



## **Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011 was an important, yet sensitive operation. Although it provides a wealth of relevant information, the exclusion of northern Kosovo and the partial boycott by Serb and Roma communities in southern Kosovo have jeopardized the comprehensiveness of its results. For these and further reasons, the census results have raised a series of questions and concerns.

In particular, minority communities' representatives have expressed dissatisfaction with the census results, which establish a significantly lower proportion of minority communities than previously estimated (7% against around 10-12%). Minority population statistics are significant in Kosovo, not least because a series of community rights and provisions are linked to them. They can potentially impact budget allocation in planning processes or open up a debate on provisions regarding representation in political institutions, civil service and other areas of public life in Kosovo.

ECMI Kosovo has conducted a preliminary assessment of the census data on minority communities, comparing them with previous estimates made by ECMI Kosovo and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo in 2010 and 2011, as well as electoral participation data. Although the latter sources of information cannot be considered to be fully accurate, discrepancies with census results pose various questions.

Based on this assessment, ECMI Kosovo makes the following recommendations:

- Always include a footnote when making reference to the Kosovo 2011 census results, specifying that northern Kosovo was excluded and that there was a partial boycott by the Serb and Roma communities, as is the standard practice with the 1991 census;
- Avoid relying exclusively on census results concerning the Serb and Roma communities for planning or decision-making purposes (including for southern Kosovo), as they cannot be considered to be representative due to the exclusion of northern Kosovo and the partial boycott in southern Kosovo;
- Use census results concerning other non-majority communities in Kosovo with caution;
- Conduct further analysis on the validity and accuracy of census results for all non-majority communities in Kosovo in order to avoid uncertainty and dissatisfaction among these communities, which may ultimately affect perceptions and attitudes towards institutions in Kosovo; and
- Include Croats and Montenegrins as separate ethnic groups in the next census.

## **Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

In April 2011, the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) conducted the “first internationally recognized census”<sup>1</sup> in Kosovo since 1981.<sup>A</sup> The official results of the census, monitored by the International Monitoring Operation (IMO), were published in September 2012. The IMO concluded that the census had been conducted in a “relatively successful manner” and resulted in “figures that can be relied on,”<sup>2</sup> highlighting however that the results did not cover northern Kosovo. Indeed, while the census makes a wealth of vital information available, its data have also raised a series of questions, particularly regarding their validity and accuracy for minority communities.

This policy brief aims to provide an analysis of the census results and their implications for minority communities. After a brief background section on the 2011 Kosovo census, some of the potential implications of minority population statistics are discussed. This is followed by an overview of census results on the population’s ethnic background, an assessment of these results and factors that may explain discrepancies with previous estimates. Finally, a series of conclusions and recommendations are provided. The policy brief is based on an analysis of the 2011 census results, previous 2010/2011 estimates made in the framework of ECMI Kosovo’s Ethno-Political Map<sup>B</sup> and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo’s Municipal Profiles,<sup>C</sup> as well as perceptions from minority community representatives communicated informally to ECMI Kosovo.

### **Background: The Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011**

Population censuses are key statistical tools to collect information on a wide range of characteristics of a country’s population, ranging from its size, ethnic/cultural background, household and gender structure to information on areas such as education and employment. Crucially, results can be used by policy-makers, researchers and other actors for informed and strategic planning and decision-making.<sup>3</sup> In Kosovo’s complex context, where the last reliable census was conducted in 1981 and major demographic changes have since taken place, the census was a particularly important and sensitive operation.

The Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011 was conducted between 1 and 19 April 2011 by nearly 5,000 enumerators dispatched by the KAS.<sup>4</sup> To ensure compliance with international standards, the census’ preparations, enumeration, and result analysis were monitored by an International Monitoring Operation (IMO) established in 2006, comprising representatives of the international statistical community.<sup>D</sup> Preliminary data were published in June 2012, and the final results in September 2012.<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasized that these only cover 34 of the 38 census areas: in the predominantly Serb-inhabited northern municipalities (Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zveçan, Leposavić/Leposaviq) and northern Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, there was insufficient cooperation from the local leaders and population to allow the census to proceed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> The census conducted in 1991 was largely boycotted by the Kosovo Albanian population.

