



EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR MINORITY
ISSUES KOSOVO

PRESS RELEASE

27 NOVEMBER 2013

TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING COMMUNITY RIGHTS WITHIN KOSOVO CIVIL SERVICE & EMPOWERING MINORITY CIVIL SOCIETY

On 27 November 2013, ECMI Kosovo and its partner organisations held the certification ceremony for successful participants of two key programmes implemented throughout 2013, aimed at mainstreaming community rights within civil service and empowering minority civil society. These programmes are an example of ECMI Kosovo's dual approach of working to increase the capacities of government officials and institutions to effectively implement the extensive legal framework for the protection and promotion of minority rights in Kosovo, while also supporting communities to actively participate in decision-making and advocate for their interests and rights.

The first programme, the **'Advocacy Skills and Community Rights Programme for Civil Society'**, has been implemented between June and November 2013 within two projects,¹ funded by the European Union Office in Kosovo and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Throughout this programme, around twenty members from civil society organisations (CSOs) representing different minority communities – Serb, Bosniak, Gorani, Egyptian, Croat, Turk and Roma – have participated in a series of interactive workshops aimed at enhancing their knowledge of their community rights, and increasing their skills to advocate pro-actively for their realisation.

Some of the topics covered during the workshops were language rights, segregation in education, mechanisms of redress, advocacy skills and use of media. In addition, participants were brought together with key government institutions dealing with minority and human rights – the Ombudsperson Institution (OI), the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC), the Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC) and the Office for Community Affairs (OCA) – with a view to increasing co-operation. Participants of the programme have also been supported in the development of advocacy plans to address specific challenges facing communities, and will be supported in the implementation of such plans also in 2014.

¹ The projects *'Empowering Civil Society to Participate Effectively in Policy and Decision-Making Processes through Dialogue with Government Institutions'* and *'Supporting Effective Governance for Minority Communities in Kosovo.'* The former project is implemented by ECMI Kosovo in partnership with the NGOs *Communication for Social Development (CSD)* and *Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organisation in Kosovo (NRAEWOK)*.

The second programme, the **‘Training of Trainers on Community Rights and Methodology’**, has been conducted in close co-operation with the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration (KIPA) under the Swiss-FDFA funded project *‘Supporting Effective Governance for Minority Communities in Kosovo.’* The aim of the training of trainers (ToT) was to equip a group of motivated and talented individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide an effective, interactive and tailor-made training on community rights for civil servants. A total of eleven participants, recruited through an open call for applications, have been certified.

Participants of the ToT were trained by ECMI Kosovo and KIPA on training methodology and community rights, using an extensive curriculum developed by the two partner organisations. Prior to the ToT, the curriculum has also been tested through a series of pilot trainings with around 45 civil servants from the central and local levels, and positively assessed by participants.

The ultimate goal of this set of activities is to integrate this training curriculum on community rights into the programme for Kosovo civil servants, in co-operation with KIPA, so as to mainstream community rights within civil service, thus enhancing the implementation of the relevant legal framework.

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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.