

**Conference Report:**  
**Socio-Economic Profiles of the Municipalities**  
**of the Prishtina Region**

**Prishtina, September 2020**

*This edition is part of the program “With Participatory Democracy for a Kosovo without Radicalism,” of the Consortium of NGO-s (ATRC, KIPRED, BIRN, SPRC, KCBS and D+)*

Consortium: “With Participatory Democracy for a Kosovo without Radicalization” | Konzorciumi: “Me Demokraci Pjesëmarrëse për një Kosovë pa Radikalizim”



*Prepared by: Lulzim Peci, Mentor Agani, Diedon Nixha, and Valdrin Ukshini*

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*Published by:*



*Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED)*

*Street: Major Mehmet Bushi, H.III. No.1*

*10 000 Prishtina, Kosovo*

*Telephone & fax: +383 38 542 778*

## INTRODUCTION

On August 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, in Prishtina took place the Regional Conference on the topic “Socio-Economic Profiles of the Municipalities of the Prishtina Region,” organized by the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), in which participated the representatives of Kosovo Police and the leaderships of the municipal assemblies of the municipalities of this region. Due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemics, this Conference was organized at distance, through the Zoom platform. In the Conference, the findings of the work of KIPRED, “Socio-Economic Profiles of the Municipalities of the Prishtina Region,” were presented and discussed,<sup>1</sup> and this discussion had as its objective to be used as an incentive for opening of the public debate, and to assist the municipal and national decision-makers in formulation and implementation of policies that will address the needs of the young population, particularly of the age-group 15–29 years. Absence of a considerable number of the invited guests, who had previously confirmed their participation, is a reason why in this Conference – and, consequently, in this Conference Report as well – a considerable number of data provided in the Profile on several from the municipalities of the Prishtina Region, were not discussed altogether.

The issues that were identified from the findings of the work presented and the discussions made in the Conference, which require urgent treatment by the municipal and national authorities are provided in the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup> *Socio-Economic Profiles of the Municipalities of the Prishtina Region*, KIPRED, June 2020.

## THE MUNICIPALITY OF OBILIQ

After the introductory part of the Conference, in which the organizer presented the Socio-Economic Profile of the Municipalities of the Prishtina Region, the word was given to Mr. Xhafer Gashi, the Mayor of the Municipality of Obiliq, who from the very outset focused on the data that in the Profile of the Municipalities of the Prishtina Region were given for the Municipality of Obiliq. He pointed out that, in spite of the fact that it is being said that some from the statistics in the Profile were taken from the municipalities as well, these, although it cannot be said that they are incorrect, nevertheless should be reconfirmed together with the municipalities prior to their publication. For illustrating this claim, he mentioned that regarding the education and school infrastructure, Obiliq as a municipality is completed. He also added that there are considerable subsidies for the fields of culture and sports, a number of sport fields, sport halls, gyms, etc., were built, and there are also subsidies for all the clubs and cultural-artistic societies in the municipality. Therefore, he said that he doesn't know how the statistics provided in the Profile were drawn, and he added that they should be confirmed.

In the clarification given by the organizer of the Conference, KIPRED, that the data in the Profile were taken from the municipal budgets, including here the municipal budget of Obiliq, Mr. Gashi replied that there are 500 pupils and students from the municipality of Obiliq who are being subsidized, there are more than 240 stipends for students, and 58 stipends for secondary schools. Also, the transportation expenses of the pupils at the municipality of Obiliq are covered, and in total there are around 500 of them. In addition, Mayor Gashi added that until 2016 Obiliq has had a very small budget, but, in the meantime, a particular package was established for poorer municipalities, and the municipality of Obiliq was among the beneficiaries. Thus, in 2015, the budget of Obiliq was around 4.7 million Euros, and in 2020 it increased to around 11 million and a half. On all these, the organizer of the Conference reacted by stressing that the Profile was based exactly on the budget of the Municipality of Obiliq for the year 2020, and that the stipends and the transportation of pupils and students was not an issue discussed in the Profile. The response of Mayor Gashi to this was that the budget for the year 2020 is not yet concluded, therefore, there is a possibility that the Profile has used data from the beginning of the year 2020, and which could have changed in the meantime.