<sup>B</sup> Estimates were based on interviews with municipal officials, in particular from the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return (MOCRs). Data was cross-checked with information from civil society organizations (CSOs) and OSCE data.

<sup>C</sup> Estimates were primarily based on information provided by MOCRs, municipal information officers, municipal websites, etc.

<sup>D</sup> These included the European Commission (EC), Council of Europe (CoE), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD). See endnote n. 2.

## **The Census’ Relevance for Minority Communities: Figures, Legislation & Policy**

In Kosovo, the 2011 census data on the population’s “ethnic/cultural background” was a particularly sensitive issue, and minority communities’ representatives have expressed dissatisfaction with the results to ECMI Kosovo.<sup>E</sup> The census establishes a significantly lower proportion of non-majority communities in Kosovo (7%), as compared to previous estimates of around 10-12% (including northern Kosovo), a situation which could potentially have an impact on budget allocation in planning processes or open up a debate on provisions on representation in political institutions (e.g. reserved seats), civil service and higher education. It is thus relevant to assess potential practical implications of minority population statistics in Kosovo.

Minority population statistics are of particular relevance in Kosovo since a series of community rights and provisions are linked to them. For instance, according to the *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo* (art. 62) and the *Law on Local Self-Government* (art. 54), in municipalities where at least 10% of the residents belong to non-majority communities, the position of Deputy Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly (MA) for Communities must be reserved for a representative of these communities. Similarly, if such condition is met, there shall also be a Deputy Mayor for Communities (art. 61 of the *Law on Local Self-Government*).

In some municipalities, the significant changes in figures may result in non-majority communities not amounting to the required 10% anymore, at least according to census data. For instance, according to previous estimates made by ECMI Kosovo and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, in Obiliq/Obilić municipality, non-Albanian communities comprised around 11-18% of the municipality’s total population. According to census figures, on the other hand, they amount to approximately 7-8%, i.e. below the legal threshold to appoint a Chairperson of the MA for Communities and a Deputy Mayor for Communities.

The *Law on the Civil Service of the Republic of Kosovo* also contains similar provisions: according to article 11(3), a minimum of 10% of civil service positions in central level institutions should be reserved to non-majority communities members. At the municipal level, the number of reserved positions shall be placed “in compliance with percentage representation of the communities in the given Municipality.” As a result, the changes in minority population data could potentially have an impact on this area. For example, according to previous estimations, the Turkish community in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality made up around 6-7% of the population, while according to the census data, they amount to around 2%.

Further provisions linked to minority population statistics are contained in the *Law on the Use of Languages*: among others, languages other than the official languages (i.e. Albanian or Serbian) shall have the status of an official language and be in equal use with the official languages in municipalities where 5% of the total population of the municipality has that language as mother tongue (art. 2).<sup>F</sup> Finally, it should be mentioned that there are reserved places for minority members at Kosovo universities.

### **Census Results on the Population’s Ethnic or Cultural Background**

As a basis for further analysis, the following table shows an overview of the census results on the Kosovo population by ethnic/cultural background, to which percentages have been added:

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<sup>E</sup> ECMI Kosovo is continuously in contact with minority representatives. In addition, the issue of the 2011 census results was brought up on various occasions throughout a series of debates organized by ECMI Kosovo in October and November 2012.

<sup>F</sup> It should be noted that Prizren has an exceptional status; Turkish has the status of an official language regardless of this provision. See *Law on the Use of Languages*. In addition, a language other than Albanian and Serbian shall have the “status of a language in official use” in municipalities where 1) the community using that language as a mother tongue represents above 3% of the municipality’s total population, or 2) that language has been traditionally spoken in the municipality (see art. 2 of the *Law on the Use of Languages*).

