



14 NOVEMBER 2013

Kosovo Local Elections – Which Self-Government for Minority Communities?

*This Information Bulletin presents **ECMI Kosovo's preliminary analysis of the results** after the first round of the local elections, focusing on the Serb community. It also draws conclusions from the voter education campaign implemented throughout the pre-election period in 28 locations, as well as from the observation mission deployed on the day of the elections in 37 polling stations.*

*Overall, the **turnout** in Serb-majority municipalities was extremely satisfactory: between 54% and 68%, the highest Kosovo wide, validating the Ahtisaari-driven decentralisation process implemented in Kosovo since 2008. In addition, the new dynamics within the Serb community show a **shift of leadership** from locally anchored SLS to Belgrade-sponsored G.I. Srpska. After a fierce campaign and in a context of high **fragmentation of the political offer** (27 Serb political subjects competing), the latter ranked first in municipal assembly election in all Serb-majority municipalities but one (Parteš/Partesh), yet failed to reach the threshold of the absolute majority anywhere. Regarding the mayoral election, **a second round will be necessary** in all of these municipalities, most frequently between G.I. Srpska and another Serb candidate (from SLS, SNPK, or SKS), except in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë where the G.I. Srpska candidate will compete against LDK runner-up.*

***Few members of other non-majority communities will be able to enter municipal assemblies**, except in Prizren, Dragash/Dragaš, and Mamuşa/Mamush/Mamuša, mostly because of the highly fragmented political offer. No individual candidate to the mayoral election was able to qualify for the second round, except in Mamuşa/Mamush/Mamuša where a Turk candidate was elected immediately after the first round.*

This Information Bulletin is based on the partial and preliminary results published by the Kosovo Central Election Commission (CEC) on 12 November, after counting 88% of the ballots, and not including northern Kosovo where elections will be re-run in three polling stations. ECMI Kosovo will update this Information Bulletin following the second round of the elections, after CEC releases the final results.

1 – Voter Education campaign

In southern Kosovo

Further to Belgrade's government being extremely vocal to urge Serbs living in Kosovo to take part in elections, **a large amount of people were expected to fulfill their electoral duty for the first time under Kosovo framework**. In these conditions, ECMI implemented a voter education campaign, targeting the most vulnerable people living in Serb-majority municipalities such as youth, the elderly, women, and Roma communities.

ECMI Kosovo facilitated **24 focus groups in southern Kosovo**, presenting informative packages about the practicalities of the elections (who is running, where are the polling stations, etc.) and showing models of ballots. Focus groups were attended by an average of 15 people, most of them reportedly voting for the first time. **420 people were directly reached and 6,000 indirectly** through posters and leaflets, living in 24 locations. **37% of them were women**. In addition, ECMI Kosovo produced two **TV clips** targeting young Kosovo Serbs, accessible on our [YouTube channel](#) and broadcasted by RTK2 on a daily basis.

Most participants reported their mistrust in the level of professionalism of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and of the Municipal Election Commissions (MEC) and their **disbelief in their capacity to run a fair and transparent process**. In addition, the issue of the **voting lists** was frequently raised by participants who doubted their accuracy as cases were reported where dead people were not removed. Explanations were also requested on **conditional voting** for people who could not find their name in the voting lists. On the practicalities, many participants felt insecure about their right to vote as they received contradictory information related to the **validity of the identification document** to be used on the day of the election, such as a Serbian ID or a Kosovo ID.

Finally, most participants **regretted that Serb political parties did not properly explain their electoral programmes**, focusing on relations between Kosovo and Serbia instead of socioeconomic issues communities deal with on a daily basis (education, healthcare, infrastructure, employment, etc.).

In northern Kosovo

ECMI Kosovo organised focus group discussions in four northern Kosovo municipalities. Each of them was attended by fourteen to nineteen participants of different age, gender and occupation in order to collect relevant information about their attitude towards the current situation in the region.

Three main topics were addressed: the agreement between Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština, the association of Serb municipalities and the upcoming Kosovo elections.

Generally, participants showed a very **low level of awareness about the 19 April agreement**, none of them being able to report about its content or main provisions. The only information they received was through media and a bit through social networks and local politicians. Mostly, **the agreement is perceived as a result of foreign pressure**. Its content is considered

confusing and ambiguous, in the sense that it is created to satisfy all parties. In Leposavić/Leposaviq, several participants expressed the opinion that its aim is to disunite Serbs from northern and southern Kosovo, and in Zvečan/Zveçan, participants reckoned that the purpose of the agreement was to dismantle Serbian institutions. However, it was also acknowledged that Serbs from northern Kosovo are not always helpful in the process as they are constantly boycotting any initiative. There were also few individual opinions stressing the necessity to implement the agreement as it is already signed and to establish rule of law in the region. When asked about its comparison to Ahtisaari Plan, the majority of the participants stated that the former was better than the latter for Serbs' interests, though there is not a conformed opinion on that.

Furthermore, **the association of Serb municipalities is broadly questioned** because it reportedly lacks jurisdiction and autonomy and there is a general belief it will be mainly controlled by Prishtinë/Priština. However in Leposavić/Leposaviq some participants assessed it as crucial for Serbs because they are a small unprotected community. It was also recalled during this discussion that Serbs living in the South are in a worse position because they are forced to accept everything. At this point, **disunity and division within Serbs living in the North and the ones living in the South was emphasized.**

Finally, there is a **general disbelief and mistrust towards local politicians**, appearing as one of the main reasons not to vote, in addition to security issues. When asked about participating to the upcoming elections, opinions were divided between the majority who firmly stated they will not vote as it would imply recognition of Kosovo as a State, and those who affirmed they will vote to avoid Albanians winning the municipality and/or because Serbia officially called for voting.

