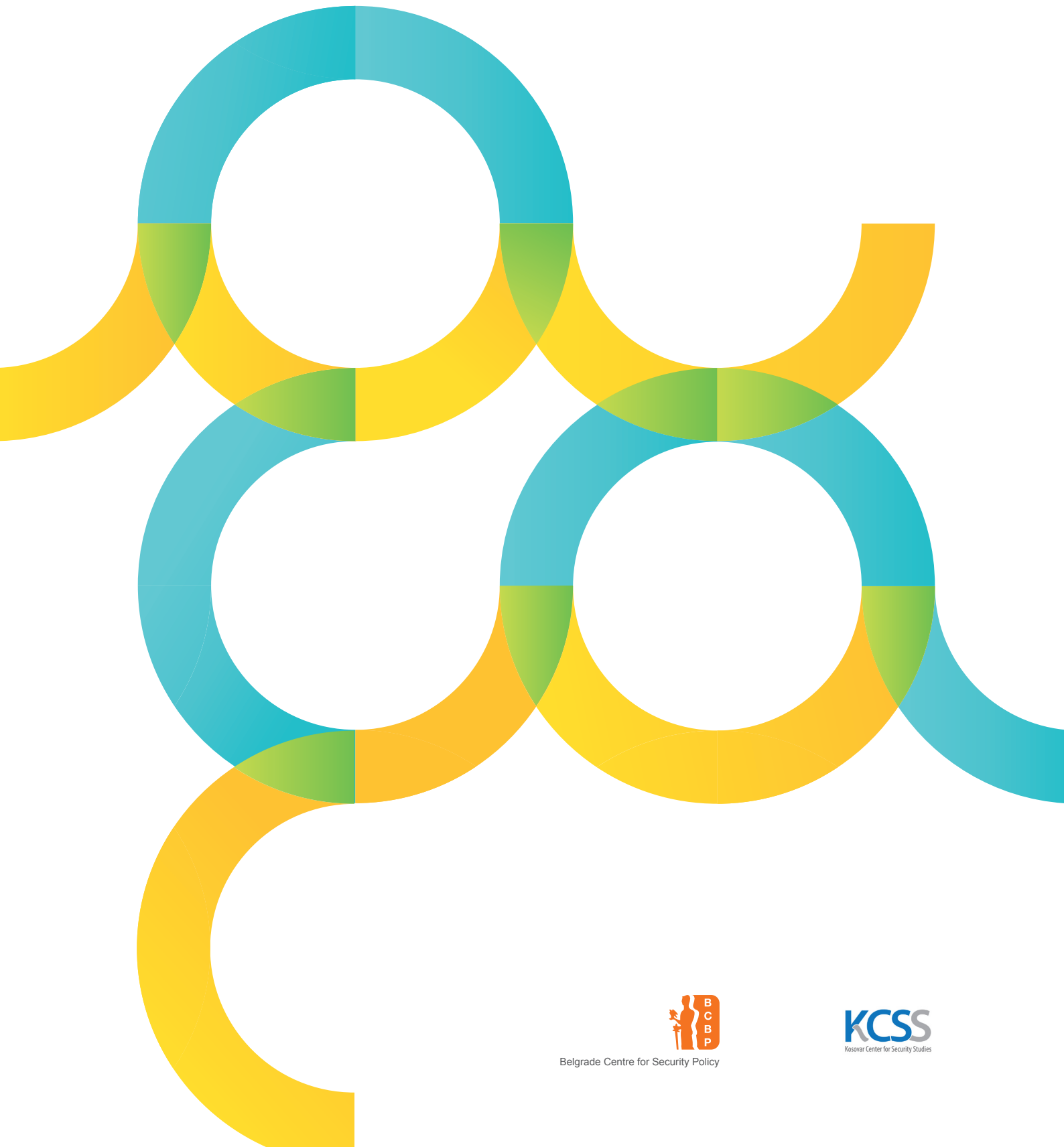


# ALBANIAN MINORITY REPRESENTATION AT THE SERBIAN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR: PROGRESS AND REMAINING CHALLENGES



Belgrade Centre for Security Policy



Kosovar Center for Security Studies

# **Albanian Minority Representation at the Serbian Ministry of Interior: Progress and Remaining Challenges**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the end of the conflict in the three southern Serbia municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja in 2001, significant progress has been made in increasing the representation of the local Albanian population in the local police, although this progress has stalled lately. Following the end of the 2001 conflict, interest in joining the police force among the Albanian ethnic minority in the three municipalities increased significantly. Due to the success of multi-ethnic policing in the aftermath of the conflict, Albanians trust the police more than they trust any other security institution in Serbia, more in fact than do the ethnic majority Serbs. The region's residents trust the police to a much greater extent than do citizens in the rest of the country. While 33% of Albanian respondents stated that they trust the police, only 19% of respondents nationally share this opinion [BCSP 2013]. The Albanian minority's main motivation for joining the police is in order to find employment.

