



EUROPEAN CENTRE  
FOR MINORITY  
ISSUES KOSOVO

# POLICY BRIEF

18 NOVEMBER 2014

## SCHOOL RETURNS IN THE DRAGASH/DRAGAŠ REGION

### 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.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the implementation of the project *Empowering Civil Society to Participate Effectively in Policy and Decision-Making Processes through Dialogue with Government Institutions*, funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo, ECMI Kosovo, and with its partners **Communication with Social Development (CSD)** and **Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Womens' Organisation of Kosovo (NRAEWOK)**, supported the establishment of the **GORA Community Network**. The establishment of the Dragash/Dragaš region network aims to foster a link between various CSOs from the region, and better advocate for their respective local government structures.

The Gorani Community network is the first such structure to bring together all CSOs from the Gorani community to advocate for issues that are important for the community. Considering that the Gorani community is one of the most marginalised minority communities in Kosovo, this is a major development in terms of their ability to lobby and advocate for their issues. One of the activities of the Network is to conduct a research on the school returns in the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš.

One of the activities of the Network was to conduct a research on the school returns in this region. ECMI Kosovo, therefore, aided the network in writing and researching questionnaires focused on areas surrounding this issue. These questionnaires were published in Serbian and distributed throughout the municipalities by our local correspondents, with the aid of CSD and NRAEWOK. Please see Annex I for a copy of the questionnaire that was distributed to participants.

ECMI Kosovo and its partners received 64 completed questionnaires from the Dragash/Dragaš region. Through the research gained by these questionnaires, ECMI Kosovo presents this Policy Brief, which will briefly outline the findings of the research, as well as recommendations for future actions and conclusions that can be drawn.

## II. THE SCHOOL RETURNS ISSUE

The members of the Gorani community in Dragash/Dragaš have chosen to use the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia for educating their children and not the curriculum of the Republic of Kosovo. This means that currently there are six (6) elementary schools within the Dragash/Dragaš region, but these run twelve (12) schooling programmes as there are two running in parallel in the schools. Moreover, Gorani students have been prevented from returning to elementary schools in Krushevo and Dragash/Dragaš and the secondary school in Dragash/Dragaš. This means that there are only two (2) secondary schools that the Gorani community are able to attend, one in Mlike and one in Dragash/Dragaš.

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The members of the Bosniak community have chosen to use the curriculum of the Republic of Kosovo, and as such are not being forced to attend schools outside their villages. However, the Gorani community are now forced to only attend schools in a few areas, meaning that the children are forced to travel long distances to attend schools that are not in their villages or immediate area.

There have been meetings between representatives of the Gorani community, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) of the Republic of Kosovo and also representatives of OSCE in the past three (3) years. The Gorani community have said that they are willing to sign a contract with MEST, but that they wish to preserve the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia until such a time as the curriculum of Kosovo integrates all communities within it. In these meetings the Gorani community have been promised that their children can return to their schools in September of that year, in time to start schooling, but these promise have yet to be fulfilled, including in 2014. This failure has occurred even though there has been agreement between EnverHoxaj, PDK member for Prizren, and SalimJonuzi, Mayor for Dragash/Dragaš.

### III. FINDINGS

The respondents were first asked what languages they speak, and the results are presented in Table 1 below (Q.2). From this we can see that while 9 per cent of respondents speak only Gorani, while overall 86 per cent speak Gorani in combination with other languages. Of the two official languages, the most respondents register themselves as speaking Serbian (57 respondents, which amounts to 89 per cent), while only 30 per cent of respondents said that they speak Albanian, the language predominately spoken in Kosovo.

Languages Spoken by Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Gorani, Serbian	19	29.69%
English, Gorani, Serbian	15	23.44%
Albanian, Gorani, Serbian	7	10.94%
Gorani	6	9.38%
Albanian, English, Gorani, Serbian	5	7.81%
Serbian	3	4.69%
Albanian, Serbian	3	4.69%
Albanian, Gorani, Serbian, Turkish	2	3.13%
Albanian, Turkish	1	1.56%
Croatian, Serbian, Russian	1	1.56%
English, Serbian, Russian	1	1.56%
Albanian, English, Gorani, Serbian, Russian	1	1.56%

Table 1: What languages do you speak?

