

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

Monthly Newsletter
January 2009

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Deployment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) continued throughout Kosovo in January and EULEX is planning to reach full operational capacity by end of winter.

During the reporting period, the President of Kosovo announced that there would be no elections in 2009, based on article 161 of the constitution of the Republic of Kosovo. The decision was criticised by the opposition parties as unconstitutional. Representatives of the international community, including the International Civilian Representative (ICR), Pieter Feith, agreed with the decision and stated that it was in compliance with the Ahtisaari's Comprehensive Settlement Proposal.

Meanwhile, the Law on the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo entered into force in mid January, and procedures to initiate the Court began on 20 January. Kosovo's government declared it would recognise Montenegrins as a minority to be represented in Kosovo institutions, after a high level visit from Montenegro asked for Kosovo's Montenegrins to be recognised as a separate community.

On 30 January, Kosovo institutions and the ICO initiated the decentralisation process, the transfer of powers from central to municipal institutions in the areas of social welfare, education, public services, business registration as well as cultural and sports aspects, a process that will include the establishment of new municipalities throughout Kosovo.

During the reporting period, the Republic of Panama recognised Kosovo's independence. Kosovo has so far been recognised by 54 UN member states.

ECMI PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Communities Consultative Council

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo supported the Office of the President in the preparations for the first meeting of the Communities Consultative Council (CCC), setting the agenda, assisting with the preparations for the appointments of the CCC's Chairperson and Deputy Chairpersons, as well as identifying outstanding business in the process of setting up the Communities Consultative Council.

Support to the Office of the Prime Minister

The Report on the institutional framework for communities in Kosovo has been finalised, incorporating all relevant comments provided through consultation with State institutions and other organisations. The Report was published at the end of the month under the name *Strengthening the Institutional System for Communities in Post-Independence Kosovo* and is now being distributed to key actors. It will soon be available online on ECMI Kosovo's website. According to the recommendations provided in the report to resolve overlaps between mandates of several governmental institutions, ECMI has been advocating for the conclusion of agreements that will temporarily solve this issue.

The project has now entered into a new phase, which aims at developing the Prime Minister's Office for Community Affairs' operational capacities in order to deliver concrete actions that will impact the lives of community members.

The Ethnopolitical Map is in its final stages towards completion. All data has been collected and edited. Currently ECMI Kosovo is conducting the final translations and is in the process of finishing the development of the website on which all information will be published.

Support to the Decentralisation Process

During the reporting period, Burim Ramadani continued his work within the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) by supporting the awareness-raising campaign on decentralisation. At the same time, ECMI Kosovo Director, Adrian Zeqiri, and the Minister of Local Government Administration, Mr. Ferati, agreed on several specific areas on which ECMI Kosovo will support the MLGA in the decentralisation process. These points will be included in the action plan ECMI Kosovo is developing for the execution of its decentralisation project.

UNICEF

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo Education Consultant, Nataša Markovska, undertook field research on minority education in three municipalities: Ferizaj, Prizren and Peja. Ms. Markovska conducted interviews with municipal authorities, teachers and NGO's in each municipality as well as local and international organisations in Pristina to determine the awareness of minority needs and availability of minority education. The findings of this research will be used to produce two analytical reports with recommendations during the next 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. Meetings were conducted with the Council of Europe, the Kosovo Education Center and the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (SOROS) to guide the project.

Security

ECMI Kosovo is currently developing a project to support the institutionalisation of community views in security project making. During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo met with Ardian Spahiu from UNDP 3SD on the developing project. The outcome was mutual agreement for cooperation in refining the concept.

Other Developments

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo said goodbye to two dear colleagues, Virginia Stephens and Arbën Osmani. We thank both of them for their hard work and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Former intern Lars Burema was hired to support ECMI Kosovo's activities as Project Manager for the decentralisation project. Gaëlle Cornuz and Kelley Thompson were promoted to Project Managers for the Support to the Office of the Prime Minister and UNICEF projects respectively. ECMI Kosovo also welcomed Dana Landau as a new intern.