
Information Bulletin

Local Elections in Kosovo

October 2013

On 3 November 2013, local elections will be held throughout Kosovo under the monitoring and supervision of the Central Election Commission (CEC). Additionally, the elections will be monitored by an EU Election Observation Mission, with the aim of ensuring transparency and upholding democratic standards. These elections will be the first ones to be held under the Kosovo legal framework in northern Kosovo, in application of the 19 April agreement between Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade. Participation of the Serb community in northern Kosovo remains unknown.

The CEC has approved 102 political subjects running for municipal assemblies, including 33 political parties, two (2) coalitions, 53 citizens' initiatives, and 15 independent candidates running in the 38 municipalities of Kosovo. Out of them, 51 lists are run by minority community members, as well as 44 candidates campaigning for mayor. The campaign officially began on 3 October.

This information bulletin presents the number of candidates from minority communities running for the 2013 local elections throughout Kosovo, with a focus on Serb-majority municipalities. It also provides an analysis of the key issues related to the participation of the Serb community, both north and south of Ibër/Ibar river.

Candidates from non-majority communities

The following table presents an overview of the number of political subjects for municipal assembly elections, as well as candidates for mayoral elections, disaggregated by community and municipality.

<i>Community</i>	<i>Municipal assemblies elections</i>		<i>Mayoral elections</i>	
	<i>Number of lists</i>	<i>Number of municipalities</i>	<i>Number of candidates</i>	<i>Number of municipalities</i>
Serb	32	27	39	13
Bosniak	8	9	3	1
Turk	2	8	2	1
Roma	2	5	0	0
Ashkali	2	10	0	0
Egyptian	1	7	0	0
Croat	1	2	0	0
Montenegrin	2	4	0	0
Gorani	1	1	0	0
Total	51	n/a	44	n/a

Geographic representation of candidates from non-majority communities

Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo

The municipality of **Leposavić/Leposaviq** has nine (9) Serb political subjects (GISDP, Inicijativa za Bolji život, Nova Snaga, Građanska Inicijativa Zajedno, SD, Demokratska Inicijativa, G.I. Srpska, SLS, and Narodna Pravda) and one (1) from the Bosniak community.

Zvečan/Zveçan has two (2) Serb political subjects (GISDP and G.I. Srpska) running in the elections, while **Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North** has three (3) from the Serb community (GISDP, G.I. Srpska, and SLS), one (1) Bosniak and one (1) Turk political subjects.

Zubin Potok will see three (3) Serb political subjects in the municipality (Nova Snaga, SD, and G.I. Srpska).

Serb-majority municipalities in southern Kosovo

In **Gračanica/Gračanicë**, five (5) Serb political subjects are competing (Građanska Inicijativa - Simonida, SLS, Savez Kosovskih Srba, G.I. Srpska, Jedinstvena Srpska Lista - Vidovan), and one (1) from the Roma community.

Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, **Ranilug/Ranillug**, **Klokot/Kllokot** and **Parteš/Partesh** have respectively seven (7) subjects (Opstanak Građanska Inicijativa, Zajednička Budućnost Novo Brdo, Demokratska Inicijativa, Budućnost Za Novo Brdo, G.I. Srpska, SLS, Srpska

Građanska Inicijativa), five (5) subjects (GI za Kosovsko Pomoravlje, SD, G.I. Srpska, SLS, SNPK), four (4) subjects (Za Zajedničku Budućnost Klokot, Narodno Jedinstvo, G.I. Srpska, SLS) and seven (7) subjects (Građanska Inicijativa Srpska Donja Budriga, Demokratska Inicijativa, Građanska Inicijativa Nove snage, G.I. Srpska, Građanska Inicijativa Srpska Pasjane, SLS, Narodna Inicijativa) from the Serb community, lacking candidates from other non-majority communities.

Štrpce/Shtërpçë has two Serb political subjects (G.I. Srpska and SLS).

Other municipalities

In **Pristinë/Priština**, two (2) Serb and two (2) Turk political subjects are running. Around the capital, **Obiliq/Obilić** has six (6) Serb, one (1) Roma, one (1) Montenegrin and one (1) Ashkali political subjects, while in **Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje**, one (1) Serb, one (1) Roma, one (1) Montenegrin, and one (1) Egyptian political subject will represent their respective communities. North of Prishtinë/Priština, **Vushtrri/Vučitrn** has three (3) Serb political subjects and one (1) from the Turk community and **Podujevë/Podujevo** has one (1) Serb and two (2) Ashkali candidates within the municipality. **Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South** has two (2) Bosniak, one (1) Turk and two (2) Ashkali political subjects.



In the west, the municipality of **Pejë/Peć** has three (3) Serb, four (4) Bosniak, one (1) Roma, two (2) Montenegrin and one (1) Egyptian political subjects, while **Klinë/Klina** will see two (2) Serb and one (1) Egyptian political subjects competing and **Istog/Istok** has three (3) Serb, four (4) Bosniak and one (1) Egyptian candidates. **Lipjan/Lipljan** has three (3) Serb, one (1) Turk, one (1) Montenegrin, two (2) Ashkali and one (1) Croat political subjects in the municipality.