2 - General observation patterns

ECMI Kosovo **deployed a team of fourteen (14) local observers** to observe the opening, voting and counting procedures in **37 polling stations** in the municipalities of Gračanica / Graçanicë, Klokot/Klllokot, Novo Brdo / Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, and Ranilug / Ranillug.

Overall, voting in the majority of polling stations visited by ECMI teams was evaluated as good or satisfactory. The process was assessed as calm and orderly, with procedures being largely followed.

Members of election boards at the polling stations visited managed the process efficiently. Due to late final instructions from Central Election Commission (CEC) regarding the eligible voter identification documents, members of some election boards faced difficulties in interpreting the law.

However observers rarely witnessed rejection of voters who were duly registered in voters' lists and who presented a document stipulated by the law (e.g. expired UNMIK or Serbian documents).

Circumstances outside and inside polling centres

In 30% of the polling centers visited during the day, observers noticed **party posters/campaign materials less than 100 meters from the polling centre**. This was mostly observed in cases when polling centres were located in schools, and campaign materials were seen just outside of the school yard. However, campaigning materials were not seen inside polling stations.

Observers noted **queues** at the entrance of 30% of the polling centers visited, however the presence of polling centre managers and assistants helped maintain the order and process the queues in a good manner.

Some party candidates and municipal officers were seen standing in small groups with party supporters right outside polling centres in 15% of polling centres visited. In a few cases, observers had **difficulties identifying assistance desks for voters** (where voters could get information from voters' list).

Election boards and observers

Party observers/proxies were present in all polling stations visited. In 70% of them, the presence of other observer groups was noted: NGO Troja, EU election observation mission, ENEMO, NDI, KDI, OSCE, BIRN and observers from Embassies.

In three out of the four polling stations visited in Ranilug/Ranillug, **police were present inside the polling stations**. In three polling stations visited in Klokot/Kllokot and Gračanica /Gračanicë), **party observers were interfering** in voting procedures and with the work of the election board (assisting voters, creating tension and supervising the work of the election board). ECMI observers did not face any obstacle while observing the election procedures and were provided with all relevant information by election boards.

In 85% of the cases, the performance of the Election Board was assessed positively by ECMI observers. Members were competent and carried out their duties in a professional manner. Observers were told about four cases of procedural complaints, mostly concerning voting assistance (meaning somebody who assisted without being separately registered as stipulated by the law).

Organisation of polling stations and voting procedures

Polling stations were mostly **organised in such a manner to guarantee secrecy of voting** and visibility of voting procedures to observers. Only 5% of polling stations visited were evaluated not to have spatial capacity adequate for voting.

All materials for voters were clearly displayed (info sheet on candidates and instruction on how to mark the ballots to be valid). In a few polling stations, the total number of received ballots was smaller than the total number of voters registered in the voting list. Observers did

not notice any procedural irregularities regarding UV check, spraying, checking identification documents, signing the voting list, issuing and stamping the ballots. In several cases, voters wanted to mark the ballot publicly but were instructed by election board to use voting booth.

In 13% of the polling stations visited, some voters were not allowed to vote as they were not registered in the voting list. **In 8% of the polling stations visited, voters were rejected because they had only a Serbian identification document.** As reported by ECMI observers, polling stations received the final instructions by CEC regarding the eligible voter identification documents at different times, hereby affecting the refusal/acceptance of voters with Serbian or UNMIK documents.

In 24% of the polling stations visited, cases of **family voting** were observed (family members providing “assistance”). ECMI observers did not witness cases of proxy voting.

Overall evaluation

ECMI observed a **calm and peaceful election day**, without any major incidents reported in the five visited Serb-majority municipalities in southern Kosovo. ECMI observers evaluated with high ranks respect of procedures, general atmosphere and working of election boards in 85% of polling stations visited. The understanding of procedures by voters was assessed as mostly good or average (on a scale ranging from poor to excellent).

3 - Analysis of the preliminary results

Serb-majority municipalities in southern Kosovo

With 47% overall participation, the overall turnout in Kosovo for these elections is more or less similar to previous local and central elections (45.4% in 2009, 45.3% in 2010). However, **participation in Serb-majority municipalities literally leaped** compared to the previous local elections held in 2009¹ to reach the highest rates Kosovo-wide. A participation higher than 60% was reported in four of the six Serb-majority municipalities, and the other two are also clearly above Kosovo average. The most striking change is noticeable in Ranilug/Ranillug, where turnout increased by 314% between both elections, while the most modest increase lies with Parteš/Partesh with an increase of “only” 20%.

Such results undoubtedly stem from the **increased mobilisation of political parties and civil initiatives** from the Serb community, as well as from the repeated and unambiguous **calls from Serbian political, religious and socioeconomic leaders** to participate, including Prime Minister Ivica Dačić, or Patriarch Irinej.

In addition, it is also the logical consequence of Serbs exercising responsibilities at local and central level in Kosovo for four years, and subsequently **validates the legitimacy and relevance of decentralisation** as envisaged by the Ahtisaari plan.

¹ 2010 for Parteš/Partesh.

