



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY MEETING

Gradiska
20th September 2016

Objectives of the meeting:

The Policy meeting was held on 20th September and gathered representatives from 5 local self-governments (Gradiška, Jablanica, Prijedor, Prnjavor, Sarajevo), representatives of the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, European Union Delegation to BiH, and the CoE Project team.

The objectives of the Policy meeting were to inform participants on Key recommendations of the CoE monitoring bodies for Bosnia and Herzegovina namely the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML); to inform participants on the results achieved by the small grant implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and to make recommendations based on the small grant projects' results, recommendations from the meeting and the latest findings of the CoE monitoring bodies.

The recommendations are based on the concrete evidence in municipalities showing how reforms can work in practice and how they could be integrated into a broader policy spectrum. They are utilizing the minority protection standards based on the local action plans, national legislation and in particular recommendations of the FCNM and ECRML.

Results from the meeting:

The participants were further familiarized with the relevant provisions of the FCNM and ECRML, the latest recommendations on BiH of the CoE expert bodies monitoring the implementation of the two instruments, and have increased their understanding of the connection between the small grants and the CoE standards and recommendations. The participants have exchanged experience of implementation of projects and shared the lessons learned. The conclusions and policy recommendations have been articulated based on insights from project implementation in individual municipalities.

Topics discussed at the meeting were culture, media, education, effective participation in political life and the official use of languages and script.

Projects implemented in different municipalities were focused on different issues. Projects in Sarajevo (National Minority Days in the City of Sarajevo) and Prijedor (improving the media and public presentation of the Ukrainian national minority in the city of Prijedor) relate to the topic of culture. Media and information was the focus of projects in Prijedor and Gradiška (Sustainable Utilization of Information Technologies for the Purposes of Promotion of National Minorities from the Area of Municipality of Gradiška). The project in Bosanska Krupa (Mobile Kindergarten) was focused on improving preschool education of prevalently Roma children. The education in, and learning of, the languages of national

minorities was in focus of projects in Prnjavor (Improvement of Learning of National Minority Languages in the Municipality of Prnjavor), Prijedor and Gradiška. An effective participation of Roma people in public and political life was in focus of the project in Jablanica (Equal Opportunities City); and the official use of languages and script of national minorities was addressed by projects in Gradiška and Prijedor.

The projects in general have shown that even small grants can make a huge difference, either by developing concrete, sustainable initiatives (such as, for example, a mobile day care in Bosanska Krupa), enhancing the visibility of national minorities in local communities, or serving as platforms for developing and promoting concrete policy initiatives (such as the one related to the “house of national minorities” in Sarajevo).

Short-term benefits of the projects are mostly related to the increased visibility of national minorities in local communities, while the long-term effects are to be seen in building capacity of associations of national minorities and changing policies and practices, in particular at the local government level.

The results of the small grant projects are relevant for other local communities inasmuch as they present a source of good practice to be followed in different fields (such as, for example, mobile day care in Bosanska Krupa, language courses for adults in Prnjavor, or integrating national minority languages on the official website of the municipality in Gradiška), or a rich source of innovative ideas that need further development and more thorough planning (such as, for example, online language courses with instructors from kin-states of national minorities).

Compliance of the Small Project Results with the last findings of the Framework Convention for protection of National Minorities (FCNM):

The Small projects relate to several articles of the FCNM: Article 5 (projects in Sarajevo and Prijedor), Article 9 (projects in Prijedor and Gradiška), Article 10 (project in Gradiška), Article 11 (projects in Prijedor and Gradiška), Article 12 (project in Bosanska Krupa), Article 14 (projects in Prijedor, Prnjavor, and Gradiška) and Article 15 (project in Jablanica)

The projects are closely related, and effectively respond, to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and the latest Committee of Ministers Resolution on BiH: ensuring financial schemes for supporting cultural activities of national minorities (cultural activities and advocacy events organized within the projects in Sarajevo and Prijedor); ensuring access to education to children from Roma communities (project in Bosanska Krupa was focused on preschool education of Roma children); addressing marginalization of Roma people (project in Jablanica was concerned with building capacities for enhanced public participation of persons belonging to Roma minority); ensuring adequate forms and means of teaching of the languages of national minorities (projects in Prnjavor, Prijedor, and Gradiška); ensuring media content in the languages of national minorities (projects in Prijedor and Gradiška); assessing the need for ensuring topographic signs and other publicly displayed information in the languages of national minorities (projects in Gradiška and Prijedor); assessing the needs for the official use of languages of national minorities (project in Gradiška).