In central Kosovo, there are four (4) Serb political subjects registered along with one (1) political subject representing the Egyptian community in **Rahovec/Orahovac**. **Suharekë/Suva Reka** will see one (1) Serb and one (1) Ashkali political subjects running in the municipality, and **Ferizaj/Uroševac** has one (1)

Serb and two (2) Ashkali political subjects. **Shtime/Štimlje** has two (2) political subjects from the Ashkali community.

In eastern Kosovo, the municipality of **Gjilan/Gnjilane** has four (4) Serb and one (1) Turk political subjects, while **Kamenicë/Kamenica** has one (1) Serb political subject.

In southern Kosovo, **Prizren** has three (3) Serb, five (5) Bosniak, one (1) Turk, one (1) Roma, one (1) Ashkali and one (1) Egyptian political subjects, and in **Gjakovë/Djakovica**, one (1) Serb political subject is present, along with one (1) Egyptian. **Dragash/Dragaš** maintains four (4) Bosniak, and one (1) Gorani political subjects. The municipality of **Mamuša/Mamush/Mamuša** has two (2) political subjects from the Turk community.



Participation of the Serb community

Participation of Serb community remains the major question mark of these elections.

In 2010, Belgrade called upon Serbs to boycott the election to the Assembly of Kosovo, which resulted in a 1% voter turnout in Serb-majority municipalities in the North.¹ However among the Serb community in southern municipalities in Kosovo, voter turnout in 2010 was seven (7) times higher than the elections in 2007, which shows a gradual shift in attitude within the community.² This trend was confirmed during the 2009 local elections, when the turnout of the Serb community in southern municipalities varied from 11% (in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë) to 27% (in Gračanica/Gračanica). The **growing interest of Serb community for elections** is also illustrated by the increase of Serb political subjects, from 22 in 2009 (covering 17 municipalities) to 32 in 2013 (covering 27 municipalities).³

While the Serb community south of the Ibar/Ibër river is expected to participate massively, the situation remains largely unclear for the Serbs living in northern Kosovo. In general, electoral participation is encouraged by Serb political, socioeconomic, and religious leaders. On 1st October, Ivica Dačić declared, “it is in our interest that everything goes along peacefully, that as many Serbs as possible go to

the polls,”⁴ a position notably shared by **Aleksandar Vulin**, Serbian Minister without portfolio in charge of Kosovo and Metohija, who declared on 16 September, “the Government of the Republic of Serbia is calling on all Serbs to go to the polls, assume responsibility for their future, for their children,”⁵ and by **Oliver Ivanović**, leader of the civil initiative GISDP. On 19 October, Serbian Prime Minister **Ivica Dačić** visited Kosovo and called on Serbs, once again, to participate in the upcoming elections and support the political subject (G.I. Sprska) backed by the Serbian government.⁶

The Orthodox Church itself called Serbs to participate, through the voice of **Patriarch Irinej** on 14 October: “It would be tragic if Serbs boycotted the vote in areas where they make up the majority.”⁷ This came after a similar statement from **Father Sava Janjić** on 3 October: “the success of the local elections in Kosovo is crucial.”⁸ Despite calls for participation from most Serb leaders, this approach is not shared by all Serb political representatives in northern Kosovo, leaving participation of Serbs north of the Ibar/Ibër river inconclusive.

Finally, the period preceding local elections saw several violent incidents happening in some Serb municipalities, illustrating the tensions

¹<http://www.europeanforum.net/country/kosovo>

²ECMI Kosovo Special Report, *Community Political Parties and Government Formation*, 10 February 2011.

³KIPRED, *Decentralization in Kosovo : Municipal Elections and the Serb Participation*, December 2009.

⁴Source B92:
http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2013&mm=10&dd=01&nav_id=87847

⁵Source B92 :
http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics.php?yyyy=2013&mm=09&dd=16&nav_id=87680

⁶<http://inserbia.info/news/2013/10/serbian-pm-ivica-dacic-to-visit-gracanica-monastery-in-kosovo-on-october-19/>
⁷<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/patriarch-irinej-ugres-serbs-to-take-part-in-kosovo-polls>

⁸<https://twitter.com/SavaJanjic/status/373557372888682496>



within the Serb community, mostly between the Belgrade-sponsored civil initiative G.I.Sprska and the locally anchored Samostalna Liberalna Stranka (SLS). For example, a handgrenade attack was reported in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North on 20 September near the premises of Telekom Srbija and other **explosions were reported throughout the month of October**, including one targeting Nebojsa Marić, a former SLS candidate.⁹ On 12 September, the wife of Oliver Ivanović, a candidate for mayor in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North, was attacked after he had encouraged Serb participation in the upcoming elections.¹⁰

