance) were members of the Kosovo Turk community. The economy is largely centred on small-scale farming and trade activities.¹⁹

¹⁷ European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Community Profile: Turkish Community* (December 2013), p. 5. (Accessed December 2023.)

¹⁸ Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša Municipality; Department of Development, Planning, Urbanism, Geodesy and Cadaster, *Municipal Development Plan of Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, 2014–2023* (2014), p. 30. (Accessed December 2023.)

¹⁹ OSCE, *Municipal Profile 2018: Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša* (2018).

Most in the municipality work in agriculture, which accounts for 55 per cent of those employed. Household farms primarily grow crops; Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša is a major producer of tomatoes in Kosovo. Additionally, some households keep livestock for subsistence. Small businesses (there are about 800 private companies registered in the municipality) accounted for 29 per cent of employment, and most related to trade and sale of motor oils and vehicle parts. Approximately 35 per cent of the working age population was economically active. The remaining 65 per cent of the economically inactive population included women who were not formally employed. However, given the nature of the heavily agricultural municipality, many women engage in household farming activities.²⁰ In this small municipality, unregulated construction on farmland, as well as land erosion, deforestation, and over-farming present challenges for an area highly dependent on agriculture.²¹

In Prishtinë/Priština region, many **Kosovo Turks** work in public companies, in government institutions as general service staff, and in the education sector (16 persons). **Kosovo Turk** women are employed less often than men. The ones employed usually perform other duties than their professions. In Prishtinë/Priština region, many **Kosovo Turks** work in the construction sector, while many from rural areas and Lipjan/Lipljan municipality have moved to Prishtinë/Priština or Ferizaj/Uroševac, seeking better economic opportunities.

The general economic situation of **Kosovo Turks** who reside in Gjiilan/Gnjilane region is generally good, similar to that of the majority community of Kosovo Albanians. They are well integrated in the local economy and social developments. Most **Kosovo Turks** are self-employed as shopkeepers in small businesses, such as accessories and optics shops. Only three **Kosovo Turk** families, two from Dobërçan/Dobrčane village and one from Gjiilan/Gnjilane town receive social assistance. One **Kosovo Turk** is registered as a job seeker. Thirty-seven **Kosovo Turks** work in the public sector, of whom three **Kosovo Turk** men work in the municipality, 13 (eight men and five women) in the education sector, ten women work in healthcare facilities, seven are employed in the Kosovo Police, and four community members (three men and a woman) in the Kosovo Security Force. Ten families that reside in Gjiilan/Gnjilane town own private businesses such as restaurants and clothes shops. In Dobërçan/Dobrčane village, one **Kosovo Turk** family owns a grocery shop while the others are mainly engaged in agriculture. In Gjiilan/Gnjilane town the unemployment rate is 40 percent and in Dobërçan/Dobrčane village it is approximately 70 per cent. In both settlements all groups and genders are affected.

The **Kosovo Turk** community in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region is located in three municipalities: Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn. The economic situation of this community is assessed as not satisfactory as most of the community members are unemployed, or working in private companies with low salaries and difficult working conditions. Very few community members run businesses. According to a community representative, the

20 Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša Municipality; Department of Development, Planning, Urbanism, Geodesy and Cadaster, *Municipal Development Plan of Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, 2014–2023* (2014), p. 18.

21 Ibid, pp. 29–31–32, 34.

majority of **Kosovo Turks** live with average or below average income. Some community members own small professional businesses such as barbershops, hairdressing salons, small grocery shops, and distribution companies. In addition, some community members depend on income from social assistance and remittances. At times, in response to specific circumstances, the Turkish embassy and **Kosovo Turk** NGOs and organizations support the community financially.