Firstly, respondents were asked which age range of students they feel are the most commonly affected by the returns policy for schooling in Dragash/Dragaš. Respondents were asked to state the age range that they have seen the most affected, and their responses are portrayed in Figure 1 below. From this we can see that most of the respondents identify students between the ages of 11 and 18 as being those most affected – with 77 per cent of respondents identifying this – meaning that it is the secondary school students who are commonly perceived as the most affected. Nearly 10 per cent of respondents highlighted the entire school age as the time that is most affected, implying that the students have to travel for both primary and secondary schooling.

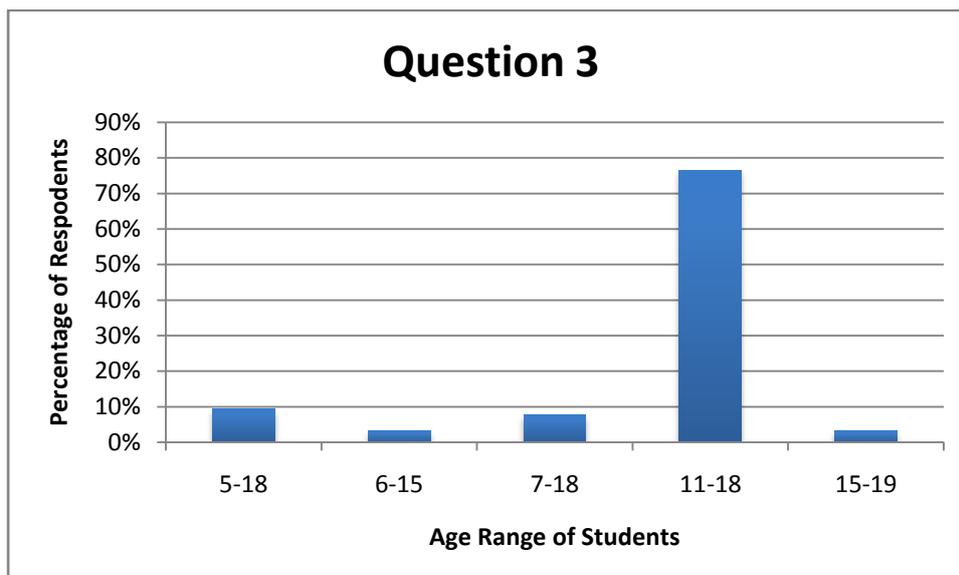


Figure 1: What is the age range of the students who are most affected by having to travel to attend school every day?

The questionnaires then asked respondents how far the students from their community have to travel to school every day (Q.4). All but one respondent provided an estimation that varied from 3 kilometres each way, to 25 kilometres per day, with most of the respondents saying that it varied according to the villages that the students lived in. **FINISH THIS ASSESSMENT**

Respondents were then asked what method of transportation the students most commonly to do this journey every day (Q.5). By far the largest proportion of respondents said that the students most commonly walk the journey, with 55 respondents highlighting this as the most common method. However, as Table 2 below shows, there is a large percentage of respondents who stated that sometimes the students used taxis or buses/minivans. Most respondents in these cases said that walking was the most common transport, but that if there was money available the students could sometimes get taxis or the buses.

Type of Transportation	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Walk	12	18.75%
Taxi	1	1.56%
Bus/Minivan	2	3.13%
Walk, sometimes use taxis	22	34.38%
Walk, sometimes use buses/minivans	16	25.00%
Walk, sometimes use taxis or buses/minivans	5	7.81%
N/A	6	9.38%

Table 2: What method of transport do they most commonly use?

Another key factor in the returns process is the amount of time that it takes students to travel to school every day (Q.6). The estimations of time given by the respondents is presented in Table 3, below. As can be seen, the vast majority of respondents (67 per cent) stated that it takes Gorani students between 1 and 2 hours to travel to school and back every day. The number of respondents who said that the students has to travel between 2 and 3 hours everyday, a long time to travel for school, was relatively high, at 16 per cent of respondents.

Amount of Time	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
An hour or less	9	14.06%
1-2 Hours	43	67.19%
1-3 Hours	1	1.56%
2-3 Hours	10	15.63%
N/A	1	1.56%

Table 3: How long does this journey take them, on average, every day?

