EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

Nomination of community membership to the Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities

Final Report

Overview

Between September and December 2009, the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo) and the Secretariat of the Consultative Council for Communities (CCC) organised a series of meetings and workshops across Kosovo, to provide civil society representatives from eight communities with technical support during nominations for community membership of the CCC.

The Kosovo Consultative Council for Communities (CCC)

Background

Established by Presidential Decree on the 15 September 2008, and located within the Office of the President of Kosovo (OP), the CCC serves simultaneously as a forum for government consultation with communities on relevant issues, and as a mechanism for facilitating inter-community dialogue and enhancing intra-community cohesion. Composed of community representatives from both civil society and political parties, along with key government officials, it enables members of communities to influence the legislative process and to advance their needs and interests within government programmes and policies.

Membership

Community membership of the CCC, which comprises two thirds (2/3) of the total membership, is apportioned as follows:

- Ashkali community: two (2) representatives, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;
- Bosniak community: three (3) representatives, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;
- Gorani community: two (2) members, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;
- Egyptian community: two (2) representatives, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;
- Montenegrin community, one (1) representative;
- Roma community: two (2) representatives, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;
- Serb community: five (5) representatives, two (2) of whom may be members of the Assembly of Kosovo (AK); and
- Turkish community: three (3) representatives, (1) of whom may be a member of the AK;

The remaining one third (1/3) of CCC membership consists of representatives from government or other public agencies addressing issues of special concern for minorities, including the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Communities and Returns, the Office of the Kosovo Assembly Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government Administration, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

Inclusiveness and transparency

At the outset of the process, ECMI Kosovo sought to establish a broad community contact database, consulting widely among local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international agencies to ensure maximum inclusiveness. With each invitation, and at each session, participants were then encouraged to invite any individuals/NGO representatives that they felt should be included in the process.

To ensure transparency, ECMI Kosovo published reports for each of the session held on the organisations's website ecmikosova.org , complete with a full list of invitees and participants for each.

ECMI Kosovo-facilitated support

ECMI Kosovo invited representatives from each community to attend three workshops: (1) an introductory cross-community meeting, to introduce representatives from civil society to the CCC and to the nominations process; (2) a community-specific session, to explain in more detail the technical and administrative procedures required to nominate members to the CCC; and (3) a final workshop to select Community Representative Organisations (CROs) and nominees.

At each session, ECMI Kosovo clarified and reiterated the four major steps in the nominations process. These were:

1. Selection by community representatives of a community representative organisation (CRO) for **accreditation** by the Office of the President (OP);
2. Accreditation of that CRO;
3. **Selection of candidates** for CCC membership by community representatives; and
4. Submission to the OP of the final list of nominees, through the accredited CRO.

Results – by community

Ashkali community

As its nominees, the Ashkali community selected two candidates: **Mr Muhamet Arifi** and **Mr Selman Bajrami**. However, at the workshop no decision was reached on the issue of a CRO, and community representatives agreed to consult further among themselves before submitting an organisation for accreditation. This issue is still pending.

Bosniak community

Rather than selecting an existing NGO for accreditation, the Bosniak community opted instead to establish a new 'umbrella' organisation, the **Bosniak Council of Kosovo**, with a broad mandate to represent the interests of Bosniak civil society. Over the course of the nominations period, Bosniak representatives developed a statute and a programme of action for the new organisation, and elected a Board of Directors. Once legally established as an NGO, this organisation will be put forward for accreditation.

The Bosniak community chose to have two representatives from civil society, and one from the Assembly of Kosovo. Unconventionally, they opted to leave the decision regarding the latter to political representatives, and to vote only on the two members from civil society. After an election by secret ballot, from a list of seven candidates divided by region, two nominees emerged: **Mr Sahit Kandić** and **Mr Ćerim Bajrami**.

Egyptian community

No issues of note arose in relation to the Egyptian community, which selected the NGO **Health for All** to become accredited, and nominated **Mr Bashkim Kurti** and **Mr Berisha Veton** as candidates.

Gorani community

Some problems arose within the Gorani community during the nominations process concerning issues of identity; the selection of a CRO and the legitimacy of nominees were disputed on the grounds of allegations of ties with the Bosniak community. Ultimately, however, it appeared that consensus had been reached when two nominees were selected unanimously: **Mr Veis Šerifi** and **Mr Mursejl Haljilj.** A memorandum of understanding was then signed, in which it was agreed that **Omladinski Savez Gora** would become accredited on behalf of all 13 NGO signatories.

However, after the workshop, ECMI Kosovo was contacted by two Gorani representatives, who voiced dissatisfaction at the outcome, again due to the issue of Gorani/Bosniak identity. ECMI Kosovo clarified that identity is not an issue with which the organisation is able to engage directly; however, it can provide communities with legal advice on how to proceed in the event of a dispute. In this instance it was explained that, if the division within the community was genuinely insurmountable, then another organisation could be submitted for accreditation, complete with a second list of nominees. The final decision would then be in the hands of the President. The individuals in question elected to pursue this option, and to put forward the organization **Neven** for accreditation, nominating **Mr Muselj Haljilj** and **Mr Denis Skenderi** as their candidates.