In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, there is one **Kosovo Turk** (woman) who works in the Municipal Office for Communities and Return, one **Kosovo Turk** (man) in the municipal administration directorate, one **Kosovo Turk** (woman) in the municipal directorate for planning and urbanism, and a **Kosovo Turk** (man) who works as a doctor at the Main Family Medicine Center. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn, one **Kosovo Turk** (man) is the municipal director for economy, agriculture and rural development; one **Kosovo Turk** (woman) is a municipal translator; and one **Kosovo Turk** (man) works at the public waste disposal company Uniteti. In Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, there is one **Kosovo Turk** (man) working for the Kosovo Police. According to the **Kosovo Turk** Community Committee member in Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipality and a **Kosovo Turk** community representative in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipality, the unemployment rate among this community Kosovowide is above 80 per cent, comprised primarily of community members between 18-40 years old. The gender breakdown of unemployment is around 50%. At the government level, **Kosovo Turk** community members in the civil service mostly occupied professional positions, followed by administrative jobs (a man from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South works in the Ministry of Public Administration and a man from Vushtrri/Vučitrn works in the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure). Few **Kosovo Turks** held senior management and management positions (two per cent and four per cent, respectively). **Kosovo Turk** women were represented beyond the requirements of the Law on Gender Equality at both the government and municipal levels.²²

In 2018, of 95,890 persons registered as unemployed in Kosovo,²³ 0.5 per cent belonged to the **Kosovo Turk** community.²⁴ Overall unemployment of the **Kosovo Turk** community in Prizren would be around 30 per cent. Based on statistics from the Kosovo employment agency office in Prizren municipality, there are 149 active job seekers (69 women) from the **Kosovo Turk** community.

Among the most notable income-generation projects involving this community have been those undertaken by the European Union (EU)-funded Community Stabilization Programme in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša. These projects target **Kosovo Turk** community members in these municipalities to support start-up and existing businesses and have been implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). A factory producing vegetable preserves was opened in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša in 2018 with the financial support of the Ministry for Rural Development and IOM, and is currently providing sustainable employment opportunities for many families.

²² OSCE, *Representation of Communities in the Civil Service in Kosovo* (May 2017), pp. 14, 17, 23, and 24.

²³ More recent data are not available.

²⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, *Annual Report 2018*, p. 19.

Additionally, Swiss Caritas, together with Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipalities, has funded projects focused on agricultural production. Also, a project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supported craft and small-scale businesses in Prizren.

In the last three years, the municipal directorate of rural development in Prizren, with financial support from the Republic of Turkey, supported women engaged in handicraft work. Furthermore, NGO "HELP" with contributions from the municipality, as well as the regional development agency provides equipment for Kosovo Turk community members engaged in handicraft work and start-ups.

Although precise data concerning the Kosovo Turk community members engaged in the informal economy are not available, a significant number of women are involved in farming and excluded from the formal economy. The issue of child labour was not observed in the community; however, in some cases children help parents in small businesses during the summer months, especially in agricultural work in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša.

The exact scope of migration within the Kosovo Turk community is not available, even though many families from this community migrated to France and Germany in 2015 for economic reasons. Additionally, since the year 2000, some Kosovo Turks from Prishtinë/Priština region moved to Turkey, but this trend is not common lately. Moreover, some Kosovo Turk youth who live outside of Prizren, especially in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, left their municipalities for higher education or better employment opportunities within Kosovo or abroad.²⁵ Scandinavian countries are currently a popular destination for this community in Prizren and visa liberalization will further increase migration of whole families. Recently, Kosovo Turks from Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša have been mainly migrating to Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 26.

4. Access to infrastructure and public utilities

Kosovo Turks have reasonable access to infrastructure and public utilities throughout Kosovo. Most Kosovo Turk community members have access to potable water from local water distribution networks, whereas in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša primarily from individual wells, which is not potable.

On 13 December 2023, the mayor announced that the Government had allocated €1.8 million in the 2024 budget to provide a potable water supply system in the municipality. In Janjevë/Janjevo village in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, which is inhabited by Kosovo Turks and other communities, access to potable water is inconsistent. All community members have access to sewage systems.