2011 OFFICIAL CENSUS RESULTS BY ETHNIC OR CULTURAL BACKGROUND <sup>67</sup>									
	Albanian	Serb	Bosniak	Turk	Roma	Ashkali	Egyptian	Gorani	Other
Figures	1,616,869	25,532	27,533	18,738	8,824	15,436	11,524	10,265	2,352
%	92.9%	1.5%	1.6%	1.1%	0.5%	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	0.1%
%	92.9%	7%							
Total population	1,739,825								

As can be seen, according to the data provided by the census, the total Kosovo population amounts to 1,739,825. The largest ethnic group are Albanians, amounting to 1,616,869 or 92.9% of the total population. The second and third largest ethnic groups are, respectively, Bosniaks, with 27,533 inhabitants (1.6%), and Serbs (1.5%), with 25,532 inhabitants. They are followed by Turks (18,738 or 1.1%), Ashkali (15,436 or 0.9%) and Egyptians (11,524 or 0.7%). Finally, Roma and Gorani, with 8,824 and 10,265 inhabitants, amount to 0.5% and 0.6% of the total population. A remaining 0.1% defined themselves as pertaining to other groups. Consequently, non-Albanians make up to around 7% of the population. As discussed below, the census data for Serbs and Roma differ significantly from previous estimates,<sup>h</sup> while there are smaller, but sometimes significant, discrepancies for other non-majority communities.

### Minority Figures: Analysis & Implications

ECMI Kosovo has assessed and compared these census data with previous estimates made by ECMI Kosovo and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and electoral participation information. Although these sources of information cannot be considered to be fully accurate, some trends can be identified. This section presents the findings of this assessment, outlining potential factors explaining these trends as well as practical implications for the validity of the census results for particular communities:

**Serb community** – The exclusion of the largely Serb-inhabited northern Kosovo was the most notable problem with the census. It meant that roughly half of Kosovo’s total Serb population – estimated at around 140,000 – was not represented at all in final census data, which estimates the Serb population at 25,532. This has also affected the census figures of other minority communities living in that area, including Bosniaks and Roma.

Serbs in southern Kosovo also partially boycotted the census; they are thus also significantly underrepresented in final census results. This becomes clear when comparing census data for municipalities with voter participation in elections. For example, according to census data, there are 3,148 Serbs living in the Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality. However, in the 2010 general elections, 3,396 people voted for the Serb political party SLS; this would mean the number of voters for that party is higher than the total Serb population in this municipality.

In some municipalities, including Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Klokot/Kllokot and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (of which the two latter have been established/enlarged as a result of the decentralization process), the census data even represent a change in the ethnic balance from a Serb majority to an Albanian majority: in Klokot/ Kllokot,

<sup>g</sup> It should be noted that 0.1% preferred not to give an answer, while 0.1% was not available.

<sup>h</sup> As indicated in the introduction, all estimates referred to throughout the policy brief are those made by ECMI Kosovo’s Ethno-Political Map and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo’s Municipal Profiles.

for example, according to the census there are 1,362 Albanian and 1,177 Serb inhabitants, while previous estimates put the number of Serbs between 3,350 and 3,710 (on the other hand, previous estimates of the number of Albanians largely correspond to the census results).

**Recommendations:**

In light of the exclusion of northern Kosovo from the census and the widespread boycott in southern Kosovo, it can be unequivocally concluded that census data concerning the Serb community is not representative, including for southern municipalities. Thus, census data should not be used for planning and policy-making purposes concerning the Serb population. When referring to the 2011 census, it is also strongly recommended to always include a footnote indicating that northern Kosovo was excluded and that it was partially boycotted, as is the standard practice with the 1991 Kosovo census.

**Roma community** – The situation of the Roma community is similar to that of the Serb community; they are notably underrepresented in the census results: while according to previous estimates there were around 21,300-27,000 Roma in Kosovo, the census provides a total figure of 8,824. An example at the municipal level illustrates this situation: according to census data, there are 745 Roma inhabitants in Gračanica/Gračanicë, as compared to 1,900-2,000 from previous estimates.

