



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – April 2012

Political Developments:

North Kosovo situation tenses up as Serb elections approach

The situation has been tensing up in North Kosovo as the Serbian Presidential, Parliamentary and local elections approached. Serbia has been under pressure from the international community not to hold the May 6th elections in Kosovo and the Serb Minister for Kosovo, Goran Bogdanović, stated that no local elections in Kosovo would be held so as to not violate UNSC Resolution 1244 and “endanger those Serbs who live (in enclaves) south of the Ibar River.” Two Serbian mayors in North Kosovo, however, declared their intention to call municipal elections, in defiance of Belgrade’s position. As for the Parliamentary and Presidential elections, the Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi said that he would allow the OSCE to facilitate voting from Kosovo for those Kosovo citizens that have double citizenship.

This month in North Mitrovica a bomb set against the Haradinaj family exploded killing one and injuring two. Further increasing the level of tension was the fact that several Albanian Kosovars have been arrested in Serbia, while Kosovar authorities arrested several Serbs for allegedly transporting election materials into Kosovo. KFOR announced it would bolster its presence in North Kosovo to appease the rising tensions with the upcoming elections.

Visa liberalisation roadmap issues

The Ministry of European Integration says it would receive the long-awaited visa liberalization roadmap with the list of requirements that Kosovo must meet at the end of spring.

Kosovo assembly passes new laws

After the Law on Radio Television of Kosovo passed in March providing the Kosovo Serbian community with a television channel in their own language, a series of laws pertaining to

banks and micro-finance institutions, to Prizren’s historic centre and the village of Velika Hoča/Hoça e Madhe, as well as to the penal code, were passed by the Kosovo Assembly this month.

The adopted laws pertaining to Prizren’s historic centre and on Hoça e Madhe/Velika Hoča foresee the creation of councils that will include religious representatives with decision-making powers. These laws have been adopted as part of the Ahtisaari Package and would help Kosovo conclude the supervisory phase of independence.

The new penal code has been heavily criticized by Kosovo journalists and media freedom organizations for its two provisions which threaten to diminish freedom of the media.

Limaj acquitted in Klecka Case

Limaj, the Vice President of the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo, has finally been acquitted after the Pristina District Court ruled that the evidence was deemed insufficient to prove Limaj and other defendants guilty of the alleged war crimes against civilians and prisoners of war at the Klecka detention centre in 1999.

Brunei recognizes Kosovo

At the end of April Brunei became the 90th United Nations member to recognize Kosovo’s independence.

ECMI Kosovo Project Updates:

Improving the Delivery of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Education

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo helped the municipal officials of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje to start deliver on activities stemming from the Municipal Action Plan (MAP) for the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Concretely, municipal officials were assisted in conducting a small scale research to identify preschool and preprimary education needs of these communities. Information for the research was collected both from civil society as well as questionnaires by visiting families. The initial analysis indicates that, out of 80 children at preschool and primary age identified (from 51 surveyed households), 24 children were not included in the pre-primary and preschool education. Remaining children attend different programs offered by local civil society organisations. The main problems for not registering children into preschool institutions as stated by families, were financial difficulties to pay the fee or lack of premises. ECMI Kosovo also supported the municipality in assessing the needs for organizing language courses for children with limited knowledge of Albanian language and for supplementary classes for children with learning difficulties.

In addition to the research, ECMI Kosovo, in consultation with UNICEF, assisted the municipal officials to prepare a template for collecting information on drop-outs and irregular attendance with the aim of facilitating the monitoring of cases of drop-outs and enable the municipality and schools to take action to prevent students from dropping out. The municipality is now in the process of consolidating its data on drop-outs into a consolidated list, after which follow-up action will be taken.

Furthermore, ECMI Kosovo finalized and published a manual on operationalisation of municipal action plans for municipal officials who are involved in drafting and implementing municipal actions plans. The manual is available at: <http://www.ecmikosovo.org/index.php/publications>. This project is financed by UNICEF.





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Legal Aid to Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups

During March 2012, legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance to 103 beneficiaries. Moreover, ECMI Kosovo spoke on the topic of segregated education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children at three regional workshops (in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Pejë/Peć and Prizren) organised by the OSCE. These workshops were attended by teachers, school directors and relevant municipal officials.

On 17 April, a referral was submitted to the Constitutional Court of Kosovo on the violation of the human rights of the late Diana Kastrati, particularly relating to the delay in the issuance of an emergency protection order. ECMI Kosovo has worked together with the Public International Law and Policy Group and the Centre for Legal Aid and Regional Development on the preparation of this case.

Moreover, ECMI Kosovo has submitted a complaint to the Kosovo Ombudsperson regarding the use of language by the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court, which requires all documentation to be submitted in English rather than in one of the two official languages of Kosovo.

These activities were part of the project: *'Enhancing the Positive Impact of the Law for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo'*, funded by the European Union and managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo. For more information on this project please visit www.kosovo-legalaid.com.

Support to Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process

Public opinion has been gauged as part of ECMI Kosovo's work on local economic development in newly decentralised municipalities. The final section of the report on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has been completed, which consists of a business survey in which 247 SMEs operating in five municipalities gave their responses to questions covering numerous elements of their experience of the business environment in their area. This information will now be elaborated into a number of forms in order to support local economic development through SMEs in decentralised municipalities.

These activities were part of the project *'Support to Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process'*, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Institutional Support to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities

The President of Kosovo signed a Decree in April 2012, amending the Statute of the Council and extending the mandate of the current members for another four months.

ECMI Kosovo in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Council developed a call for applications document to release to the media informing all active NGOs about the beginning of the accreditation and nomination process. On Thursday 26 April, the Secretariat of the Council opened a process for the accreditation of

all active minority community organisations in the Republic of Kosovo. The announcement was published in local newspapers and several websites and provides the guidelines on the accreditation and nomination process.

Following the reform of the Language Commission and the approval of the new regulation on the Office of the Language Commissioner, ECMI Kosovo representatives assisted the plenary session of the Council, where members recommended one representative from each Kosovo linguistic community for appointment by the Prime Minister to the language policy board.



ECMI Kosovo would like to express its gratitude to the governments of the UK and Norway for funding and supporting the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities.

Personnel Changes

Femke Dekker has completed her internship at ECMI Kosovo; we thank her for all of her hard work and wish her well for her new job in Zagreb.

ECMI welcomes Jeelan Syed who begins his internship this month.