The respondents were then asked about their perception of the affect that having to travel a long distance to the return schools was having on the students. Ninety-seven (97) per cent of respondents said that they felt that the travel was physically fatiguing the students before their school day, with the other 3 per cent not providing an answer for this question (Q.8). Respondents were then asked whether they feel that this kind of travel was disrupting the students' ability to learn during the day (Q.9). The question had a choice of four answers: it does not disrupt the learning at all; it disrupts the learning a bit; it disrupts the learning a lot; and, it disrupts the learning entirely. The results are presented in Figure 2, below, and show that the respondents were overwhelmingly of the opinion that the amount of travelling strongly affects the Gorani students' ability to learn, either a very large amount, or completely.

Moreover, the respondents were also asked to explain how they feel that the travelling most affects the students (Q.9). The majority of respondents highlighted that the students are often physically exhausted from the distances that they have to walk before attending school, with several also highlighting that the time taken up with the long travelling means that the time they can study is reduced compared to other communities who do not have to travel as far for schooling. Others also highlighted that the travel becomes more exhausting, and dangerous, in the winter months when the students have to walk in the dark and across icy or wet terrain. Moreover, some respondents said that the travel is also psychologically exhausting. The Gorani villages tend to be located in the Sharr Mountains, and thus the students must walk through tough terrain and face different dangers, such as the animals that live in the mountain forests they walk through to attend school in Dragash/Dragaš. This means that they find it especially difficult to concentrate because of mental

exhaustion, as well as physical. Some also highlighted that while there are minibuses organised to take the children to school, the disorganisation and unreliability of these often leaves children having to walk very long distances where they might not have been expecting to.

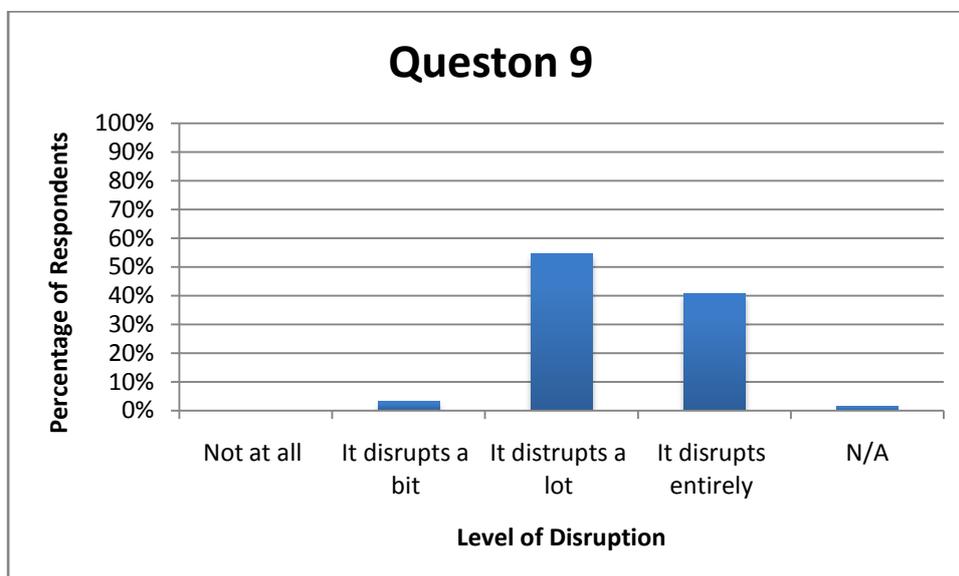


Figure 2: Do you feel that having to travel to school is disrupting to the students level of learning during the day?

When asked, there were only two (2) respondents, amounting to 3 per cent, who said that they did not feel that the returns process is legally based (Q.10). The other 97 per cent highlighted that they feel that it is in compliance with the current Kosovo laws, with some specifically highlighting Chapter 2, Article 47 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. All of these respondents said that it is a right that is guaranteed for their community by Kosovo law, and thus should be respected.

Respondents were then asked what, in their opinion, would be the best way to legally solve the issue of schooling for the Gorani community in Dragash/Dragaš (Q.10). Seventy-seven (77) per cent of respondents said that the schools need to be legally returned to the Gorani community, and thus give them the right to enjoy education in their community, while 19 per cent argued that the only way forward is the legal creation of the Municipality of Gora, within the Dragash/Dragaš region, which would allow the Gorani community to make their own decisions about issues such as education.