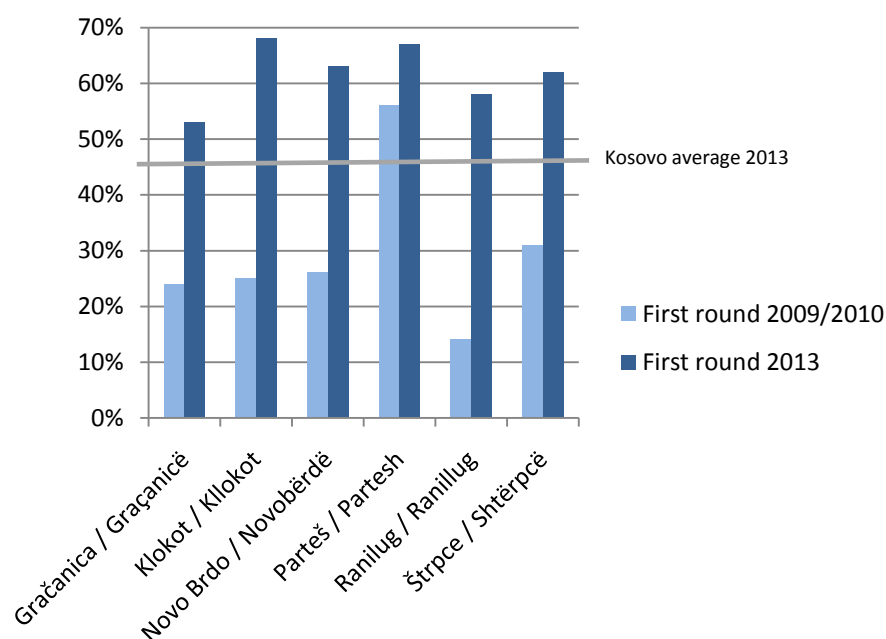


Fig.1: Participation of the Serb community in southern Kosovo

Looking at the results, **the dynamics within the Serb community largely changed** alongside the direct intervention of Belgrade into local politics, through the civil initiative Srpska. In this respect, **SLS clearly appears as the main loser** in this new political landscape.

In light of the results of the first round, **SLS lost its position as the first Serb political subject in five out of six municipalities to the benefit of G.I. Srpska**, which ranks first in municipal assembly elections everywhere except in Parteš/Partesh where SLS maintained its leadership. However, G.I. Srpska did not manage to reach the threshold of the absolute majority in any of these municipalities, paving the way for the **formation of coalitions** in municipal assemblies. In terms of cumulated score throughout Kosovo, **G.I. Srpska secured 40%, leading ahead of SLS (22%) and Gračanica/Gračanice-based Savez Kosovskih Srbe (8%)**.

In addition, the extreme fragmentation of the electoral offer within the Serb community is to be noted, with only seven (7) of the 27 lists competing securing more than 3% of the votes, and fifteen (15) of them scoring lower than 1% overall.

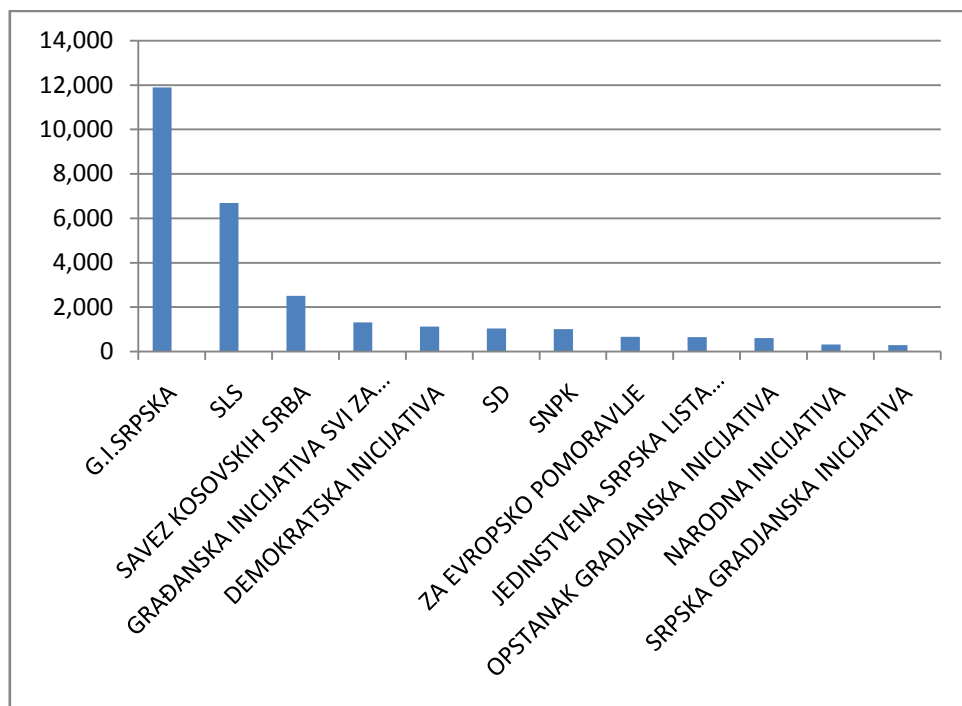


Fig.2: Breakdown of votes for the first twelve Serb lists in southern Kosovo, in absolute terms