At the end of this part of the discussion, the organizer required the specification of any statistics and data provided in the Profile which could be wrong, in order to correct them. On this requirement Mr. Gashi did not mention any concrete statistical data, but he stressed that Obiliq does not have any Protestant Church, and that the Profile has mentioned that there is one. Here the organizer stressed that the Protestant Community of Kosovo, which has provided this data, has confirmed the presence in Obiliq of a Protestant Church. KIPRED also added that all the data on religious sites and facilities in the municipalities, including the municipality of Obiliq, were taken from the Islamic Community of Kosovo, from the Kosovo's Catholic Church and from the Protestant Community of Kosovo, including the data which were taken from OSCE on orthodox religious facilities.

At the end, the organizer stressed that during the preparation of the Profile, it has had a good cooperation with a number of municipalities, but there were some of them that have not responded to requests for data, in which cases KIPRED was forced to search for the data in alternative routes. Thus, for instance, there were problems regarding collection of data on cultural and sport infrastructure, such as non-responding of the Director on Culture, Youth and Sports of the Municipality of Obiliq to the requests of KIPRED for data. As a consequence, KIPRED was bound to request the data on cultural and sport infrastructure of the Municipality of Obiliq at the central level, from the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports.

In the subsequent communication, the Cabinet of the Mayor of the Municipality of Obiliq did provide written objections only on the number of mosques, and on the data of the Agency of the Statistics of Kosovo, which, according to them, are outdated, and there were no other objections whatsoever on the other data presented in the Profile.

After this, the discussion continued on the issues of radicalization and violent extremism, as well as on the factors that cause them, at both, regional, and Kosovo level. Here the organizer of the Conference, KIPRED, mentioned several important conclusions that follow from the Profile on all the municipalities of the Prishtina Region, and which were confirmed earlier by the previous Profiles prepared for other regions of Kosovo. Thus, regarding the ratio of the number of mosques with the number of people who had joined foreign wars, the organizer mentioned that there are 41 mosques in the municipality of Podujeva, and that this municipality has had only 3 foreign fighters; meanwhile, Prishtina has had only 5 mosques more than Podujeva, but it has had 58 foreign fighters. From this

can be concluded that the expression of religiosity by the people is not related to the radicalization and violent extremism. Also, the Lipjan municipality, which has 32 mosques and 11 foreign fighters does not have any relation between the number of mosques and religiosity, with radicalization and violent extremism.

The same was said to apply to the level of criminality. This level is the highest in the municipality of Graçanica, in despite of the fact that it is a small community in which most of the people do know one another. The same applies to the municipality of Fushë Kosova, which is in the second place in the region on criminality, with 36 penal deeds on 1,000 inhabitants. But, again, there is no relation between the level of criminality and the number of foreign terrorist fighters. This was even more evident in one from the previous Profiles, which has shown that the municipality of Hani i Elezit did have a very low level of criminality – however, the municipality of Hani i Elezit has given a very high number of foreign terrorist fighters. Thus, as a conclusion, the issue of radicalism and of violent extremism requires a treatment which should be more complex than it seems at the first sight.

Also, there was a stress on the illiteracy as a very serious issue for the regional level. Illiteracy has the highest level in Fushë Kosova, 59 individuals in 1,000 inhabitants, and this was followed by Lipjan and Podujeva. The participants in the Conference agreed that the figures on illiteracy are alarming, and that they should necessarily be taken into the consideration during the planning of local policies.

## THE MUNICIPALITY OF PODUJEVA

In his word, Mr. Fatmir Gashi, the President of the Municipal Assembly of Podujeva, praised the Profile, by pointing out that, in his opinion, the statistics provided in the Profile for the Municipality of Podujeva are approximately accurate. He stressed that the major problems, in his opinion, are caused by the fact that the municipal budgets provided for Culture, Youth, and Sports are unsatisfactory, as well as by the religious radicalization of a portion of youth in all of Kosovo.

