



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – July 2011

Political developments

Border control dispute

The end of July saw the dispute over border control in the north escalate; the situation is ongoing. During this month an embargo was placed on Serbian imports into Kosovo, a retaliatory measure to Serbia's blocking of Kosovo goods since 2008. This move by the Kosovo government necessitated access to Gates 1 and 31 on the border with Serbia, with Kosovo special police attempting to gain full control over these border points on 25 July. The police encountered resistance from local Serbs who organised road blockades; and the border crossing at Jarinje was later burned down.

The intervention of the Kosovo police, during which a police officer was killed, was not backed by either KFOR or EULEX; and Prime Minister Thaçi the next day sacked the Head of the Police force, Reshat Maliqi. The EU expressed regret that the move was not coordinated with the international community; with international missions based in Kosovo also issuing statements repudiating all violence employed during the dispute. Representatives of US, Germany and England also stated that the territorial integrity of Kosovo must be respected; a position echoed in ICO Head Pieter Feith's statement that "the [Kosovo] Government is entitled to take steps to administer all of its territory". By the end of the month, KFOR troops declared the two border crossings military zones, while talks between Serbian officials and KFOR had not yet resulted in an agreement.

International Appointments

The EU has not yet elected a Special Representative for Kosovo, thereby further extending the mandate of the current provisional EUSR, Fernando Gentilini. Meanwhile, the mandate of the International Civilian Office (ICO) is due to end during 2012; with ICO Chief Pieter Feith to preside over the continued implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan until the closure of its office supervising Kosovo independence. The appointment of US

diplomat Robert E. Sorenson as Officer in Charge of UNMIK was also announced in July; after the departure of Lamberto Zannier to head up the OSCE.

Kosovo – Serbia talks

There was a breakthrough in the EU-led negotiations in early July, when agreements were reached concerning freedom of movement, acceptance of mutual university degrees and issues concerning civil registry. However, the sixth round of talks between Pristina and Belgrade in Brussels, due to take place later in July, was postponed until September. On the agenda was the divisive issue concerning Kosovo customs stamps, with Serbia's concern that acceptance of the stamps is de facto recognition of Kosovo's statehood.

Debate over MP immunity

July saw a crescendo in the debate concerning parliamentary immunity from penal prosecution; with Prime Minister Thaçi eventually requesting the Constitutional Court for clarification. Earlier in the month, EULEX raised the issue concerning current members of the Assembly under investigation.

Limaj Indicted

The MP Fatmir Limaj was indicted in July for war crimes against civilians and crimes against prisoners of war committed during the 1998-1999 Kosovo war for independence. Limaj was previously indicted in 2003 by Hague-based war crimes tribunal for war crimes against civilians, but later acquitted due to lack of evidence.

Haradinaj back before The Hague

A partial re-trial for former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj is scheduled to begin in August in The Hague. While Haradinaj was acquitted in 2008 of war crimes committed during the conflict in Kosovo in 1998; the prosecution appealed the verdict citing witness intimidation.

Census in the north

While preliminary census results were collated in June, no agreement has been reached with the authorities in Kosovo's northern regions for the census to be conducted by UNOPS.

Recognition of Kosovo

The Central African Republic recognized the independence of Kosovo on 22nd July, becoming the 77th country to do so.

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 this month, ECMI Kosovo processed all findings from the 10 civil society workshops on 'Taking Action against Human Rights Violations' organised throughout Kosovo; and started to take action on the cases identified through these workshops. At the same time, ECMI Kosovo is researching several potential cases of strategic litigation. Finally, legal aid lawyers provided free legal assistance to 121 beneficiaries in eight municipalities: Gjilan/ Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica, Skenderaj/ Srbica, Prishtinë/ Priština, Klinë/ Klina, Suharekë/ Suva Reka, Leposavić/ Leposaviq and Gračanica/ Graçanicë.





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Consultative Council for Communities

(CCC)

During the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo continued with the implementation of the project 'Institutional Support to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities 2011', financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Specifically, ECMI Kosovo focussed on providing technical and legislative support to the CCC secretariat. It is providing legislative support to the development of comments on the draft *Law on Pre-University Education*, which were proposed by the CCC working groups on legislation and education in a group meeting organised on 20 July.

The comments are expected to be submitted to the Ministry for Education, Science and Technology in August. At the same time, ECMI Kosovo monitored the CCC plenary session on 14 July, focussed on the *Law on the Use of Languages*, and the meeting of the working group on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities on 28 July. Finally, support was also provided to the Secretariat in the preparation of a budget for 2012.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, ECMI Kosovo started an additional project to support the CCC, funded by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office. As part of this project, ECMI Kosovo has begun developing a website for the CCC.

Language training for municipal officials

In the month of July, ECMI Kosovo continued to provide the municipal officials in the municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpçë with regular Serbian and

Albanian language courses. Two evaluation meetings were conducted with the courses' participants to receive feedback about their satisfaction with the courses during the first two months. The language teaching programmes were also finalised, following adaptations according to feedback received from participants in the first month's evaluation. The project, which foresees a provision of language courses over a six-month period, is financed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Building Sensitivity for Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian Communities in Schools

In July, ECMI Kosovo continued with the implementation of its project aiming at increasing the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in schools, funded by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Evaluation meetings for the assessment of the impact of the last year's 'Building sensitivity' project were conducted in the three pilot municipalities of Prizren, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Gjakovë/Đakovica.

In these meetings, teachers, school directors, municipal officials and representatives of local civil society organisations were asked to assess the impact of last year's activities on the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in schools in their municipalities. The data collected will now be analysed, with the findings compiled in the form of a report.

Another activity foreseen to take place in the month of August is the organisation of teachers' visits to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian neighbourhoods in the municipalities of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Obiliq/Obilić and Lipjan/Lipljan. The objective of the meetings between teachers and parents of primary and secondary school students will be to increase the awareness among parents on the importance of education for their children; and to further solidify teachers' understanding of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities and the challenges impacting their education.

ECMI Kosovo vacancies

ECMI Kosovo is currently recruiting staff and experts for its new project on improving the education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The vacancies can be found under <http://bit.ly/pIAk7w>, <http://bit.ly/p4nXGd>, <http://bit.ly/qdbIDC>.