The absence of a direct bus line Prishtinë/Priština-Janjevë/Janjevo²⁶ is to this day a great concern for the residents of Janjevë/Janjevo who commute daily to Prishtinë/Priština. On 6 November 2023, a group of about 20 women workers from Janjevë/Janjevo, belonging to Kosovo Turk and Kosovo Croat communities in a numerical minority and majority alike, gathered in front of the municipal building to protest, but the situation has not changed. On 12 December 2023, the OSCE supported a workshop on inter-municipal co-operation in Prishtinë/Priština region, during which a framework agreement was signed by the mayors of Prishtinë/Priština, Podujevë/Podujevo, Obiliq/Obilić, Lipjan/Lipljan, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and the Deputy Mayor for Communities of Gračanica/Graçanicë. The agreement included, among others, public transportation services. Later, the municipality of Lipjan/Lipljan informed on their official social media channels that they intend to establish an urban transport line on the route Prishtinë/Priština - Lipjan/Lipljan - Janjevë/Janjevo.

In general, the Kosovo Turk community has stable access to electricity. Previously in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, numerous issues related to the system were reported. However, electrical supply improved considerably after the Kosovo Electricity Distribution System (KEDS) grid was upgraded in 2017, which helped reduce power outages in winter months. Furthermore, over the last few years, the municipality has implemented projects to expand the power grid to agricultural fields, helping farmers to reduce production costs by replacing expensive petrol power generators.

²⁶ Currently, there seem to be only four rides a day to Gračanica/Graçanicë, where to take connecting line to Prishtinë/Priština main bus station; and five rides a day to Lipjan/Lipljan town through the villages of Donja Gušterica/Gushtericë e Ulet, Gornja Gušterica/Gushtericë e Epërme, and Dobrotin/Dobratinë.

However, in some parts of the city of Prizren where Kosovo Turks reside,²⁷ such as Kurilla/Kurila neighbourhood, electricity supply is reportedly unreliable, with frequent outages and low voltage.

Street lighting is available in most areas inhabited by the Kosovo Turk community. Its availability improved significantly in the past several years in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, thus increasing the overall security and safety conditions for the community. However, in certain parts of Prizren where Kosovo Turks reside, the lack of public lighting is still an issue. There have been repeated requests to community representatives from residents living in Kurilla/Kurila neighbourhood and in some other, smaller areas, for installation of streetlights and for their regular upkeep. Residents of these areas, including from the Kosovo Turk community, especially women and girls, reported being reluctant to walk outdoors at night.

Road quality is maintained in areas inhabited by the community, and more local roads have been paved over the past decade, as have sidewalks in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša. The municipality upgraded an alternative shorter road to Prizren and opened another road connecting with the Suharekë/Suva Reka – Rahovec/Orahovac road, yet to be upgraded. In addition, the municipality opened few new roads leading to agricultural lands, aiming to facilitate access of local farmers to their properties. In Prizren, smaller roads represent a traffic and safety risk for all communities, including the Kosovo Turks, as there are no safe sidewalks for pedestrians. The maintenance of these roads is also made difficult due to their narrow configuration.

One small street in Dobërçan/Dobrčane village, in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, where ten Kosovo Turk families reside, is currently being asphalted.

Housing is not an issue for Kosovo Turks as most community members own their own houses or apartments. However, in some collective apartment buildings, some members of the Kosovo Turk community have approached community leaders to ask for the municipality's help in repairing leaking and dilapidated roofs, as well as installing or repairing façades and improving their energy efficiency, in a bid to lower energy costs. In Prizren, the CC Chair informed that there are Kosovo Turk families benefiting from ongoing municipal housing support schemes (e.g., temporary housing, support with payment of rent, etc.).

In general, the Kosovo Turk community faces the same environmental issues as other communities in Kosovo. The exception is Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, where an illegal dumping site continues to be a challenge for the residents and municipal authorities, despite gradual improvements of the situation. The site significantly contributes to air pollution, particularly during the winter months. The municipal authorities, themselves or supported by the Turkish KFOR contingent, occasionally clean illegal dumpsites. Support is also provided by many organisations²⁸ and the

²⁷ In Prizren, the Kosovo Turk community is not concentrated in a specific neighbourhood or area, but live in different parts of the town.

²⁸ KFOR, GIZ, Caritas Switzerland, PREDA Plus, etc.

Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, for activities aiming to advance environmental protection (e.g., distribution of bins to households and in public places, cleaning of public spaces, awareness raising activities, etc.). Additionally, waste management remains a challenge, as in other parts of Kosovo.

