



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – August 2010

Political Developments

On 17 August 2010, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg released a statement saying that western European countries should cease the forced return to Kosovo of members of the Roma community. According to UNICEF, 38% of Roma deported from Germany are expatriates. Hammarberg pointed out that many Roma have problems acquiring personal documents in the host countries, and are thus unable to work or realise other rights. He recalled that the lack of personal documents was the result of large numbers of Kosovo Roma being forced to flee the territory in order to survive. Hammarberg had already raised the issue with leading European countries back in February, asking them to refrain from sending refugees back to Kosovo since the conditions were not right for their return.

During the month of August, a number of daily newspapers reported that former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj had called on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to release him from detention until trial, the date of which has yet to be set. In the request, Haradinaj's defense noted that he voluntarily surrendered to EULEX police on 19 July 2010, after the Tribunal issued his arrest warrant and before the Appeal's verdict for a retrial was announced. Haradinaj's defense also claimed that his interim release would not constitute a threat to witnesses or victims.

NATO has decided to move forward with the process of transferring responsibility for guarding most of Kosovo's numerous Serb Orthodox monuments to the Kosovo police.

One of the most important religious sites in Kosovo is an Orthodox monastery located in Gračanica/Gračanicë, a Serb enclave some eight kilometers south of the capital Prishtinë/Priština, will be included in the handover.

The NATO-led mission in Kosovo (KFOR) said the move reflected "the improved security situation in Kosovo and the confidence that KFOR has in the capability of the Kosovo police to perform this important task". It added that a timeline has already been developed and approved for the transfer of three further monasteries, but noted that five of the most valuable religious and cultural sites, such as the Visoki Decani monastery which is under UNESCO protection, "will still be protected by KFOR".

Support to the Decentralisation Process

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo continued to publish information bulletins for the municipalities of Klokot/Klllokot, Ranilug/Ranillug and, for the first time, published one for Novo Brdo/Novobërdë. The organisation also continued its work on a needs assessment for the Albanian community in the municipality of Klokot/Klllokot.

ECMI Kosovo supported the organisation of the first of two public debates in the municipality of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, which addressed the subject of the municipal budget. It also organised a visit by civil society actors from Novo Brdo/Novobërdë to Plementina/Plementinë, with the aim of exchanging experiences and improving knowledge on minority rights of civil society actors from both areas.

Needs Assessment



Building Sensitivity for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Schools

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo organised the second phase of its three-phase project, *Building Sensitivity for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Communities in Schools*, funded by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The project currently targets three municipalities: Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Prizren and Gjakova/Đakovica.

The first set of workshops brought together key actors in education provision—eg, school directors, teachers, municipal authorities and civil society representatives—to identify the major challenges facing RAE communities in education. The second phase brought these issues into relief through organised visits to the homes of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families. There, project participants were able to engage directly with parents and discuss key issues such as low registration, drop-out rates and poor performance.





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Consultative Council for Communities

August was a quiet month for the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC). At a meeting with ECMI Kosovo on the 1 September, the six Council members representing the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities agreed that a Working Group on RAE Issues should be created, to oversee government action on all areas of importance to RAE communities, including monitoring implementation of the government Strategy for Integration of RAE communities. It was agreed that the Group would be established at the next Plenary Session of the Council, currently scheduled for mid-September, and that the first meeting would take place immediately afterwards.

Regrettably, one of the five Council representatives for the Serb community, Ms Jelena Nedeljkovic, tendered her resignation to the President on 23 August, citing the body's ineffectiveness among the reasons for her withdrawal. Since her appointment at the Council's inaugural session on 3 March 2010, Ms Nedeljkovic has attended no Council sessions. The President has accepted her resignation and her replacement is due to be announced at the next Plenary Session."

Enhance and Integrate Community Concerns within the Work of the Government

During the reporting period, progress was made on the database for policy and legislation. Key provisions in primary laws were identified, sorted by keywords, and linked to responsible institutions.

The research team is now focusing on subsidiary acts, strategies and action plans.

With regards to the research on the roles of the Committee on the Rights and Interests of Communities (CRIC) and the Consultative Council for Communities, ECMI team finalised a first draft following interviews with stakeholders, namely, the Head of the CCC Secretariat and the Chairperson of the CCC Legislative Working Group, as well as representatives of the National Democratic Institute and the OSCE. The draft, which included suggestions for cooperation between CRIC and CCC, will be presented to members of those institutions at a workshop. During that event, ECMI will gather inputs from CRIC and the CCC, and integrate these findings into a final report.

Another activity under this project focuses on the Strategy and Action Plan for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities. ECMI's work in this respect is two-fold: supporting governmental institutions in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating implementation, and facilitating community participation. ECMI met with CCC representatives from the three communities in order to propose the creation of a CCC Working Group on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Issues (see section, 'Consultative Council for Communities'). The Working Group, which is expected to be established at the next Council Plenary Session, would perform the following functions: support the work of the CCC representative to the Inter-institutional Steering Committee, one of the two coordination mechanisms foreseen to monitor and evaluate the Action Plan; articulate the Council's

position on issues discussed in the Steering Committee; inform members of the three communities of their rights as they accrue from the Action Plan; and provide a channel for consultation between community representative organisations (CROs) and other civil society organisations representing the interests of the RAE communities. In the meantime, ECMI is also lobbying for the allocation of sufficient budgetary resources to ensure effective implementation of the Plan and better quality reporting.

