MONTHLY NEWSLETTER – *September 2010*

Political developments

On 9 September the UN General Assembly discussed the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of the independence declaration by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo. The Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus that was prepared by Serbia in consultation with the EU. Upon insistence of the EU the resolution does not condemn the unilateral secession of Kosovo. The resolution calls upon parties to reopen talks with the aim to "promote cooperation, make progress on the path towards the EU and improve people's lives". This resolution is widely believed to relaunch direct negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina, which were put on hold since the declaration of independence in February 2008.

On 27 September another court ruling with a big impact on Kosovo politics was made public. The Constitutional Court of Kosovo ruled that Fatmir Sejdiu violated the constitution by simultaneously holding to the posts of President of Kosovo and party leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK. Upon this ruling Fatmir Sejdiu announced to resign as President. This step was followed by speculation about early elections to be held soon. This resignation came at an especial bad timing for Fatmir Sejdiu since he is being contested for the party leadership within the LDK as well. With the LDK being embroiled in an internal battle over succession and the party leader of another major political party, the AAK, facing a retrial in the Hague, political life in Prishtina is up for a bumpy road ahead in the coming months.

UPDATE 18 OCTOBER: Fatmir Sejdiu announces the resignation of all LDK ministers from the Government. Early elections are expected in December.

Support to the Decentralisation Process

During the reporting period ECMI Kosovo finalized its first draft of the needs assessment for the Albanian community in Klokot/Kllokot. This report is based on 170 questionnaires, several interviews and 2 focus group discussions. It will be discussed with community members in October 2010 and the generated comments will be included in the final draft.

ECMI Kosovo also continued to publish information bulletins for the municipalities of Klokot /Kllokot, Ranilug /Ranillug and Novo Brdo /Novobërdë. Moreover, ECMI Kosovo supported the organisation of public debates on the municipal budget in the municipalities of Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (on 13 September in the village of Kusce/Kuvcë) and Ranilug/Ranillug, on 20 September in the Assembly Hall in the village of Domorovce/Domorovc. The meetings had the aim to inform citizens about the planned Municipal budget for 2011.

Consultative Council for Communities

On 23 September 2010, the CCC met in a plenary meeting. At this meeting the establishment of a Working Group on the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities was discussed. ECMI Kosovo explained the importance of such a working group and it was decided that members of the three communities would meet soon to discuss the exact mandate and objectives of such a working group.

At this meeting, ECMI Kosovo informed the CCC regarding a planned 2-day training for its project funded by the government of the UK. It was decided that this training would take place on 8 and 9 October.

Building Sensitivity

Building Sensitivity to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Schools

On 7, 8 and 13 September 2010 ECMI Kosovo organized field visits on education of Roma, Ashkali and Egypytian communities in three Municipalities: Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Prizren and Gjakovë/Dakovica. In each Municipality a group of teachers from local primary and secondary schools visited neighborhoods to talk with parents about the challenges they face in the education of their children.

These field visits form the second part of a pilot project on 'Building Sensitivity to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Schools,' which aims to increase sensitivity to the rights, interests and needs of these communities within the school learning environment. Local teachers are the main target group of this project, because they form the frontline in the effort to improve education. Throughout the process local civil society organizations, parents and school directors are engaged to build understanding and cooperation. The project is supported by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Str. Rexhep Luci, No. 16/3 Prishtina, Kosovo, Tel. +381-(0) 38 224 161
www.ecmikosovo.org
info@ecmikosovo.org

CCC (Continuation)

Moreover, ECMI Kosovo expressed its readiness to provide assistance to the working groups and organised further capacity building exercises through its project funded by the German government.

Due to technical reasons it was decided to postpone the detailed reporting of the Working Group on Education for the next meeting.

Enhance and Integrate Community Concerns within the Work of the Government

Following-up from the hiring of a new staff member of the Office for Community Affairs (OCA) current August 2010, the capacity and training needs assessment of the OCA staff started in September. Mr. Ertan Munoglu, capacity development expert, has developed a two-step methodology – a self-assessment questionnaire followed by individual interviews. The final report will designed as a guidebook for staff development and will include findings of the assessment in form of a comprehensive training programme.

Collection of data for the Study on Language Policies, conducted by ECMI for the OCA, has largely been completed. Questionnaires have been completed by a great majority of central and local institutions, public enterprises and courts. Three researchers have conducted interviews and field checks in over 30 public bodies. The final step in the research is three workshops that will be held mid-October in order to collect information on community members perception of the implementation of the legal framework and contribution of policies to their integration and preservation of their languages.

The Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) has formed a working group on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, which will support the work of the CCC representative to one of the two coordination mechanisms for implementation of the Action Plan – the Inter-institutional Steering Committee, as well as outreach to members of the three communities and lobby for increased implementation of the Plan. ECMI provide technical support to this group. Details of activities will be decided at the groups' first meeting beginning of October.

Based on the outcome of a project evaluation, a new strategic direction was adopted, mainly in order to match the current staffing level of the Office for Community Affairs (OCA), one of the two project's direct beneficiaries. In addition to support to the OCA, activities' targets were widened in order to include other institutions, such as CCC.

Concerning support to the OCA, the revised design of the EthnoPolitical Map, including new municipalities, has been completed. The gathering and cross-checking of data and its accuracy are still ongoing. The first draft chapter on the legislative framework of the language study has been produced and collection of information will start mid-July.

In terms of on-going support to the OCA, new public information tools have been launched: a monthly newsletter and a website. The website contains a large section of information on and for communities, mainly based on ECMI publication Communities in Kosovo, also financed by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland as part of a previous project of support to OCA (http://kryeministriks.net/zck/?page=2,6).

Project developments with regards to other beneficiaries include the launch of a research on the roles of CCC and the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights and Interests of Communities (CRIC) in the legislative process. The objective is to further understanding of the two institution's respective roles and develop channels of cooperation in order to maximise efficiency of their interventions.

This initiative will also complement the study visit of CRIC to the Swiss Parliament of March 2010 (see Assembly Bulletin No 25, March 2010) and workshop on Parliamentary Best Practices organised by ECMI in January 2010.

The policy database, which will allow easy access to legislation and strategies' provisions relevant to communities and will be made available initially to both OCA and CCC, has been created. The identification and entry of provisions is at an early stage.

Str. Rexhep Luci, No. 16/3 Prishtina, Kosovo, Tel. +381-(0) 38 224 161
www.ecmikosovo.org
info@ecmikosovo.org