



RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY MEETING

VUSHTRRI
12th of July 2016

Results from the meeting:

The main topics discussed during the meeting were: (i) the effective participation of minorities in public and political life, (ii) employment and income-generating opportunities, (iii) integration of minorities in cultural and social life, (iv) use of language and script, (v) existing strategies and legislation on minority rights, (vi) recommendations from Council of Europe (CoE) bodies on minority rights in Kosovo*¹, (vii) recommendations from the European Union (EU) Progress Report and (viii) results from projects implemented by municipalities.

Results from the small projects are very encouraging, and offer valuable insights into targeting specific issues faced by communities. For example, in Rahovec/Orahovac, the project provided professional vocational trainings for minority community members, coupled with equipment to start-up their own businesses. By doing so, the project improved the livelihoods of beneficiaries *and* improved their skills and prospects in the job market. These types of specific targets and actions can solve problems and make a difference in the community.

Projects have assisted a number of beneficiaries to truly improve their position in economic chain of society, and have increased their chances at earning a decent livelihood. In a long term period the minority communities can feel the positive effect of municipal interventions, and might be more inclined to cooperate with the municipality, to offer new ideas, to request assistance, and to further integrate into society. Project results in Kamenice/Kamenica, for example, prove that there is willingness for long-term dialogue and reconciliation within a multi-ethnic setting. The long-term effects and implications of that are a peaceful environment, a more productive populace, and increased exchange of ideas and services leading to more prosperity for citizens.

The Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac made use of the training facilities in Prizren, a regional center and a large labour market. According to Rahovec/Orahovac, Prizren expressed an interest in emulating trainings organized by Rahovec/Orahovac for the purposes of integrating minority communities through trainings and employment. Similar interest has been made known to Kamenice/Kamenica, to Vushtrri/Vucitrn as well as to Leposavic/Leposaviq for some of their results. Employment and cross-cultural, inter-ethnic relations, including public participation of minorities, are themes that are common to all of Western Balkans; as such, results from the projects are very relatable to other beneficiaries/region.

¹ * "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence"

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

The main Project findings are in compliance with Article 4, point 2 specifically, Article 6, Article 7, Article 9, Article 12, as well as Article 15 of the FCNM.

The last Advisory Committee Opinion and the Committee of Experts Resolution made note and highlighted several areas concerning the protection of minority rights. Project activities/results/findings are directly related to those areas, as they targeted minority communities and vulnerable groups in particular (Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians). The Opinion/Resolution highlighted the need for concrete activities aimed at furthering the social, economic, political position of minority communities in Kosovo society; all projects and their results have done so. Thus, there is a direct and strong relation between projects and the Opinion/Resolution, particularly as they related to minority protection.

Compliance of the Small Project Results with the last findings of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRMN)

The main Project findings are in compliance with articles 7 and 8 of the ECRML

There is an indirect but important relation between the project's results and the Committee of Experts' Evaluation Report and the Committee of Experts Recommendations. Project's results did not tackle issues of regional and minority languages directly, but did tackle public participation in life, which is directly related to language and the ability to intake and impart information in one's native language, and enhancing education and trainings for minority communities in their language, as recognized by Kosovo.

Main strategic/legislative and institutional framework dealing with minorities in beneficiary

The overarching document is the Constitution of Kosovo, the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo, the Law on Local Self-Governance (which provides far-reaching self-governance for municipalities with a Serb-majority), the Law on the use of Official Languages, the Strategy on Human Rights, the Strategy on Integration of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, etc.

The main institutions responsible for minorities are: the Ministry for Communities and Return, the Office for Good Governance within the Office of the Prime Minister, the Office for Community Affairs within the Office of the Prime Minister, the Consultative Council for Communities within the Office of the President, the Ombudsperson (general human rights).

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

Project results operate within the framework, and comply with the provisions, or national legislation and local action plans. Abovementioned laws and strategies are focused on

achieving integration of minority communities in Kosovo's society in the full meaning of the word; social, economic, political, educational, etc. Project results are in line with those strategic goals, having provided employment opportunities and trainings for enhanced skills, a forum for inter-ethnic communication as a means of better understanding, have developed a local strategy for the integration of communities at the municipal level, and having organized workshops, radio shows, fairs, and other events within a multi-ethnic setting.

Policy Recommendations

The steps required to implement the recommendations, and the resources needed are as follows:

- Continue supporting relevant municipalities with smaller projects that target specific issues identified by the municipality
- Include minority communities in the drafting of projects and in their implementation as project partners
- Focus on what is feasible and realistic on the ground, and fund projects that have a tangible output (trainings, employment, education, culture)
- Implement policies and projects that have long-term implications that can be disseminated to all of Kosovo with minor modifications
- Create a "model project" with achievable, measurable, tangible outputs that is easily transferrable to several municipalities
- Provide funding for the "full package" (identifying issues, selecting beneficiaries, providing capacity-building and tools, long-term monitoring and additional interventions, including financial).
- Create a municipal forum wherein municipalities with similar issues and needs can come together and discuss; facilitate the meeting, guide the overall discussion towards issues identified by CoE bodies in relation to Kosovo
- Create central-level "buy in" by applying lessons learned and working solutions from the local level to the central level.

By implementing the above mentioned recommendations the following benefits can be achieved: better integration of minority communities, more accessible institutions for minority communities, increased employment and enhanced education leading to increased productivity, the pooling of resources by municipalities to tackle common issues of concern, a "model project" that could serve as a basis for many projects throughout Kosovo, reducing costs, saving time, etc.

The feasibility of proposed recommendations depends on the availability and implementation of a small-scale strategy to streamline projects and to guide their results towards issues directly identified by CoE bodies. They are feasible if: there is enough funding, there are clear goals and objectives which are measurable and tangible, there is buy in from the central level, and the end goal is to enhance the capacity of municipalities to implement similar projects from their own budgets, using the experience and expertise developed in the meantime.

Recommendations for the relevant institutions in the beneficiary

The main recommendations that best support the main Projects' results are:

- Funding/implementation of projects whose overall goals are increased employment, better education, and better public services for minority communities (unemployment being a major problem for all communities, particularly Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians).
- Creation and/or usage of a "model project" targeting specific issues faced by many communities in Kosovo (skills, jobs, education, culture, access to public services), which could be applied in many municipalities.
- Creation and join a "municipal forum" wherein municipalities can get together and discuss ways to pool their resources about issues of common concern
- Implementation of activities that directly benefit your beneficiaries, and do so in a complementary way (if your overall goal is to increase employment, consider that parents of children need kindergartens or daycare, or transportation to/from school, etc).
- Implementation and funding for activities that are tangible, and whose results can be seen and observed within a relatively short period of time. Make use of existing resources (training centers) when it is possible.
- Liaise with the central level and ask for additional funding for obligations related to minority protection and implementation of legislation/strategies related to minority rights.