Afterwards, Mr. Fatmir Gashi said that the radicalization and extremism did not happen in Podujeva. The Municipal Council discusses up to a certain extent these issues, and, therefore, there can be no objections that there were no debates on them. In despite of the fact that there were ideas to have particular meetings on this issue, given the small numbers, those meetings were not organized, and the related topics were discussed only time after time, in the meetings in which other topics were discussed as well.

Otherwise, the success in fighting the radicalization and violent extremism in the Municipality of Podujeva, according to the Assembly President, Gashi, is a consequence of the commitment of the Municipality – during the time of both, the former Mayor Agim Veliu, and the recent one, Nexhmi Rudari – for a full cooperation with the community, with the police, etc. This cooperation was a very good one and has given results, so that, in despite of the fact that the community is almost 100% Muslim, and has a large number of mosques, the radicalization of young people and their violent extremism did not succeed. He also focused on the fact that the level of criminality in the municipality of Podujeva is average, a fact that was stressed by the Profile as well. Nevertheless, he added, it is necessary to work on this issue even more, in order to reduce further the number of criminal cases.

After the initial word of Mr. Gashi, the organizer, KIPRED, added that during the previous year it has prepared a special work on the Municipalities of Podujeva and Suhareka, and on a particularly low level of radicalism in them. This level was also compared with that of the municipalities of Hani i Elezit and of Kaçanik, which have had the highest level of radicalism in Kosovo. The conclusion drawn in this work was that in Podujeva and Suhareka a cooperation triangle was created between

municipal government, Kosovo Police, and Local Islamic Communities of Kosovo, and this cooperation was a key in fighting the phenomenon, and in not allowing the entrance of radical and extremist currents in these municipalities. With this, as this work has concluded, Podujeva and Suhareka have provided a model and an example on how should be acted to confront this phenomenon. At the end, the organizer of the Conference pointed out for the participants that a large interest was shown for this special work of KIPRED by numerous institutions, many of which were international, either in Kosovo, or abroad. These institutions were very interested on the conclusion of the work that the cooperation in the above mentioned triangle, Municipal Government – Police – Local Islamic Community, was vital for fighting the violent extremism.

After this, the President of the Municipal Assembly of Podujeva, Mr. Fatmir Gashi, expressed his agreement on a very good functioning of this triangle in the municipality of Podujeva, as well as his hope that such a triangle will function properly in other municipalities of Kosovo as well. He also said that the Profile shows for other issues as well where we are and how do we stand, and that we should deal seriously with them in municipal policies, in order to improve all the issues mentioned in this work.

After the Assembly President, Mr. Fatmir Gashi, the word was given to the Regional Deputy Director of the Directorate of the Kosovo Police for the Prishtina Region, Lieutenant Colonel Gëzim Dibrani, who praised the work done in the Profile. He stressed that both, the topic selected, and the age-group targeted in this work, are very important for the security sector.

Lieutenant Colonel Dibrani said that, in his opinion, the data presented are accurate, but he added that for having a clear picture on criminality in a given area, based on statistics, there is a need to provide these statistics for a time frame of three years. In this manner, a proper impression will be created, not only on the actual state of criminality, but also on its dynamics, and, therefore, on its tendencies. Given that in previous discussions the issue was raised on the data for the Municipality of Obiliq, Lieutenant Colonel Dibrani said that he will scrutinize the data on criminality in the Municipality of Obiliq provided in the Profile, 48 penal deeds on 1,000 inhabitants, and that after this he will send his conclusion on this issue.

After this he stressed that radicalization and violent extremism continue to be a challenge and priority for the Kosovo Police. He focused also on the fact that was mentioned, that the religious



institutions, as such, are not a source of terrorism. On the contrary, he added, the Islamic Community of Kosovo has provided a considerable assistance in the prevention of terrorist deeds and in the treatment of persons who had returned from the foreign wars.

