EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES KOSOVO

Voter Education in the 3+1 New Municipalities



Support to Minority Communities During and After the Decentralisation Process

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

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Report: Voter Education in the 3+1 New Municipalities

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Prepared by the European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo)

1. Introduction

After consultation with the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Kosovo, representatives of the Embassy of Finland in Kosovo and the International Civilian Office (ICO) ECMI Kosovo decided to design a voters education campaign aimed at the Serb and RAE communities in the 3+1 new municipalities where elections were organised: Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Gracanica/Graçanicë, Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc and Ranilug/Ranillug. The activities were financed as part of ECMI Kosovo's project on 'Support to Minority Communities During and After the Decentralisation Process', funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

After consultations with the CEC it was decided that the campaign would target the communities in two ways: through face to face contact, through round tables and individual meetings on the one hand; and through indirect means such as printed materials (flyers, posters and leaflets) and spots on local radio stations on the other hand. All these activities were closely coordinated with relevant institutions: CEC, ICO, Municipal Preparation Teams (MPTs) and Municipal Election Officers (MEOs).

2. Goal

The goal of this campaign was:

- To provide Serb and RAE community members in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë, Gracanica/Graçanicë, Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc and Ranilug/Ranillug with technical information on the voting procedures and the necessary background information to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the electoral process and to provide the necessary technical

3. Election Results

Turnout

Ranilug/Ranillug:	13.89 %
Gracanica/Graçanicë:	23.62 %
Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc:	25.39 %
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë – general	25.64 %
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë – Serb Turnout	5.89% (Mun. Assembly)

Mayoral Results

Red = Serb Political Entity
Green = Albanian Political Entity
Blue = RAE

- **Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (two candidates for run off)**
  BAJRUSH YMERI (LDK) 43,73%

RADOVAN DENIĆ (SNSD)	**11,48%**
RAMUSH MEHMETI (AKR)	10.28%
SVETISLAV IVANOVIĆ (ZBB)	10.18%
GAFURR MUSTAFA (PDK)	10.03%
SRĐAN JOVANOVIĆ (SLS)	7.67%
AVDULLA GASHI (AAK)	6.27%
SADIK MAKOLLI (PSK)	0.35%

- **Ranilug/Ranillug**

GRADIMIR MIKIĆ (GIZOR)	**71,11%**
PERICA ANĐELKOVIĆ (СРПСКА КОСОВСКОМЕТОХИЈСКА СТРАНКА)	28,89%

- **Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc (only one candidate)**

SAŠA MIRKOVIĆ (SLS)	**100,00%**

- **Gracanica/Graçanicë**

BOJAN STOJANOVIĆ (SLS)	**60,94%**
NEBOJŠA PERIĆ (VIDOVDAN 2009)	12,14%
MOMČILO TRAJKOVIĆ (SPOT)	11,67%
ALEKSANDAR MIHAJLOVIC (SDSKIM)	4.17%
BRANISLAV GRBIIĆ (CKMC)	3.87%
AGIM KRASNIQI (LDD)	3.76%
NADA BRKLJAČ (SRPSKA NARODNA STRANKA)	3.43%

Municipal Assembly Results (preliminary)

- **Novo Brdo/Novobërdë**

AAK – ALEANCA PËR ARDHMËRIN E KOSOVËS	7.1%
PSK - Partia Socialiste e Kosovës	0.7%
PDK - PARTIA DEMOKRATIKE E KOSOVËS	12.4%
AKR – Aleanca Kosova e Re	17.6%
LDK - LIDHJA DEMOKRATIKE E KOSOVËS	34.1%
GI - Za Bolju Budućnost- ZBB	11.4%
SNSD	11.0%
Samostalna Liberalna Stranka – SLS	5.6%

- **Ranilug/Ranillug**

СРПСКА КОСОВСКО МЕТОХИЈСКА СТРАНКА – СКМС	67.4%
Gradjanska Inicijativa za Opstinu Ranilug – G I Z O R	30.6%

- **Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc**

LDK - LIDHJA DEMOKRATIKE E KOSOVËS	34.3%
Samostalna Liberalna Stranka – SLS	65.7%

