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In Focus

Call for Applications for Trainers on Community Rights for Civil Servants

ECMI Kosovo and the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration (KIPA), in the framework of the Swiss FDFA-funded project *'Supporting Effective Governance for Minority Communities in Kosovo,'* are receiving applications for trainers to be certified to provide a training on community rights for civil servants. Deadline for applications is 25 September. For more information, please see the call for applications on the websites of ECMI Kosovo or KIPA.

In this newsletter, you will find information on:

- ECMI Kosovo's Work
- Institutional Developments
- Political Developments

ECMI Kosovo's Work

New Project on Media Transparency in Northern Kosovo

On 9 August 2013, ECMI Kosovo signed a Grant Agreement with the Finnish Embassy in Pristina to implement a 1-year project on media transparency in northern Kosovo. The project has been designed in partnership with the Serbian-speaking radio Kontakt Plus, based in north Mitrovica/ë. It will start in September 2013 and enable the production and broadcast of independent daily radio news programmes, weekly interviews with key political actors, and bi-monthly socio-economic debates in the presence of guests from civil society, experts, etc. Another component of the project deals with media training for civil society activists and staff from local public authorities; and foresees an eye-opening training for local journalists about human rights and minority protection. The project will be implemented by ECMI's Mitrovica/ë North branch office.

Seminar on Annual Budget for MNAO Management

On 19 to 21 August 2013, ECMI Kosovo organised a seminar in Ohrid for the senior- and middle-management of the Mitrovica/ë North Administrative

Office (MNAO). It was attended by the Principal Executive Advisor (PEO), the deputy-PEO, and all directors of the seven thematic departments. The objective of the seminar was to internally discuss the annual budget of the Office for 2014, before it is officially submitted to the Ministry for Local Government and Administration for review, in compliance with the annual budget cycle procedure. This activity is part of the *Decentralisation project* supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

The Rules of Procedures and Code of Conduct for Consultative Council for Communities Approved by the President of the Republic

During the ECMI Kosovo workshop organized in Durrës, Albania, with the Council earlier this year three key issues were identified as debilitating to the work of the Council: firstly, the lack of clarity regarding the division of responsibilities between the members of the Council and its Secretariat, secondly, the regulation of fees and procedures for financial compensation for the members of the Council, and thirdly, the lack of adequate budget allocation to the Council by Kosovo Government and Assembly. Consequently, ECMI Kosovo hired a team of experts that worked closely with the Secretariat, the Legal Office of the Office of the President and with the Council addressing the above issues.

On 20 June, the Council approved unanimously the Code of Conduct, which, among others stipulates the relationship of the Council and accredited organisations. Further, on 25 July, the Council unanimously approved the Rules of Procedures, which govern the work of the Council, its working groups, as well as its functioning and decision-making procedures. ECMI Kosovo has worked closely with the Office of the President, its Permanent Secretary, and has drafted the Regulation on Financial Compensation for Members of the Council. The regulation takes into account the best practices of similar government bodies and is in accordance with the government policies governing this sector. The Regulation is expected to be signed soon by the President of the Republic of Kosovo, who has the sole authority over the Council.

The Secretariat has presented an enhanced budget for the work of the Council for the coming fiscal year, 2014. ECMI Kosovo calls upon all stakeholders to lobby for the increase of the budget for the work of the Council. For more details on the budget of the Council please refer to ECMI Kosovo Information Bulletin. The project is funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kosovo.

Data Collection Completed for Assessment of the Ministry for Communities and Returns' 2009-2013 Strategy

In August 2013, ECMI Kosovo, in cooperation with the Ministry for Communities and Returns (MCR), conducted the data collection process for its assessment of the current 2009-2013 strategy. This data collection process consisted of a series of focus group discussions in all regions of Kosovo with eight different communities; over 20 interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders, including ministries, international organisations and NGOs; questionnaires distributed to all Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns and a compilation of all activities conducted by the MCR in the 2009-2013 period. The collected data will be compiled and analysed by ECMI Kosovo and as such provide the basis for an evidence-based approach to the development of a new strategy for communities and returns for the 2014-2018 period.