However, additional work is needed, as Albanians are still under-represented in police structures. So far the greatest success has been achieved in the increase in Albanian minority representation among rank-and-file officers in the police units in Preševo and Bujanovac. 50.4% of police officers in Preševo are Albanian in comparison to 89% of the population, while the respective numbers in Bujanovac are 35% versus 55% and Medvedja's figures are 5% and 26% [Halimi 2014]. Yet, among the higher ranks, representation of this ethnic minority remains even lower. Albanian representation is virtually non-existent in regional police structures, with only one ethnic Albanian police officer working at Vranje's District Police Directorate.

There are three sets of challenges to Albanian representation in the police. The first is related to the lack of political will by the Serbian authorities to work towards full integration of the Albanian minority at all levels of the public structure. This is evidenced by the slow progress made towards recognis-

ing diplomas issued by Kosovo's universities (where most Albanian police officers are educated) and practical limitations on the use of the Albanian language in the predominantly Albanian inhabited municipalities. The second set of challenges is related to inadequate internalisation of diversity policy by the police, evidenced by inadequate access to police education and difficulties in integration with the environment. Full and consistent integration of Albanian ethnic minorities into the police in the three southern Serbia municipalities is further challenged by the third set of challenges, related to the prejudice against the Albanian ethnic minority which is encountered in Serbia. One of the main recommendations, therefore, is to ensure sustainable inclusion of the Albanian minority into the Serbian police by ensuring that they are represented at a level which reflects their proportion of the population.

## INTRODUCTION

The initial intention of this paper was to evaluate the representation of the Albanian ethnic minority in all Serbian security institutions, including the police, the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) and the Gendarmerie. However, review of the literature and relevant documents showed that representation of the Albanian ethnic minority in the military and Gendarmerie is non-existent, thus the focus of this paper is now solely on representation in the police. The Albanian ethnic minority in Serbia is territorially concentrated in three municipalities in southern Serbia: Preševo, Medvedja and Bujanovac, so this paper will direct special attention towards assessing the level of Albanian representation in the police units in these three municipalities. Recommendations for the authorities at the central level, aimed at further improvements in representation of the Albanian minority in the Serbian Police, will be provided. The review of integration was carried out in relation to internationally recognised standards related to: the adoption of clear security policies for promoting the integration of minorities at the national and local levels; rec-

ognition by state authorities and the police of the importance of policing to promoting good inter-ethnic relations; development of action plans to implement these policies as well as monitoring their implementation on a regular basis; composition of the police at the local, regional and national levels, including senior and junior ranks, and recognition that the makeup of civilian personnel should reflect the diversity of the population [OSCE 2006: 4]. Also, the solution of operational issues such as the use of language and education, training and professional development has reached a standstill despite recommendations to address them accordingly. This research has found that, apart from the numerical increase in ethnic Albanian police officers at police stations in the three municipalities, further progress in ensuring sustainable minority inclusion, the use of language, career development and equal opportunities for promotion has not been fully ensured.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper has been prepared by two independent think-tanks from Prishtina and Belgrade with the aim of revealing the progress made and the challenges faced in integrating the Albanian minority into the Serbian police. We believe that it is important to provide analysis through collaboration, and thus critically access and verify evidence based on the interest of the audience in both Kosovo and Serbia. In drafting this policy paper, the authors carried out desk research and conducted 20 interviews with interlocutors based in Belgrade, Preševo, Bujanovac and Vranje in late February and early March 2014. Interviews were carried out with representatives of Serbian state authorities and civil society organisations, as well as six ethnic Albanian police officers from Bujanovac and Preševo. It should be noted that the researchers had difficulty obtaining current statistical data on ethnic representation from the Ministry of Interior on the grounds that employees are not

asked to reveal their nationality.<sup>1</sup> Thus, statistics on Albanian representation in the Serbian police were collected from the Albanian Minority Council and other actors at the local level in the respective municipalities.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### *International Mechanisms*

Participation of persons belonging to ethnic minorities in the public affairs of the state in which they live is crucial for protecting their rights and preventing social exclusion. Such participation is therefore guaranteed by instruments provided by the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU).<sup>2</sup> The core human rights instruments protect minority rights, first of all, through the general principle of non-discrimination, which constitutes the necessary basis for minority protection. However, a non-discrimination clause obliging states to abolish all discriminatory laws and measures and thus refrain from actively discriminating against certain groups is not sufficient

<sup>1</sup> Serbian Ministry of Interior, Minister's Cabinet, Bureau for Information of Public Importance, 01 no. 1586/14, "Taking into account that the legal and constitutional framework does not oblige anyone to declare their nationality, the Ministry has not collected data on its employees' ethnicity", 21 February 2014