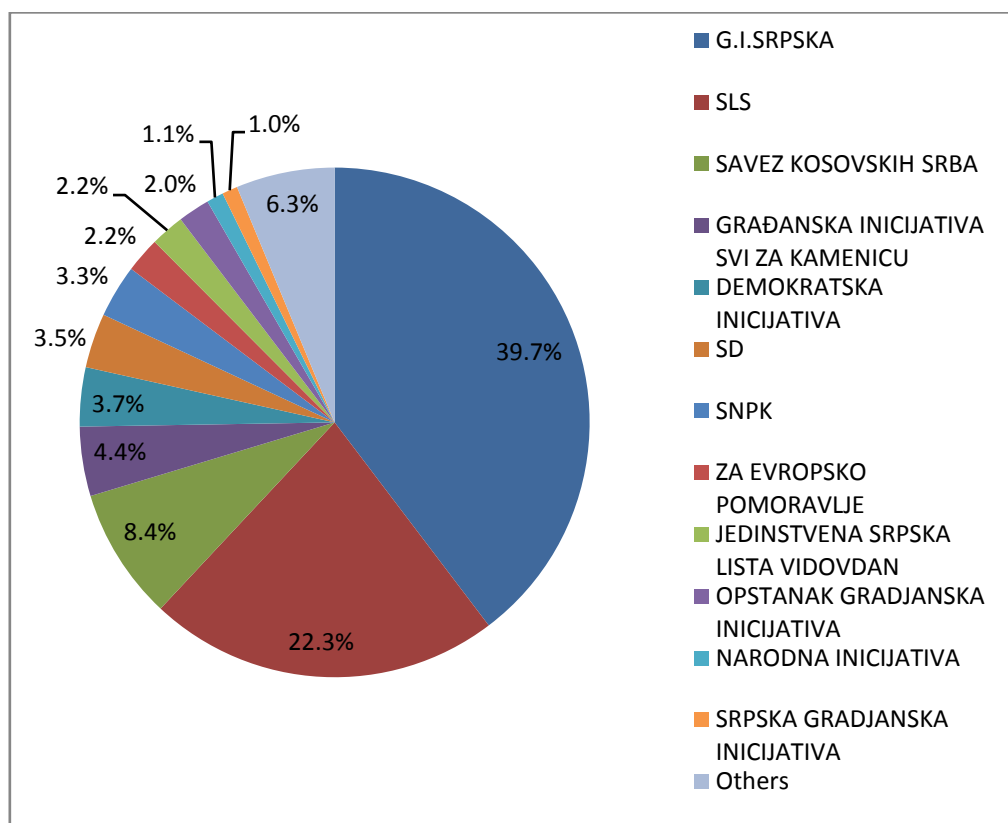


Fig.3: Breakdown of votes for Serb lists in southern Kosovo, in relative terms

The **same tendency is to be observed as the result of mayoral elections**. While five out of six Serb mayors (except in Ranilug/Ranillug) elected in 2009 and 2010 belonged to SLS, a minimum of zero and a maximum of three newly-elected mayors would be from this party. It should be noted that the SLS candidates did not even qualify for the second round in three municipalities: Gračanica / Graçanicë, Novo Brdo / Novobërdë and Ranilug / Ranillug.

Although the SLS candidate in Štrpce/Shtërpcë is in a relatively good position to be elected, **the second round in Klokot/Klllokot and Parteš/Partesh is extremely open** between SLS and G.I. Srpska.

Of particular interest will be the attitude of the Albanian voters in Štrpce/Shtërpcë and Klokot/Klllokot, in light of the electoral instructions issued by the PDK to support Serb candidates opposing G.I. Srpska.²

A preliminary analysis of the results per municipality follows.

² <http://www.pressonline.rs/info/politika/290807/pristina-ce-podrzati-savez-kosovskih-srba-u-drugom-krugu.html>

Gračanica / Graçanicë

The campaign was extremely fierce in this strategic municipality, the heart of Kosovo Serbs cultural and political life south of Ibar/Ibër river. In the mayoral election, the Belgrade-sponsored candidate from G.I. Srpska, Branimir Stojanović was short of only 108 voices to be elected right after the first round. He is, however, ideally placed with a solid 49%, and will compete against the runner-up, the outgoing mayor, former SLS Bojan Stojanović, from Savez Kosovskih Srbe (35%).

The SLS candidate, Srdjan Popović, Head of the Prime Minister's Office for Community Affairs, only secured 14% of the votes.

In the assembly election, G.I. Srpska also ranks first and gathered 46% of the votes. G.I. Srpska will need to enter into coalition with Savez Kosovskih Srbe (27%) or with SLS, ranking third with 12%.

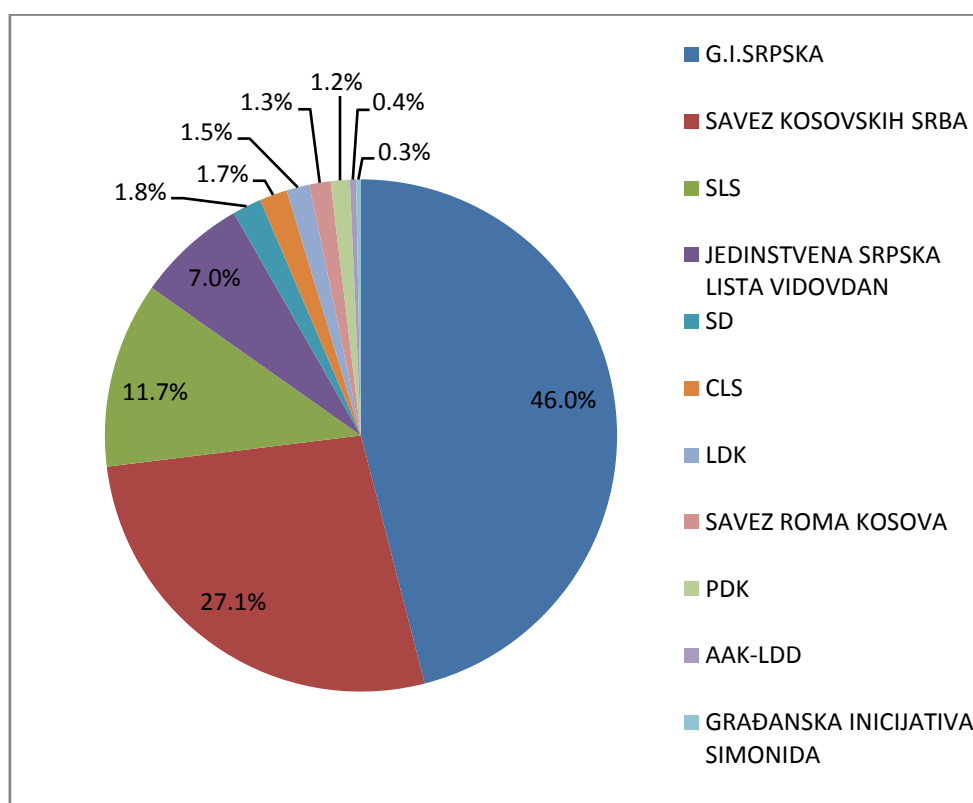


Fig.4: Results of municipal assembly elections in Gračanica / Graçanicë

Klokot / Kllokot

In the multi-ethnic municipality of Klokot/Kllokot, where the turnout was among the highest Kosovo-wide, the second round of the mayoral election will oppose the candidate from G.I. Srpska Srećko Spasić (35%) and the incumbent SLS mayor, Saša Mirković (29%).

