



## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – March 2011

### Political Developments

#### **Resignation of President of Kosovo, Mr. Pacolli**

Since March 29<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Pacolli has stopped exercising his functions as President of Kosovo. The Constitutional Court found that Mr. Pacolli's election on February 22<sup>nd</sup> was unconstitutional because the required quorum of two-thirds of the 120 MPs were not present, and only one candidate was put forward for the post.

#### **Census in Northern Kosovo**

On March 29<sup>th</sup>, the Municipal Assembly of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë North called on Serbs and other minority communities to boycott the forthcoming census organised by the government in Prishtinë/Priština. They also announced they would stop cooperating with the EULEX mission until it begins working in line with its mandate.

These affirmations take place in the context of Belgrade's call to a boycott of the census, unless organised by the UN in all of Kosovo. Conversely, Mr. Slobodan Petrovic, Kosovo's Serb Deputy PM and Minister for Local Government, said it was in the interest of Kosovo Serbs to participate.

Meanwhile, the government of Kosovo and Eurostat, the EU statistical agency, said the census would go ahead on April 1<sup>st</sup>, whether or not northern Kosovo takes part.

#### **Arrest of KLA leaders**

Thousands of people protested in Prishtinë/Priština on March 22<sup>nd</sup> against the arrest of former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters, including MP and former Minister of Transport, Mr. Fatmir Limaj, who is suspected of ordering one murder and participating in the inhumane treatment of prisoners held in the Kleqke KLA camp, in Malishevë/Mališevo municipality, during the 1999 Kosovo war.

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, the EU mission arrested nine people in an investigation relating to war crimes. Mr. Limaj was taken in for questioning by EULEX prosecutors and later released. The mission said it only discussed the charges with Mr. Limaj since he enjoys immunity as deputy in the Kosovo Assembly.

Mr. Limaj has already faced a war crimes trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague, which ended with his acquittal.

#### **Prishtinë/Priština - Belgrade Talks**

With 63 votes in favour, the draft resolution for the Prishtinë/Priština - Belgrade talks proposed by the PDK was approved on March 10<sup>th</sup>. The resolution outlines the issues the

Assembly finds acceptable for the talks in Brussels that began on March 8<sup>th</sup> and are planned to continue throughout April. They are related to air traffic, customs, cadastral documents, and Kosovo's participation in regional initiatives. The text states that the talks will be held between two countries and that Kosovo's status and territorial sovereignty will not be part of the negotiations.

The three largest opposition parties, the LDK, Vetëvendosje, and AAK, voted against the resolution. Vetëvendosje proposed a parallel resolution putting conditions that Serbia must meet prior to the start of the talks, including recognising Kosovo's independence and seeking public forgiveness for all crimes committed in Kosovo.

Kosovo and Serbia have said that some progress has been made on issues of cadastre and land registers, as well as energy supply, during the second round of talks on March 28<sup>th</sup> in Brussels. Negotiations are expected to continue in mid-April, when issues surrounding the free movement of people and goods transport will likely be on the agenda.

#### **Blockade of Kosovo Goods**

Kosovo officials have rejected a proposal made in March of an influential think-tank, the Gap Institute, to pull out of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) if Serbia and Bosnia continue to block its exports, and focus on trade relations with Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. Instead, Kosovo, which is chairing the organisation, said it would raise the issue of accepting goods marked with Kosovo customs stamps during the second CEFTA meeting in late April, arguing that breaking off from CEFTA would only damage Kosovo's economy and bid for the EU.

#### **Legal Aid to Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups**

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo continued 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.

Legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance to 87 beneficiaries in 8 municipalities: Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica, Skenderaj/Srbica, Prishtinë/Priština, Klinë/ Klina, Suharekë/ Suva Reka, Leposavić/ Leposaviq and Gračanica/ Graçanicë. ECMI Kosovo continued and finished its small information campaign and continued with its research on the institutional and legislative framework for vulnerable and marginalised groups. This research will form the basis of future outreach and training activities.





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### Census in Kosovo

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo started implementing outreach activities aimed at increasing the awareness and participation of isolated minority communities in Kosovo's census, which will be held in the first half of April 2011. On March 4<sup>th</sup>, ECMI Kosovo organised a roundtable in Gračanica/Gračanice with civil society organisations to provide them with information about the upcoming census and to consult on the planned activities. Following that, ECMI Kosovo conducted 10 round-tables targeting key individuals from the Serb, Roma, Croat and Gorani minority communities (see textbox for more details). ECMI Kosovo also used media to inform minority community members at large about the upcoming census. A debate with municipal representatives from Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokotit-Vërbocit, Ranilug/Ranillug, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo and Gjilan/Gnjilane was broadcasted on TV PULS covering the Gjilan/Gnjilane region. ECMI representatives were also interviewed for two Serbian language programmes of the RTK television. Furthermore, an informational radio spot on the census was broadcasted on 6 Serbian-language radio stations and information was disseminated through ECMI Kosovo's Facebook and Twitter account, as well as in Serbian online newspapers. ECMI Kosovo is currently finalising its preparations for the outreach activities in northern Kosovo.

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

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, ECMI Kosovo launched a new project 'Provision of Language-learning Opportunities for Municipal Officials in Kosovo', supported by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). This pilot project aims to provide municipal officials in the pilot municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpçë with a six-month language training in Serbian and Albanian. Moreover, after the finalisation of the project, practical recommendations will be formulated for

eventual follow-up language teaching in other municipalities. ECMI Kosovo is currently recruiting (the vacancy announcements can be found under <http://bit.ly/hsfk9G> and <http://bit.ly/gjtb2t>).

### Support to the Decentralisation Process



On March 31<sup>st</sup>, ECMI Kosovo presented to the Municipal Assembly of Klokot/Kllokot a needs-assessment for the Albanian community in the municipality. The full content of the study will be discussed by the Municipal Assembly in April. On March 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, ECMI Kosovo supported the organisation of a workshop aiming to improve relations between the municipality of Gračanica/Gračanice and the Roma community and enhance the awareness of the Roma community of their rights in Kosovo.

On March 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, ECMI Kosovo supported the organisation of a 2-day training workshop for Serb youth in the new municipality of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë. The participants were provided with training sessions on project development, CV writing and advocacy.

This support was part of the project "Support to Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process, financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

### Trainings and Workshops

#### Census – 10 Round Tables



In the period from 10<sup>th</sup> of March until 25<sup>th</sup> of March, round-table discussions were held in the following 10 municipalities in order to inform minority community members about the upcoming census: Lipjan/ Lipljan, Dragash/ Dragaš, Obiliq/ Obilić, Novobërdë/ Novo Brdo, Rahovec/ Orahovac, Peja/Peć, Klokot-Vrbovac/ Kllokot-Vërboc, Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Ranilug/ Ranillug, Parteš/Partesh. ECMI Kosovo's local outreach officers gathered around 20 key individuals from minority communities at each round-table, where they provided accurate information on the census and stressed the importance of participation.