Lieutenant Colonel Dibrani also focused on the fact mentioned in the Profile that the Municipal Councils did not discuss in their assemblies the issue of the radicalization and violent extremism. He stressed that, except for the Strategy against Terrorism, the Kosovo Police also has the Strategy of the Security in Community 2017–2021, the essence of which is in the cooperation with the community for the prevention of all the criminal activities, including here the violent extremism as well. And, on the other hand, the Forums of Local Security, in which the leaders are the Mayors of the Municipalities, debate these issues as well, so, they are informed well on them.

After this, on the issue of the Forums on Local Security, KIPRED stressed that it is part of the Forum that has to do with the execution of the strategy of the war against radicalism and for prevention of violent extremism, and that it has access to declassified reports of the Council of National Security, and that it knows very well on what is being done in each municipality. This was not put deliberately as a part of this report, despite of the fact that KIPRED knows that they are led by the mayors of the municipalities. In despite of this, KIPRED stressed that what it sees as a problem here, is the fact that the policy at the local level is not dealing with this issue.

## **THE MUNICIPALITY OF DRENAS**

In her word, Mrs. Egzona Jetullahu, the Director of the Directorate for Economic Development at the Municipality of Drenas, said at the beginning, that she is present in this Conference due to the absence of the Mayor of the Municipality, Mr. Ramiz Lladrovci, and she added that she was informed on this just today, and she was asked to replace Mayor Lladrovci. For this reason she apologized for not being able to read the entire Profile up to the beginning of the Conference, but she, nevertheless, praised the portions she had read.

Mrs. Jetullahu expressed her wish to have the opportunity to make a more detailed confirmation of the data on the Municipality of Drenas. She stressed that the work treats data on the budgets taken from the central level, that is, the budgets that are pre-determined for the municipal level. Then she added that the Municipality of Drenas has large subsidies that are provided to culture, as well as to education at the lower levels. Thus, she stressed that Drenas is the first municipality which, through the Google-Maps application, has conducted the digitalization of data on the numbers and levels of education of citizens for all the parts of the Municipality of Drenas, in order to make these data available to everyone.

Therefore, Director Jetullahu expressed her suspicion on whether the data taken from the central level correspond with the actual ones that are available, and for this reason she requested that before the final publication of the Report, the possibility should be provided to review the data again, and if there are any proposals for changes, these will be send.

Regarding this issue, Mrs. Jetullahu mentioned subsidies and grants that are provided to the sectors of culture, and also those that are provided to economy and agriculture. These, she added, can be discussed with the Deputy Mayor of the Municipality, Mr. Nasmi Hasi, given that the Mayor cannot do this because of his health condition. At the end, she stressed that she will be in touch with Mr. Hasi, as well as with all the directors of the Municipal Council of Drenas, and that the topics will be treated in detail, and if there are additional comments, they will be send. On this occasion the organizer added that if the Municipality has data which are more specified than those from the central level, those will be welcomed, given that they will only improve and complete the Report.

However, it should be added that there were no such proposals for potential changes in the Profile that were sent by the Municipality of Drenas until this publication was sent to print.

## **THE MUNICIPALITY OF LIPJAN**

The Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of Lipjan, Mr. Fauz Xhemajli, did not make any detailed discussion on the data of the Profile, but in his comment he stressed that the Profile, as a report, is a good base for going further. The data gathered in this Profile, he stressed, show where we are and how do we stand. According to him, the level of illiteracy is very concerning, and every municipality, as such, should take the responsibility on the parts that belong to them. This, he added, should also apply for all the issues treated in the Profile – on the level of religious radicalization, of employment, of social condition, culture, etc. Wherever there is a need for intervention, he ended, the municipalities should develop and apply the respective necessary policies.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- National and municipal institutions should pay attention and take measures to reduce the level of illiteracy in respective municipalities, which has a direct impact on local development and socio-economic condition.
- Municipal assemblies and political parties at the local level should take their responsibilities for fighting radicalism and for prevention of violent extremism.
- Municipalities should substantially increase their budgets for supporting youth activities.
- Municipal authorities and Kosovo Police should undertake joint measures for reducing the level of criminality at the local level.