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Article 2 of the *United Nations Minorities Declaration* of 1992 provides for the right of persons belonging to minorities to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life, as well as in decision-making at the national and regional levels in matters concerning the minority to which they belong. The Council of Europe's 1995 *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* strengthens this provision by obliging parties to 'create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.' Article 2 of the *Treaty on the European Union* declares respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as one of the Union's fundamental values. The EU's commitment to minority rights has since progressed through the inclusion of the principle of non-discrimination in the *Amsterdam Treaty* of 1997, the establishment of the Human Rights and Democracy Committee in 1999 and the adoption of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* in 2000.

to secure substantial equality. Thus, state authorities must undertake positive actions, i.e. 'affirmative action,' which favour a minority group, with the aim of eliminating the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The need for affirmative action becomes particularly urgent in societies which have been stricken by ethnic conflicts in the recent past. In such societies, re-building trust between the different ethnic groups is impossible without including national minorities in public affairs and decision-making processes.

### *The Serbian Legal Context*

An overview of international mechanisms for minority inclusion and the Serbian legal framework shows that Serbian legislation for protection of minorities complies with international standards to a satisfactory level, especially since the adoption of the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in 2009 [Official Gazette of RS No. 22/2009]. The non-discrimination clause has been incorporated into all major laws, including the constitution, and there appears to be no legal barrier to members of national minorities obtaining employment and developing their careers in public sector institutions. However, the situation is less satisfactory in regards to affirmative action measures. Policy measures aimed at ensuring full and effective equality have been envisaged by several laws, but not necessarily those laws which regulate the work of the security sector. The inclusion of such provisions in security sector legislation is not obligatory, but could demonstrate a willingness to deal with the legacy of conflicts during which some ethnic minorities were excluded from security institutions. Western Balkan security sector institutions were directly involved in the recent ethnic conflicts, and as such are regarded particularly negatively by members of ethnic minorities.

In Serbia, representation of minorities in public institutions is guaranteed by the constitution. While Article 21 of the constitution contains a general non-discrimination clause,

there is also whole section [Articles 75–81] dedicated to the protection of national minorities [National Assembly of the RS 2006]. Thus, Article 76 prohibits any discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and explicitly envisages affirmative action measures. Moreover, Article 53 provides that all citizens, under equal conditions, have the right to participate in government affairs and obtain positions in public institutions, while Article 77 reaffirms this principle, referring specifically to national minorities as the right holders. Finally, Article 60 stipulates that all jobs must be accessible to all citizens under the same conditions.

Besides the Constitution, provisions which protect the rights of national minorities are contained in various laws, the most important of which is the 2002 Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, which, inter alia, elaborates some of the above constitutional provisions, encouraging affirmative action by state authorities [Official Gazette of FRY No. 11/2002]. Further, Article 9 of the 2005 Law on Civil Servants stipulates that in hiring civil servants special attention should be paid to the representation of minorities in order to adequately reflect the composition of society [Official Gazette of RS No. 79/2005]. Finally, in 2009 the Serbian Parliament adopted the first comprehensive anti-discrimination law, introducing a new institutional mechanism – the Commissioner for Protection of Equality – an independent body with a mandate to prevent all forms of discrimination and oversee the implementation of anti-discrimination regulations [Official Gazette of RS No. 22/2009].

In regards to the security sector in Serbia, the conditions and criteria for employment are set out in the laws which regulate security sector institutions: the 2005 Police Law, the 2007 Defence Law, the 2007 Law on the Military and the 2002 Law on the Security-Information Agency. The provisions contained in these laws are neutral in regards to ethnicity, meaning that the conditions and criteria of employment apply equally to all citizens, regardless of whether they belong to an ethnic minority or the majority [Bjeloš 2012: 253].

The laws regulating security institutions do not specifically require nor encourage proportional representation of national minorities in the security sector [Ibid].

Nevertheless, in 2011 the Commissioner for Protection of Equality, in accordance with her statutory mandate to recommend certain measures for advancing equality to the public authorities, recommended that the Ministry of Interior (Moi) take appropriate measures to ensure that the composition of district police units corresponds to the ethnic composition of the areas policed (Commissioner for Protection of Equality 312/2011). The Commissioner was acting on a complaint against the Moi for alleged discrimination against members of the Bosniak national minority who had acquired their diplomas in Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Commissioner's opinion was that the Moi had not discriminated against the Bosniaks, but that there still was room for improvement regarding representation of the Bosniak minority in the police. Although this case was specifically about the Bosniak minority, the Commissioner's recommendation (312/2011) presented more general instructions aimed at improving representation of national minorities in the police, proposing measures to ensure that the number of individuals belonging to each national minorities educated at police schools is proportional to their presence in the population as a whole and other measures to secure equal access to police jobs for graduates who belong to national minorities [Ibid].

## REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN THE SECURITY SECTOR IN SERBIA

According to Serbia's 2011 population census, ethnic minorities comprise around 16% of the total population [Statistical Office of the RS 2011]. Although some data on the representation of national minorities in certain public institutions exists, there is no comprehensive record of the representation of all national minorities across the whole of public admin-

istration, nor is there a comprehensive record for any particular national minority [Bjeloš 2012: 254]. It is virtually impossible, therefore, to determine whether and to what extent the Serbian Government complies with the constitutional and other legal provisions discussed above [Ibid].

