

Štrpce/Shtërpçë

September 2009

1. Area and population

Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality is located in the southern part of Kosovo, bordering the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to the south. It is a Kosovo Serb majority municipality, consisting of 16 villages. The majority of villages have a water supply system but the quality of water is poor due to contamination caused by an old and damaged sewage system. The electrical network is also in very poor condition. Over the past few years, the municipality has been facing constant power cuts. Municipal road infrastructure has, nonetheless, improved during 2008 and 2009. The total population is estimated at around 13,600; approximately 9,100 Kosovo Serbs, 4,500 Kosovo Albanians and 37 Kosovo Roma. Yet, an accurate picture of the population is difficult to obtain due to departures by the Kosovo Serb community. There are an estimated 700-1,000 Kosovo Serb displaced persons living in the municipality. Many of them are accommodated in the collective centres in Brezovica/Brezovicë. [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 UN Special Representative of the Secretary General issued Executive Decision No. 2007/64 appointing 12 Kosovo Serbs, five Kosovo Albanians to the municipal assembly and a Kosovo Serb as a mayor. The same executive decision was afterwards extended by the Kosovo prime minister. 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. Replacement of the remaining seven members, who failed to take the oath within the deadline, has not happened.¹ The municipal assembly has been entirely inactive since January 2008.

• Executive

The mayor is Mr. Stanko Jakovljević, member of Democratic Party (DS). The deputy mayor, Mr. Ali Halimi, represents Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), while the deputy mayor for communities, Mr. Aleksandar Janičević, represents the Movement for Kosovo and Metohija (PKM). The six municipal departments are as follows: education, culture, youth and sport; health and social welfare; administration and personnel; economy, finance, agriculture and forestry; urbanism, planning, reconstruction, development and public services; and geodesy, cadastre and property. There are three Kosovo Serb directors and three Kosovo Albanian directors. After the collective resignation of Kosovo Serb civil servants during 2008, the municipality conducted employment actions and restored the foreseen figures of staff in the civil service. 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 and play 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 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 of the municipal court, Kosovo Serbs and Roma have full access to the court system.

• Security presence

The Kosovo police in Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality is comprised of 56 officers: 45 Kosovo Serbs and 11 Kosovo Albanians. There are seven female officers (Kosovo Serb). Currently EULEX police officers monitor the work of the Kosovo police. As to the international military presence, Ukrainian KFOR is in charge of the area, especially of controlling the access to the Kosovo Serb area.

¹ According to Central Elections Commission, the replacement of these members is currently not possible due to lack of official results and political parties candidates lists from the 2002 municipal elections.

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 the appointments of the municipal assembly members were made through the 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 before the 1999 conflict. Today, most of the local businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises; there are also ten small socially-owned enterprises. The municipality is known for the ski resort in Brezovica/Brezovicë and the Šara/Shar National Park - the only national park in Kosovo extending over 4 municipalities - with more than 60 per cent 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 health system. 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 outside Kosovo. For the Kosovo Albanian side, in addition to the health care unit in the Kosovo Albanian village of Brod operating with five Kosovo Albanian staff in the afternoon, there is an health care unit in the ethnically-mixed village of Drajkovce/Drajkovc. The latter works in the morning hours, with eleven Kosovo Albanian and eight Kosovo Serb staff. [Source: municipal department of health]

• Education

There are six primary schools with 17 buildings throughout the municipality; nine Kosovo Serb with 1,668 students and eight Kosovo Albanian with 853 students, and two secondary schools; one Kosovo Serb with 547 students and one Kosovo Albanian with 140 students. In total, 146 Kosovo Serb and 91 Kosovo Albanian employees work in the education sector. The Kosovo Serb employees have been receiving their salaries from Belgrade. While in Kosovo Serb parts 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 have difficulties attending university. [Source: municipal director of education]

6. Map of the region