Albanian candidates from PDK (Xhelal Rexhepi) and LDK (Hasan Rashiti) secured 16% and 10% of votes, respectively, and did not qualify for the second round. The attitude of the ethnic Albanian population will be interesting to observe in the second round, as some Albanian voters could join the SLS side in order to oppose G.I. Srpska.

Regarding the assembly, G.I. Srpska ranks first with 29% of the votes, followed by SLS with 22%. Together, they barely meet the absolute majority, while the four Albanian lists competing (PDK, LDK, AAK, and civil initiative Mogillë) cumulate a total of 42%. This configuration could pave the way to a joint Albanian/Serb coalition in the municipal assembly.

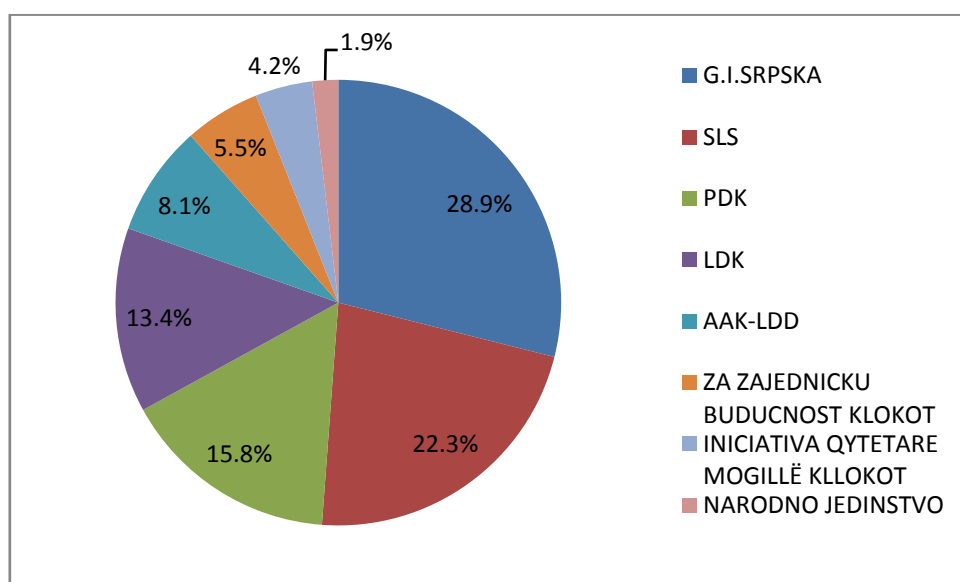


Fig.5: Results of municipal assembly elections in Klokot /Kllokot

Novo Brdo / Novobërdë

The incumbent LDK mayor, Bajrush Ymeri, came first gathering a total of 33% of votes, followed by Svetislav Ivanović, runner up for G.I. Srpska with 25 % of the votes. It will be interesting to know about the attitude of the other Serb candidates who received a significant number of votes, mostly Saša Milošević from Opstanak Gradjanske Initiative (16%) and Nebojša Arsić (11%). The remaining votes were spread amongst six other candidates (three Serbs who cumulate 10% of the votes and three Albanians who cumulated 6%), none of them getting individually more than 4%. The very low score of the SLS candidate, Ranko Makić, is to be reported (4%).

The composition of the upcoming municipal Assembly is expected to be extremely fragmented, with no party managing to secure more than 25% of votes. While LDK is ahead, it is followed by four Serb lists which cumulate 63% of votes, none of them being however individually higher than 18%. Although G.I. Srpska is asserting its leadership over the Serb community, the gap with other local civil initiatives is quite limited.