This can be explained by various factors, including the exclusion of northern Kosovo and, more importantly, the fact that many Roma community members live in largely Serb-inhabited areas, such as Gračanica/Gračanicë, and have also partially boycotted the census. It should also be noted that data on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians is often not easily disaggregated; however, also the aggregated census figure for the three communities (35,784) is around 20-30% lower than that of previous estimates.

Migration trends may be a further relevant factor to explain discrepancies between earlier estimates and 2011 census results: around 10,000-12,000 Kosovo residents, including members from the Roma community, emigrate every year (overall, for each returnee, there are two residents emigrating abroad).<sup>8</sup>

**Recommendations:**

As in the case of the Serb community, due to the major discrepancies that exist between the census data and previous estimates, it appears that currently the former cannot be considered to be fully reliable for the Kosovo Roma community, including for southern Kosovo. In policy-making and planning process, it is thus recommended to also refer to other data. Further analysis is needed.

**Other minority communities** – Overall, census results concerning the remaining non-majority communities correspond more closely with previous estimates. With regard to the **Bosniak** population, however, discrepancies are still somewhat significant: the total census figure (27,533) is around 18% lower than previous OSCE estimates (33,524). The exclusion of northern Kosovo is a factor that contributes to this gap, but figures are also lower for some municipalities in southern Kosovo. For example, according to the census, there are around 16,900 Bosniaks in Prizren and 1,142 in Istog/Istok, while previous estimates provide figures of around 22,000 and 1,650, respectively. Yet figures are slightly higher in some other municipalities, such as Gjakovë/Dakovica and Ferizaj/Uroševac.

On the other hand, the figure provided by the census for the **Gorani** population (10,265) is higher than that of previous estimates (8,953). The changes in figures for Bosniaks and Gorani may potentially be linked:

despite being separate ethnic groups, each of them with a separate cultural identity and speaking different Slavic dialects, figures concerning Bosniaks and Gorani are often merged or confused.<sup>1</sup>

The total census number for **Turks** (18,738) is somewhat lower than that of previous estimates. To give an example, in Lipjan/Lipljan, the figure of Turks decreases from 400-500 to 128. However, in the 2010 general elections, the Turkish political parties KDTP and KTB received together a total of 207 votes. Although members from other communities sometimes vote for Turkish parties and other issues need to be taken into account,<sup>1</sup> this figure suggests that for this municipality the census figure may not be representative and that further analysis is needed.

With regard to the **Ashkali** community, the census data (15,436) is roughly an average of estimations made by ECMI Kosovo and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. For **Egyptians**, there are discrepancies in all data from different sources (census results, ECMI and OSCE data); it is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions. As aforementioned, this can be due to the fact that data on the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities often cannot be easily disaggregated.

Finally, it should be noted that the **Croat and Montenegrin** population was not counted separately in the 2011 census; they had the possibility of declaring themselves as “other” in the question on ethnic/cultural background. There is thus a lack of basis for comparison and analysis. After the census operation, in December 2011, the *Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo* was amended to explicitly incorporate the Croat and Montenegrin communities.

#### Recommendations:

ECMI Kosovo recommends the inclusion of Croats and Montenegrins as separate ethnic groups in the next census. With regard to the remaining minority communities, it can be concluded that, in view of the discrepancies with previous estimates and information on elections’ participation, there are a series of questions to be addressed. Further analysis on the validity and accuracy of census data for these communities, as well as on factors that may explain discrepancies or may have affected census results, is required. It is therefore recommended to use census data on minority communities with caution. Census data have certainly raised widespread criticism among minority community members in Kosovo, who perceive them as not fully reliable.

#### Further Relevant Factors

In addition to the issues described above, several further factors can explain discrepancies in population data from the census and previous sources. Crucially, thousands of people from Kosovo live permanently abroad but have residences and spend some months every year in Kosovo. The census focuses on resident population and therefore did not aim to include Kosovars living only temporarily in Kosovo in its main data; however, some of these individuals may have been counted in previous estimates, “inflating” numbers.