Albanian and Serbian Language Classes Set to Begin in 10 Municipalities

In August, ECMI Kosovo concluded preparations for the start of Albanian and Serbian courses aiming at improving the communication of municipal officials among themselves and with citizens in 10 Kosovo municipalities. First, Albanian and Serbian language teachers were recruited and briefed about the teaching programme and methodology and exchanged experience and best practices on teaching Albanian or Serbian as second language. ECMI Kosovo, together with the Office of the Language Commissioner, then started holding informative sessions with municipal officials enrolled in the courses in each municipality, during which they were informed about the organisational details of the courses and tested on their level of language skills. Albanian and Serbian language courses will be held from September till the middle of December and are part of the project '*Official Language Acquisition in Kosovo'* supported by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Office of the Language Commissioner/Office of the Prime Minister.

ECMI Kosovo Supports Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Economic Empowerment

During the month of August, ECMI Kosovo, in cooperation with the Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women Organisations of Kosovo (NRAEWOK) and D&D Business Support Centre, continued offering individual coaching and support to 8 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women and girls from the municipalities of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjakova/Đakovica, Peja/Peć and Prizren. Four business plans were developed by beneficiaries from Ferizaj/Uroševac and Gjakova/Đakovica municipalities, which can now be used to access capital (e.g. micro-grants or loans offered by the relevant institutions and bodies). Other beneficiaries were in the process of information gathering and researching the market to prepare their own business plans. In addition, ECMI and NRAEWOK have offered in-kind support to the selected beneficiaries through buying some needed equipment and raw materials for the smooth run of their businesses. The aim of this activity is to contribute to the alleviation of economic insecurity of the targeted beneficiaries and trigger further development of their income-generating activities. Furthermore, preparations to conduct strategic meetings with key local and central level government institutions have been made, in order to raise awareness and advocate greater action on the economic empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women. These activities were 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.

Institutional Developments

Consultative Council for Communities

The plenary session of the Council was convened on August 30. The Working Groups (WG) presented the main points of their discussion from August' meetings during the Plenary Session. The Working Group on Legislation, informed Mr. Veton Berisha, came to the conclusion that they need a one day training to build upon and advance knowledge about Legal Procedures. The participants of the training, scheduled for September and supported by the OSCE, will be all chair persons of the working groups, to include the Office of Prime Minister and Ministry of Communities and Returns.

Mr. Zeqiri, Director of ECMI Kosovo, presented to the members of the Council the project "*Supporting Civil Society Members of the Consultative Council for Communities"* which is funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kosovo. Mr. Zeqiri informed the members of the challenges which have

been identified as being faced by the Council and expressed the willingness to help three Working Groups with research and forming evidence-based recommendation regarding the following issues:

· WG on Education: issue of diploma certification
· WG on Languages: the implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages (with the Office of the Language Commissioner)
· WG on Employment: employment policies

ECMI Kosovo is monitoring the work of the Council and its Working Groups within the framework of the Swiss FDFA-funded project.

Political Developments

Kosovo Ballot Papers for Upcoming Municipal Elections without Symbols of the Republic of Kosovo

The design of the ballot papers for the forthcoming local elections in Kosovo, scheduled for 3 November, was one of the main topics of discussion during

the 15th round of EU-mediated negotiations held in Brussels on 27 August between Prime Minister of Serbia, Ivica Dačić and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi. After an apparent stalemate on the issue of the Kosovo emblem, the Kosovo Central Election Commission announced that the ballots will not have any symbols of the Republic of Kosovo. Instead, they will carry the logo of the Central Election Commission.

Calls on Kosovo Serbs to Participate in Kosovo Municipal Elections

Kosovo Serbs have been publicly called to vote in November municipal elections by Kosovo and Serbia's top officials. Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi has called on Kosovo Serbs, and especially those living in northern Kosovo, to participate in the local elections for the sake of 'electing the leadership and for the functioning of legitimate and democratic institutions'. In a meeting with Serbs from Kosovo, the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić has called on Kosovo Serbs to take part in the elections and urged the Serb representatives to cooperate with the government of Serbia. In the meeting, it was agreed to have a unified Serb list that would be supported by the government of Serbia. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of Serbia Ivica Dačić stated that participation in elections would allow Serbs to have legitimate and legally appointed representatives that would be recognized internationally and threatened that government-appointed officials from northern Kosovo not following the government's policy would be replaced.

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