

Štrpce/Shtërpçë

April 2008

1. Area and Population

- Štrpce/Shtërpçë Municipality is located in the southern part of Kosovo bordering with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to the south. It is a Kosovo Serb majority municipality, consisting of 16 villages. Municipal roads are generally not in good condition. The majority of villages have water supply system but the quality of water is poor because of contamination caused by old and damaged sewage system. Electrical network is in a very poor condition and its upgrading is a major priority. Over the past couple of years, the municipality has been facing constant power cuts.

- The total population is estimated at around 13,600; approximately 9,100 Kosovo Serbs, 4,500 Kosovo Albanians and 37 Roma. Yet, the accurate picture of the population is always difficult to obtain since some Kosovo Serbs are leaving the Municipality while very few have returned.

There are a significant number of Kosovo Serb IDPs living in the Municipality estimated between 700 and 1,000. Many of them are accommodated in the collective centres in Brezovica/Brezovicë while the rest in private houses. [Source: Serbian Red Cross]

2. Governing Structures

• Legislative

The Municipal Assembly has 17 members. After the non-certification of the 2007 election results due to Kosovo Serb non-participation, the Special Representative of the Secretary General issued Executive Decision No. 2007/64 appointing 12 Kosovo Serbs, five Kosovo Albanians and a Kosovo Serb Mayor. All Kosovo Serb appointees, including the Mayor, are the same representatives that held seats in the previous Municipal Assembly elected in October 2002; the Kosovo Albanian appointees were selected based on 2007 municipal election results. Ten members (eight Kosovo Serb and two Kosovo Albanian) and the Mayor took the solemn oath within the legal deadline, while it is up to the Special Representative of the Secretary General to replace the remaining seven members who have failed to take the oath within the deadline.

• Executive

Štrpce/Shtërpçë Municipal Civil Service has not yet undergone restructuring in order to be in compliance with the UNMIK Reg. 2007/30. The work force remains multi-ethnic with particular attention to the ethnic balance among the senior municipal posts. Certain sections of the parallel Serbian administration are fully operational playing a significant role in the municipality.

• Judiciary

Since its establishment in 2004, the Court in Štrpce/Shtërpçë acts as a sub branch of the Ferizaj/Uroševac Municipal Court. In addition, there is a Minor Offences Court of Štrpce/Shtërpçë with two judges (Kosovo Albanian). The Municipal Court, which opened in 2004, remains with only one judge (Kosovo Albanian) since 2005, as no Kosovo Serb has applied to fill a vacant position. According to the Representative (President) of the Municipal Court in Štrpce/Shtërpçë K/S and K/Roma have access to the court system and all the cases belonging to them are finished according to the law.

• Security Presence

The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality is comprised of 56 officers; 45 Kosovo Serbs and 11 Kosovo Albanians. There are seven female officers (Kosovo Serb). The police station was handed over to the KPS in March 2003, and currently two UNMIK Police officers monitor the work of the KPS. As to the international military presence, Ukrainian KFOR is in charge of the area especially controlling the access to the Kosovo Serb area.

3. Political Overview

There are four major Kosovo Serb-supported political parties: Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Democratic Party (DS) and Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), all of which are based in Serbia proper. Kosovo Serbs boycotted the 2007 Kosovo general elections. The Kosovo Albanians voted, electing a Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) Mayor and 11 members in the Municipal Assembly. Besides PDK, Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Democratic League of Dardania (LDD) and Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) also won seats in the Municipal Assembly. However, the election results were not certified by the Special Representative of the Secretary General but appointment were in Executive Decision No. 2007/64 in order to preserve ethnic balance in the Municipal Assembly.

4. Economy

Štrpce/Shtërpçë is a rural and agricultural area with high unemployment. Many Kosovo Serbs worked in neighbouring municipalities, but not since 1999 conflict. Today, most of the local businesses are small and medium enterprises including 10 small socially-owned ones. The municipality is famous for the ski resort in Brezovica/Brezovicë and the Šara National Park - the only national park in Kosovo extending over 4 municipalities - with more than 60% of its area is located in Štrpce/Shtërpçë.

5. Public Services

• Health

The health care system in the municipality consists of the Health Centre in Štrpce/Shtërpçë town and seven health sub stations and outpatient departments in the villages. The Centre has approximately 300 employees paid by the Serbian Ministry of Health. The access to the primary health care in the Kosovo Serb inhabited villages is good. However, serious cases are transferred to Gračanica/Gračanicë, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North and to Serbia proper. For the Kosovo Albanian side, in addition to the ambulanta in the Kosovo Albanian village of Brod operating with five Kosovo Albanian staff in the afternoon, there is an ambulanta available in the ethnically mixed village of Drajkovce/Drajkovc. The latter works in the morning hours, with 11 Kosovo Albanian and eight Kosovo Serb staff. Lately, there is an increasing trend of Kosovo Albanians visiting the main Health Centre in Štrpce/Shtërpçë town. [Source: Chief of Sector of the Municipal Department of Health]

• Education

There are six primary schools with 15 buildings throughout the municipality; eight Kosovo Serb with 1,129 students and seven Kosovo Albanian with 729 students, and two secondary schools; one Kosovo Serb with 547 students and one Kosovo Albanian with 135 students. In total, 153 Kosovo Serb and 66 Kosovo Albanian employees work in the education sector. The Kosovo Serb employees have been receiving their salaries from Belgrade. They denounced payment from the Provisional Institutions of Self Government in March 2005. While in Kosovo Serb part most of the teachers possess university degrees, it is not always the case with the Kosovo Albanian teachers and it impacts the quality of education. Due to the lack of freedom of movement, Kosovo Serb youth has difficulties to attend university. [Source: Municipal Director of Education]

6. Map of the Region