The questionnaires then asked whether the respondents feel that community leaders, in cooperation with the local authorities, need to do more to overcome the problems of the return (Q.11). To this, 86 per cent of respondents said that they do need to do more for this issue, while only 14 per cent of respondents answered that the authorities and community leaders are doing enough.

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Finally, only 11 per cent of respondents said that they have hope the issue of returns will be resolved soon, with 91 per cent saying that they do not think that it will be (Q.13). Many of these respondents said that the situation has not changed in the past 15 years, and that they do not see there being any political will to change it now, and thus it is not a priority issue for the authorities.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the research conducted by ECMI Kosovo and its partners, there are some recommendations that can be presented to deal with the issue of returning the Gorani community students to their local schools.

As can be shown by the results from the questionnaires within the Gorani community, the current situation is making the issue of education for the children of the community difficult. The students have to travel a long distance, from a very young age, in order to attend schools that are using their chosen curriculum.

The respondents from within the Gorani community show that there is the feeling that the law is not currently being respected in term of the schooling issues. The return of the Gorani community to their school, and the use of the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia, is something that is currently allowed for by the Law on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo (Law. No. 03/L-068), which states that:

*Schools that teach in the Serbian language may apply curricula or textbooks developed by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia upon notification to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo.<sup>1</sup>*

Moreover, the situation seems to have been politicised within the community, with any changes to the current situation being blocked by the current political actors at the local level. While there have been moves by the Gorani community to agree on situations that would allow their students to return to schools, these proposals have never come to any concrete actions to solve the situation.

As the questionnaires' respondents have shown, there is willingness within the Gorani community to solve this within the Municipality of Dragash/Dragaš, but there has to be urgent action to allow the situation of these students to improve. The Gorani community have shown their willingness to act in this situation continuous across the past several years, and have presented several options for solutions. One such suggestion is the use of the same schooling institutions for those at the primary level using the Serbian and Kosovar curriculums, while also allowing for integration in lessons such as Physical Education so that there is more mixing between the communities. Moreover, they have agreed with MEST that they would use the curriculum of the Republic of Serbia until a time that the Republic of Kosovo's curriculum is more suitable for use by minority communities.

The current situation is highly disruptive to the Gorani community's children and their ability to learn, and has been continuing for too many years, even though there has been willingness and meetings so solve the issue. Therefore it should be of the utmost priority for the current public administration officials in Dragash/Dragaš to allow the

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<sup>1</sup> Republic of Kosovo, Law on Education in the Municipalities of Kosovo, Article 12.2

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Gorani community to return to their own schools and use the curriculum that they have selected.

## V. ANNEX I

### QUESTIONNAIRE –SCHOOL RETURNS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DRAGASH/DRAGAŠ

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Kosovo in partnership with Communication with Social Development (CSD) and Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Womens' Organisation of Kosovo (NRAEWOK) on behalf of the project "Empowering Civil Society to Participate Effectively in Policy and Decision-Making Processes through Dialogue with Government Institutions", funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo supported the establishment of the **GORA Community Network**. The Gorani Community network is the first such structure to bring together all CSOs from the Gorani community to advocate for issues that are important for the community. Considering that the Gorani community is one of the most marginalised minority communities in Kosovo, this is a major development in terms of their ability to lobby and advocate for their issues. One of the activities of the Network is to conduct a research on the school returns in the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš.

Thus, we would kindly ask you to spend five (5) minutes of your time to fulfil this questionnaire.

Thank you for your support!

#### Questions

1. In which Municipality do you live?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What language/languages do you speak?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the age range of the students who are most affected by having to travel to attend school every day?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How far do the students have to travel to school every day?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What method of transport do they most commonly use?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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6. How long does this journey take them, on average, every day?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. On average, how much does it cost you, every day, to travel to school?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you think that the travel is physically fatiguing the students before going to school?

YES

NO

9. Do you feel that having to travel to school is disrupting to the students level of learning during the day?

- I. Not at all;
- II. It disrupts a bit;
- III. It disrupts a lot;
- IV. It disrupts entirely.

Please explain how the travel most affects them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you think that the return to school is legally based?

YES

NO

Please explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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11. What do you think is the best way to legally resolve this issue?

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12. Do you think that community leaders, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, should do more to legally overcome the return?

YES

NO

13. Do you think that these problems will be resolved soon?

YES

NO

Please, explain your answer.

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