- **Gracanica/Graçanicë**

NARODNA CRNOGORSKA PARTIJA KOSOVA	0.7%
SRPSKA NARODNA STRANKA	1.7%
Djurdjevdan Herdelezi	0.8%
VIDOVDAN 2009	12.0%

Lidhja Demokratike e Dardanisë - LDD	3.7%
СРПСКА КОСОВСКО МЕТОХИЈСКА - СКМС	3.4%
SRPSKI POKRET OTPORA - SPOT	11.3%
SDSKIM	5.4%
Samostalna Liberalna Stranka - SLS	60.9%

4. Activities

Please find below a short summary of the activities of ECMI Kosovo during the Voter Education Campaign:

- Information Campaign for the 2 October Deadline
  Description: ECMI Kosovo received authorisation from the CEC on 29 September and instantly started an information campaign on the 2 October Deadline for Voter re-registration and challenging of the voter list. Unfortunately, due to the limited time period, round tables could not be organised in time. Therefore, ECMI Kosovo concentrated on putting up posters containing all the necessary information in all 4 municipalities. Moreover, a radio clip containing all necessary information was broadcasted 12 times on KIM radio, a local Serb radio station, in the period 29 September – 2 October.
  Outcome: Community members were informed regarding the possibility to re-register and/or challenge the voter lists. Unfortunately, not many community members used this opportunity.
- Hiring of Field Officers
  Description: In order to have a presence close to the local communities ECMI Kosovo hired field officers to work in each of the municipalities. For each municipality ECMI Kosovo hired one Information Officer carrying primary responsibility for the organisation of all activities in that region and an Information Assistant for support. For the municipality of Gracanica/Graçanicë an extra Information Assistant was hired specifically to target the RAE communities living in the new municipality of Gracanica/Graçanicë. All Field Officers were citizens of the municipality they would be covering and the majority were selected on the basis of previous work done for ECMI Kosovo and previous experience in, generally, organising an information campaign and specifically, in voter education.
  Outcome: An experienced field presence in all 4 municipalities capable of independently implementing the required activities.
- Training of Field Officers
  Description: On 7 October ECMI Kosovo organised a training for all its Field Officers. In this training the Field Officers were provided with material outlining the most important information regarding the elections and ECMI Kosovo's methods. Moreover, they received a brief on the Laws on General and Local Elections and the CEC timeline for the elections. Finally, they received a presentation on the ECMI Kosovo approach, centred on a neutral approach to sharing information.
  Outcomes: Informed Field Teams with the necessary tools and skills to independently implement the actions as planned by ECMI Kosovo.
- Organisation of informal dinners
  Description: In order to spread and share the latest information regarding elections with all relevant actors, ECMI Kosovo organised informal dinners in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë,

Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc and Ranilug/Ranillug. No such event was organised in Gracanica/Graçanicë, because a similar activity was organised by the Gracanica/Graçanicë MPT in the same time period, during which ECMI Kosovo also distributed its materials.

The informal dinners were organised in close coordination with the MPTs and ICO regional teams, all relevant actors were invited: ICO; OSCE; MPTs; MEOs; KFOR; Local Leaders; Local Political Leaders; Local Activists. During the dinner ECMI Kosovo gave a short presentation on the elections, distributed its information materials and spoke to the participants personally to answer any potential questions.

Outcomes: The latest information was shared with all relevant actors and contacts were established with actors. Moreover, by creating contacts with these actors, everyone knew how to contact ECMI Kosovo in case of any further questions.

- Organisation of Round Tables

Description: In order to reach the citizens directly ECMI Kosovo organised several round tables in all municipalities:
Ranilug/Ranillug: 1x
Novo Brdo/Novobërdë: 3x
Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc: 1x
Gracanica/Graçanicë: 3x Serb Community, 1x RAE communities



The round tables were organised in cooperation with regional ICO teams and MPTs and local leaders and representatives were invited. In the round tables ECMI Kosovo would give a presentation on the electoral process, including how, when and where to vote. MPT representatives would also say a few words on the work of the MPT so far. All representatives would then answer questions from the participants.