The **Kosovo Turk** community has access to cemeteries in all locations where they reside, often sharing Islamic graveyards with other communities.

5. Access to social services, including healthcare

In general, the Kosovo Turk community enjoys open access to social services, including physical access to centres for social welfare.

In 2018, 74 Kosovo Turk families, which included 213 persons, were eligible for social assistance.²⁹ Most lived in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipalities. Community disaggregated data on the number of Kosovo Turks who receive pension and/or disability allowances is not available. According to municipal officials in Dobërçan/Dobrčane, only three Kosovo Turk families, two from Dobërçan/Dobrčane village and one from Gjilan/Gnjilane town, receive social assistance.

In general, the Kosovo Turk community does not encounter significant issues in accessing healthcare services. This is also true for the Kosovo Turk community in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, who tend to access social and health services in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South. In Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, in the mixed village of Janjevë/Janjevo, physical access to health services is problematic, as the local pharmacy has been inadequately stocked, and community members have been required to travel to urban areas to find proper medical supplies. In Dobërçan/Dobrčane village, there is a healthcare centre, while residents who live in Gjilan/Gnjilane town use the healthcare facilities in town. In Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, residents rely on one municipal family health centre. For complex health issues, community members travel to Prizren municipality.³⁰ The municipality commenced the construction of a new main family health centre in January 2021, improving not only healthcare facilities but also the list of specialist services in the municipality. The statute of the new health facility was endorsed in September 2023 and its opening is expected in early 2024. In Prizren, the community mainly uses the main family health centre, while also having full access to services in the Prizren regional hospital. Moreover, several Kosovo Turk doctors run their own private practices. The Kosovo Turk community also uses healthcare providers in Turkey for more serious health issues.

Although affordable health care is a concern across Kosovo, the Kosovo Turk community faces relatively fewer financial barriers compared with other communities.

²⁹ Ombudsperson Institution, *Annual Report 2018* (2019), p. 100.

³⁰ OSCE, *Municipal Profile 2018: Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša* (2019).

However, **Kosovo Turk** women face more financial obstacles when using healthcare services than men of the same community.³¹

Recently, health-related campaigns targeting different communities have been conducted in several municipalities, including on early detection of breast cancer. In one campaign, the Ministry of Health offered free check-ups through a mobile mammography machine to women from different communities, including those from the **Kosovo Turk** community. **Kosovo Turk** community members who reside in Gjilan/Gnjilane participate in all awareness raising campaigns held within the municipality.

As for the civil registration process, **Kosovo Turk** community members generally have satisfactory access to these services.

31 Kosovo Women's Network, [Access to Healthcare in Kosovo](#) (2016), pp. 29, 51. (Accessed December 2023.)

6. Access to education

Kosovo Turk students have access to primary, secondary, and university education in the Turkish language in Kosovo. Some Kosovo Turk students attend classes in the Albanian language, most often in secondary school and university.

Turkish-language higher education is limited and not convenient to all Kosovo Turk communities. Moreover, Albanian-language education is often considered by many community members of better quality than Turkish-language courses and to offer better access to career opportunities in Kosovo.

In accessing Turkish-language education, the community's main challenge remains the scarcity of Turkish-language textbooks and reading materials. Many students rely on photocopies, particularly for upper-secondary texts. Some students obtain texts from Turkey. However, not all Turkish textbooks are adapted to the Kosovo context or align with the Kosovo curriculum. According to respondents, most textbooks translated from Albanian into Turkish are of poor quality.

Among other major challenges for Turkish-language students is the lack of qualified Turkish-language teachers for specialized subjects. Some parents have said they choose Albanian-language schools to access better quality instruction. For example, in Gjilan/Gnjilane, numerous Kosovo Turk students attend primary school in the Albanian language.

According to data from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), there were 2.748 Kosovo Turks registered in pre-university education in the 2023/2024 academic year.³²

The vast majority of Kosovo Turks enrolled in pre-university education live in the Prizren region, close to one of the two universities that offer Turkish-language education. Kosovo-curriculum pre-university education in the Turkish language is available in Prizren, Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, Prishtinë/Pristina, Gjilan/Gnjilane, and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipalities.

In Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, Kosovo Turk children in the mixed-community village of Janjevë/Janjevo mainly attend education in the Albanian language. Their education after the lower primary continues with lower and upper secondary in Lipjan/Lipljan and/or Prishtinë/Priština.

³² Information from MESTI on 2023/2024 academic year. (Accessed December 2023)

Some **Kosovo Turks** opt for university education in the Turkish language, which is offered in Prizren and Prishtinë/Prishtina.³³ Others choose to study in the Albanian language in one of the seven public universities in Kosovo. Public universities reserve places for non-Albanian students, including **Kosovo Turks**. In addition, **Kosovo Turk** students may apply for Albanian-language programmes in the Turkish language.

Municipalities in Kosovo do not offer or fund university scholarships that specifically target **Kosovo Turk** students. Some municipalities offer scholarships and allocate a reserved number for students from non-majority communities. For the academic year 2020/21, the Municipality of Prizren announced 80 scholarships offered at university-level, of which ten per cent was reserved for students from non-majority communities. In the academic year 2021/22, the municipality increased the scholarships to 100 and specifically allocated four scholarships to programmes in Turkish and Bosnian languages. For the academic year 2022/23, 130 scholarships were launched by the municipality, including eight for programmes in Turkish and Bosnian languages at the Faculty of Education.

Many **Kosovo Turks** study at universities in Turkey, as well. The Government of Turkey and its Embassy in Prishtinë/Priština offer full scholarships for university education in Turkey for students who qualify. Additionally, a small number of students attend private colleges and universities in Kosovo, while others enrol at the South East European University in North Macedonia.

The only teacher training programme in Kosovo in the Turkish language is at Prizren University. The programme has been discredited several times due to an insufficient number of academic staff fulfilling the requirements that regulate the accreditation of higher education programmes.³⁴ In February 2024, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency rejected the re-accreditation of the programme based on the same reasons.³⁵ During the 2023/2024 academic year, 148 students from the **Kosovo Turk** community attended classes at the Prizren University; most were enrolled in the Faculty of Computer Sciences and Faculty of Education, according to information supplied by the university.

Because **Kosovo Turk** community members reside mainly in urban areas, students do not face significant barriers to physical access to schools. Occasionally, **Kosovo Turk** students commute from one municipality to another, such as from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North to Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, or Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša pupils who attend upper-secondary schools in Prizren.

In recent years, very few cases of dropouts have been recorded among **Kosovo Turk** students.

In school buildings with both Albanian- and Turkish-language classes, interaction between schoolchildren from different communities is mostly positive. For example, Turkish-language and Albanian-language children reportedly use the same school entrance doors, schoolyards, and other school facilities. The teaching staff in these

³³ Ukshin Hoti university is in Prizren; Hasan Prishtina university is in Prishtinë/Priština.

³⁴ Law No. 08/L-110 on Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

³⁵ Outside the reporting period, as of June 2024, the continuation of the programme is uncertain.

schools share a single teachers' room, which offers additional opportunities to communicate and co-operate. Moreover, pupils participate in various sport and cultural activities jointly organized by the schools and easily interact with students from other communities.

7. Access to justice

There is one representative of the Kosovo Turkish community employed in the Victims' Advocacy and Assistance Office (VAAO), a woman (in the regional office in Prizren), but none in any of the other non-judicial institutions: the Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA), the Ombudsperson Institution (OIK). Furthermore, two Kosovo Turkish lawyers, both men, are licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association (KBA).

OSCE field monitoring reports that members of the Kosovo Turk community do not face any challenges in accessing legal services.

Kosovo Turkish community members are generally well aware of the services provided by FLAA, OIK, VAAO and KBA. Of note, in Prizren and in the predominantly Kosovo Turkish municipality of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, the community is well-represented and active in public institutions and civil society organisations due to regular outreach and a more active role of justice institutions in this municipality in the last couple of years.³⁶ The same is true for the Kosovo Turkish community in Prishtinë/Priština given that they are living mainly in urban areas.³⁷

In 2023, with the support of USAID, the FLAA distributed leaflets and posters in the English, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages as well as in the Braille alphabet. Similarly, video spots and posts on social media during the Week of Free Legal Aid, with the motto "Protect your Rights", were delivered in the Albanian and Serbian official languages, including in the Turkish language in the municipalities of Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša.

