



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – Dec. 2010 – Jan. 2011

Political developments

Interim Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) were confirmed as winners of the general elections of 12 December 2010, following reruns in six municipalities affected by widespread fraud during the 12 December poll. The PDK won 34 seats, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) 27, Vetëvendosje 14, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) 12, the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) 8 and minority parties 25, of which the Serbian Independent Liberal Party (SLS) is the largest with 8 seats.

Thaçi gathered more than 160,000 personal votes, finishing ahead of Isa Mustafa, the leader of the PDK's erstwhile coalition partner, the LDK, who secured 130,000 votes.

The PDK started negotiations with the AKR, AAK and minority parties to form a government, as the LDK and Vetëvendosje are unwilling to form a coalition with the PDK.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Thaçi has been identified in leaked NATO documents as one of the main actors in organised crime in Kosovo. The same documents name a senior member of the PDK, Mr. Xhavit Haliti, as the instigator a series of political murders. The latter affirmed the report is Serb propaganda against an independent Kosovo.

Following the report by Dick Marty alleging that a criminal network tied to the KLA was involved in illicit organ trade, the Council of Europe (CoE) voted a resolution calling for investigations into crimes committed in the aftermath of the conflict in Kosovo.

The CoE asked that EULEX be given a clear mandate, the resources and political support it needs to carry out the probes into the allegations made by Marty. The latter had earlier expressed doubts on EULEX's capacity to carry out the investigation and protect witnesses. An assertion contested by a EULEX press release, reaffirming it is "ready, willing and able to assume that responsibility" and calling all individuals and organizations to present the evidence supporting the accusations. The resolution also called on

Albanian and Kosovo officials to cooperate with the investigation. Interim President of Kosovo Jakup Krasniqi said that the passing of the resolution had damaged Kosovo's image and asked EULEX to launch an investigation as soon as possible.

European Parliament rapporteur for Kosovo Ulrike Lunacek reaffirmed Serbia "must recognise Kosovo" before joining the EU.

The State of Qatar and Guinea-Bissau recognised the independence of Kosovo on January 4th and 14th respectively, becoming the 73rd and 74th countries to do so.

Legal Aid to VMGs

ECMI Kosovo is pleased to announce that on 17 January it officially started with the implementation of a new 2 year project: 'Enhancing the Positive Impact of the Law for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) in Kosovo', funded by the European Union and managed by the European Commission Liaison Office to Kosovo. Through this project and in cooperation with the NGO 'Centre for Legal Aid and Regional Development' (CLARD) ECMI Kosovo will be providing free legal aid to a minimum of 2.000 beneficiaries throughout Kosovo. At the same time, ECMI Kosovo will undertake several strategic litigation cases and will advocate for positive improvements in the legislative and institutional framework for vulnerable and marginalized groups.

During the reporting period, legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance in 5 municipalities: Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica, Skenderaj/ Srbica, Prishtinë/ Priština, and Gračanica/ Gračanice. Moreover, a start was made on a research on the institutional and legislative framework for vulnerable and marginalized groups. This research will form the basis of future outreach and training activities.

Trainings and workshops



On 8 December, ECMI organised a one-day information workshop for members of the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) on Minority Rights Instruments of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The aim of the workshop was to enhance the knowledge of CCC members on international minority rights instruments on international minority rights instruments which are highly relevant for their work within the CCC.



In December, a round of workshops entitled 'Community: Know your Rights' were organised in cooperation with the OCA. More than 30 representatives of communities were trained by the OCA and ECMI on the legal and institutional framework for community right protection and received a brochure including information on remedies available to them. Both workshops were part of ECMI's project "Institutional Support to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities", financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany.





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Decentralisation

In December, ECMI Kosovo published its final information bulletins for the municipalities of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, Klokot/Kllokot and Ranillug/Ranilug. ECMI Kosovo will discuss with the municipal authorities of these municipalities to see how the publication of the information bulletins can be transferred to the municipalities. ECMI Kosovo started developing informational leaflets for the municipalities of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, Klokot/Kllokot and Ranillug/Ranilug. These leaflets will contain all basic information on the services offered by the municipalities, including relevant contact details.

At the request of the Municipal Preparation Team (MPT) for Mitrovicë/Mitrova, ECMI Kosovo assisted in the development of information leaflets on decentralisation in Mitrovicë/Mitrova and on the MPT itself. Moreover, on 10 December, ECMI Kosovo participated in the Sub-Working group on Information Campaign for decentralization of the Ministry for Local Government Administration. These activities were part of the project 'Supporting Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process', financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Enhance and Integrate Community Concerns within the Work of the Government

The reporting period saw the conclusion of the project 'Enhance and Integrate Community Concerns within the Work of the Government', which aimed at developing the capacities of a strategic office for communities located within the Office of the Prime Minister – the Office for Community Affairs (OCA), and supporting the activities of the working groups of the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC).

In January, ECMI Kosovo conducted a training for the CCC legislation working group. A research on the roles of community political participation mechanisms in the legislative process was presented. It encouraged a reflection on the CCC's role in the process vis-à-vis other institutions such as the OCA and the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights and Interests of Communities (CRIC). The working group reflected on its achievements and discussed ways of enhancing its impact, notably through cooperation with the two other bodies.

ECMI Kosovo finalised the evaluation of the implementation of the strategy and action plan for the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Communities conducted in partnership with the CCC working group on RAE communities by a workshop held on January 28th. ECMI Kosovo and the CCC presented to RAE civil society representatives the main findings of the research and recommendations were developed in working groups.

Consultative Council for Communities

On December 17th, the Consultative Council for Communities held its plenary meeting. The issues discussed in this meeting were the following: 1) Recommendations from 5 regional outreach workshops organised by ECMI Kosovo/OSCE; 2) Information on the meeting of the Working Group on Education with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) regarding the commenting on the draft textbook on 'civic and inter-cultural education'; 3) Information from the Working Group on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians; 4) Discussion on the CCC working plan for 2011; 5) Presentation of the Handbook for CCC members, developed by ECMI Kosovo.

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo finalised the development of a handbook for CCC members, designed to be both an informative tool and an ongoing reference for the members of CCC in their day-to-day work in ensuring the effective political participation of their communities. This activity was part of ECMI's project "Institutional Support to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities", financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Staff Changes

Ms. Venera Kusari has left our team for new opportunities and we would like to thank her for her dedication, commitment and hard work for the organisation, and wish her all the best in her future endeavours. At the end of January, ECMI Kosovo welcomed a new intern, Mr. Nicolas Jadot, who will be supporting our various projects until mid-May.