In 2008 and 2012, the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy published reports on the representation of minorities in the security sector [Hadžić et al. 2012; Hadžić & Stojanović-Gajić 2012]. The overarching conclusion in 2012 was that the situation had improved slightly since 2008, but that, despite a satisfactory legal framework, minorities were still under-represented in the Serbian security sector [Bjeloš, 2012]. When asked in February 2014 for data on the representation of national minorities, the Moi claimed that they did not keep records of the ethnicity of their employees. However, at a conference organised by BCSP and KCSS on 27 June 2014, an Moi representative provided figures indicating that ethnic representation within the police is monitored. However, the authors are unable to assess whether definite progress in national minority inclusion has yet been achieved.

According to BCSP's 2010 data [Bjeloš 2012: 255-260], the state institution with the highest representation of national minorities is the Customs Administration with 13.5%. In second place is the National Assembly with 12.4%, while national minorities comprise 12% of Ministry of Defence employees [although the figure for the Serbian Military is only 6%] and 9.22 % in the Ministry of Interior. Only 5% of employees in the Security Information Agency do not belong to the majority nation. Not surprisingly, the representation of national minorities in decision-making and command positions within Serbian security institutions is even lower than their proportion of public sector employees as a whole [Ibid: 255]. The under-representation of certain national minorities in public sector institutions in multi-ethnic towns and municipalities in Serbia is particularly striking. For example, in Novi Pazar, Bosniaks make up more

than 70% of the population but only 20% of the police [Ibid: 263-264]. The situation is equally unsatisfactory in some municipalities in Vojvodina in which Hungarians constitute the majority but constitute less than 20% of the local police forces [Ibid: 264]. The Albanian national minority is among the best represented in the police due to the specific positive measures which have been taken in recent years.

### ALBANIAN ETHNIC MINORITY REPRESENTATION IN THE SERBIAN POLICE: MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The inclusion of minorities in the security sector is hugely important for the democratisation of society. Participation by minorities in security institutions and decision making is crucial for the protection of their social rights and to avoid potential exclusion. Improving the inclusion of minorities in the security sector make these institutions more representative, increases citizens' trust and improves the functioning of the institutions. In addition, it increases cooperation between citizens and the police in combating negative phenomena and improves safety for all citizens.

Turning specifically to minority inclusion in the police, achieving the necessary qualitative and quantitative representation contributes substantially to improved inter-ethnic relations and increases the operational effectiveness of the police. However, the inclusion of minorities in the police is frequently a

complicated issue, as has been the case with representation of the ethnic Albanian minority in the three municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja in southern Serbia.

Due to a boycott of Serbia's 2011 nationwide census by the Albanian minority, there is a lack of reliable data which can provide an accurate picture of the size of this community. Therefore, to avoid any false impressions regarding the ethnic composition of these municipalities which might be caused by using the demographic data from the 2011 Census, this policy brief will use the more accurate data (especially in the case of Albanian residents) from the 2002 census. To give an idea of the false picture provided by the 2011 census, it claims that there are 416 ethnic Albanians and 2,294 Serbs in Preševo, 224 Albanians and 12,989 Serbs in Bujanovac and 527 Albanians and 6,429 Serbs in Medvedja [Population by Ethnicity 2011]. In contrast, according to the 2002 census, the Albanian minority accounts for a total of around 116,000 residents in the three municipalities, including those residing abroad who amount to 27,000 of the total [Population Census, 2002]. In percentage terms, Albanians comprise the majority in Preševo and Bujanovac municipalities, with 89% and 55% respectively. In Medvedja municipality they amount to 26% of the total population [Ibid].

Until the 1999–2001 conflict, the Albanian minority was largely excluded from the social, political, economic and security sectors, and was almost unrepresented in Serbian security institutions, including police structures. More precisely, prior to the conflict a total of only 11 Albanians were serving in the Serbian Police

**Table 1. Ethnic Structure of the Population in the three Southern Serbia Municipalities, excluding those residing abroad\***

Municipality	Total		Albanians		Serbs		Other	
	Number / %	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Preševo		34,904	31,098	89	2,984	9	822	2
Bujanovac		43,302	23,681	55	14,782	34	4,839	11
Medvedja		10,760	2,816	26	7,163	67	781	7

\* The number of citizens residing abroad for more than a year was: 13,000 from Preševo, 11,000 from Bujanovac and 3,000 from Medvedja. Bujanovac Municipality Report, 24 June 2010.



