



# Municipal Co-operation on Inter-Community Dialogue in Kosovo

33 of Kosovo's 38 municipalities are multi-ethnic. To enhance inter-community relations in the municipalities, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo has supported 29 of them in signing a declaration on inter-municipal co-operation promoting inter-community dialogue.

The declaration outlines municipalities' commitments to improve and strengthen inter-community relations through a variety of activities. The OSCE will continue to support and facilitate inter-community activities together with municipalities in Kosovo.

## FOSTERING INTER-MUNICIPAL CO-OPERATION IN KOSOVO

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Mission in Kosovo (OSCE) launched the activity “Promotion of Inter-Community Relations among Municipalities” in 2013 in Gjiilan/Gnjilane region. The objective of this activity was to further support municipal level actions promoting inter-community relations, which include different activities performed through co-operation between municipalities, with their full ownership over the proposed activities. As part of this initiative, municipal officials of Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo and Ranilug/Ranillug signed the first Inter-Municipal Declaration for Promotion of Inter-Community Dialogue and Co-operation. The initiative acted as a catalyst for other regions in Kosovo, namely Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Pejë/Peç, and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica regions following this model in the following years. Today, after continuous efforts of the OSCE, a total of 29 Kosovo municipalities have committed to collectively promote and maintain good relations between communities living in their regions. This initiative is already bearing fruits for the participating municipalities and the communities Kosovo wide.

## ENGAGING YOUTH

The signing of the Declarations have to date resulted in the successful development of inter-community activities involving youth from the Albanian, Kosovo Serb, Bosniak, Turk, Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. These activities encourage their participation in local decision-making processes and provide sustainable platforms for interaction and co-operation between youth belonging to different communities. The objective of the Declaration is to establish an environment for youth to meet and socialize with their peers from different communities, and gain a mutual understanding of various cultures.

## LOCAL OWNERSHIP

The importance of the Declaration signing initiative lies in the local ownership and in the responsibility that the municipalities have taken in implementing this concept further and in expressing explicit support for future activities. Based on the commitments stipulated in the Declaration, municipalities across Kosovo have already carried out activities which promote and strengthen diversity and shared values of different communities and their members.



## ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS

### PRISHTINË/PRIŠTINA REGION

In May 2017, a Peace March took place in Obiliq/Obilić municipality with over 200 young members of Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb, Kosovo Ashkali, Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Bosniak and Kosovo Turk communities. Together with municipal officials, including the mayor of Obiliq/Obilić, Xhafer Gashi, participants walked together to send a message of tolerance and acceptance among all communities in Kosovo. Municipalities' continuous efforts in this region are reflected in several other significant activities carried out since the Declaration signing. In July 2019, 12 young women and men from Obiliq/Obilić municipality who had successfully completed language classes organized by the OSCE visited Belgrade and were hosted by seven OSCE Dialogue Academy alumni from there. Together with their hosts, the Obiliq/Obilić youth visited museums and went on a city tour to practice their newly acquired Serbian language skills.



### PRIZREN REGION

In October 2018, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality, predominantly inhabited by the Kosovo Turkish community, supported inter-community dialogue through hosting a ceremonial session in the municipal hall and organizing a visit to different Serbian Orthodox, Catholic and Islamic religious and cultural heritage sites in Prizren town. A diverse group of participants from

Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Dragash/Dragaš, Malishevë/Mališevo and Suharekë/Suva Reka municipalities, including municipal directors of culture, youth and sports, municipal focal points on inter-municipal dialogue, municipal youth officers and youth activists took part in this activity.



In another event organized and hosted by the Mayor of Suharekë/Suva Reka, Mr. Bali Muharremaj, Kosovo Roma community activists delivered a presentation dealing with stereotypes, bias motivation, hate speech and discrimination as negative phenomena impeding inter-community relations. Around 50 women and men, including municipal focal points on inter-municipal dialogue, municipal youth officers, Suharekë/Suva Reka communities' committee chairperson and youth activists from Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Turk, Kosovo Roma and Kosovo Ashkali communities participated. The activity was organized as part of the 2018 Inter-Municipal Activity Plan on Inter-Community Dialogue for Prizren region, facilitated by the OSCE during 2017 and 2018.