Montenegrin community

Although community representatives had initially selected the NGO Komitet Žena as the organisation to accredited, this decision was later questioned by individuals who argued that its work focused on gender issues and not on the Montenegrin community. It was agreed instead to submit the organization **Udrezenje Crnogoraca Kosova** for accreditation.

Participants then unanimously selected current CCC member **Mr Slobodan Vujičić** as their nominee.

Roma community

At the final session, representatives from the Roma community initially agreed that the organisation **International Centre for Integration** would be put forward for accreditation. However, a dispute then arose regarding nominees. It was reported that all participants were given the opportunity to put forward candidates but that, of the five proposed, two withdrew due to constraints of time. The remaining three were then put to a vote, with participants accorded two votes each. **Mr Daut Quljandji** and **Mr Selatin Emini** received seven votes apiece, while CCC member **Mr Kujtim Paçaku** received just two. On this basis, it was decided that Mr Quljandji and Mr Emini would be put forward as the nominees for the Roma community.

However, after the session, Mr Paçaku expressed dissatisfaction at the process, and enquired as to a possible course of action. It was suggested that he submit a separate application for accreditation along with a second list of nominees but ECMI representatives noted that, as the first group of nominees had been selected by majority vote of representatives present, his application would lack credibility unless he could mobilise additional support within the Roma community. **Mr Paçaku** confirmed that he would put forward the organisation **Romani Bacht** for accreditation, with himself as the sole nominee. The final decision will be for the President.

Serb community

At the second workshop, a group of Serb representatives stated that they were unwilling to participate in the nominations process until certain conditions were met, notably, the holding of a public debate to discuss the work of the CCC, its mandate and its membership, under the scrutiny of members of the international community. ECMI Kosovo agreed to facilitate that discussion, and invited representatives from international organisations such as the International Civilian Office (ICO), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), and national embassies.

The third and final meeting was then divided into two parts: a public debate, and a workshop to select the Serb CRO(s) and nominees to the Council.

During the debate, questions were put to Ms Nafiye Gaş, the General Secretary of the CCC, and Mr Bojan Stojanović, former Chairman of the CCC, concerning the resignation of two former Serb Council members, and the work of the Council to date (see ECMI Kosovo Information Bulletin for more comprehensive coverage of this discussion). At the end of the meeting it was concluded that, while the Council may have experienced difficulties in its first year, both procedural and substantive, the best way to proceed was through continued and constructive engagement, and proper communication between CCC members and the communities they represent.

All community representatives present took part in the second session to select CROs and nominees. The community acted in unison to select five candidates for nomination: **Mr Slaviša Antić, Ms Anđelka Ćup, Ms Bojana Gudžić, Mr Saša Ilič, and Ms Jelena Nedeljković.**

However, no agreement was reached on the issue of a CRO, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between those organisations present – which ascribed the technical function of submission of the list of candidates to just one among them – was deemed unsatisfactory. Consequently, ECMI Kosovo representatives advised all NGOs who wished to become accredited to submit their application to the Office of the President, but reminded then that the final selection would be in the hands of the President. This issue is still pending.

Turkish community

No issues of note arose in relation to the Turkish community. At the final session, during which all individuals were asked to put forward suggestions for nominees, six candidates emerged, although current CCC member Mr Ibrahim Arslan withdrew his candidacy due to prior commitments. The community was unanimous in its support for **Mr Tahir Luma**, but it was agreed that the other four candidates would submit their CVs to the President, who would select the remaining two members. These four discretionary candidates were **Mr Ercan Kasap, Ms Tacida Hafız, Mr Zeynel Abidin Ustaibo** and **Mr Cengiz Çesko.**

It was noted that, in order to submit more nominees than the number of positions allocated to the Turkish community (3), the community would need to select two organisations for accreditation. It was agreed that these would be **Doğru Yol** and **Gepçek**.

ANNEX: Final Results

Community	Organisation to be accredited	Number of nominees per community	Nominees submitted
Ashkali	Balkan Sunflowers	2	Mr Muhamet Arifi Mr Selman Bajrami
Bosniaks	Bosniak Council of Kosovo	3	Mr Ćerim Bajrami Mr Sahit Kandić TBC (by political representatives)
Egyptian	Health for All	2	Mr Bashkim Kurti Mr Berisha Veton
Gorani	Omladinski Savez Gora AND Neven	2	Mr Veis Šerifi Mr Murselj Haljili Mr Muselj Haljilj Mr Denis Skenderi
Montenegrins	Udrezenje Crnogoraca Kosova	1	Mr Slobodan Vujičić
Roma	International Centre for Integration AND Romani Bacht	2	Mr Daut Quljandji Mr Selatin Emini Mr Kujtim Paçaku
Serbs	Centre for Peace and Toleance	5	Mr Slavisa Antic Ms Andjelka Cup Ms Jelena Nedeljković Mr Saša Ilić Ms Bojana Gudzic
Turks	Doğru Yol AND Gepçek	3	(Unanimous) Mr Tahir Luma (For selection by president) Mr Ercan Kasap Ms Tacida Hafız Mr Zeynel Abidin Ustaibo Mr Cengiz Çesko