



## Community safety in Kosovo: Lessons learned

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*While the EU is planning its future role in Kosovo it should not neglect the need for developing community safety projects aimed at establishing local and democratic self-governance in the security sphere. The following presents key findings from Saferworld's community safety work in Kosovo in order to contribute to this end during the transition phase.*

### ***Introduction***

Without a well-developed civil society to sustain its democratic development there is still a risk that Kosovo might become a 'failed' state, weakened by organised crime, ethnicised politics and local fiefdoms.

In the near future KFOR will remain the main military actor in Kosovo. But the EU, as a major donor and leading transitional authority, will also be able to make its own significant contribution to security-related efforts. For instance, it has many tools at its disposal to assist in security sector reform. Unfortunately, however, - so far at least - community safety has been hardly mentioned as a priority for the transfer of competencies. This article makes the case why it should be.

### ***Community safety: a missing link in the transition process?***

UNMIK's (the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo) days are numbered. The role of the OSCE - a secondary, yet still important, player in the international governance of Kosovo - is also now open to question. With enlightened self-interest, the EU has already said it will fill the gap left by this UN/OSCE retrenchment and, together with other donors, is committing significant resources towards building up the capacity of Kosovo's new justice and security institutions. An Internal Security Sector Review (ISSR) is also underway, bringing together Kosovan institutions, the UN, the EU, major donors and international think tanks.

These parallel processes are all converging towards a major handover of responsibilities to the EU, the mandate of which is still being discussed.<sup>1</sup> The challenge will then be to find a sound balance between the enhancement of local ownership<sup>2</sup> and a smooth transition to peace. One EU Member State diplomat has described attempts to define the EU's role as a "planning nightmare".<sup>3 4</sup> Yet, unless the EU does provide

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<sup>1</sup> See, Damien Helly and Nicoletta Pirozzi, 'The EU's changing role in Kosovo: what next?', in this edition of ESR.

<sup>2</sup> See Saferworld/Kipred report, Enhancing civilian management and oversight of the security sector in Kosovo, November 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The diplomat used this expression at the launch of the EU Planning Team to Kosovo.

<sup>4</sup> See other articles in this ESR number and Crisis Group Report, Kosovo: the Challenge of Transition, 17 February 2006.

(temporary) assistance with the reform process, political sensitivities within Kosovo may prevent it happening at all.

There are good opportunities to enhance not just the effectiveness of the security sector but also its democratic oversight. Ideally, key issues such as the demobilisation of illegal intelligence agencies, the reintegration of their former employees, the future of the KPC (Kosovo Protection Corps) and good governance of justice and interior ministries need to be addressed as soon as possible as *sine qua non* conditions for Kosovo's independence.

To avoid a resumption of violence it is essential that all EU attempts to establish democratic and locally derived governance are developed in a conflict-sensitive manner. To achieve tangible results in these areas the EU mission in Kosovo should only use its executive powers sparingly and clearly define its advisory and monitoring roles so as to minimize any possible "grey zone" of mixed responsibilities.

EU planners, therefore, will have to be prepared to act flexibly. They will also want to send the right signals to Kosovo's multi-ethnic population and neighbouring countries. This could partly be achieved by drawing lessons from ongoing projects about governance and community safety - led by civil society organizations - and then applying some of their best practices to support local democratic empowerment.

### ***Value of community safety after conflict***

The conduct of security policy in post-conflict situations like that in Kosovo is invariably state-centric, overly technical, and uses pre-conceived templates and ideas about the country. This means that the real needs of communities affected by conflict are unlikely to be met. It also compounds ordinary peoples' mistrust of the relevant institutions. When policing is ineffective, communities may acquire their own weapons or turn to armed militia for protection. The prevalence of arms proliferation and latent mistrust mean there is always the capacity to return to armed violence as and when tensions rise.

Nevertheless, everyday 'security' in rural areas is just as likely to be related to road safety and random environmental problems, as to anything more violent.<sup>5</sup> Community safety projects seek to directly address public safety concerns through a collaborative planning process between communities, local authorities and security providers – thereby ensuring local ownership.

Saferworld has conducted such a community safety project in a Kosovan village (Germova).<sup>6</sup> This demonstrated the need for an integrated prevention and peacebuilding approach: one pursued at local level that deals with several issues simultaneously - such as governance and accountability, public safety, community-based policing. This approach took the form of 'community safety plans', collectively and democratically discussed and agreed at municipal level, and based on genuine commitments from all stakeholders.

