



Special Feature: Georgia

Citizen's Forum established in Georgia's Armenian minority region



and increases the capacity of civil society organizations and local communities through training and community mobilization.

“Over 20 civil society organizations are among the founders of the Javakheti Citizen's Forum and some 150 people representing all groups in the region have signed up to become members of the Forum,” says Tom Trier. ECMI launched the Javakheti Citizen's Forum project in 2004 and will continue to support its activities at least until the end of 2007.

On 23 August, the Javakheti Citizen's Forum held its inaugural meeting with the participation of over 150 people from the region and elected an organizational committee. The next day, the committee elected 17 board

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The Javakheti region is among the poorest of Georgia, with a predominantly rural population. 95% of the population is ethnic Armenian with smaller groups of Georgians, Greeks and Russian Dukhobors. Photo by M. Hertoft.

Under the auspices of ECMI, local leaders from the primarily Armenian-inhabited region of Javakheti established a Javakheti Citizen's Forum on 23 August 2005. “The establishment of the Javakheti Citizen's Forum is a major step forward for advancing civil society in Javakheti,” says Tom Trier, ECMI's Regional Representative for the Caucasus, based in Tbilisi. “The Forum will play a major role in enhancing the links between

the region's population and the authorities.”

With a conflict prevention focus, ECMI aims to defuse inter-ethnic tension and promote regional integration of the isolated Javakheti region (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda *rayons*) into the Republic of Georgia by enhancing informed political dialogue between local, regional and state levels of government and civil society. ECMI conducts independent research projects

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Didi Abuli, the highest peak in Javakheti (3301m) as seen from Akhalkalaki, the region's principal town. Photo by R. Holmboe.



The inaugural conference of the Javakheti Citizen's Forum in Akhalkalaki was attended by well over 150 participants representing all ethnic groups of the region, local authorities and civil society organizations. Photo by E. Sambesile.

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members and established six working groups on gender, youth issues, human and minority rights, economic issues, language, education and culture, and governance and public administration. The next steps include electing a board chairman and registering the Forum

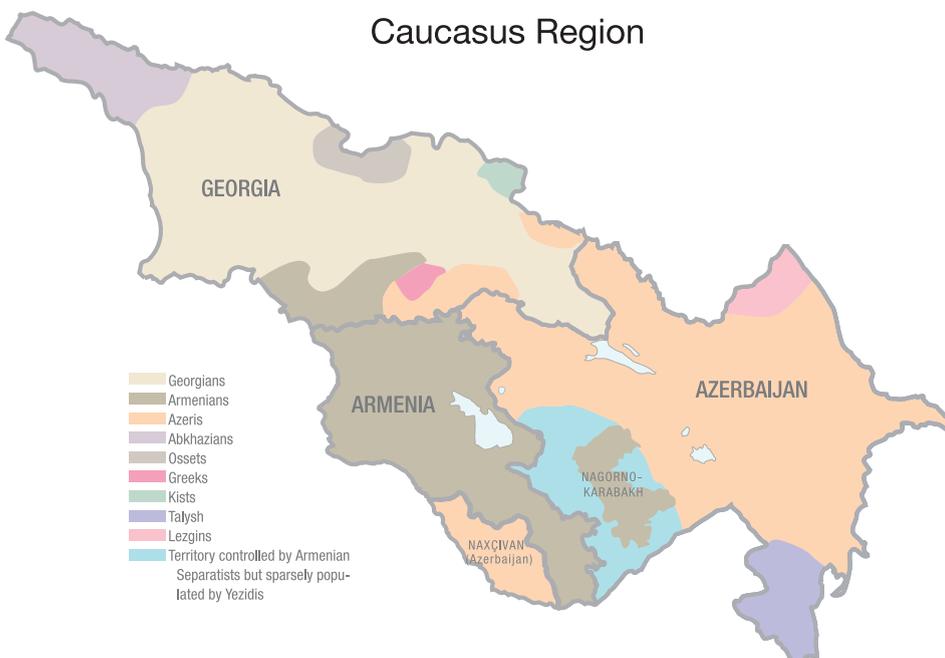
with the Georgian authorities.

The Javakheti Citizen's Forum is all-inclusive. All of Javakheti's ethnic groups — Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Russian Dukhobor — and different religious confessions — Apostolic and Catholic Armenians — were present at

the inaugural meeting. The Forum's membership base consists of all invitees who signed the inaugural declaration on 23 August.

Socially, economically and geographically isolated from the rest of Georgia and with a large Armenian minority, the Javakheti region, which forms the eastern part of the Samtskhe-Javakheti Province of Georgia, possesses the potential for ethno-political tension. The scheduled withdrawal of the 62nd Russian military base — a major provider of jobs to the local population — by 2007 risks exacerbating regional problems.

