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## Staff

In July, ECMI Kosovo welcomed the arrival of Ariana Hasani, Renata Nikolla and our new intern Naida Hadžiomerović. Also, Amanda Berisha has completed her internship at ECMI Kosovo; we thank her for her valuable contribution.

## In Focus

### **Pilot Trainings on Mainstreaming Community Rights in Kosovo Civil Service Successfully Completed**

On 8 and 9 July 2013, ECMI Kosovo conducted the last of a series of three pilot trainings on community rights for Kosovo civil servants. It was attended by 21 representatives from the Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns (MOCRs) from 11 Kosovo municipalities. These pilot trainings aimed at testing a curriculum developed by ECMI Kosovo to enhance civil servants' understanding of community rights in Kosovo, and their own corresponding roles and responsibilities. Participants actively engaged in discussions, and assessed the quality of materials and methods extremely well. ECMI Kosovo will start the preparations for a training of trainers (ToTs), in cooperation with the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration (KIPA), in order to ensure the sustainability and handover of the training to Kosovo institutions. The development and testing of the training curriculum is conducted in the framework of the Swiss FDFA-funded project *'Supporting Effective Governance for Minority Communities in Kosovo.'*

### **In this newsletter, you will find information on:**

- [ECMI Kosovo's Work](#)
- [Institutional Developments](#)
- [Political Developments](#)

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## **ECMI Kosovo's Work**

### **Supporting the Ministry for Communities and Returns in the Development of its 2014-2018 Strategy**

In July 2013, ECMI Kosovo started the implementation of its new project on supporting the Ministry for Communities and Returns (MCR) in the development of the MCR 2014-2018 Strategy for Communities and Returns, supported by the Royal Norwegian and British Embassies. The MCR is currently in the process of developing a new strategy for the 2014-2018 period. This strategy will define the vision and objectives of the Kosovo Government in

relation to the return process. Through this project, ECMI Kosovo will support the strategy development process in two main ways. First, a coordinator will be engaged to directly support the MCR, second, an assessment will be conducted of the current 2009-2013 strategy that will inform the strategy development process.

In July, ECMI Kosovo held a number of interviews with relevant local and international stakeholders involved in the return process, on the basis of which a research proposal was developed for the strategy assessment.

### **Training for Civil Society Organisations on Identifying and Addressing Violations**

On 30 July 2013, ECMI Kosovo organised a training session aimed at strengthening selected non-majority community CSOs' capacities to engage in the area of community rights. In the first part of the session, participants were trained to recognise the mechanisms for redress in order to realize their rights and resolve challenging issues affecting their communities. Next, the issue of segregation in schools was addressed and participants were familiarised with their rights under local and international law as well as international conventions. Furthermore, they were given a practical exercise to write a hypothetical request for the dissolution of a segregated class in one elementary school in Kosovo. Finally, on the issue of language rights, the participants looked at the relevant national legal framework and discussed examples of violations of language rights made by public authorities. During a practical exercise they had to fill in a complaint form to the Office of the Language Commissioner. This activity was part of two ECMI Kosovo projects, funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The former is implemented in partnership with the NGOs Communication for Social Development (CSD) and Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo ([NRAEWOK](#)).



**Workshops for Civil Society Organisations on Advocacy**

### **Analysis and Advocacy Plan Development**

During July 2013, ECMI Kosovo in partnership with its partner organisations CSD and NRAEWOK organised six workshops with selected CSOs and CSOs' coalitions. The purpose of these workshops was to work closely with each of them to identify specific problems to address and to develop detailed and targeted advocacy plans. These workshops were supported by the European Union Office in Kosovo under the project *Empowering Civil Society to Participate in Policy and Decision-Making Processes*.

### **Further Support to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Economic Empowerment**

During the month of July, ECMI Kosovo, in cooperation with the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women Organisations of Kosovo (NRAEWOK) and the consultation company D&D Business Support Centre, started offering individual coaching and support to eight Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women and girls from the municipalities of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakova/Đakovica, Peja/Peć and Prizren. These beneficiaries were chosen as a result of the commitment they showed during the Entrepreneurship Trainings held the last two months. With the help and professional expertise of the consultation company, these beneficiaries are going to develop a complete business plan for their business idea. This is with the aim of applying for available business grants and loans offered by the relevant institutions and bodies during the next four months. Information gathered at the local roundtables on the existing support schemes and economic opportunities will be of use during this process.

