



### Voter Education in the New Municipalities

October – November 2009



The success of the decentralisation process is dependent on community participation in the local elections. To promote awareness of the elections ECMI Kosovo developed a voter education campaign targeting the Serb and RAE communities in the 3+1 new municipalities where elections were organised: Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Gračanica/Gračanicë, Klokot-Vrbovac/Klllokot-Vërboc and Ranilug/Ranillug. These activities were organised as part of ECMI Kosovo's project on decentralisation, financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

On 29 September 2009 ECMI Kosovo was officially authorised by the Central Election Commission of Kosovo to start its activities. Activities were started in the same week to inform communities regarding the 2 October deadline for re-registration of voters and the challenging of the voter list. ECMI Kosovo put up posters in all 4 municipalities and broadcasted relevant information on local radio.

In the following period ECMI Kosovo developed a program for voter education which included face to face meetings with community representatives, the organisation of round tables, the development of printed materials (i.e. leaflets, flyers and posters), the organisation of a press conference and the broadcasting of radio clips. ECMI Kosovo and its field officers coordinated all their activities closely with the CEC, ICO and Municipal Preparation Teams.

In its activities ECMI Kosovo aimed to provide community members with the necessary information to make an informed decision on whether to vote or not. Information provided included: the locations of the polling stations, the voting procedure, the documents required, and the competencies of the new municipalities.



A few problems were encountered during the campaign:

- Some vital information was not available until late in the process. The decision regarding the validity of Serbian and UNMIK IDs was left until two weeks before Election Day. Moreover, the final list of polling stations was, in most cases, only announced in the week before Election Day.
- An unwillingness of certain parts of the Serb community to participate in the process, due to two factors: The fear that participation in the elections would lead to sanctions by Serbia; and the belief that participation in the elections would equal recognition of an independent Kosovo.
- The lack of strong political activism left many citizens uninformed regarding their electoral choices, and negatively affected their interest in the electoral process.

However, ECMI Kosovo distributed the latest available information and found that, in the 4 relevant municipalities, most community members had access to the required information, which was reflected in the relatively high turnout on Election Day.

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