

Communiqué

The Project on Ethnic Relations, a U.S.-based institute, together with the Ministry for the Protection of Rights of Persons Belonging to National and Ethnic Groups of Montenegro, held in Kolasin on June 2-3, 2006 its second roundtable in the series on Developing a Governmental Minority Policy for Montenegro. The meeting was sponsored by the British Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro. Participants included members of the parliament of Montenegro, government officials, leaders of ethnic communities from Montenegro, and international experts.

The main topic of the discussion was implementation of the law on minority rights, especially the establishment of national councils that are envisioned in this law.

Following are the main items of the consensus that was reached at the meeting by the majority of participants:

- The implementation of the law on minority rights and freedoms must improve Montenegro's already good interethnic practice;
- To encourage the parliament of Montenegro to adopt the new electoral legislation as soon as possible by taking into consideration provisions of the law on minority rights and freedoms;
- Taking into consideration the fact that the law on minority rights and freedoms gives the Ministry for the Protection of Rights of Persons Belonging to National and Ethnic Groups of Montenegro one year to draft the minority strategy for Montenegro, the ministry should be encouraged to draft the rules of establishing the national councils and to form them as soon as possible according to the specific features of each minority;
- The Ministry for the Protection of Rights of Persons Belonging to National and Ethnic Groups of Montenegro will produce the first draft of the rules on establishing the national councils and will present it to the participants upon its completion;
- The law on minority rights and freedoms sets up the maximum number of members of national councils; the rules should include the minimum number;
- The rules will provide for representation from non-governmental organizations and intellectuals; these organizations and individuals should prove their long-term connection to a given minority and to the mission of improving minority and human rights;
- The state should strive for the council membership to be as authentic and representative as possible in relation to a given minority while respecting the provisions of the law on minority rights and freedoms; a possible solution might include the provision that 50%+1 members of the total number of council members should come from the minority lists.

The participants will provide all support needed to the Ministry for the Protection of Rights of Persons Belonging to National and Ethnic Groups as it works on drafting the provisions necessary for the formation of the national councils.

*Kolasin, Montenegro
June 3, 2006*