In addition, ECMI and NRAEWOK have started offering in kind support to the chosen beneficiaries, so that they can buy necessary equipment and raw materials for the smooth running of their businesses. The aim is to alleviate the economic insecurity of the targeted beneficiaries, also triggering the development of their income-generating activities. These activities are conducted in the framework of the project '*Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women*,' supported by UN Women, UNDP and the EU.

### **Support to Decentralisation in Kosovo: Project's Steering Committee**

On 25 July 2013, the Decentralisation project's Steering Committee was held in Gračanica/Graçanicë with representatives from the Finnish Embassy and the main beneficiaries of the project, namely the municipalities of Gračanica/Graçanicë, Klokot/Kllokot, Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Parteš/Partesh, Ranilug/Ranillug, the Mitrovica/ë North Administrative Office

(MNAO) and the Association of Serbian Entrepreneurs (ASP). After lively discussion the participants agreed on a set of activities to be implemented by the end of the year.



### **Ensuring Catch-up Classes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Children in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje**

On 12 July, ECMI Kosovo participated in a meeting of the Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje municipal task force on Education of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. The purpose was to discuss the urgent need for informal catch-up classes for children who have dropped-out of school. As a result of joint efforts and the advocacy of ECMI Kosovo and the civil society organisations The Ideas Partnership, Balkan Sunflowers, Health for All and UNICEF and OSCE, around 40 children were enabled to attend catch-up classes starting from 29 July, which will allow them to re-integrate the formal education system.

### **Preliminary Agreement Reached with 10 Target Municipalities on Provision of Serbian and Albanian Language Courses**

In July, ECMI Kosovo, together with a representative from the Office of the Language Commissioner, conducted meetings with the Mayors of ten target municipalities to inform them about language training courses for municipal officials in Kosovo's two official languages. All municipalities expressed their interest and need for language training and approved the training. As of September, Albanian and Serbian language courses will be organised in the following municipalities: Dragash/Dragaš, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Lipjan/Lipljan, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, Obiliq/Obilić, Prizren, Shtërpçë/Štrpce and Vushtrri/Vučitrn. This project is supported by the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) and the Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC)/Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

## **Institutional Developments**

### **Working Group on Employment of Non-majority Communities**

On 26 July 2013, the Working Group (WG) on Employment of Non-majority Communities established under the auspices of the Office for Community Affairs (OCA) conducted its second meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to present the findings of an assessment on the employment situation of minority communities in Kosovo civil service and publicly-owned enterprises (POEs), commissioned by OCA and UNDP. Following the presentation, a sub-working group consisting of representatives of public institutions was established. ECMI Kosovo attended the meeting in its capacity as an observer, and will provide inputs to the sub-working group for the development of policy recommendations. ECMI Kosovo supports the work of the WG in the framework of the project '*Supporting Effective Governance for Minority Communities in Kosovo*', funded by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

### **Committee on the Rights and Interests of Communities and Returns (CRICR)**

On 16 July 2013, the CRICR approved an amendment to Article 12.6 of the Draft Law for Supplementing the Law on Communities (No. 03/L-047). The amendment assigns the Montenegrin and Croat communities two seats at the Consultative Council for Communities, as opposed to the one seat provided in the Draft Law. On 19 July 2013, the CRICR met and unanimously approved the Draft Law on the Protection of Journalists' Sources (No. 04/L-137) and the Draft Law on Spatial Planning (No. 04/L-174). The Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing Law No. 04/L-165 on Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2013 was also approved with five votes in favour, two votes against and one abstaining.

### **Consultative Council for Communities**

On 25 July, the Council held a plenary session, during which the Rules and Procedures of the Council were approved. The appointment of a new Chairperson, scheduled to take place during this meeting, was postponed to the next plenary meeting in August. ECMI Kosovo is monitoring the work of the Council and its Working Groups within the framework of the Swiss FDFA-funded project.