Every October, VAAO under the auspices of the Chief Prosecutors' Office and with the support of the US Embassy organizes "Crime Victims' Rights Week". However, it is the general opinion of interviewed stakeholders that information campaigns should be organized throughout the year.

Generally, members of the Kosovo Turkish community are not aware of the Crime Victims' Compensation program, despite the OIK, VAAO, FLA and KBA informing community members about their rights, remedies and benefits, including access to crime victims' compensation program during their interaction with cases.

In 2023, the FLAA offered services to 6,070 people (including 2,883 women), of whom 54 were members of the Kosovo Turkish community.

³⁶ According to interlocutors from Prizren.

³⁷ According to the OSCE field reports from the Prishtinë/Priština region.

In 2023, the OIK received in total 1,660 complaints (1,162 men and 498 women),³⁸ involving 4,296 persons. Of the total number of complaints, 11 came from the **Kosovo Turkish** community. VAAO addressed 2,883 cases in 2023, where 11 victims were **Kosovo Turks**, most of them women.

Among the **Kosovo Turkish** community, language is not perceived as a barrier in accessing legal institutions, nor are court related expenses and travel expenses. Although the Basic Court in Prizren does not have a permanent Turkish language translator (the recruitment process is ongoing), translation into the Turkish language is provided by the court via outsourced certified interpreters.

³⁸ See, Ombudsperson Institution 2023 Annual Report.

8. Language use and media

Turkish is currently an official language in the municipalities of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša and Prizren. Additionally, in the municipalities of Prishtinë/Priština, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South, and Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Turkish is a “language in official use,” which involves a municipal obligation to provide services and documents in the Turkish language upon request.³⁹

Moreover, although the Turkish language is not an official language at the government level, the Official Gazette of Kosovo publishes all legal and sublegal acts, regulations, agreements, decisions, and other acts issued by institutions in the Turkish language. The publication of official documents in the Official Gazette in the Turkish language supports municipalities where Turkish is an official language.⁴⁰

Kosovo Turk community members speak a local dialect of the Turkish language for everyday use and standardized Turkish for formal communication. Many Kosovo Albanians and other communities speak or at least understand Turkish, especially in Prizren region, and most **Kosovo Turks** can communicate in the Albanian or Serbian languages. However, young people often do not speak Albanian or Serbian. Community members frequently use Albanian and/or Serbian languages to interact with municipal officials and access municipal services; however, interpretation or translation of documents is sometimes not available at the municipal level.

In Prizren municipality, the majority of signs used in municipal and other official buildings, such as the regional office for employment and centre for social welfare, as well as cultural heritage, signs are displayed in all official languages, including Turkish. However, signs in municipal administration buildings are not always displayed in all official languages. Street signs and names in Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša are displayed in a trilingual format (in Albanian, Serbian, and Turkish) for the word “street”: “Rr. Ul. Ca.”. The full names of streets are written in the language of the majority population; that is, in Albanian in Prizren and Turkish in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša.

Road signs in rural areas use only two languages, Albanian and Serbian.

³⁹ The Law on the Use of Languages gives Turkish the status of an official language in the municipality of Prizren, irrespective of the size of the Turkish community living there. Further, in municipalities inhabited by a community whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of Kosovo and which represents three per cent of the total population of the municipality, the language of the community shall have the status of a language in official use.

⁴⁰ Office of the Prime Minister, “Official Gazette”. (Accessed December 2023).

In Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša, public information and utility bills are partially printed in the Turkish language, while most central level notifications and taxes are in the Albanian and Serbian languages only.⁴¹

The availability of written documents and services in the Turkish language varies between municipalities where Turkish is an official language or a language in official use. For example, on the Prizren municipality website, documents such as daily municipal news, financial information, and mayor's decisions are partially in Turkish.⁴² The situation has improved on the Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality website, even though information is not regularly published in Albanian or Serbian.