After almost a year of day-to-day work on local safety challenges in Germova, such as road and environmental safety, the community is now willing to co-operate on hard security issues with local NGOs such as FIQ, (Forum for Civic Initiative - Saferworld's partner in Kosovo), the police (KPS) and possibly the international military. This demonstrates a growing local trust in the security sector. Moreover, the

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<sup>5</sup> For instance in Germova village, the presence of aggressive wild dogs in the village, caused by the spread of uncollected garbage, was a serious safety concern for inhabitants.

<sup>6</sup> Saferworld and FIQ project in Germova entitled "Engaging civil society in decision making on arms control and community safety in the Western Balkans" is funded by the UK Government and the EC under the CARDS regional programme 2003 Democratic Stabilisation Local Civil Society Development Programme, running from April 2005 to September 2006.

information gathered through this project is much richer than anything that could be gleaned from one-off municipal consultations for the ISSR, and the project is sufficiently flexible to adjust to developments as they occur.

Deepening trust between communities and the local police is probably one of the most promising avenues through which to promote conflict-sensitive security sector reform, as well as democratic governance, in Kosovo. Without building such trust, international assistance efforts will struggle to be effective.

The EU should seriously consider developing similar projects across Kosovo, in both multi-ethnic and mono-ethnic locations. Such community-based activities would provide a useful 'feed' into security policy – helping to direct policing at the micro-level, to aid policy development higher up and to inform oversight. It would be the best way to gather reliable information to back-up conflict-sensitive policing, and would also facilitate the modalities through which to organise burden sharing between local and international security providers. EU assistance, provided through competent civil society organizations, would need to be de-politicised, 'status-blind' and rooted at local level.

Whatever Kosovo's future status, these projects will open a democratic space in which key safety and governance issues can be addressed.

### ***The governance dimension of community safety***

Because it is based upon popular consent and readiness for change, 'bottom-up' security governance has more chance of succeeding. There are already many successful collaborative and self-governed projects between Serbs and Albanians at civil society level. More are now needed, including those that bring local communities and security providers together.

Donors need to "invest in politics" by supporting political parties' development and training programmes, as well as enhancing parliament's capacity to carry out proper oversight of the security and justice sector. Those civil society organisations with a key role to play in mediating between local communities, the political elite and the international community, also require sustained funding. A major challenge is to entrust and empower a new civil society elite with the means of engaging fully in Kosovo's future political and social life – untarnished by the existing political 'establishment'.

To a large extent, the EU's role will be both to support knowledge transfer and to promote activities that cultivate local ownership – whether in security sector reform, participatory democracy, or legislative work. In this respect, one simple move would be to implement a smoother visa policy, thereby opening access to EU countries and enabling civil society in Kosovo to better familiarise itself with life in the EU.

To date, the OSCE and UN have been responsible for developing community-based policing in Kosovo, and uncertainty about who will take over this task needs to be clarified as soon as possible. The EU and the OSCE should agree on a long-term framework arrangement - focusing on community safety and community-based policing and aimed at achieving a full and democratic transfer of executive powers to Kosovars.

### ***The need for long-term responses***

While community safety projects may appear to be a convincing model to apply more widely across Kosovo it is important to stress once again that they need to be conducted in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Perceptions of insecurity inside Kosovo vary from one community to another and thus require targeted responses. Recent data have repeatedly shown that minorities (Serbs, Roma) are more likely to feel physically insecure in Kosovo. For the majority of the Kosovar population, however, community issues such

as unemployment, poor electricity supply, inadequate roads and environmental problems are probably of greater concern.

In regions close to Kosovo's territorial boundaries, perceptions of insecurity are higher because of major worries about cross-border crime, combined with a lack of trust in border patrols. Those international actors responsible for providing security also enjoy varying degrees of public confidence. For instance, whereas KFOR is treated with suspicion by Kosovar Serbs it commands a high level of trust amongst the wider population.<sup>7</sup> These differences illustrate the need for targeted policies aimed at addressing specific security needs at a local level.

Crime prevention and arms prevention campaigns need to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach as this may produce counter-productive effects. Future community safety projects need to be implemented on the basis of preliminary impact assessment studies, with clear benchmarks to be achieved and proper monitoring of progress made. Since the final status talks are unlikely to address this issue responsibility falls to the EU to start devising a strategic approach to community safety in Kosovo.

*Damien Helly and Simon Rynn (Saferworld)*



**international security information service, europe**

Rue Archimède 50, 1000 Brussels Tel: +32 (0)2 230 7446 Fax: +32 (0)2 230 6113  
E-mail: [info@isis-europe.org](mailto:info@isis-europe.org) Internet: [www.isis-europe.org](http://www.isis-europe.org)

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<sup>7</sup> Information gathered by Saferworld, FIQ and Gani Bobi Institute, May-June 2006.