

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES – ECMI KOSOVO

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Round Table on Decentralisation – RAE Community Members (Gracanica)

10 June 2009



On Tuesday 10 June in the Roma Mahalla of Gracanica the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo), in cooperation with Mr. Afrim Osmani, director of the Roma Education Centre, organised a round table on ‘Decentralisation and the Establishment of Municipal Preparatory Teams (MPTs)’. This round table was part of the ECMI Kosovo project on decentralisation funded by the Finnish Government, for which ECMI Kosovo is organising a series of round tables in all six new municipalities. The round table was intended to present the decentralisation process and the establishment of the

Municipal Preparation Teams specifically. The meeting was attended by representatives of the RAE community in Gracanica and representatives of ECMI Kosovo.

The round table was opened by ECMI representative, Mr. Lars Burema who welcomed the participants, explained the aim of the meeting and gave a short presentation explaining the process of decentralisation. Mr. Burema explained all the benefits of this process for the RAE community. Among others this will include the right to choose the municipal Chief of Police, authority over culture and in some municipalities authority over secondary healthcare and tertiary education. He specifically mentioned that the RAE community will have a stronger position in the new municipality as the largest minority community in Gracanica. He also explained the main tasks of the MPTs and their role in determining future priorities of these new municipalities, as well as the way that these new municipalities will be financed.

The floor was then opened up to remarks from the community representatives who explained that they experienced a serious lack of information about the decentralization process, and the establishment of MPTs in particular. Other issues that were raised were concerns about the position of RAE within the new municipality, education, employment and the future of the parallel institutions that are currently active in the area.

ECMI Kosovo representatives, Mr. Burema and Mr. Salijevic, expressed their understanding for their problems regarding the lack of information and explained that this was the reason why this round table was organized. They provided answers to their questions and stressed the importance of taking a proactive stance to ensure the interests of RAE communities are respected, through voting but also by putting their recommendations on paper so that these could be presented to the new municipality.

Ms. Burema closed the meeting and thanked all participants for their presence and input.

ECMI Kosovo is providing support to the MLGA on how to effectively implement decentralization whilst including and considering the needs and recommendations of local communities. The project is funded by the Finnish Government.