



EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

Monthly Newsletter
February 2009

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

During the month of February, Kosovo celebrated its first anniversary since the declaration of independence in February 2008. Kosovo opened eight new embassies and nine consular missions. On 5 February, the European Parliament passed a resolution recommending that all European Union member states which have not yet recognised the independence of Kosovo from Serbia should do so. The non-binding resolution passed with 424 votes in favour, 133 against and 24 abstentions.

At the beginning of the month, the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) restored control of Gates 1 and 31 in the north of Kosovo and started registering goods that entered the country, though without charging any customs fees. Demonstrations against this and last month's formation of the Kosovo Security Forces were held by Kosovo Serbs in Mitrovica.

Also in February, the Interim Secretariat of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo was established. Through this body, Kosovo citizens can now submit their legal requests to the Constitutional Court, the highest body over legislative and executive powers in Kosovo.

The head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, Lamberto Zannier, continued his efforts to start talks on technical issues between Belgrade and Pristina, yet both Serbia and Kosovo declined the invitation by UNMIK to talks regarding cultural and religious heritage. Zannier travelled to Belgrade, determined not to give up on facilitation of Pristina-Belgrade dialogue.

On 11 February, the Kosovo Security Council was constituted as the highest security body in Kosovo. The establishment of the KSC concludes the process of security infrastructure, after the establishment of the Kosovo Security Forces and Kosovo Intelligence Agency. Recruitment for the Kosovo Security Forces continued, though applications from minority communities remain low.

The Assembly of Kosovo once again failed to appoint an Ombudsperson in the fourth unsuccessful vote in two years. None of the candidates succeeded to receive the required number of votes.

During the reporting period, the Republic of Maldives officially recognised the state of Kosovo. It is the 55th state to do so.

ECMI PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Support to the Office of the Prime Minister

During the reporting period, two activities aimed at building the operational capacities of the Prime Minister's Office of Community Affairs have been carried out. A consultant has been supporting the Office in developing its action plan for the year, as well as its operational policies. The action plan will state the objectives of the Office of Community Affairs for 2009. The operational policies will describe the mechanisms that need to be created to fulfil each component of the Office's mandate, as well as the procedure to develop such mechanisms. Another activity has been to assist the Office of Community Affairs, in partnership with the Advisory Office for Good Governance, to carry out a study on the employment of members of minority communities within Kosovo public institutions and publicly owned enterprises. The findings of this study will enable the Office of Community Affairs to ensure that legislative provisions providing for the equitable representation of community members are implemented.

During the reporting period ECMI Kosovo finished its work on the Ethnopolitical Map, of which a beta version (<http://www.ecmi-map.com/>) will be available online from 9 March onwards.



Support to the Decentralisation Process

In February, ECMI Kosovo organised a conference for the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) and the Communities Consultative Council (CCC) on the decentralisation process and community participation. This conference, attended by Minister Sardri Ferati and Mr. Raphael Naegeli, representative of the International Civilian Office (ICO), provided the MLGA with a chance to inform members of the CCC on the decentralisation process and for CCC members to ask questions and raise their concerns. ECMI Kosovo's expert to the MLGA, Mr Burim Ramadani is continuing his work within the Ministry by supporting the awareness-raising campaign.

UNICEF

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo Education Consultant Nataša Markovska drafted two reports based on her field research in Ferizaj, Prizren and Peja. The reports assess the awareness of education minority rights at the municipal and civil society levels and provide recommendations to improve the delivery of minority education. The reports will be presented to UNICEF and discussed with relevant stakeholders at an event organised for the next reporting period.

Support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo continued its cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in developing a project to support the ministry to improve minority education. Project Manager Kelley Thompson and Research Associate Ester Kosova attended a workshop on teacher licensing and development hosted by MEST. Ms. Thompson also attended a conference hosted by the Council of Europe/European Commission (COE/EC) launching their higher education project and a COE/EC workshop on civic education, as well as a donors coordination meeting at MEST. In addition, meetings were held with the World Bank and UNDP to guide the project.

Security

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo Director Adrian Zeqiri and Project Manager Kelley Thompson met with Ardian Spahiu from UNDP 3SD and agreed upon the objectives of their joint security initiative. Ms. Thompson attended an ICO Civil Society Forum on security and continued to meet with relevant actors.

Other Developments

ECMI Kosovo staff attended a number of conferences on issues of interest to communities, including a roundtable on the challenges and prospects of sustainable integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities of Kosovo and the launch of the Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan of the Republic of Kosovo (2009-2011).

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo also welcomed Gazmen Salijević as Project Officer on the project supporting the Decentralisation Process.