In February 2020, Prizren municipality contracted a private company to provide translation of official municipal documents in all official languages - Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, and Bosnian - as well as in English, until 2025. As the only municipality in Kosovo with four official languages, the lack of municipal translators to translate official documents had been an issue.

Non-working simultaneous-translation equipment had been an additional challenge in Prizren municipality, as it hindered Kosovo Turk community representatives from properly participating in official municipal meetings. In July 2019, the lack of proper translation caused tensions between Kosovo Turk and Kosovo Albanian representatives during a municipal assembly session.⁴³ In December 2020, the municipality resolved the problem by purchasing new interpretation equipment and electronic voting systems for the municipal assembly hall, thus ensuring simultaneous translation in all official languages. Although according to OSCE monitoring, cases were noticed in which interpretation equipment was dysfunctional and/or translation could not be provided.

In Prishtinë/Priština, despite the fact that the Turkish language is a language in official use, the municipality does not provide documents in Turkish upon request from community members. In Gjiilan/Gnjilane, the municipality often misspells names and surnames of Kosovo Turks in official documents by failing to use Turkish characters. In Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South and Vushtrri/Vučitrn municipalities, there are no official municipal translators or interpreters for the Turkish language. Services and documents provided in Turkish upon request in these two municipalities are rare, slow, and unsatisfactory.

Considering these challenges, Kosovo Turk representatives from some municipalities where Turkish is an official language or language in official use resort to Albanian or Serbian languages to communicate with the local administration (including accepting documents and municipal services in these two languages).

41 Water and waste disposal bills are printed in the Turkish language, whereas electricity bills are not.

42 In 2023 between the months of May and December, 156 contents were available in Turkish language, while 1,186 were in Albanian in the same reporting period.

43 While discussing a draft strategy on tourism, the Kosovo Turk director of tourism and economic development, Sevil Kazaz (KDTP), responded in Turkish to questions raised by Kosovo Albanian municipal assembly members, as she did not speak Albanian confidently and preferred to respond in Turkish. Members of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) stated that while they recognized the right of the director to speak in her mother tongue, they did not understand her responses. Ms. Kazaz opted to respond to the questions in writing at a later date.

Kosovo Turks revert to other languages to avoid longer and more complicated procedures and/or inaccurate documents and information. This is not the case for Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa where Turkish is an official language and residents actively use Turkish language in their verbal and written interaction with the Municipality. This default use of other languages is most especially true among **Kosovo Turks** from Gjilan/Gnjilane and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica regions, who use the Albanian language to access municipal services. This has led to concerns among the community about language assimilation, particularly among young people, who prefer to use Albanian in public and in interactions with institutions.

The **Kosovo Turk** community enjoys access to information in their mother tongue through electronic and print media. Additionally, public broadcaster RTK 1 broadcasts special community programmes for non-majority communities, including programs in the Turkish language. The most active web portals in the Turkish language are the Prizren-based "Kosovahaber" and "Kosovaport," while print media outlets such as *Kosova Imza* and *Turk Cem* are also popular.⁴⁴ Additionally, in Prizren region, "Radio Prizren" broadcasts a three-hour daily programme in the Turkish language, while in Gjilan/Gnjilane two local radio stations, "Star" and "Victoria," air two-hour daily programmes in Turkish.

The Ministry of Education, civil society organizations such as the Kosovo Education Centre, and the private school Marif in Prizren offer free Turkish-language classes during the summer break. Yunus Emre Institute, the Turkish cultural institute, also offers Turkish-language classes online.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Kosova Haber" is a Turkish-language news site; "Kosova Port" is a Turkish-language web portal. (Accessed December 2023.)

⁴⁵ The institute offers Turkish-language classes for various groups, including civil servants working for Prizren municipality.