[S Kamberi 2014]. However, as tensions rose during the late 1990s even these officers were either removed or were forced to leave their jobs. Since the end of the uprising in the three municipalities in 2001, significant efforts have been made to increase the representation of Albanians in the police, while little has been done to improve their representation in other security sector institutions. The most important efforts in this regard were largely made in the immediately aftermath of the conflict. Following the fall of the Milošević regime in October 2000, the Serbian Government took the first steps towards a peaceful settlement. The so called Čović Plan, developed in 2001 by then Deputy Prime Minister Nebojša Čović, foresaw among other security and economic developments the development of a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society based on democratic principles and respect for all human, political and minority rights [Stodiek 2006: 43]. With support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], the Serbian Government undertook some concrete measures to include a multi-ethnic element in police stations in Albanian populated municipalities, and particularly significant progress was made in 2001–2004. However, these were short-term efforts, as very limited progress has been made in these matters since 2005 [Dragan Popović 2014].

Between 2001 and 2004, 400 police officers, of whom 270 were Albanians and 130 Serbs, were trained to join the multi-ethnic police element [Halimi 2014]. Basic training at Mitrovo Polje lasted three months and was delivered only in the first year. This basic training was followed by 15 weeks “on-the-job” or “in-service” training with mentoring from

international police officers and a curriculum which substantially duplicated that of the OSCE Police Academy in Kosovo, adjusted to Serbian police legislation.

Interest from ethnic-Albanian citizens of southern Serbia in joining the police has been growing since the first application process for employment in a multiethnic police element was opened. It is probably the success of multi-ethnic policing in the aftermath of the conflict that has meant that Albanians now trust the police more than they trust any other security institution in Serbia, and also that they trust the police more than the Serbs do [BCSP 2013]. In general, the Albanian minority's interest in joining the Serbian police is at a satisfactory level, as also evidenced by surveys of the job preferences of high-school students [Stojanović 2008: 169]. The prospect of obtaining employment is also an important motivation for the Albanian minority for joining the police [Stojanović 2009: 2]. Ethnic Albanians comprise 50.4% of police officers in Preševo and 35% in Bujanovac, while 5% of police officers in Medvedja are Albanian [Halimi 2014]. However, the total representation of Albanians in the police in these three municipalities is still very low considering that they comprise only 25% of the total number of police officers there, while in these same municipalities Albanians comprise 65% of the total population [Halimi 2014]. Albanian representation in regional police structures is almost non-existent, with only one ethnic Albanian police officer working at the District Police Directorate in Vranje. Until 2011, there were no Albanians working for the border police, despite the fact that the border zone is populated by Albanians. Currently, five Alba-

**Table 2. Ethnic Structure in the Police in the South of Serbia – Preševo Valley\***

Municipality	Number of Staff	Albanians		Serbs		Roma	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Preševo	248	125	50.4	120	48.4	3	1.2
Bujanovac	307	107	35	198	65	2	0.65
Medvedja	142	7	5	133	93.6	2	1.4
Total	697	239	30	451	69	7	1

\* Etnička struktura stanovništva, zapošljenih i rukovodioca organa, institucija i preduzeća u opštinama Preševo, Bujanovac i Medvedja, Savet za ljudska prava, Preševo 2011/2012

nians work for the border police [S Kamberi 2014]. It remains concerning that in all cases in which police officers belonging to the Albanian minority have been released or removed from duty for any reasons, their posts have largely been filled by representatives of other communities, and replacements from their own community have not been considered.

An even more challenging task has been to create an environment which would allow representatives of the Albanian national minority to develop their career and be promoted to managerial positions. Apart from the in-service training delivered in the three municipalities in southern Serbia, very few Albanians have had the opportunity to join police education programmes in Belgrade. Of 270 ethnic Albanian police officers employed since 2001, only eight have been able to continue their training in Belgrade, while in the past 12 years only one of these officers was able to pursue training at the Academy of Criminal and Police Studies in Belgrade [B Kamberi 2014]. One other officer who took the entrance examination was disqualified due to insufficient knowledge of the Serbian language. A lack of proficiency in the Serbian language has proved to be a significant challenge to younger Albanians' career opportunities within the Serbian Police. Some affirmative action has been taken by producing promotional materials<sup>3</sup> and parts of the entrance exam for Basic Police Training in Albanian. Mentoring and language training was provided on an *ad hoc* basis to prospective ethnic Albanian officers in order to increase the number of potential candidates from a minority background who could apply for training and promotion in the Serbian police. There is thus a need for these programmes to be planned and budgeted by the Mol in cooperation with the Coordination Body for Bujanovac, Medvedja and Preševo so as to ensure the sustainability of these endeavours. They could be designed according to the model of the Serbian language courses and

internships<sup>4</sup> in central public administration which are already provided with the support of the British Embassy in Serbia [Coordination Body Activities 2013]. Police education structures in Serbia's Mol should also set a goal of working with the local community in order to attract qualified candidates for college-level police training in Belgrade.