Compliance of the Small Project Results with the last findings of the ECRML

The Small projects are related to several ECRML Articles: Article 8 (projects in Prnjavor, Prijedor, and Gradiška), Article 10 (projects in Prijedor and Gradiska), Article 11 (projects in Prijedor and Gradiska) and Article 12 (projects in Sarajevo and Prijedor).

The projects are clearly related to a number of recommendations of the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers: undertaking concrete measures to promote the usage of the languages of national minorities by local and regional administration (projects in Gradiška and Prijedor); ensuring media content in the languages of national minorities in public broadcasts (projects in Gradiška and Prijedor); ensuring sustainable funding schemes for cultural activities of national minorities (projects in Sarajevo and Prijedor); providing for topographic signs and other relevant information in the languages of national minorities (projects in Prijedor and Gradiška); ensuring adequate forms and means of learning national minority languages (projects in Prnjavor, Prijedor, and Gradiška).

Compliance of the Small Project Results with the minority policies in beneficiary

The projects are fully in accordance with the laws on the protection of rights of national minorities at the state and entity levels (which to a significant extent aim to implement the above FCNM and ECRML standards).

Policy Recommendations

a) Associations of national minorities are a key partner in ensuring progress in this field. Thus, authorities at all levels should further explore ways to support national minority associations and their work – in terms of legislation (which is obviously relevant for central and entity level government), funding schemes, donor policies etc.;

b) Some interventions are not as straightforward as they seem at first glance. For example, even when facilities and resources are ensured, persons belonging to minorities sometimes do not express significant interest to learn the language of the minority in question. Hence, the authorities at all levels should invest significant effort to promote their interventions and ensure sufficient demand and participation on the part of persons belonging to national minorities;

c) The support of local governments to national minorities' associations and their activities – in particular through a separate budget line for national minorities – is a key factor for achieving important synergies of actors, resources and interventions in this field. Local governments where minorities live traditionally or in significant numbers should thus be encouraged to follow the example of best practice in BiH (e.g. Prnjavor) and ensure systemic support for activities of national minorities;

d) Media promotion is key to ensuring the visibility of national minorities and to further awareness-raising regarding the role and position of national minorities in local communities and broader society. It is therefore crucial for governments in BiH to ensure that the media at all levels pay sufficient attention to the needs and interests of national minorities;

e) Rules and procedures at regional or national levels seem to be complex at times and thus unfavorable to the realization of the rights of national minorities – providing for signs and topographic marks in the language of national minorities being one example. A systematic analysis, preferably by the BiH government (i.e. Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees), should thus be conducted from the perspective of FCNM and ECRML standards with the aim to identify the rules and procedures that could be simplified in the best interest of national minorities at the local level.

The position of national minorities' associations would be improved and this would have a beneficial effect on other aspects of rights of national minorities – such as, for example, the formation, legitimacy and functioning of advisory bodies for national minorities at the entity

and state levels; stable and sustainable local funding for activities of national minorities' associations would ensure continuity of projects and initiatives in this field, which is key for many aspects of rights of national minorities – from media presence to language teaching.

The recommendations are feasible in particular in that they do not require significant additional funding, but rather better planning, coordination and synergies of various actors in the field and more decisive steps towards ensuring participation and consultation of national minority communities.

Recommendations for the FCNM and ECRML Secretariats and the relevant institutions in the beneficiary

All the above recommendations are important, but the following ones are particularly relevant for all projects and communities:

- a) Ways to support national minority associations and their work – in terms of legislation (at central state and entity levels), funding schemes and donor policies etc. – should be further explored, particularly by using examples of best practice from other European countries;
- b) The authorities at all levels should invest significant effort to promote their interventions aimed at the realization of minority rights and ensure sufficient demand and participation on the part of persons belonging to national minorities;
- c) Rules and procedures at regional or national levels seem to be complex at times and thus unfavorable to the realisation of the rights of national minorities – providing for signs and topographic marks in the language of national minorities being one example. A systematic analysis should thus be conducted (preferably by the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees) from the perspective of FCNM and ECRML standards, with the aim to identify the rules and procedures that could be simplified in the best interest of national minorities at the local level.