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INFORMATION BULLETIN

Lack of Adequate Budget Allocation Seriously Hampers the Work of the Consultative Council for Communities

On 7-9 June 2013, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Kosovo hosted a two-day workshop with members of the Consultative Council for Communities (Council) and its Secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo (OPM), and Legal Office of the Office of the President of Kosovo (OP). The workshop was organized within the framework of support to the Council funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina and with the aim of addressing some of the challenges that the Council currently faces.

Two main issues were raised in the workshop. First, there exists a lack of clarity regarding the division of responsibilities between the Council's Secretariat and the Council itself. In order to address this issue, ECMI Kosovo will support the development of clear internal procedures. Second, the lack of adequate budget allocation to the Council was also identified as a key challenge. This will be the main topic of discussion of this information bulletin, which will outline the issue and argue that without a significant increase in budget the Council will not be able to effectively exercise its constitutional mandate.

The *Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in Kosovo* (hereafter: *Law on Communities*) foresees the allocation of budget to allow the Council to function effectively by:^[1]

- engaging in studies and surveys;
- seeking external expert advice;
- building the capacity of its members;
- publicising its activities;
- engaging in programming relating to community issues in Kosovo;
- assigning portions of its budget to community representative organisations, NGOs and other actors in support of projects aimed at satisfying community interests;
- arranging for capacity building within the relevant community representative organisations to help ensure effective organisation and articulation of community interests.

For the year 2013, the total budget of the Council amounts to 87.385 Euros (equal to its budget in 2012) and covers seven allocated positions for the Secretariat, of which three are not filled. The budget of the Council and its Secretariat is assigned from the budget of the OP, which also manages the budget of the Council, as the Council Secretariat does not have the required staff

to manage its own budget. After deducting the cost of maintaining the Council secretariat, approximately 60,000 Euros remain to finance the functioning of the Council, including per-diem and other financial compensations of the Council members. For an institution that has approximately 30 members and meets regularly, the Council is markedly underfunded. Not surprisingly this budget is being used almost entirely to cover the regular Council meetings and working-group meetings.

As a consequence, the limited budget does not allow the Council to implement any of the measures foreseen by the *Law on Communities* (as described above) and thus seriously hinders the effective functioning of the Council; in the current situation, the Council cannot develop any concrete programs or activities to enhance the situation of communities, and the ambitions of the Council members to fulfill their mandate are destined to be unsuccessful.

ECMI Kosovo believes that the budget of the Council should be immediately increased to ensure that the Council can effectively implement its mandate as set out in the Constitution and in the *Law on Communities*. Most of the work that the Council has been doing up to date has been externally funded, though support provided by Governments of Germany, UK and Norway. In order for this important institution to become sustainable and effective, the Kosovo Government and Assembly should immediately approve an increase of the Council's budget. As it stands, the Council cannot and will not be able to effectively exercise its functions and mandate.

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.

[1] Law on Communities, Articles 12.11 & 12.13; Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 60