“Javakheti remains an isolated region of Georgia,” Tom Trier says, “but the Forum will provide new opportunities for enhancing a process of consultation between government and civil society in the region. It is important that the concerns of Javakheti's population are heard and taken into account when the government devises new policies affecting the region”. Collaborative lobbying efforts with Georgia's Ministry of Justice have led to the opening of a passport issuing authority in Javakheti, saving the local population from





Potato harvest in Javakheti. Potatoes are the main crop of the region Photo by M. Hertoft.

travelling to the city of Akhaltsikhe, some 75 km away. In consultation with ECMI, Georgian authorities are planning socioeconomic programs to defuse base withdrawal concerns and ongoing tensions.

ECMI has been involved with research on ethnopolitical conflicts in the Caucasus since 2001. As a non-partisan actor, the Centre has established very close working relations with local authorities in Javakheti, the governor of Samtskhe-Javakheti, as well as the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and several NGOs. To support the Georgian government's capacity to develop national minority policies, ECMI seconds several local experts in regional development and conflict management at the Office of the Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, which works to enhance governmental policy on minorities and to improve dialogue between governmental structures and the population of Javakheti.

A New Momentum in Talks on the Settlement of the Transnistrian Conflict in Moldova

Two events, the failure of the federalization talks that dominated the Transnistrian conflict settlement agenda during the first term of the communist government in Moldova (2001-2005) and the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, have led to the beginning of a new period in Transnistria's conflict resolution talks. This time, the initiative came from the Ukrainian President, Viktor Yushchenko, in May 2005. The Yushchenko Plan reiterates the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and proposes that a special legal status be granted to the Transnistrian region within the Republic of Moldova. The plan envisages early free and fair elections to the Transnistrian 'Supreme Soviet' under international monitoring before Moldova recognizes this assembly as the legitimate representative body of the region.

The Moldovan parliament approved Yushchenko's plan in June 2005 and the OSCE reacted positively to this

initiative and to the first steps taken by the Moldovan parliament. There remain, however, many questions as to whether or not the Transnistrian authorities will accept the plan that was proposed by Yushchenko and elaborated on in the decisions of the Moldovan parliament.

ECMI has been involved in Moldova for a quite some time, supporting the Moldovan authorities' search for an optimal solution to the conflict through its network of international specialists on conflict resolution and through the active engagement with the local expert community. These ECMI activities are set to intensify in the forthcoming months. A number of international experts' missions, as well as several seminars and local expert group discussions, are planned for the autumn months of 2005. Hopefully, the concerted efforts of all domestic and international actors involved in conflict resolution in Moldova will help to bring about democratization in Transnistria and to find a lasting solution for the Transnistrian problem.



Javakheti, made up of the districts of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, is a mountaneous region located in an altitude of 1700-2200 metres above sea level. Photo by R. Holmboe.



A banquet in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1944 deportation of Meskhetian Turks from Georgia to Central Asia. Photo by Igor Savin.



A Meskhetian Turk woman sells her products at a market in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Meskhetian Turks are predominantly rural settlers. Photo by Igor Savin.



A Meskhetian Turk family in Michurin Oblast, Kazakhstan. Photo by Igor Savin.

Support for the Georgian Government in policy-making on Meskhetian Turks

Georgia today has the veneer of relative stability and progress, but many of the elements that tore the country apart 15 years ago still prevail. The standstill in the relations with the unrecognized republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remains an important concern of the government. The post-Soviet socio-economic situation in Georgia has not significantly improved either. At the same time, Georgia's new leadership is determined to eventually become a member of the EU and strives to transmit the image of a country sincerely committed to democratic principles.

Whilst having signed a range of international agreements and conventions, Georgia still has many obligations remaining to be implemented. One of the commitments made when Georgia acceded to the Council of Europe in 1999 was to begin the process of repatriation of the Meskhetian Turks, who were deported from the country in 1944. However, the government has been frustratingly sluggish in addressing this issue. Despite pressure from the Council of Europe, this issue remains at the margins of contemporary Georgian politics. However, the government's inefficacy cannot solely be attributed to its deliberate unwillingness to address the issue of repatriation. This issue is indeed very sensitive, as the concept of repatriation enjoys little support amongst the population. Moreover, the Georgian government lacks both the knowledge on the current situation of the deported population and the experience for adequately initiating a process of repatriation. At the same time, the international community has been reluctant to get involved until a law on repatriation has been passed by the Georgian parliament.