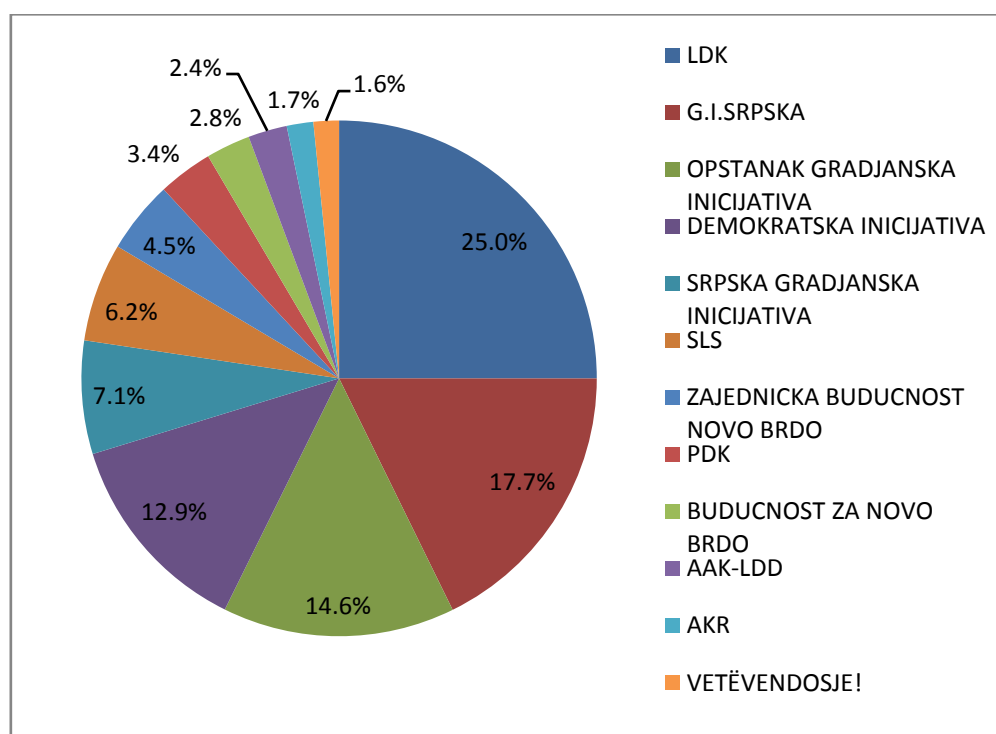


Fig.6: Results of municipal assembly elections in Novo Brdo / Novobërdë

Parteš / Partesh

Four candidates competed in the first round of the mayoral election, and the second round will oppose the outgoing SLS mayor Nenad Cvetković (46%) and the G.I. Srpska runner-up, Dragan Nikolić (34%). The other two candidates, Obrad Sosić and Goran Milošević, received respectively 12% and 8% and will play a key role in shaping the final result of the election.

SLS is also ranking first in the assembly election with 38% of the votes, more than twice as many votes as the list ranked second, G.I. Srpska (18%). The SLS majority will however need to enter into coalition to run the municipal assembly, as three local civil initiatives managed to secure between 10% and 13% each.

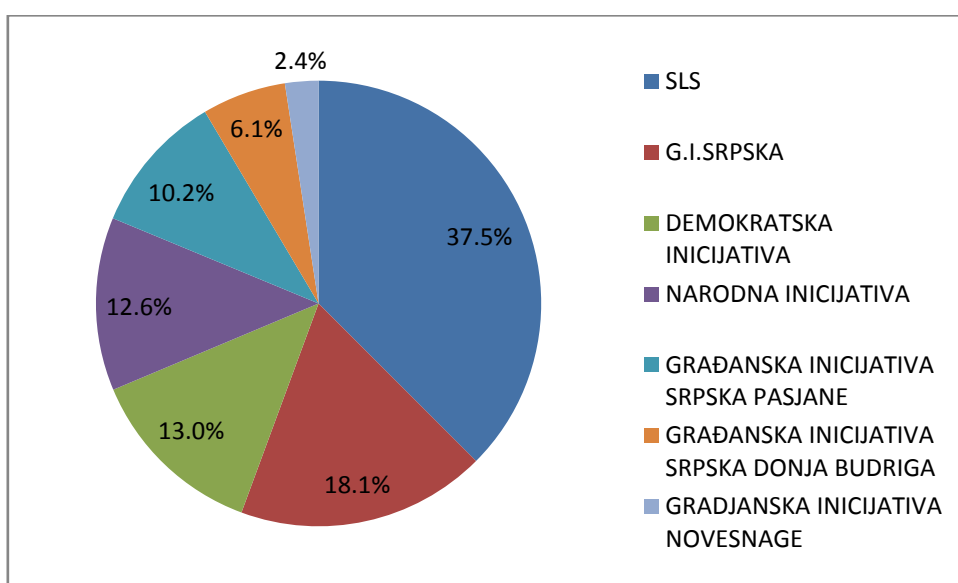


Fig.7: Results of municipal assembly elections in Parteš / Partesh

Ranilug / Ranillug

In Ranilug/Ranillug, the results of the first round of the mayoral election are extremely tight between incumbent mayor Gradimir Mikić competing for G.I. Srpska (40%) and his runner-up Milan Artonović competing for locally-anchored SNPK (37%). The voting instructions from the SLS candidate who ranked third with 17%, Radojica Dokić, will be crucial to determine the outcome of the election.

Regarding the assembly election, G.I. Srpska and SNPK are also extremely close to each other, with the former leading over the latter by only 20 votes. SLS ranks third with 20% of votes, and could enter a coalition agreement.