Over the past three years, some remedial action has been taken aimed at the inclusion of minorities. In November 2011, the Mol organised promotional activities aimed at popularizing the police profession among Albanians and multi-lingual software was provided so candidates could take the entrance exam in their mother tongues. In October 2012, with the support of the OSCE, the Mol held a meeting with Serbian language teachers from Preševo, Bujanovac and Vranje to organize a Serbian language course for members of the Albanian minority to help them integrate better and pass the entrance exam. In March 2014, representatives of the Basic Police Training Centre held a seminar, in cooperation with the OSCE, for enrolling national minorities in Subotica, Vranje, Sremska Mitrovica, Belgrade, Užice, Valjevo, Bor, Požarevac and Kikinda [Arsenijević 2014]. As in the past, all these activities were carried out with external support, whereas for change to be sustainable, efforts need to be continuous and budgeted.

In order for the perspective of Albanian police officers to be included in this paper, six ethnic Albanian officers with work experience of between one and twenty years were interviewed. All the interviewed police officers stated that their experience of their initial and in-service training was very good and professional. They were treated equally with all other communities, and did not experience any form of ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, none of the interviewed police officers have experienced any problems based on ethnic profiling in the police stations where they serve. However, they expressed concern

3 [http://www.copo.edu.rs/Albanski\\_jezik-187-1](http://www.copo.edu.rs/Albanski_jezik-187-1)

4 <http://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/Koordinaciono-telo-pomaze-buducim-policajcima.sr.html>

**Table 3. Ethnic representation in police management in the three municipalities\***

Rankings	Preševo	Bujanovac	Medvedja
Chief Executive	Albanian	Serb	Serb
Commander	Serb	Serb	Serb
Deputy Commander	Albanian	Albanian	Serb
Assistant Commanders	Three Serbs; One Albanian	Four Serbs	Four Serbs

\* Interviews with police officers from Bujanovac and Preševo, 27 & 28 February 2014

that representatives of the Serbian majority are generally preferred for central leadership (Mol) and managerial positions.<sup>5</sup> Further, they noted attempts to demotivate and discourage officers of ethnic Albanian background from applying for promotion to senior managerial positions, highlighting that there is no equal treatment at the highest level of the police in these three municipalities (Police Officer 12 2014).

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FOR THE INCLUSION OF THE ALBANIAN MINORITY IN THE SERBIAN POLICE

Some of the main challenges faced by the Albanian minority community when it comes to integration into security institutions are: the lack of continuity of affirmative action by both central and local political actors; the non-recognition of the education systems in which most members of the Albanian communities pursue their studies; limitations on use of their native language in the municipalities or towns where there is a large concentration of this ethnic minority; interethnic relations between the Serbian and Albanian communities; excessive deployment of military and Gendarmerie forces in Albanian inhabited areas; and the limited territorial competence of the local police.

Another challenge is set by the fact that the competences of the local police are limited even in the territory under their jurisdiction. Gendarmerie forces are highly visible in this region, constantly patrolling the territory of Preševo Valley with heavy military equipment.

### The Political Environment

In general, civil society representatives in Belgrade consider that there is limited political will among Serbian security institutions to deal with issues of ethnic representation in the security sector. The issue of ethnic representation in the Serbian security sector has been largely absent from Serbian institutional public discourse since the immediate aftermath of the insurgency in Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja. As a result, there have so far been no publicly available official analyses of the level of representation of the ethnic Albanian minority in the Serbian security forces, including their promotion to senior positions. There is no evidence of any Mol agenda-policy targeting an increase in sustainable integration of Albanians or any other minorities into Serbia's security institutions. Many consider that when it comes to the Albanian minority, the main reason for this lack of institutional attention is the close relationship between this community and Kosovo Albanians, as well as Serbian officials' previously cultivated distrust of their colleagues of ethnic Albanian background.

This lack of prioritisation might also derive from the lack of public support for integrating Albanians into Serbian society. A recent public opinion poll on discrimination in Serbia

<sup>5</sup> Police officers preferred to remain anonymous, despite the fact that the Ministry of Interior gave them permission to conduct interviews with civil society representatives. This reluctance to speak indicates a certain amount of fear that disclosure of any discontent or irregularities within the police might result in termination of employment and/or distrust between both parties.

shows that 76% of citizens support the introduction of affirmative measures that would require employers to employ an adequate percentage of members of disadvantaged groups [Commission for Protection of Equality 2012: 23]. However, the same research shows that the highest degree of ethnic distance is towards local ethnic Albanians. More than half of respondents do not want Albanians in their family, 25% do not want to live next door to an Albanian, while one fifth feel that Albanians should not be citizens of Serbia [Ibid 2012: 26]. On the other hand, local Albanian political elites seem to make little effort to promote the issue of Albanian representation in Serbia's security structures. Some parties are interested only in local power, and as such have no interest in power at a broader, regional or national, level. These confrontations between political subjects are detrimental for Albanian citizens living in that region. In general, Albanians living in southern Serbia had high expectations of the Belgrade-Prishtina negotiations and expect concrete results which will also improve their situation. In the long term, they expect the relaxation and normalization of Belgrade-Prishtina relations, which would certainly affect Albanians living in that region [S Kamberi 2014].