Against this unpromising background ECMI has been the

only international organization that has attempted to provide concrete assistance to the government in its efforts to tackle the issues pertaining to repatriation. The large scale ECMI research project "Between Repatriation and Resettlement: The Meskhetian Turks", currently being conducted by ECMI (see page 5), has turned out to be most timely, allowing ECMI to provide policy makers with facts on the current situation of the Meskhetian Turks. Acknowledging the highly sensitive nature of the problem, ECMI has positioned itself outside a controversial political debate over the ethnic origin of the Meskhetian Turks and refrained from voicing an opinion about the timeframe for repatriation and the locations of settlements for those to be repatriated. Instead, ECMI has made a commitment to rendering assistance in the following areas:

- a) To provide state structures with objective and up-to-date information. Dearth of information about number of Meskhetian Turks, the location of their current settlement and their intentions with regard to repatriation has significantly impeded the government's efforts to deal with the problem;
- b) To enhance the dialogue between the state structures and the population. The Georgian population is barely aware of the government's position and activities regarding repatriation. Although this issue has been frequently raised by NGOs, until recently the government has tended to disengage from a public discussion on this matter;
- c) To assist in devising a viable action plan for repatriation. Clearly, the international community is reluctant to accelerate assistance for repatriation as long as the Georgian government fails to work

out a realistic plan with a feasible timeframe and clear division of responsibilities.

On 6 June 2005, ECMI organized a conference with participation of key experts on Meskhetian Turks (see page 5). At the event, ECMI experts informed Georgian officials, activists, scholars and other stakeholders on the results of its comparative research project in nine states of Meskhetian Turkish settlement. A special emphasis was put on the Meskhetian Turks' intentions with regard to possible repatriation to Georgia. The conference cemented relations between ECMI and the Georgian government and encouraged the Commission on Repatriation to intensify its work.

ECMI regularly updates members of the Commission on the project's progress and on the findings of the ongoing research. Due to this research the government has now obtained more reliable statistics as to the total number of Meskhetian Turks and information on the locations of their current settlement.

Equally vital is ECMI's contribution in devising an action plan for repatriation. ECMI has seconded a noted specialist in the field, former Acting Ombudsman of Georgia Mr. Teimuraz Lomsadze, to work with the Office of the State Minister for Conflict Resolution. He is working in close cooperation with the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, Mr. Giorgi Khaindrava, on issues related to the repatriation of Meskhetian Turks. Mr. Lomsadze has almost single-handedly authored a new action plan, which is now being considered by the government and president. The new action plan is envisaged to carry more weight in the eyes of the international community.

ECMI's assistance is welcomed and highly appreciated by the Georgian authorities. The Centre is regarded as a leading expert on Meskhetian Turks. It remains to be seen, however, whether the government has the political will to join the dots and utilize these efforts for beginning a process of repatriation.

Conference on Meskhetian Turk Resettlement in Tbilisi

On 6 June ECMI held a conference entitled "Finding Durable Solutions for the Meskhetians" in Tbilisi, Georgia, as a part of a large-scale comparative research project "Between Integration and Resettlement: The Meskhetian Turks".

In light of the Georgian government's growing attention of to the issue of resettlement of Meskhetian Turks in Georgia, the conference aimed at presenting and discussing the research results of recently conducted studies in the countries of Meskhetian settlement. By bringing together different stakeholders involved in the issue, the conference was envisaged to contribute to discussion on the problems of the Meskhetian Turks and how they can be addressed. The conference featured presentations on Meskhetians based on case-studies in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the USA. The case studies covered a wide range of issues relating to the situation of the Meskhetian Turks, with a particular focus on their attitude toward repatriation, resettlement, their notion of home/homeland and their plans and aspirations. In addition to the country case-studies, the conference shed light on the role and interests of the actors involved in discussions about solutions for the Meskhetian Turks.

The conference was a great success. It was chaired by the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, Mr. Giorgi Khaindrava, and was attended by a significant number of MPs as well as Georgian ministers. Overall, it attracted an audience of over 100 experts, politicians, scholars and NGO activists. The conference received very positive media coverage and gave a boost to the work of the Government Commission on Repatriation.

So far, the Commission on Repatriation has not been very efficient. It was tasked to devise an action plan and a strategy for repatriation. Since its establishment in November 2004,

the Commission has worked out two plans (in addition to previous plans developed by former commissions), but neither has been presented to the government or the president. Post-conference developments, however, have brought some signs of hope. The Commission has managed to get representatives of all ministries and the parliament involved in its work and has completed an action plan. In contrast with numerous previous plans, it implies a clear division of responsibilities and a feasible timeframe for repatriation. However, this plan is still pending the president's approval.

