



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – February 2011

Political Developments

Pristina-Belgrade Talks

The several times postponed talks between Serbia and Kosovo are due to resume in March. Prime Minister Hashim Thaqi said Pristina and Belgrade will talk as two independent states and the main topics will be freedom of movement, trade and regional cooperation.

These talks are particularly important in the European integration agenda of Kosovo. Mr Thaqi stressed that Kosovo was dedicated to economic development, rule of law and good neighbourly relations. Success in these fields "would speed us in Euro-Atlantic integrations", he added.

Thaqi has appointed Edita Tahiri, the Deputy Prime minister, to lead the Kosovo delegation in dialogue with Serbia. The latter said that Kosovo's final status, its territorial integrity and the future of the Serb-run northern Kosovo will not be on the agenda of the future talks with Serbia. The talks are expected to take place in Brussels.

Election of New President of Kosovo

On February 22nd, Behgjet Pacolli, the leader of the New Kosovo Alliance, AKR, and owner of the Swiss-based, international construction firm Mabetex, was voted in the third round, with 62 votes in favour, four against, and one cancelled vote. The opposition boycotted the vote. In the first two rounds of voting in the Parliament, Pacolli was not able to get the required two-thirds majority of votes in the Parliament. The third round required only a simple majority.

Two opposition parties, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) claimed the President of Kosovo's election breached the Constitution, and asked the constitutional court to investigate the circumstances of the vote. A thirty-minute break was made between the second and third voting turns, at the request of Kosovo's ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). Jakup Krasniqi, speaker of parliament and a senior member of the PDK, warned that taking a break would be unconstitutional but allowed it to take place nonetheless.

Mr. Pacolli's AKR has formed a coalition cabinet with the

largest party, the PDK, led by incoming Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, and several smaller parties.

Publication of Messages During Presidential Election

The Koha Ditore and Express dailies published pictures of text messages sent between Mr. Pacolli and his advisor, who was seated next to American Ambassador Christopher Dell in the Assembly and appeared to be relaying the diplomat's advice. The pictures of the text message seem to indicate that Pacolli's team sought the advice of the US Ambassador as they attempted to secure Pacolli's approval as President. The Ambassador has condemned this publication as violation of private information, an accusation refuted by a local journalists' association insisting that the Assembly of Kosovo is a public space.

Formation of New Government

The same day, the Parliament also approved the new government. With 65 votes in favour and one against, MPs approved 17 new ministers. 66 MPs were present as the opposition parties boycotted the vote.

The cabinet has five Deputy Prime Ministers. For the first time, one Kosovo Serb, MP Slobodan Petrovic, the leader of the Serb Liberals, takes up a Deputy Prime Minister post as part of the coalition agreement that his party signed with the PDK. Mr. Petrovic will also run the Ministry of Public Governance.

The PDK-led coalition includes the New Kosovo Alliance, AKR, headed by new President Pacolli, the Serb Liberal Party, SLS, the Ibrahim Rugova list, and several minority parties.

Oman Recognises Kosovo

Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on February 4th that the Middle Eastern state of Oman had recognised Kosovo's independence, the 75th State to do so.





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Census in Kosovo

On February 3rd, ECMI Kosovo launched a 3-month project funded by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) aiming at increasing the awareness and participation of isolated minority communities in Kosovo in the census scheduled for the first half of April 2011.

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo completed a research aiming to identify the major concerns of minority community members and produced informational material specifically targeting members of the Serb, Roma, Gorani and Albanian communities. Training on the Census project was provided to selected local outreach officers who will lead a series of 17 round-tables throughout Kosovo, including northern Kosovo. Other activities planned by ECMI Kosovo in order to inform minority community members about the upcoming census are two media events, a consultation round-table with civil society organisations, as well as broadcasting through new media.

Support to the Decentralisation Process

ECMI Kosovo finished the development of information leaflets on the services offered by the municipalities of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo and Klokot/Kllokot and distributed the leaflets in these municipalities. The development of a similar leaflet for the municipality of Ranilug/Ranillug is expected soon. On February 24th, ECMI Kosovo attended a reception organised by the Municipal Preparation Team for Mitrovicë/Mitrovica North. Moreover, ECMI Kosovo held a series of informal meetings with civil society actors to

assess their needs over the next period and what role ECMI Kosovo can play.

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. Legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance in 6 municipalities: Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica, Skenderaj/ Srbica, Prishtinë/ Priština, Klinë/ Klina and Gračanica/ Graçanicë. In order to promote these legal clinics, ECMI Kosovo has started a small outreach campaign. Furthermore, ECMI Kosovo 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.

Staff Changes

ECMI Kosovo is pleased to welcome a new intern, Alessandra Briganti. Her main tasks will be related to the decentralisation process.

Trainings and workshops

On February 25th, ECMI Kosovo organised a training for its local collaborators in the Census project. The aim of the training was to prepare the outreach officers that will be conducting a series of round-tables with representatives of minority communities. During the training, technicalities of the census process were explained and eventual concerns of minority community members were discussed, in order to prepare the outreach officers to play down any concerns raised by minority community members during the round-tables and convince them of the importance of participating in the census.