### *The Legacy of War and its Psychological Effect*

The reluctance of Albanians to be part of Serbian security structures is also related to the legacy of the conflict and the segregated position of this minority, in particular under the Milošević regime. Some voices among civil society representatives have called for institutions to deal with the consequences of the past as a way of building trust in the three southern Serbian municipalities inhabited by the Albanian community. According to representatives of the Humanitarian Law Center, 15% of all officials in Serbian security institutions are suspected of committing war crimes in Kosovo or other regions in former Yugoslavia [Kostić 2014]. On the other hand, a large number of war crimes committed by

Serbian military or paramilitary forces during the 1990s are yet to be processed by the courts. If the process of providing justice is not taking place, it is extremely difficult to expect the Albanian minority to trust those security institutions [B Kamberi 2014]. Also, the first post Milošević government set out to address several issues related to the police, including its de-politicisation, de-centralisation, de-criminalisation and de-militarisation. None of this has been achieved, due to a lack of adequate policies aimed at tackling these problems [Bakić, Gajić 2006].

### *The presence of the Gendarmerie and Military Forces*

National and local authorities have divergent perceptions regarding the need for the presence of the Gendarmerie in southern Serbia. Unlike the central authorities, local authorities and civil society representatives believe that it is no longer necessary for the Gendarmerie to be present in southern Serbia [Djordje Popović 2007: 45]. The large presence of the Serbian Gendarmerie and military forces in areas with an Albanian majority has a negative psychological effect on local citizens [Dragan Popović 2014] and contributes to ethnic Albanians' persistent distrust of these two security institutions. As a result, almost no members of the Albanian minority have yet expressed any willingness to join the Serbian Military or Gendarmerie. Moreover, in a survey by the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons [SEESAC], 43% of Albanian respondents felt that the greatest threat to general security was the Serbian Gendarmerie [Stodiek 2006: 53]. The use of large contingents [of around 100 gendarmes or troops] even sometimes when local police would be able to carry out operations, has resulted in parts of the city being blocked off for significant periods of time, raising tensions and creating a sense of insecurity among citizens [Halimi 2014].

Conditions should be created which would allow Albanians to join the Gendarmerie, since

its excessive and sometimes cumbersome deployment compromises its own work and thus impacts Albanians' willingness to join it [Halimi 2014]. One so-called improvement in this regard is that human rights violations by the police and Gendarmerie have declined since 2004, but fears provoked by their excessive deployment remain systematic [B Kamberi 2014].

### *Economic factors*

Limited economic development and high unemployment is considered the main propulsive factor encouraging the Albanian minority to join the Serbian Police. The economic situation is one of the main problems which the Preševo Valley faces. The economy in this region is weak in comparison to the rest of Serbia, with an unemployment rate of 49% compared to 20.1% in the rest of Serbia [World Bank Group 2014: 2]. The highest unemployment rate is in Preševo with 56%, followed by Medvedja with 46% and Bujanovac with 43% [Stanković 2013]. The majority of the local population considers this critical economic situation to be the main negative factor influencing interethnic relations. More precisely, 95% of ethnic Albanians stated that the most important factor for improving interethnic relations is economic development, followed by political agreements with 91%. [BCSP 2013: 7]

### *Education and the use of native language*

The lack of knowledge of the Serbian language is a key problem faced by the Albanian minority when it comes to integration into the Serbian public sector. In municipalities in which the Albanian minority comprises a local majority, problems are noted with the implementation of bilingualism. Such problems are caused mainly by a lack of willingness at the central level, reflected in very limited investment in human resources [e.g. translators and lecturers] in local public institutions in these three municipalities. Despite the fact

that a branch of Subotica's Economics Faculty was opened in Bujanovac in 2011, due to the limited opportunities to access other branches of university education in the Albanian language, the majority of Albanians living in Serbia tend to study abroad and in their native language, mainly in Kosovo, Macedonia or Albania.

Furthermore, limited progress has been made when it comes to recognition of diplomas. Between 1990 and 2002, the Serbian authorities did not recognize diplomas from universities in Kosovo [Halimi 2014]. In 2002, after the peace agreement ended the insurgency, the government decided to recognise all diplomas from Kosovo. This continued until 2008, when the minister of education in Prime Minister Koštunica's government decided to cease recognition of diplomas issued in Kosovo, a decision triggered by Kosovo's declaration of independence [S Kamberi 2014]. This blocking period lasted around a year, until 2009, when the international community put pressure on the Serbian government to resolve the issue [ibid]. An agreement on reciprocal acceptance of university diplomas through certification by the European University Association [EUA] was reached on 2 July 2011 and signed on 21 November, while implementation began in February 2012 [State of Play 2014: 29]. The agreement offered a way of resolving the issue of recognition of university diplomas by detailing a procedure for recognition, which was impossible before the agreement. Yet, although this represents progress, it is not a complete solution, since it does not oblige Serbian universities and employers to accept diplomas as valid. In the meantime, in some cases in which Kosovo diplomas were accepted, the denomination "Kosovo and Metohija" was added to them [KIPRED 2013:20].