Outcomes: Increase of awareness of local communities on the electoral process and a chance for local communities to raise issues with relevant parties.

- Development of Printed materials

Description: In order to reach the widest possible audience ECMI Kosovo developed a number of printed materials (for electronic examples of all printed materials please consult Annex I):

  - *Posters on the 2 October Deadline: 400x* – Put up in all 4 municipalities in the week of 28 September.
  - *Posters on the locations of Polling Stations: 1450x* – Put up in all 4 municipalities in the week of 9 November (week before Election Day). The final information on polling stations was not available earlier.
  - *Leaflets on Basic Questions: 750x* – Distributed in all 4 municipalities through ECMI Kosovo Field Officers and MPTs.
  - *Flyers on locations of Polling Stations: 1340x* – Distributed in all 4 municipalities from door to door and distributed directly to citizens through ECMI Kosovo Field Officers.
  - *Billboard* – ECMI Kosovo put up an advertisement on 1 billboard in Gracanica/Graçanicë during the period: 19-25 October. The other municipalities either did not have billboards or the owners of the billboards were unwilling to publish information on elections.

Outcomes: Through printed materials ECMI Kosovo made all essential information on elections available to all citizens of the new municipalities.

- Direct Meetings with Community Representatives

  Description: From the moment the ECMI Kosovo Field Officers started their activities they organised individual meetings with important community representatives, including village leaders and local activist. In these meeting they shared the latest information on the electoral process and answered any questions posed. This method of reaching out to the citizens is often more effective when dealing with politically sensitive issues. People are sometimes hesitant to come to larger meetings due to the political sensitivity of the topic, however are willing to discuss these issues in a private environment.

  

  Outcomes: Increase of awareness of the electoral process and the ECMI Kosovo voter education campaign among community representatives, some of whom are unwilling to discuss these issues in public meetings.

- Broadcasting of radio clips

  Description: Due to the fact that most members of the Serb community do not watch Kosovo national TV and that Serbian national TV will not broadcast material relating to an independent Kosovo, local radio is the best mass medium to reach local Serb communities. ECMI Kosovo broadcasted the following clips (for the exact broadcasts please consult Annex II):

  - *Radio Clips on the 2 October Deadline:* 29 September until 2 October, 12x on Kim Radio – these clips set out the rights of voters to re-register until 2 October and to challenge the current voter list before the same date.
  - *Radio Clips on the locations of the polling stations:* 11 November until 13 November, 32x on Radio Vitez; 6 November until 13 November, 31x on KIM Radio; 11 November until 13 November, 16x on Radio Klokot. – These radio clips listed the date, opening time and locations of polling stations for the 15 November elections.

  Outcomes: The broadcasting of radio spots made the most essential information regarding the elections publically available to any family in possession of a radio.

- Organisation of Press Conference

  Description: On 9 December ECMI Kosovo organised a press conference on the elections in the 4 municipalities for local Serb media in the Caglavica Media Centre. The purpose of the press conference was to share the latest information on the elections with all media. The meeting was chaired by ECMI Kosovo and speakers from ICO and CEC were present to give presentations on the importance of the elections for the Serb community in Kosovo and the technical details of the elections in the 4 municipalities.

  Outcomes: An increase in information of the local Serb Media on the local elections in the 4 municipalities.

- Provision of Transport on Election Day

  Description: On Election Day ECMI Kosovo provided transport in the municipalities of Ranilug/Ranillug (4 cars) and Novo Brdo/Novobërdë (2 cars) for the citizens of several villages located far away from the polling stations. This transport was arranged after regional ICO teams and MPTs had indicated it might have an effect on the turnout at

Election Day. In Ranilug/Ranillug 35 community members made use of the provided transport, which considering the total number of votes (654), is around 5% of the total turn out. In Novo Brdo/Novobërdë 17 people made use of the provided transport, which considering the total number of votes (1775), is around 1% of the total turn out. However, it is approximately 3.4% of the total Serb turnout (498 votes). The lower willingness of community members to use the provided transport in Novo Brdo/Novobërdë is reflected in the low Serb turnout in the Novo Brdo/Novobërdë elections (around 6%).

