



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – April 2011

Political developments

Election of New President of Kosovo

On 6 April, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga was named the new candidate for President of Kosovo, following several rounds of talks between the ruling PDK, its coalition partner AKR, and the opposition LDK. On 7 April, Mrs. Jahjaga was officially elected President after receiving 80 votes in the 120-seat Parliament – just enough to secure the required two thirds majority.

It is considered unlikely that Mrs. Jahjaga will serve her full 5-year mandate, as it was agreed to hold new presidential elections within 18 months after rewriting the Constitution to make the post directly elected by the public.

Role of International Presence in Kosovo

A number of Kosovo politicians have called to diminish the international presence in institutions, as the Government considers changes to the Constitution. Mr. Arsim Bajrami, heading a commission on constitutional reform, said that according to the Ahtisaari Plan, Prishtinë/Priština should assess the need for continued international presence 3 years after the declaration of independence, which was made in February 2008.

Pacolli as Deputy Prime Minister?

Mr. Behgjet Pacolli was offered the post of First Deputy PM by Mr. Hashim Thaci, following the rejection by the Constitutional Court of his election to the Presidency of Kosovo. As Deputy PM, Pacolli would have special competencies for lobbying and foreign investments. It is not yet known whether Mr. Pacolli will take the post, since he has showed interest to run for presidency again and taking this post might affect his candidacy.

Serb Leader Against Court in Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica

In mid-April, a Serb leader from northern Kosovo warned against plans to reopen the court in North Mitrovicë/Mitrovica. Marko Jaksic, of the Assembly of the Community of Municipalities of Kosovo and Metohija, stated that such a move could cause unrest.

The court in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica was reopened in 2008, after it was closed for more than seven months in the wake of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, but only international judges and prosecutors have worked there since.

Serbia Asking for UN Organ Probe

Serbia's Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic has sent a proposal for an investigation into allegations of organ trafficking in Kosovo and Albania to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. Mr. Jeremic sent the letter on 18 April, after discussing the issue with his Russian counterpart Serguey Lavrov.

According to Mr. Jeremić, a credible international investigation under the mandate of the UN is necessary because of the territorial jurisdiction of the bodies which will carry out the investigation, but also because all war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia have been investigated under a UN Security Council mandate. He added that "if that was not the case now, it would be hard to fight the impression of a double standard".

Also in April, former Hague Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte affirmed that EULEX is not capable of conducting an objective investigation into allegations of organ trafficking in Kosovo and Albania.

Kosovo to Lose 120 Million Euros in Aid

In the 2008 Donors' Conference for Kosovo, 500 million euros were pledged to Kosovo by the EU, of which 150 million was contingent on Kosovo securing a stand-by agreement with the IMF. Following the signing of the deal last year, the EC agreed to release 30 million euro of the first 50 million euro tranche.

However, the late signing of the IMF deal and Kosovo's breach of the agreement by allowing massive wage increases to civil servants, meant that 20 million euro was already lost and a further 100 million will almost certainly be dropped.

Trainings and workshops

Legal Aid to Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo continued with the implementation 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 Commission Liaison Office to Kosovo. On 28 April, ECMI Kosovo organised the first of ten civil society workshops on 'Taking Action against Human Rights Violations'. These workshops are aimed at increasing the awareness of vulnerable and marginalised groups in Kosovo on the legal aid services offered through this project.



Moreover, Legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance to 97 beneficiaries in 8 municipalities: Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica, Skenderaj/ Srbica, Prishtinë/ Priština, Klinë/ Klina, Suharekë/ Suva Reka, Leposavić/ Leposaviq and Gračanica/ Graçanicë. Furthermore, ECMI Kosovo finalised its research on the institutional and legislative framework for vulnerable and marginalised groups. This research will be published in May 2011.





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Support to the Decentralisation Process

On 28 April, the Municipal Assembly of Klokot/Kllokot accepted the needs assessment developed by ECMI Kosovo and focusing on the Albanian community residing in the municipality. This project is financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

CCC

On 29 April, the CCC had a plenary session in which several new members were appointed to the council and in which it was agreed to ask for an update from the relevant institutions on the recommendations of the Working Group on Education provided in 2010. Also, it was announced that the Council, from this year onwards, will have its own budget, over which it will exercise full control. This is a policy change that ECMI Kosovo has consistently and strongly advocated for and believes will have a significant impact in increasing the efficiency of the work of the CCC. Finally, the CCC approved the working plan for 2011, which was developed in close cooperation with ECMI Kosovo.

Improving the Competencies of Municipal Officials to Communicate in the Official Languages of Kosovo

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo recruited teachers of the Serbian and Albanian language, targeting Albanian- and Serbian-speaking municipal officials respectively. ECMI Kosovo also promoted the courses among municipal officials and facilitated the enrollment of interested participants. In the upcoming period, teachers will design language teaching

programmes for the courses that are planned to start beginning of May, specially adapted to the needs of the municipal officials. The aim of this project is to improve the competencies of municipal officials to communicate in the official languages of Kosovo and contribute to an increased use of both languages. The project is financed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Census in Kosovo

ECMI Kosovo started with outreach activities in northern Kosovo aimed at providing general information about the census to the residents. To this end, ECMI Kosovo conducted 5 round-tables with Serb and Albanian communities in the North (see textbox for further details). Two more round-tables are foreseen targeting the Serb and Roma community, in addition to providing information through TV and radio. This project is financed by UNOPS.

Staff Changes

Ms. Gaëlle Cornuz, who had been working with ECMI Kosovo for 2 ½ years, has decided to pursue other professional plans. Though she is no longer employed with ECMI Kosovo, we are pleased to count Mrs. Cornuz as associate member. ECMI Kosovo would like to sincerely thank Mr. Cornuz for her hard work and outstanding commitment.

Census - 5 Roundtables

In the second half of April, ECMI Kosovo organised 5 round-tables in northern Kosovo, three of which targeted Serb community and two the Albanian community living in the North. The events were conducted by local coordinators and gathered mostly women of both communities. The round-tables were held in the following locations: Zvečan/Zveçan, Rudare, Kodra e Minatoreve/Mikronaselje, Çabër/Cabra. Given the current context where the census dates have not yet been determined, the outreach campaign focused on public education and general information about census.