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## **Political Developments**

### **Developments Regarding the Implementation of the**

## **Agreement between Kosovo and Serbia**

The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> rounds of dialogue were held in Brussels on the 8 and 24 July between the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ivica Dačić and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi mediated by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton. In the trilateral meeting the Prime Ministers discussed the way forward in the implementation of the April Agreement on the normalisation of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and the preparation of the local elections scheduled for 3 November. The next session of the dialogue is scheduled for 27 August.

The integration of the judicial system in the North is a necessary step for the implementation of the Brussels agreement. According to it Pristina has the obligation to form by 1 September an Appeal Court in Mitrovica and an adequate prosecutorial system. As of 15 July, courts in Kosovo, still operating within the Serbian legal system, no longer accept criminal cases. Further progress includes Kosovo's newly appointed liaison officer to Serbia, Valdet Sadiku, who assumed his post in July. Despite progress on several issues, an agreement on the issues of telecommunications and energy was not reached. As a reaction to the agreement and its implementation plan, the representatives of four Serb majority municipalities in northern Kosovo have established a provisional Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo.

In July, Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, Catherine Ashton and Štefan Füle, the EU Enlargement Commissioner all made separate official visits to Kosovo. They commended the progress in the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and stressed the importance of the upcoming negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. These negotiations are scheduled to start in the autumn of this year and are expected to finish by spring 2014.

## **Further Details on Voting Procedures for Local Elections Scheduled for November**

According to Catherine Ashton, both Prime Ministers Dačić and Thaçi agreed to take all concrete actions to ensure a good turnout at the local government elections set for 3 November. Dačić confirmed that Serbs may vote with the ID documents they already possess. He stressed the need for further efforts and mechanisms to ensure the voting of all IDPs and those born in Kosovo. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been authorised to organise the elections in northern municipalities and of displaced Serbs. Their involvement will extend to the election's realisation, monitoring and verification of results. The OSCE confirmed that internally displaced persons currently living outside of Kosovo will

be offered by-mail-voting.

### **The Municipality of Northern Mitrovica to be Established Following the November Local Elections**

The Municipality of Northern Mitrovica is expected to be established as the fourth Serb municipality in northern Kosovo after the elections of 3 November, which will be organised separately for northern Mitrovica for the first time. According to the Ministry of Local Government Administration, the municipality will be considered automatically established at the moment of the certification of the electoral results by the Central Election Commission.

### **Pending Decision of Constitutional Court on Controversial Law on Amnesty Passed by Kosovo Assembly**

On 11 July, the Assembly of Kosovo passed the [Law on Amnesty](#). The law grants amnesty to those persons convicted of a criminal offence, under prosecution or who could face prosecution for a criminal offence. There are over 60 criminal offences amnestied by this law. The amnesty applies to all aforementioned criminal offences committed prior to June 20, 2013 within the whole territory of Kosovo.

The [first draft law](#) was not approved by the Assembly of Kosovo, so upon the initiative of the Deputy Prime Minister Hajredin Kuçi Article 3 was amended to no longer apply to crimes of unpremeditated murder, manslaughter and theft. The draft law received widespread criticism from Kosovo's civil society. The representatives of civil society met with the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga on 19 July to present her with the petition signed by citizens for the change and amendment of the Amnesty law. The petition was backed by around 30 NGOs and contained more than 12,500 signatures. The EU Special Representative to Kosovo, Samuel Žbogar expressed that despite the public outcry, the law was necessary for the implementation of the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. Catherine Ashton stated that the law was aimed at integrating Kosovo Serbs into Kosovo's legal system by decriminalizing past resistance.

At present, the law's constitutionality is challenged before the Constitutional Court. A notification was sent to the President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga by the President of the Constitutional Court instructing her not to promulgate the law. The Constitutional Court stressed in a press release that the Law has not and cannot enter into force until the Court has rendered its final decision.

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#### **About ECMI Kosovo**

ECMI Kosovo is the principal non-governmental organisation engaged with minority issues in Kosovo, with the overarching aim to develop inclusive, representative, community-sensitive institutions that support a stable multi-ethnic Kosovo. ECMI Kosovo contributes to the developing, strengthening and implementation of relevant legislation, supports the institutionalisation of communities-related governmental bodies, and enhances the capacity of civil society actors and the government to engage with one another in a constructive and sustainable way.

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