Outcomes: A significant number of Serb community members made use of the provided transport.

5. Restrictions

During the activities ECMI Kosovo faced several restrictions:

- Vital information confirmed late in the electoral process – ECMI Kosovo was not involved in the organisation of the elections, therefore it was dependent on the information provided by the CEC and the MEOs. Both were quick to provide ECMI Kosovo with relevant information when available. However, some vital information only became available late in the electoral process.

  The decision to allow (expired) UNMIK IDs and Serbian IDs as valid identification documents on Election Day was left till 4 November. This was an important issue, due to the fact that the majority of the Serb population does not have Kosovo IDs and that UNMIK IDs expired just before the elections, leaving many Serb community members without alternative Identification documents.

  Moreover, the final locations of polling stations were not published till the last week before the elections. The first official list of polling stations included many schools on the list, which are run by parallel institutions which, as all information indicated, were unwilling to open the schools on Election Day. The fact that both the information on the documentation necessary to vote and the locations where to vote were left unclear till late created confusion and uncertainty.
- Fear for Sanctions – there was a consistent fear among the Serb community that participation in the electoral process would lead to (financial) sanctions by Serbia, regardless of the fact that the Serbian government had publically declared that the decision on participation in the elections was one of personal freedom. The rumours of sanctions had a serious effect, since many Serb families in Kosovo are financially dependent on assistance from the Serbian government. This fear on occasion prevented interested citizens from taking part in elections activities.
- Participation in Elections is Recognition of Kosovo – for many Serb community members, and argued by Belgrade, participation in the electoral process equals recognition of an independent Kosovo. Many Serb community members still have a strong loyalty to Belgrade and the parallel institutions in Kosovo and felt that to participate in elections would be to betray this loyalty. Moreover, not only did this belief influence people to not take part in the elections it also motivated citizens to actively oppose the process. In ECMI Kosovo activities this meant that posters were taken down, Field Officers experienced occasional pressures, which in Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërboc convinced an Information Assistant not to be engaged in the ECMI Kosovo campaign.
- Lack of respected leaders in favour of elections – Another important factor that negatively affected the willingness of community members to participate in the local elections was the lack of respected local leaders who stood up in favour of the elections.

There were some exceptions, such as Rada Trajkovic in Gracanica/Graçanicë, but on the whole most respected leaders did not speak in favour of the elections. In a hierarchical society such as Kosovo the opinion of such leaders is of significant importance and their support is needed to convince the community of the merits of participation. ECMI Kosovo did communicate with many of these leaders directly and worked positively together with some, but most, while interested in information, were unwilling to support the process.

- Lack of trust – there is a great feeling of scepticism in the Serb community in Kosovo. This scepticism is aimed at Kosovo institutions, but also at the Serbian government and the international presence. Many Serbs in Kosovo feel they have been betrayed or in the least neglected by the aforementioned actors and are extremely distrustful of any promises made.
- A lack of strong political parties – ECMI Kosovo found that in most of its activities community members lacked information on which political parties were running in the elections and had even less information regarding their programs. These findings reflected the weakness of many of the Serb political entities running in the local elections. Although some parties were stronger than others all had a limited geographical base outside of which their influence and reputation was limited. Political Entities carry the primary responsibility in motivating the citizens to participate in the elections and without their active engagement in the community citizens cannot know who and what they are voting for. This resulted in a situation where ECMI Kosovo was often asked about what the future municipal government would do for them, questions that ECMI Kosovo, as a neutral NGO could not answer, and that should have been answered by Political Entities.

6. Project Results

All practical outcomes are listed in chapter 3. Regarding the goal of the project, the final results are hard to measure. ECMI Kosovo utilised all mediums available to it, mass media, printed materials and face to face meetings. It is never possible to reach all community members directly, however, the required information was publically available to anyone willing to look for it. Although it is hard to assess to what exactly caused the relatively high turnout of Serb voters in new municipalities. However, ECMI Kosovo believes its actions played a significant part.