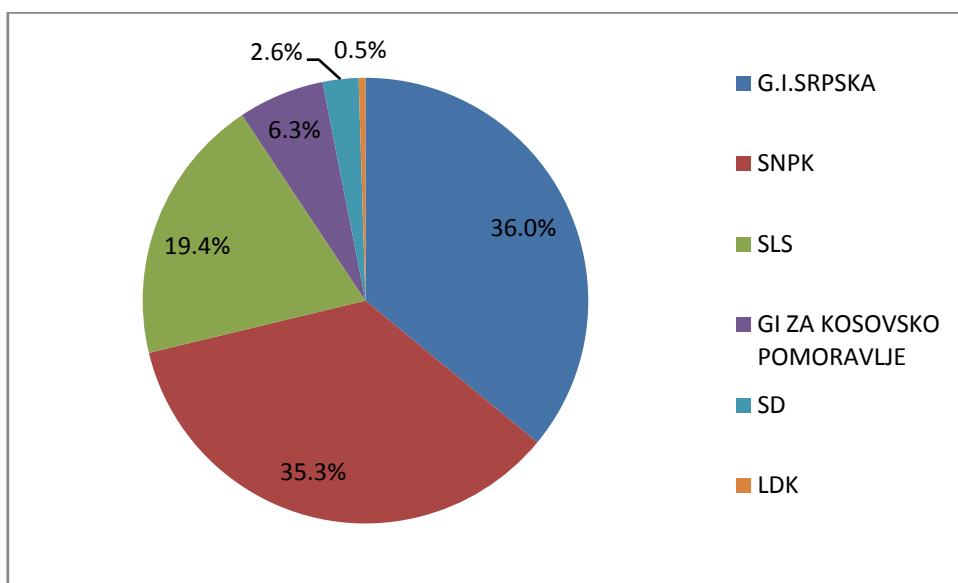


Fig.8: Results of municipal assembly elections in Ranilug / Ranillug

Štrpce / Shtërpçë

In the second largest Serb-majority municipality south of the Ibar/Ibër river, the incumbent SLS mayor Bratislav Nikolić ranked first of the mayoral election with 39% of the votes, closely followed by Ivan Redžić from G.I. Srpska (36%). They were the only Serb candidates competing. The other ethnic Albanian candidates, representing PDK, Vetëvendosje, LDK, and AAK, received between 1% and 11% each and did not qualify for the second round. As in Klokot/Kllokot, the attitude of the Albanian electorate towards the two Serb candidates will be decisive in the determination of the outcome of the election.

Regarding the assembly election, G.I. Srpska secured 43% of the votes, ahead of SLS (38%). The Albanian parties (PDK, Vetëvendosje, LDK, and AAK) cumulate a total score of 20%, aligning them in a strategic position to build a multi-ethnic coalition.

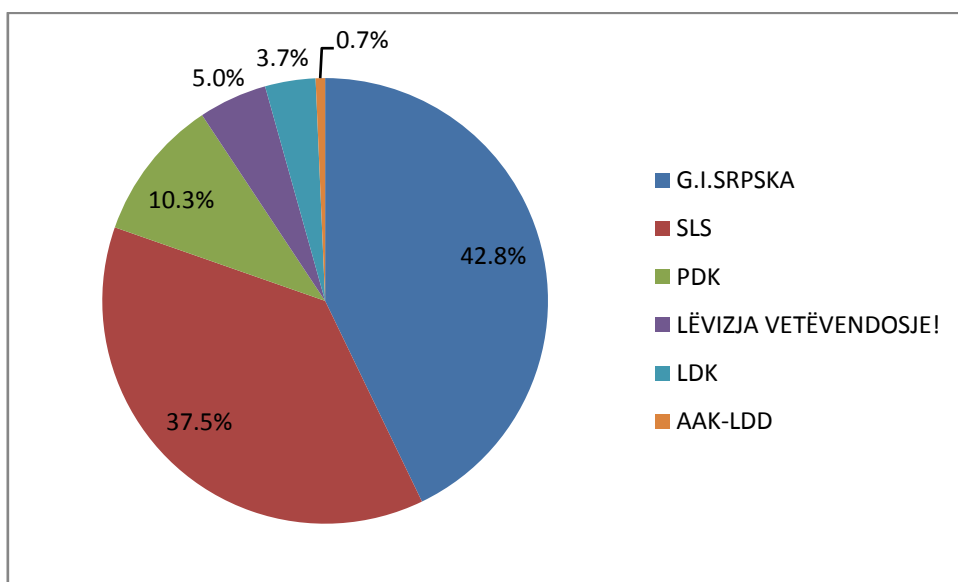


Fig.9: Results of municipal assembly elections in Štrpce / Shtërpçë

Northern Kosovo

The **turnout tentatively registered in Leposavić/Leposaviq and Zubin Potok is extremely encouraging**. While ECMI Kosovo envisaged a participation rate between 15% and 20% in these municipalities, it appears that more than 20% was reached, opening the door to the establishment of sustainable and legitimate municipal administrations there.

However, the situation is far less clear in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North and Zvečan/Zveçan where a re-voting will be organised on 17 November in three polling stations.

No information was communicated by the CEC on the results in northern Kosovo.

Other non-majority communities

Bosniaks

The (8) lists representing the Bosniak community in nine (9) municipalities secured the second largest number of votes from non-majority communities (11,037), following the Serb community. This represents a 7% turnout decrease compared to 2010 central elections (11,943 votes).

The highest scores were achieved in Dragash/Dragaš (3,484 votes), where two Bosniak parties could enter the municipal assembly: *Centar Demokratske Unije* (13% of votes) and *Koalicija Vakrat* (nearly 10% of votes).

In Prizren, Bosniak parties secured 5,744 votes. However due to the fragmented political offer, only representatives from *Koalicija Vakrat* and *Nova Demokratska Stranka* could potentially enter the municipal assembly as they secured 4% of the votes each.

The second round of the mayoral election in Prizren and Dragash/Dragaš will, however, be 100% Albanian between opposing LDK and PDK candidates.

Turks

With 10,618 votes Kosovo wide, the Turk community follows the Bosniak community closely in terms of number of voters. This represents a 7% increase in the number of votes compared to the 2010 central elections (9,912 votes).

As expected, the highest scores were reached in Prizren and in Mamuşa/Mamush/Mamuša. In Prizren, the *Kosova Demokratik Türk Partisi* (KDP) gathered 6% of the votes and should be able to enter the municipal assembly. In Mamuşa/Mamush/Mamuša, all votes went to Turk lists, except 4% secured by PDK.

Regarding the mayoral elections, there will be no second round in Mamuşa/Mamush/Mamuša as the candidate from the *Kosovo Türk Adalet Partisi* (KTAP), Arif Bütüç, reached the absolute majority on the first round with 53% of the votes.

Roma

The two Roma lists competing in four (4) municipalities gathered a total of 530 votes, with the highest scores in Prizren (266 votes) and in Gračanica/Gračanicë (124 votes). As honourable as these scores are, they will not allow any representative of the Roma community to enter any municipal assembly in Kosovo. Compared to the 2010 elections when the only Roma party competing secured 690 votes Kosovo wide, this constitutes a 23% decrease.