Northern Kosovo is not the only area where violence is committed, as other incidents were reported in Serb-majority municipalities south of the Ibar/Ibër river. This was the case notably in Klokot/Klllokot, where the candidate Srećko Spasić was physically attacked (reportedly by members of the rival SLS party) on 11 September.¹¹ Finally in Parteš/Partesh, Gabriel Ničić accused the mayor, Nenad Cvetković, of hitting him purposely, causing him physical injuries earlier in August this year.¹²

A recent poll conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), revealed that **44 % of citizens residing in northern municipalities plan to boycott the upcoming election**, while 17 % answered “maybe,” 23 % responded they are undecided and 16 %

acknowledged that they will vote in the election.¹³

Based on the largely undetermined attitude of the population and on the turnout in previous elections and current circumstances, the participation of Serbs in the 3 November election remains ambiguous. With Belgrade’s approval and the urging of local leaders, we may see greater participation by the Serb community in the upcoming elections and increased minority representation. It is particularly true in southern Kosovo, where the polarization of the political life has been extremely strong. In light of the electoral campaign, the mobilisation Serbs living south of Ibar/Ibër is expected to be massive. However, calls for boycott find a strong echo amongst Serbs north of Ibar/Ibër river, while the **local security situation also constitutes a deterring factor**. In these conditions, a turnout of 15-20 % would already be considered significant.

Finally, the Central Election Commission approved a large number of **Serb voters residing outside of Kosovo**, whose participation could have a large impact on effective turnout rates. Of roughly 39,000 applicants, over 6,000 requests from Serbs were deemed valid by the CEC.¹⁴

⁹ <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/increased-security-measures-demanded-in-kosovo-mitrovica>

¹⁰ <http://www.kosovapress.com/en/security/family-of-oliver-ivanovic-attacked-2564/>

¹¹ Source KIM Radio : <http://www.radiokim.net/vesti/klokot-branimir-stojanovic-posetio-spasica.html>

¹² <http://www.radiokim.net/vesti/gavrilo-nicic-tukao-me-gradonacelnik-opstine-partes.html>

¹³ <http://inserbia.info/news/2013/10/undp-16-percent-of-voters-sure-to-vote-in-north-kosovo/>

¹⁴ <http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/serbia-kosovo-overcome-crisis-re-news-530938>

Voter education

Throughout September and October, **ECMI Kosovo is implementing a voter education campaign** targeting Serb-majority municipalities. The campaign is using different mobilisation tools, such as TV and internet clips, debates, and also focus group discussions with vulnerable and marginalised groups (ethnic minorities, women, youth, and repatriated persons).

ECMI Kosovo organised focus group discussions in the following locations:

- **Municipality of Gračanica/Gračanicë:** Batuša/Batushë, Laplje Selo/Llapllasellë, Lepina/Lepi, Roma Mahalla.
- **Municipality of Klokot/Kllokot:** Klokot/Kllokot, Vrbovac/Vërboc, Mogila/Mogillë.
- **Municipality of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë:** Bostane/Bostan, Boljevice/Bolec, Bušince/Bushincë, Gornje Kusce/Kufcë e Epërme, Prekovce/Prekovë, Stanišor/Stanishor, Straža/Strazhë.
- **Municipality of Parteš/Partesh:** Budriga/Budrigë, Parteš/Partesh, Pasjane/Pasjan.
- **Municipality of Ranliug/Ranillug:** Malo Ropotovo, Odevce, Rajanovce, Veliko Ropotovo.
- **Northern Kosovo:** Leposavić/Leposaviq, Mitrovica/ Mitrovicë North, Zubin Potok, Zvečcan/Zveqan.

Despite ECMI Kosovo's efforts, it appears evident that the level of awareness of these groups about the upcoming elections is

extremely low, particularly regarding the status of the elections (the content of the 19 April agreement remains largely unknown), the political orientations of the political subjects competing, and the practicalities of the election (localisation of the polling stations, functioning of the ballots, means of identification).

In addition, there are **limited neutral and non-politically affiliated voter education campaigns** implemented in Kosovo,¹⁵ most of which have been initiated rather late in the campaign process. Many political parties have provided information to citizens, as confirmed by the latest Monitoring Report published by Democracy in Action: *"Political parties are increasingly campaigning "Door to Door" directly talking to voters contact in their homes. (...) Political parties are practicing the manipulative approach using minors in election campaigns, influencing and even using the authority of principals and teachers from secondary schools."*¹⁶

The CEC has posted advertisements regarding the election, which also appear in Serbian. Additionally, several organisations have arranged public discussions between mayoral candidates, including within Serb municipalities.

Hence, **ECMI Kosovo recommends that public authorities organise more systematic and large-scale voter education campaigns in an adequate time frame before every local and national election to ensure a fair, transparent and inclusive electoral process for all communities in Kosovo.**

¹⁵ See for example the [Program građanskoq vaspitanja](#) and the [OSCE-led campaign](#).

¹⁶ Democracy in Action, [Monitoring Report](#), 12 October 2013.