9. Cultural and religious heritage, religious freedoms

The Kosovo Turk community has been long present in Kosovo and contributes significantly to its heritage. Kosovo Turks are well integrated into Kosovo society, sharing many cultural and social traits with the vast majority of the Albanian population, including the Muslim faith.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane, many cultural and religious monuments date to the Ottoman period and are included in the list of cultural assets under temporary protection by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Some of the most prominent sites are found in the Special Protective Zones of the medieval town of Novo Bordo/Novobërdë. In April 2014, arson was reported at the wooden tomb inside the 16th-century *Tyrbe në Kala* ("fortress tomb," which contains a Sufi grave). Reconstruction works at the *Tyrbe në Kala* (fortress tomb) and the *Osman Efendi Mosque* located in the Special Protected Zone of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë medieval town were finalised in 2023.⁴⁶

A number of outstanding heritage sites are in Prizren region, such as Sinan Pasha mosque, Mehmet Pasha Hammam, Mehmet Pasha mosque, Suziu mosque, Kukli Beg mosque, and the Kadri Tekke and Halveti Tekke (Sufi *tekke*); and Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa is the site of the Watch Tower of Mahmud Pasha. In Prishtinë/Priština, the tomb of Sultan Murat, who was killed in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, is in Mazgit. Apart from Muslim holidays, the Kosovo Turk community marks its official Community Day on 23 April.

⁴⁶ The reconstruction works were undertaken within the "Cultural Heritage as a Driver for Intercommunity Dialogue and Social Cohesion" project funded by the EU Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and implemented by the UNDP.

10. Property rights

The Kosovo Turk community generally has open access to property and housing.

However, field monitoring by the OSCE has recorded some concerns regarding property rights of the community.⁴⁷

In 2022, three Kosovo Turk families in the Prizren region received legalization certificates formalizing their property titles through registration in the cadastral registry.

⁴⁷ According to reports, in September 2021, a Kosovo Turk woman from Lipjan/Lipljan municipality reported to the Kosovo Police that her property had been damaged by a construction company hired by the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure. The family filed a complaint with the Police Inspectorate of Kosovo, which initiated an investigation. According to police reports, the same owner experienced other property-related incidents such as broken windows, felling of trees (by Lipjan/Lipljan municipal authorities to construct a riverbed), and damage to her yard by fire.

11. Return and reintegration

The issues of displacement, returns, and reintegration are generally not a concern for the Kosovo Turk community, as there are no significant emigration reports stemming from the 1999 conflict.

The UNHCR estimates that only 16 displaced **Kosovo Turks** have voluntarily returned to their pre-conflict homes in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South between 2015 and 2023.⁴⁸

In 2023, the Ministry for Communities and Return took a significant step by issuing a call to provide essential assistance to members of non-majority communities.⁴⁹ The initiative aimed to address diverse needs, encompassing provisions for food and non-food items, as well as support for house construction and reconstruction. Additionally, the Ministry extended its outreach to bolster the agricultural sector, offering subsidies to facilitate sustainable farming practices. Simultaneously, there was a dedicated effort to support small-scale businesses within these communities. The impact of these endeavors was tangible, as the Ministry successfully supported three **Kosovo Turk** families, providing them with crucial items, including construction materials. Additionally, the impactful initiatives of the Ministry for Communities and Return extended to providing substantial support to 34 families, amounting to EUR 444,250.20. This financial assistance was directed towards fostering growth in the agriculture sector or supporting small-scale businesses. Specifically, 23 families located in Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuša and 11 in Prizren benefitted from this initiative.⁵⁰ This comprehensive approach reflected the Ministry's commitment to fostering holistic development and empowerment among non-majority communities.

48 UNHCR, Office of the Chief of Mission Prishtinë/Priština, *Statistical Overview* (April 2020). Three persons in 2015, seven persons in 2016, and six persons in 2017 voluntarily returned.

49 Decision for establishing procedures for providing assistance from the Ministry for communities and return for the members from non-majority communities issued in 2 February 2023: [Vendim i procedurave per ofrimin e ndihmes-Odluka o proceduri pruzenja pomoci_compressed_compressed-compressed \(1\).pdf \(rks-gov.net\)](#), (Accessed December 2023.)

50 Data was shared with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo by the Ministry for Communities and Return on 6 February 2024.