Ashkali

The two Ashkali parties competing in nine (9) municipalities gathered a total of 3,268 votes, with high scores secured in Ferizaj/Uroševac (1,118 votes), in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (549 votes), in Lipjan/Lipljan (539 votes), and in Podujevë/Podujevo (405 votes). However, as these

scores are spread between two competing parties *Partia Demokratike e Ashkanlive të Kosovës* (PDAK) and *Partia e Ashkalinjëve Për Integrim* (PAI), it is unlikely that Ashkali representatives could enter municipal assemblies. Compared to the 2010 elections when the two Ashkali parties secured 4,257 votes Kosovo wide, this constitutes a 23% decrease.

Egyptians

The only Egyptian list competing, in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, secured 157 votes (1.3%), an encouraging but insufficient score, well below the 1,010 votes gathered by the *Lidhja e Egjiptianve Të Kosovës* in 2010 general elections.

Montenegrins

The Montenegrin community secured a total of 600 votes in six (6) municipalities, without, however, any expectations to enter any municipal assembly. This makes a 171 vote difference from the 2010 general election when the Montenegrin party gathered 771 votes.

Gorani

The single party representing the Gorani community secured 319 votes in Dragash/Dragaš (2%), lower than the 598 votes from the 2010 general election.

Croats

The single party representing the Croat community secured 232 votes in Viti/Vitina and Lipjan/Lipljan.

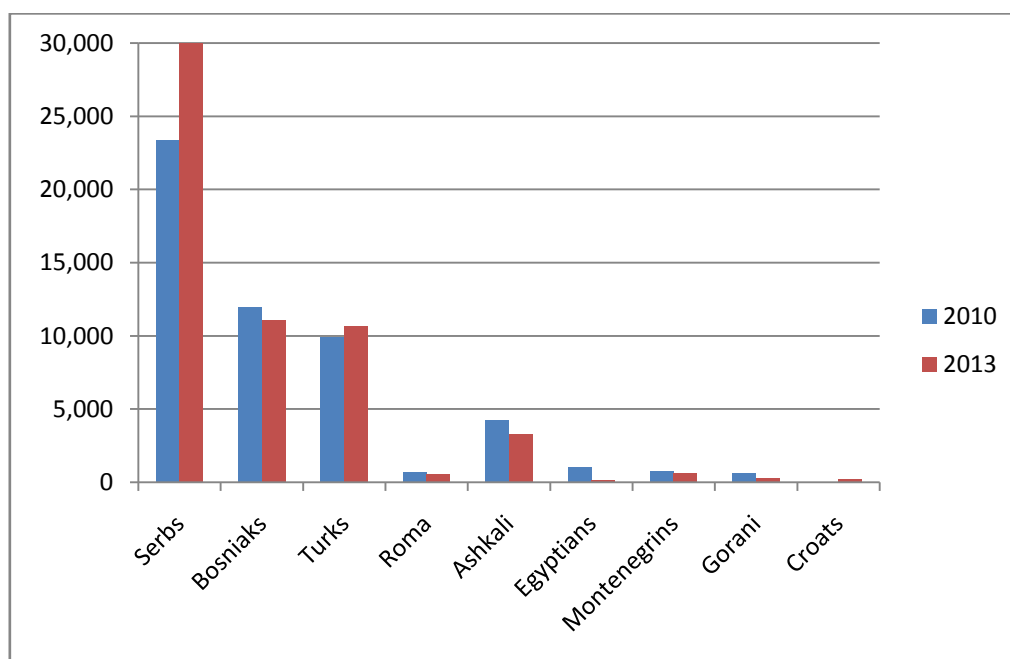


Fig.10: Number of votes secured by non-majority community political subjects in 2010 general elections and 2013 local elections

Lessons learnt: towards the 2014 central elections

Overall, the **2013 local elections might constitute a turning point** for the relation between the Serb community and Kosovo institutions.

First of all, it is arguable that the high turnout observed in Serb-majority southern municipalities **validates the overall decentralisation process** implemented according to the recommendations of the Ahtisaari plan and completes the successful institutional reintegration of Serbs into the Kosovo legal framework.

However, **new difficulties may arise** between local and central levels in the near future, caused by the direct involvement of Belgrade in internal Kosovo politics. With a block of municipalities taking instructions and directly reporting to the Serbian government, **Serb-majority municipalities' leadership may well become more difficult** in its relation towards central government, unlike current SLS leadership which is part of the PDK-led parliamentary majority.

In the north, despite violent incidents in three polling stations, it is likely that new municipalities will emerge and progressively establish their jurisdiction.

Finally, **the electoral offer has been extremely fragmented this time**. Beyond the “big two” in the Serb community (namely G.I. Srpska and SLS) a very large number of small-size civil initiatives competed, most of them gathering only a very limited number of votes. This makes it very difficult to make an in-depth assessment of the balance of power within the Serb community. Such conclusions are also valid for other non-majority communities where the fragmentation of the political offer was noticeable.

Based on the total cumulated score from non-majority communities parties and initiatives, and if the turnout in the upcoming general elections remains comparable, some communities could increase its representation in the Kosovo Assembly. However, the **shift from set-aside to guaranteed seats** requires more complex calculations to anticipate such changes.

About ECMI Kosovo

ECMI Kosovo is the principal non-governmental organisation engaged with minority issues in Kosovo, with the overarching aim to develop inclusive, representative, community-sensitive institutions that support a stable multi-ethnic Kosovo. ECMI Kosovo contributes to the developing, strengthening and implementation of relevant legislation, supports the institutionalisation of communities-related governmental bodies, and enhances the capacity of civil society actors and the government to engage with one another in a constructive and sustainable way.