Members from the Roma community have also informally notified ECMI Kosovo that census enumerators visiting their households did not explicitly ask all questions in the questionnaire, including the one on ethnic background. Furthermore, despite efforts made, ECMI Kosovo is aware of informal complaints that enumerators sometimes did not speak the language of the communities they were assigned to interview

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<sup>1</sup> Both groups adhere to Islam and speak South Slavic dialects/languages, Bosnian and Gorani. However, while Bosnian has been included as a separate option for “mother tongue” in the census questionnaire, Gorani has been excluded. In the municipality of Dragash/Dragaš, where the largest Gorani community resides, 6,978 individuals have given “other” as their mother tongue.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the persistent phenomenon of election fraud in Kosovo.

and that questionnaires were only in Albanian, for instance in Plementin/Plementina. Although this does not necessarily indicate an ill intention, but most probably time pressure or lack of sufficient adequate staff, it may potentially have had some impact on the census data for minority communities.

As regards information and awareness-raising on the census, a one-month campaign was conducted, and special outreach efforts were made targeting non-majority communities,<sup>9</sup> including by ECMI Kosovo and local NGOs. However, there was criticism from civil society and minority communities that the campaign and media coverage were not sufficient. Due to the lack of understanding of the census' purpose, some individuals may have preferred not to give certain information.

### Concluding Remarks

The Kosovo census 2011 provides a wealth of information that can be used by policy-makers and other relevant actors for more informed planning and decision-making. International monitors have praised the "relative" success and the reliability of its data; however, the exclusion of northern Kosovo and the partial boycott in southern Kosovo have jeopardized the comprehensiveness of its results. Indeed, for these and further reasons, the census results have raised a series of questions and concerns, particularly with regard to data on minority communities.

Minority population statistics are of particular relevance in Kosovo, not least because a series of community rights and provisions are directly linked to them. Based on an assessment of data on minority communities it can be unequivocally concluded that census results concerning the Serb and Roma communities, including for southern Kosovo, are not representative and thus should not be relied on for planning and policy-making purposes. Instead, data from other sources should be used for these communities. Furthermore, when making reference to 2011 census results, ECMI Kosovo strongly recommends always including a footnote specifying that there has been a partial boycott, as is the standard practice with the 1991 census.

With regard to other non-majority communities in Kosovo, ECMI Kosovo believes that further analysis on the validity and accuracy of census data is needed. Since there are somewhat significant discrepancies with previous estimates and elections' participation information, it therefore recommends using census data with caution.

This issue certainly deserves attention – due to the significance and potential implications of census results, and the criticism they have raised among minority communities, ECMI Kosovo recommends conducting further analysis. Since the next Kosovo population census will not be conducted in a near future, this is vital to avoid uncertainty and dissatisfaction, which may ultimately affect perceptions and attitudes towards institutions in Kosovo.

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<sup>1</sup> See European External Action Service (EEAS), *Census data ready for use*, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2012/21082012\\_01\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/21082012_01_en.htm) (21/09/2012).

<sup>2</sup> See EEAS, *op. cit.*, and EEAS, *The International Monitoring Operation final assessment of the 2011 Kosovo Census on Population and Housing*, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press\\_corner/all\\_news/news/2012/21092012\\_02\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/press_corner/all_news/news/2012/21092012_02_en.htm) (21/09/2012).

<sup>3</sup> *Supra* n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Supra* n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Supra* n. 2; European Commission (EC), *Kosovo 2011 Progress Report* (October 2011).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See KAS, *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011. Final Results. Main data*, p. 143 (September 2012).

<sup>8</sup> See KAS, *Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011. Final Results. People on the Move: An analysis of international, national and local mobility of Kosovo people*, pp. 16-17 (September 2012).

<sup>9</sup> *Supra* n. 2 ; EC, *op. cit.*