According to a report by the government of Kosovo, to date 279 applications have been approved by the European University Association [EUA], but none has been certified nor have any official acceptance letters been issued by any Serbian institution [State of Play 2014: 29]. No progress has been achieved in

this regard; moreover a step backwards was taken on 30 April 2014, when Serbia's constitutional court took the decision<sup>6</sup> to suspend recognition of Kosovo diplomas. This step is detrimental for young ethnic Albanians, since difficulties in integrating into the socio-political, economic, security and other sectors and reduced employment opportunities, let alone continuing their education in Serbia, will continue to pose a problem for their prosperity. The international community should monitor and support the progress of the agreement reached in Brussels which foresees, inter alia, the mutual recognition of diplomas which are able to pass EUA approval.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the progress made over the last decade, the Albanian minority in Serbia remains highly under-represented in security institutions. Some progress has been achieved in Albanian minority representation among rank-and-file officers in the local police in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac since the end of insurgency in these municipalities in 2001. This ethnic minority remains under-represented in higher ranking positions. The situation of the Albanian minority in Serbia is still not satisfactory when judged by European standards. The inclusion of the Albanian ethnic minority in the police in the three municipalities where they live has resulted in an increase in trust towards the Police there. However, bearing in mind that the date for starting negotiations for EU integration has already passed (21 January 2014), the Serbian government must demonstrate more determination to achieve minority inclusion in order to make the progress required in this area.

More precisely, based on the findings elaborated in this report, it is recommended that

the Serbian government and the local institutions there take some concrete steps aimed at integration of the local Albanian minority into the Serbian Police:

1. The Ministry of Interior should set a clear policy to promote integration of the Albanian minority in all branches and at all ranks of the police. One measure they could take is to develop an increased partnership with the Coordination Body for PBM, increase the budget and provide mentoring and language training for ethnic Albanian officers, which could contribute to increasing the number of individuals from this minority group potentially interested in applying for career development opportunities and promotion within the Serbian police. The programme could be delivered by the Mol in cooperation with the Coordination Body for Bujanovac, Medvedja and Preševo, based on the model of the Serbian language courses and internships in central public administration already provided with the support of British Embassy to Serbia.
2. Cooperation between state/central institutions and local authorities must be improved in order to ensure more sustainable representation of the ethnic Albanian minority in Serbia's security institutions. Police education structures in Serbia's Mol should also set a goal of working with the local community in order to attract qualified candidates to college-level police training in Belgrade.
3. Recognition of Kosovo issued university diplomas should take place as soon as possible. There is a need to devise mitigation policies in this direction because the process consumes time and money.
4. In order to create a friendlier environment and progressively contribute to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja and to create a sense of security among the Albanian minority which

<sup>6</sup> Nešić Milan, Odluka o neustavnosti diploma ozbiljan test, Radio Slobodna Evropa, link: <http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/content/odluka-o-neustavnosti-diploma-ozbiljan-test/25377887.html> 8 May 2014 Accessed on 21 July 2014

lives there, there is a need for drastic reduction of deployment of the military and Gendarmerie as soon as possible. Their presence does not reflect the security situation on the ground, while the negative reputation they have developed over the past two decades has created an unsettled environment for the Albanian minority. The tensions and dissatisfaction created among the Albanians in the region would also improve if the Gendarmerie's current practices, which intimidate law-abiding citizens, were altered.

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## ABOUT ORGANISATIONS

### **KOSOVO CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES (KCSS)** **Kosovo**

The Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS) is a non-governmental and non-pro-fit think tank established in 2008 with the main aim of developing research studies in the security sector. KCSS conducts research and organizes conferences and seminars in the related fields of security policy, rule of law, justice, and monitoring of the security sector. KCSS activities contribute to strengthening the principles of democratic oversight of security institutions in the Republic of Kosovo.

### **BELGRADE CENTRE FOR SECURITY POLICY (BCSP)** **Serbia**

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) is an independent think tank founded in 1997 to publicly advocate national and human security based on democracy and respect for human rights. The BCSP works towards consolidation of security sector reform (SSR) and security integration of Western Balkan states into the Euro-Atlantic community by creating an inclusive and knowledge-based security policy environment. It achieves these goals through research, public advocacy, education, bringing together relevant stakeholders and creation of networking opportunities.

## ABOUT PROJECT

The Security Research Forum is a joint project of three independent think tanks from Belgrade (BCSP), Prishtina (KCSS) and Tirana (IDM) specialized in research of security issues. The Security Research Forum is meant to foster balanced debate among think-tank community, academia, public policy and media in order to provide research-based alternative solutions to ongoing challenges of cooperation among Serbia, Kosovo and Albania.

