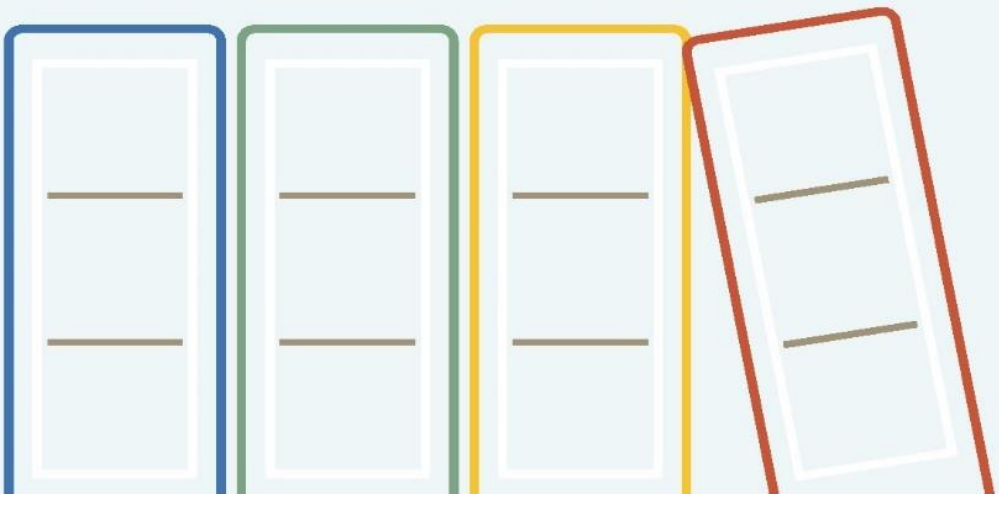
EUROPEAN CENTER FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

Norwegian Embassy

Support to Implementation of Agreements Reached in the Brussels Dialogue -
Freedom of movement in documentation and citizenship acquisition



- ***Needs assessment of the Civil Registration Agency***

To this day, Serbian public institutions continue to operate in Serb-populated areas in Kosovo, providing services that are essential to the Kosovo Serb community in the field of local self-government Kosovo authorities have vehemently opposed these structures as they operate outside of the central level of Kosovo governance and thus are illegal by standards of Kosovo authorities. Kosovo has conditioned the implementation of agreements within the Brussels Dialogue on the disbandment of these structures. One of the central services provided by Serbian public institutions in Kosovo is civil registry. The Kosovo Serb community continued to make use of Serbian documentation even after the installment of UNMIK Administration (1999) and have continued to do so after the declaration of Independence of Kosovo (2008). These identity and travel documents were not considered as passports as no nationality was stated in them nor they were issued by a sovereign state, they simply served the purpose of travel and identifying the residents of Kosovo. These documents were available for anyone who could prove their residence in territory of Kosovo during former Yugoslavia.

Since then Kosovo has worked on enhancing the civil registry system and the civil status offices as well as access to Kosovo citizenship and other identity documentation, however, the situation remains problematic in municipalities inhabited with a Kosovo Serb majority, especially in northern municipalities.

Due to the current situation of the freedom of movement for citizens of Kosovo whom have these identity and travel documents that are not considered nor recognized as Kosovo documentation, the Minister of the Ministry of internal affairs issued a decision regarding this issue. The decision taken by the Minister of the Ministry of internal affairs states that “All the citizens of Republic of Kosovo, who have registered their civil facts (birth, marital and death), in Serbian illegal parallel structures, from 10th of June 1999 until 14th of September 2016, have the right to apply for registration in Central Civil Registry of the Republic of Kosovo.”

The implementation process of the signed Brussels Agreement in 2013 on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia has seen significant stagnation over the last five years. Even though many points of the dialogue have been successfully completed, full implementation is far from being achieved since some of the key-deals still represent unsettled challenges for the Kosovo government. The non-accomplishment of the priorities set out by the Brussels Agreement generates tensions and uncertainties for the future development of the country and hampers Kosovo's EU accession. Considering these circumstances, ECMI has chosen to address the pending issue which is Freedom of movement in documentation and citizenship acquisition.

ECMI Kosovo has had a serious of constructive meetings with the director of the Civil Registration Agency and with the necessary staff as well as different departments of the Agency. ECMI Kosovo obtained information regarding the capacity of the Civil Registration Agency in implementing the decision of the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Civil Registration Agency seems to face some difficulties in implementing the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as capacity development to further improve the data registered in the central database of the Civil Registration Agency.

ECMI Kosovo, by cooperating with the Civil Registration Agency, found that there are several needs that the Civil Registration Agency acquires in order to enhance the central database system:

- There is a need for better communication between the Civil Registration Agency and the civil registration officers in the municipalities that are inhabited with a Kosovo Serb majority community.
- The Civil Registration Agency needs support in organizing trainings, workshops and roundtables for the civil registration officers for using the central database system and further advancing the capacity to register relevant civil facts of the citizens.
- The Civil Registration Agency needs support in implementing the decision of the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding change of license plates from temporary license plates RP to regular RKS or KS license plates and support in implementing the decision of the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on Exemption from Registration Tax for vehicles with KS or RKS license plates for owners of vehicles who possess former FRY license plates after 10 June 1999 until 14 September 2016.

- The Civil Registration Agency is interested in extending the mandate on the decision of the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs towards obtaining Kosovo documentation.
- The Civil Registration Agency has shown a need to develop a pilot project which would include two or three municipalities, such as Vushtri/ Vučitrn, Istog/ Istok and Novoberd/ Novo Brdo, the addresses of the inhabitants of the people in these municipalities. Apart from their addresses, the system would include other relevant civil facts that would enhance the central database system. In order to support the creation of such a pilot project, the Civil Registration Agency needs support in developing a system that would register these civil facts, hire workers who would collect data on the field, financial support for technical equipment that would enable registration of the data. The Civil Registration Agency would need support in launching a campaign and provide informative brochures.

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