## PEJË/PEĆ REGION

In June 2019, the common interest of municipalities in promoting inter-community relations manifested itself in a youth event hosted by the Pejë/Peć municipality in the Rugova Gorge. It was the first opportunity for many Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb, Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian youth from the region to take a ride on the longest “Zip Line” in Kosovo, and connect and share impressions with other communities. This event – organized and run by the municipality itself – was a resounding success.



## GJILAN/GNJILANE REGION

Gjilan/Gnjilane region was the first region in Kosovo to sign the Declaration in 2013. The region brought the communities together and empowered diversity. With seven municipalities having signed the Declaration, the region was host to a variety of inter-community events, including a two day painting workshop with the theme “Peace and Tolerance”. The event was followed by intercommunity exhibitions organized in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipalities. Besides the art exhibition, the Declaration triggered actions such as joint voluntary cleaning of defaced road signs in Klokot/Kllokot municipality, and trade fairs with products of local entrepreneurs from all local communities organized in Štrpce/Shtërpçë town.

## MITROVICË/MITROVICA REGION

In July 2019, Podujevë/Podujevo, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South and Skenderaj/Srbica municipalities in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region signed the Declaration. During the declaration-signing event, the representatives of the joining municipalities announced various youth activities ranging from sports events and summer schools to study visits and cultural exchange programmes, where young members of communities residing in the region would learn about the culture and history of other local communities. The first scheduled activity will be an inter-community youth camp gathering young members from various communities in the region, interested to learn about human rights and inter-ethnic tolerance, planned to take place in October 2019 in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South municipality.



## **MUNICIPALITIES THAT HAVE SIGNED INTER-MUNICIPAL DECLARATION FOR PROMOTION OF INTER-COMMUNITY DIALOGUE AND CO-OPERATION**

### **GJILAN/GNJILANE REGION**

On 27 May 2013 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Qemajl Mustafa, Mayor of Gjilan/Gnjilane*
- *Enver Mavriqi, Municipal Assembly Chairperson, Kamenicë/Kamenica*
- *Bajrush Ymeri, Mayor of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo*
- *Lulzim Canaj, Deputy Mayor for Communities, Ranillug/Ranilug*

On 11 May 2015 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Muharrem Sfarqa, Mayor of Ferizaj/Uroševac*
- *Beqir Fejzullahu, Deputy Mayor of Shtërpcë/Štrpce*
- *Srećko Spasić, Mayor of Klokoč/Klokot*

### **PRISHTINË/PRIŠTINA REGION**

On 13 April 2016 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Shpend Ahmeti, Mayor of Prishtinë/Priština*
- *Vladeta Kostić, Mayor of Graçanicë/Gračanica*
- *Imri Ahmeti, Mayor of Lipjan/Lipljan*
- *Naim Ismajli, Mayor of Shtimë/Štimlje*
- *Xhafer Gashi, Mayor of Obiliq/Obilić*
- *Burim Berisha, Mayor of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje*

### **PRIZREN REGION**

On 19 June 2017 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Ramadan Muja, Mayor of Prizren*
- *Salim Jenuzi, Mayor of Dragash/Dragaš*
- *Rexhep Kuçi, Deputy Mayor of Suharekë/Suva Reka*
- *Idriz Vehapi, Mayor of Rahovec/Orahovac*
- *Arif Büttüç, Mayor of Mamuşa/Mamushë/Mamuşa*
- *Rexhep Mazreku, Deputy Mayor of Malishevë/Mališevo*

### **PEJË/PEĆ REGION**

On 28 May 2018 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Gazmend Muhaxheri, Mayor of Pejë/Peć*
- *Ardian Gjini, Mayor of Gjakovë/Đakovica*
- *Bashkim Ramosaj, Mayor of Deçan/Dečani*
- *Zenun Elezaj, Mayor of Klinë/Klina*
- *Haki Rugova, Mayor of Istog/Istok*
- *Agron Kuçi, Mayor of Junik*

### **MITROVICË/MITROVICA REGION**

On 18 July 2019 the Declaration was signed by:

- *Agim Vellu, Mayor of Podujevë/Podujevo*
- *Xhafer Tahiri, Mayor of Vushtrri/Vučitrn*
- *Hysen Muzliukaj, Director of Administration and Personnel, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica South*
- *Ramiz Shala, Director of Youth, Culture and Sport, Skenderaj/Srbica*

## **FUTURE INTER-COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

The OSCE will support the municipalities to encourage strengthened inter-community dialogue and to bring the communities closer to each other. Examples of planned activities:

- A *group bike tour* through the hilly area of Bjeshkët e Nemuna/Prokletije Mountains in Junik municipality, with members of communities from Pejë/Peć region. Young girls and boys from different backgrounds will have an opportunity to socialize while exploring the natural beauties of the area. Representatives of Junik municipality announced this event will be organized for autumn 2019.
- A *Film Month* activity is planned for the Shtime/Štimlje municipality, where participants of all age groups and communities from Gjilan/Gnjilane region will be invited to attend a series of film screenings and theatre plays with subsequent discussions involving the audience. The activity will bring different communities together and offer them opportunities to socialize and share their views.
- *Photo exhibition* – socializing of youth is the title of the activity proposed by Malishevë/Mališevo municipality, based on the Declaration. The first part of this activity took place in August 2018, where around 40 young women and men from different communities, along with municipal officials, participated in an outdoor painting activity near Mirushë/Miruša waterfalls. As in the first round, the activity will attract young artists from Dragash/Dragaš, Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša, Rahovec/Orahovac and Suharekë/Suva Reka municipalities.
- *Multi-ethnic sports games and competition* is planned by the Rahovec/Orahovac municipality. This activity will gather girls and boys from all communities from Prizren region municipalities. Municipal officials and young Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbs are committed to organize this event based on previous successful inter-community sport events in this municipality.
- *Awareness-raising workshops on stereotypes and prejudice towards the Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities* are to be carried out in co-operation with public schools in Suharekë/Suva Reka municipality. An active group of young activists with rich experience in combating racial and ethnic discrimination will provide their expertise. With the support of the municipality, they will also tackle widespread negative phenomena against members of Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities.
- *Cultural festival promoting Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Turkish, Kosovo Serbian, Kosovo Bosniak, Kosovo Gorani, Kosovo Roma, Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptian communities* residing in the Prizren region is foreseen to take place in Dragash/Dragaš municipality. The participants and the attendees of the festival will have the opportunity to enjoy music, poetry, traditional food, and performance of traditional dances. The activity will be organized by young activists from Prizren and other municipalities in the region.

- **Promotion of cultural and religious heritage for youth from all communities** is an activity proposed by young activists and officials from Mamuša/Mamushë/Mamuša municipality. This cultural exchange programme will include visits to religious monuments and lectures delivered by religious representatives and leaders. The objective of the programme is to improve the knowledge of cultures, beliefs and traditions of other communities. The programme will be tailored in a way to promote religious tolerance and diversity of traditions. The activity will target youth from all municipalities of Prizren region, but it is also ready to host visits of interested groups from other regions of Kosovo.
- Lipjan/Lipljan municipality proposed the organization of a **workshop where people with special needs** from all communities in the Prishtinë/Prishtina region would have an opportunity to socialize with their peers from other local communities as well as share their views and challenges relevant to human rights and compliance of public institutions with their needs. The aim of the activity is to raise awareness and visibility of issues affecting persons with physical disabilities.
- **Cleaning up graffiti and defaced road signs** in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje is an activity proposed by young activists from this municipality, who are interested in volunteering for the common good and mutual recognition of all communities residing in the area. As shown by previous cases of similar activities performed across Kosovo, the action of cleaning defaced road signs containing inscriptions in different languages will promote positive attitude towards diversity.
- **Youth camp on human rights** is an activity proposed by young activists from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region and is meant as a follow-up event to a youth camp to be organized by the OSCE in 2019. The core part of the camp will be a series of workshops, where participants, with the assistance of municipal officials, will draft proposals for municipal action plans, to be endorsed by the respective municipal assemblies in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica region. In addition to being a unique opportunity of socializing across communities, the event will offer insight to issues and human rights violations in Kosovo and available protection mechanisms and decision-making forums.
- **Promotion of language rights and relevant legislation** is planned by activists from Gračanica/Gračanicë municipality. A group of young activists is planning to map the public spaces and forums where the communities in numerical minority suffer from discrimination due to non-compliance of their language rights by public institutions.





As the series of activities carries on, and diverse youth from around Kosovo continue to get opportunities to interact, the municipalities will increase their capacity to implement such initiatives independently.

With 29 municipalities throughout five regions having signed the Declaration, and with the financial support of interested donors, sustainable practices for inter municipal co-operation in Kosovo will continue to be strengthened.

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