Meanwhile, ECMI continues its research project on the Meskhetian Turks, which is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. Studies in the nine countries of settlement are close to completion. The project will lead to the publication of a 600-page research volume; a unique comparative and multi-disciplinary study of the Meskhetian Turks, serving as a solid base for the process of finding possible solutions to the problem of the Meskhetian Turks. It is expected that the volume will be published in Autumn 2006. The research findings themselves as well as a set of recommendations will provide policy-makers and practitioners with an invaluable tool in addressing the problems of the deported Meskhetian Turk population.





ECMI supports ratification of the FCNM in Georgia

During the last year, ECMI has developed a dual strategy to better address the issue of minority rights protection in Georgia. Together with a grassroots approach that aims at raising awareness among citizens and representatives from local and regional authorities, the Centre has also developed a top-down approach to support the parliament and central government's efforts to ratify and implement the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), as well as to strengthen its capacity to deal with minority issues.

Georgia has signed but not yet ratified the FCNM. With Resolution 1415 (January 2005), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has encouraged Georgia to keep up with its commitments and obligations by urging that the Georgian government ratifies the FCNM by September 2005.

During recent months, the Georgian government has achieved significant progress in the FCNM ratification process: the Parliamentary Committees for Human Rights and Civic Integration, Foreign Relations, European Integration and Legal Issues, which are in charge of the reviews of the FCNM's provisions, have recently issued positive opinions about the Convention. Furthermore, a

Concept for the Integration of National Minorities has been drafted by the Parliament's Human Rights and Civic Integration Committee and will, most likely, be adopted during the Autumn Session.

So far, ECMI has made major efforts in consulting with those parliamentary and executive bodies in the government involved in the FCNM ratification process and has established contacts with relevant officials. Through meetings and consultations, ECMI has been able to identify the major gaps and obstacles impeding the setting of a clear agenda for the implementation of the FCNM.

Despite its efforts to improve standards for democratic and transparent governance, the government's capacity in policy formulation and implementation of minority governance standards seems to remain limited and is impeded by the existence of parallel structures and lack of efficient coordination. Georgia still faces severe difficulties in its ongoing attempt to set a clear agenda and a precise distribution of responsibilities in addressing the issue of minority rights protection and regional policy issues. This process has been further undermined by the lack of a consensus amongst government

officials and parliamentarians regarding the definition of the term 'minority' as it applies to the Georgian context, as well as a generally held concern that the implementation of the FCNM may encourage separatism in minority populated regions, thereby threatening Georgia's territorial integrity.

To efficiently address these problems, ECMI is currently working in close cooperation with the relevant parliament committees to elaborate a capacity-building action plan, whose main target group will be government's officials and members of parliament, for which expert consultations on the specific provisions of the FCNM will be provided along with briefing sessions on implications of the ratification and steps to be taken for follow-on measures in the process of implementation of the Convention. In early October, ECMI will organize a seminar for parliamentarians and government officials to address the remaining obstacles for ratification of the FCNM. Mr. Alan Phillips, former Vice-President of the Advisory Committee for the FCNM and a leading expert on the Convention, will attend the seminar along with other experts and will hold separate consultations with Georgian parliamentarians.

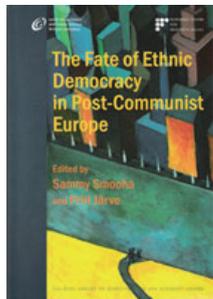
ECMI Concludes Civil Society Capacity Building Project in Macedonia

ECMI has been present in Macedonia since 2000, working with local NGOs in six regions — Skopje, Tetovo, Bitola, Gostivar, Shtip and Kumanovo. The objective of ECMI's project, the "Regional and National NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations", was to promote interethnic cooperation amongst all Macedonia's communities. Over the course of three years, more than 80 NGOs participated in the Network and received assistance from ECMI in the development and implementation of projects and

activities with cross-cultural themes and implementing partners. In December 2004, this Network transformed into three Regional Coalitions with thematic focuses: education, human rights and health care. With the assistance of ECMI staff in Skopje, Regional Coalitions consisting of Network members were formed in Bitola, Tetovo and Kumanovo, while a number of NGOs from Skopje, Gostivar and Shtip, along with several from the Bitola, Tetovo and Kumanovo regions, formed the Society Development Initiative — a national network of NGOs in Macedonia.

In January, the Regional Coalitions, with the assistance of ECMI staff, registered themselves as independent entities in their respective regions and have since developed and begun implementing action plans that will facilitate the civil society element of the decentralization process in Macedonia. August 2005 marks the end of ECMI's role in the development of civil society in Macedonia, but with the creation of the regional and national coalitions, at the behest of the Network members themselves, ECMI has been able to finalize the project with the knowledge that it has produced viable and sustainable mechanisms for the continued development of civil society and, thus, the democratization process in Macedonia.

