



## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – October 2011

### **Political Developments:**

#### **Roadblocks in the North**

The Kosovo border dispute has continued through October, with major roads remaining blocked in northern Kosovo. After the expiry of several deadlines to remove the barricades, KFOR have begun dismantling them by removing roadblocks in Zupče/Zupçe and Jagnjenica/Jagnjenicë. In response, the local Serb population erected new barriers. While the border crossing points have been opened by KFOR, no movement has been reported because of access roads being blocked by barricades.

At the end of the month, the so-called Mayors of the four parallel municipalities in the north of Kosovo have decided to open one lane on major roads in the north for KFOR trucks for the purpose of re-supplying their border presence in the north. KFOR Commander Erhard Drews, responding to the decision of Serb representatives to give full freedom of movement to KFOR, stated that they will not exercise this right until all international missions, including EULEX, as well as all citizens, are granted the same level of access. Both NATO Secretary General Rasmussen and KFOR Commander Drews emphasized the importance of finding a political solution for the problem of roadblocks in the North.

Earlier that month, Serbian intelligence services, in a hearing with the Serbian parliament's Security Committee, uncovered for the first time that clashes with KFOR troops at Jarinjë/Jarinje checkpoint were organized by a smuggling dealer named Zvonko Veselinović, believed to be a resident of northern Kosovo.

#### **Kosovo – Serbia Talks**

Talks continue to be stalled after the head of the Serbian delegation, Stefanović, insisted that Belgrade will resume talks only after a solution is found for the border crossings points in northern Kosovo.

#### **2011 EC Kosovo Progress Report**

On 12 October, the EC published its 2011 Kosovo Progress Report, which surmised that Kosovo has met the requirements for visa

liberalization dialogue to commence, and that it is expected to issue the visa liberalisation strategy to Kosovan authorities in December. At the same time, the EC recommended Serbia the status of candidate country on the understanding that Serbia reengages in the dialogue with Kosovo and moves swiftly to the implementation of agreements reached to date.

#### **Discussion on approach to Northern Kosovo**

Discussion about the approach to Northern Kosovo were intensified after the EC, in its Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2011-2012, called on Kosovo to launch a comprehensive agenda for the north. There was some speculation in the media and various circles that a provisional international administration for northern Kosovo, or a new plan, described as "Ahtisaari Plus" should be advanced. However, major EU Countries, through their Embassies in Prishtina, including Kosovo Prime Minister Thaçi, together with President Atifete Jahjaga have reiterated that the solution for north Kosovo is the Ahtisaari Plan.

#### **Further recognition of Kosovo**

In October Cote d'Ivoire and Kuwait officially recognised Kosovo as an independent state. So far, as of October 2011, a total of 83 countries have recognised Kosovo independence.

### **Project Activities**

#### **Support to Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process**

ECMI Kosovo continued with implementation of the project extension 'Support to Minority Communities during and after the Decentralisation Process' funded by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After meetings with Municipal officials of the five target Municipalities, on 24 October ECMI Kosovo signed MoUs with each Mayor, at a public event which took place at Gorenje Hotel, near Gračanica/Gračanicë. The event was also attended by the Deputy Minister of Local Government Administration, Rifat Krasniç, as well as representatives from the

Finnish Embassy in Prishtinë/Priština. The MoU's establish and regulate cooperation between ECMI Kosovo and each target Municipality implementing the project.



ECMI Kosovo also organized consultation meetings with over 30 representatives of local civil society organisations and local business community in all the five municipalities. These meetings provided a forum for discussions on challenges and responses to local economic development and enabled them to establish better channels of communication and information sharing. They also helped ECMI Kosovo to broadly identify the main priority areas for economic activity and local economic development in each of them.

Finally, a concept, methodology and plan for socio-economic analysis and needs assessment have been developed as the next phase of the project.

#### **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. During October, ECMI Kosovo organized a Kosovo-wide outreach campaign aimed at increasing the awareness of Kosovo citizens on the free legal aid available and identifying potential strategic litigation cases. 5 legal outreach officers visited all municipalities in Kosovo, targeting both major urban centres and more isolated





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rural and minority community areas. Through this campaign, 394 new legal aid cases were registered. Finally, Legal aid lawyers provided free legal aid to 126 beneficiaries in 8 municipalities. During this period ECMI Kosovo continued with a project funded by the Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).



Through this project, ECMI Kosovo will be able to expand its legal aid coverage to four new municipalities: Novo Brdo/ Novobërdë, Klokot-Vrbovac/ Kllokot-Vërboc, Parteš/ Partesh and Ranilug/ Ranillug. During October, ECMI Kosovo organised weekly visits to Parteš/Partesh and Ranilug/ Ranillug.

### Language Training for Municipal Officials

In October, the project providing Serbian and Albanian language courses to municipal officials in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, funded by the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, entered its last month. During this month, ECMI Kosovo introduced a joint conversation class for participants of both courses, which provided them with an

opportunity to jointly practice professional and daily situations in both languages. Earlier in September, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities representative, Pavlo Byalyk, visited the language classes and led a discussion with participants and municipal representatives.

### Building Sensitivity for Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian Communities in Schools

In October, ECMI Kosovo organised 'Building cooperation' workshops in the municipalities of Ferizaj/Uroševac (20 October 2011), Lipjan/Lipljan (25 October 2011), and Obiliq/Obilić (29 October 2011). The aim of the workshops was to provide an opportunity to teachers, parents, civil society, municipal officials and school directors to jointly discuss challenges facing the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in education, whilst fostering cooperation between teachers and parents. The participants discussed and identified best practices on how to overcome problems related to economic hardship, dropouts, absences and motivation of pupils, low awareness of parents and discrimination. Following this, the discussion centred on ways of sustainably engaging in cooperation. Altogether, 104 participants in total attended the workshops. The project is funded by the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities.

### Improving the Delivery of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Education

ECMI Kosovo continued with the implementation of the project 'Improving the Delivery of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Education in the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje', funded by UNICEF. In October, ECMI Kosovo began providing technical support and expertise to the municipal officials with the revision and operationalisation of the education component of the current Municipal Action Plan for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities. The support to the

municipality is being delivered by a technical advisor who has been hired to directly assist the relevant municipal officials. Besides that, ECMI Kosovo advised the municipality on the establishment of a task-force within the municipal structures that shall monitor and coordinate the implementation of activities by the municipality aimed at improving the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Finally, the experts hired for conducting the capacity needs assessment and the baseline study delivered first drafts of their reports.

### Support to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities

ECMI Kosovo supported the CCC to prepare conclusions regarding amendments in the Rules and Procedure of the Government, which oblige the OPM Legal Office to hold a meeting aimed at establishing institutional cooperation with the CCC. The CRIC also proposed amendments on the new draft-Law on Communities, which were not harmonized with the CCC demands. Therefore, the CCC, supported by ECMI Kosovo, agreed to convey its discontent with the proposed amendments to the Legislative Committee of the Kosovo Assembly. Finally, the Secretariat, supported by ECMI Kosovo, finished the selection and recruitment of two new legal officers who are going to start working as of the next month.

### ECMI Kosovo on media

In October, ECMI Kosovo Director Adrian Zeqiri made an appearance in the TV debate 'Slobodno Srpski', as well as the Serbian language programme of RTK.

### Staff changes

In the past few months, ECMI Kosovo welcomed five new team members: Artan Çollaku, Taner Boynik, Etleva Sefaj, Mihajlo Dekić and our new intern Chris Aston.

