



EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR MINORITY
ISSUES KOSOVO

PRESS RELEASE

21 MARCH 2013

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION /
EUROPEAN ACTION WEEK AGAINST RACISM

ECMI KOSOVO CALLS FOR INCREASED ACTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the European Action Week Against Racism (16-24 March 2013), the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo) would like to reiterate its strong commitment to establishing a tolerant, pluralistic, multi-ethnic Kosovo, and call upon all relevant stakeholders to increase their efforts to put an end to the persistent problem of discrimination in Kosovo society.

Kosovo has one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks against discrimination in the world: its Constitution firmly establishes non-discrimination, pluralism and equality before the law as its core values; an ambitious Anti-Discrimination Law was adopted in 2004; and key international conventions are directly applicable in Kosovo, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

Nevertheless, discrimination remains persistent in Kosovo society. This serious problem receives insufficient attention and is often denied or even propagated by decision makers; there is also a generally low level of awareness on discrimination in Kosovo society. Some of the most pressing issues in relation to the discrimination of minority communities in Kosovo include the following:

- The **Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities** are among the most vulnerable groups to discrimination in Kosovo. Prejudices against these communities are widespread and insufficient action is taken to address such negative attitudes. Complaints about discrimination in access to public services are common. Also, over the past two school years, ECMI Kosovo has received reports of a number of cases where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children received education segregated from their Albanian peers.¹

¹ ECMI Kosovo Information Bulletin on 'Segregated Education in Kosovo'.

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- Kosovo's **education system** does too little to promote the vision of a multi-ethnic Kosovo which celebrates tolerance and respect for diversity. In fact, in some instances negative stereotypes are promoted through school materials: for example, in the eighth grade text book 'Leximi 8', Roma community members are portrayed in an extremely derogative fashion.
- The **Anti-Discrimination Law**, despite providing protection against an extensive number of grounds and forms of discrimination, has been largely ineffective; only a handful of discrimination cases have appeared before courts since its adoption in 2004. This has been due to two main factors: (1) a lack of understanding of discrimination among legal practitioners and Kosovo society as a whole, and (2) ambiguous and unclear procedures for applying this law.

Against this backdrop, ECMI Kosovo would like to reiterate its commitment to establishing a tolerant, pluralistic, multi-ethnic Kosovo. Over the past years, it has taken legal actions against discrimination, actively advocated for the amendment of the Anti-Discrimination Law, and promoted tolerance and respect for diversity in Kosovo's education system.

Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ECMI Kosovo calls upon government institutions and other relevant stakeholders to:

- recognize and raise awareness on the issue of discrimination in Kosovo;
- undertake concrete actions to combat prejudices and stereotypes; and
- promote and protect diversity and inter-ethnic respect in Kosovo.

This press release has been developed in support of the European Action Week Against Racism organized by UNITED between 16 and 24 March 2013.

For more information, see the following sources:

Segregation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Children

ECMI Kosovo Policy Brief on '*Segregated Education in Kosovo*', available at: [http://www.ecmikosovo.org/images/03-07-2012 - ECMI Kosovo Policy Brief - Segregation in Education.pdf](http://www.ecmikosovo.org/images/03-07-2012_-_ECMI_Kosovo_Policy_Brief_-_Segregation_in_Education.pdf)

ECMI Kosovo Information Bulletin on '*Segregation in Education in the Municipality of Gjakovë/Đakovica*', available at: [http://www.ecmikosovo.org/images/21-01-2012 Information Bulletin - Segregation in Education.pdf](http://www.ecmikosovo.org/images/21-01-2012_Information_Bulletin_-_Segregation_in_Education.pdf)

Education in Kosovo

Kosovo Education Centre Report on '*Kosova 1912 – 2000: In the History Textbooks of Kosova, Albania and Serbia*', available at: [http://www.kec-ks.org/botimet_files/Kosova%201912-2000 eng.pdf](http://www.kec-ks.org/botimet_files/Kosova%201912-2000_eng.pdf)

The Anti-Discrimination Law

ECMI Kosovo Legal Handbook '*Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo*' (pp. 144-151), available at: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0ByGtGDQ1znIUNW9icE9SZk5uZW8/edit>

Youth Initiative for Human Rights Report on '*Anti-Discrimination Law in Kosovo: seven years on*', available at: <http://ks.yihr.org/en/article/111/Anti-Discrimination-Law-in-Kosovo-seven-years-on>

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.