External Publications by ECMI Staff



The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post Communist Europe

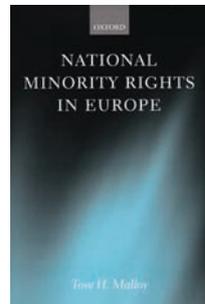
Edited by Sammy Smooha and Preet Järve,
ISBN 963-9419-74-9

The break-up of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia has unleashed two grand forces: a drive for democratization on Western lines and the resurgence of ethnonational conflicts. It is anticipated that these post-Communist states may develop

a new regime that combines institutionalized dominance of an ethnic majority with democratic rights for all. This mixed, non-Western type of system is amenable for analysis by Sammy Smooha's model of ethnic democracy, based on Israel.

In this volume, the model is applied by country specialists to Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. From these seven case studies, Smooha draws comparisons and conclusions about the model and regimes in post-Communist Europe.

To order this book please send an email to: LGIpublications@osi.hu.



National Minority Rights in Europe

Tove H. Malloy, ISBN 0-19-927443-6

National Minority Rights in Europe reviews the European inter-governmental approach in international law and politics through analysis of issues related to the moral recognition and ethical acceptance of national minorities. Examining issues of sub-state nationalisms, group recognition, identity, and political participation, Malloy reveals assumptions in international law and politics about state

sovereignty, collective rights, loyalty, and political inclusion. Employing both theoretical analysis and practical examples, Malloy provides a new framework for the accommodation of national minorities in Europe, which aims to address the problems that have emerged from both international law and European relations since 1989.

This publication may be ordered directly from the publisher, Oxford University Press. For telephone credit card order please call: +44 (0) 1536 454534. Alternatively, please visit: <http://www.oup.co.uk/bookshop/order.html> for an order form.



Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution. Innovative Approaches to Institutional Design in Divided Societies

Edited by Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff,
SBN 0-415-33986-3

This book compares and contrasts recent cases from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America in which new forms of autonomy regimes have been implemented in ethnically diverse societies. Acknowledging the significance of recent developments in the design of complex and innovative autonomy regimes and focusing on different options that are available for their design, this book makes an important contribution to, and moves forward, the current debate among scholars and practitioners on institutional design in ethnically diverse societies.

For further information about this book, please see the ECMI Library Catalogue.

This publication may be ordered directly from the publisher, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Hardback £65.00. Telephone credit card orders: +44 (0) 20 7017 6000. Fax credit card orders: +44 (0) 20 7017 6699

Recent ECMI Reports, Working Papers and Briefs

ECMI Report #56

Denika Blacklock.

Finding Durable Solutions for the Meskhetians. A Presentation of Preliminary Findings and a Roundtable Discussion with Government and Civil Society Actors in Georgia: Report on the Joint Conference organized by the ECMI and the State Minister of Georgia on Conflict Resolution Issues.

August 2005, 20 pp., appendix.

➔ www.ecmi.de/download/Report_56.pdf

ECMI Report #55

D. Christopher Decker and Roxana Ossian.

Enhancing Minority Governance in Romania. The Romanian Draft Law on the Status of National Minorities: A Consultation with Civil Society

July 2005, 35 pp., appendix.

➔ www.ecmi.de/download/Report_55.pdf

ECMI Working Paper #24

Malloy, Tove. H.

National Minority 'Regions' in the Enlarged European Union: Mobilizing for Third Level Politics?

July 2005, 44 pp., appendix

➔ www.ecmi.de/download/working_paper_24.pdf

Calendar of Events

July

1 July

Academia Baltica Seminar at the ECMI

14 July

Visit by the "Ostsee Jugend MedienCamp", Co-operation between the Landesmedienanstalt and the Landesjugendring, Flensburg

August

11 August

Meeting of Working Group on Minorities, Integration and Intercultural Competence

22 August

Book Presentation and Press Conference organised by Author at ECMI

25 August

Interview with the Spanish Newspaper "El Mundo" regarding ethnic and national minorities in Europe, Flensburg

25 August

Opening of the Minority Film Festival, Flensburg

26 - 28 August

Minority Conference at Akademie Sankelmark in cooperation with Landeszentrale für politische Bildung

28 August

Minority Marathon, ECMI Info desk and Press Office, Flensburg

September

25 – 26 September

"ECMI Ombudsperson Network Project – Training Event", Sofia, Bulgaria

27 September

ECMI National Conference on "Improving Minority Governance in Bulgaria", Sofia