

# Evaluation of the European Centre for Minority Issues

Conducted by an expert panel

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# 1 Summary

## Findings

On 29 January 1998, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal State (Land) of Schleswig-Holstein (hereinafter referred to as the Founders) established the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) as a foundation under civil law, located in Flensburg.

On that same date, the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany and the – then – Ministry of Information, Technology and Research (now Ministry of Higher Education and Science) of the Kingdom of Denmark entered into an interdepartmental agreement. Article 8 of this agreement stipulates that ECMI's activities shall, according to its regulations and for its own efficiency, be evaluated every four years by an independent scientific commission. Pursuant to this provision, the Founders have stipulated four focus themes as the framework for an evaluation to take place in 2018/19 and have commissioned a scientific expert panel (the Panel) to investigate these themes through a review of ECMI's activities and ECMI as an organisation. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) has been commissioned to assist the Panel in this process.

The findings of the Panel are summarised as follows:

### Topic 1: Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg

The quality of ECMI's relatively limited number of academic *peer-reviewed* publications is high in the sense that the research-based articles published in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in books, etc. certainly meet the criteria for qualified academic research (see below). In addition, ECMI's numerous application-oriented project reports, briefs, working papers, etc. are also valuable for the minority societies involved therein – even if these reports do not, strictly speaking, qualify as academic research.

The practical impact of these publications and the centre's other activities (lectures, presentations, etc.), in contrast, is more difficult to assess. Judging from the number of citations of articles and the number of lectures and presentations offered by ECMI staff, however, the Panel is able to conclude that the centre's activities in Flensburg and elsewhere have had a positive impact in general.

The number of lectures and presentations offered by ECMI's director and the academic staff is impressive and suggests that ECMI's teaching and communication activities are extensive and have had a positive impact – judged by the number of people attending the events and the interest shown in inviting staff from ECMI to come and speak at conferences, roundtables, etc. However, the centre's "Norm Criteria", requiring each academic staff member to produce and publish at least 1 article per year in a peer-reviewed journal, do not seem to have been fulfilled during this period (2014-18).

The Panel notes that ECMI has entered cooperation agreements with many universities, government authorities and NGOs. However, the Panel is unable to provide a viable assessment of the practical impact of these agreements. In respect of the centre's cooperation with minorities, the Panel concludes from the material in the external evaluation 2018-19 that the centre has in fact established viable and useful connections with minorities in various parts of Europe and Eurasia, including teaching and training sessions.

The Panel finds that there seems to be an increasing and worrying relationship between the available funds and the geographical orientation of the work covered by ECMI; the Eastbound expan-

sion of ECMI's territorial coverage into minority issues in Eurasian regions, such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan appears to have become an instant means of financial survival rather than the result of well-planned, focused and substantive research priorities, which is unsustainable in the long run.

## **Topic 2: Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes**

The ECMI mandate is unique for Europe and perhaps for the world. After more than 20 years of its existence, ECMI has become well-respected by several governments, international organisations and other relevant communities as a serious actor in minority protection and minority studies. With its limited human resources and precarious external funding in mind, the foundation's achievements, both as a research institute and a capacity-building organisation in minority issues, are remarkable.

Based on the submitted reports and documentation, as well as the background material made available, the expert panel concludes that ECMI, generally speaking, complies satisfactorily with the elements in the centre's very comprehensive mandate, as defined by the founding governments in Article 2, paragraph 2 and Article 3 of the Statutes.

On the other hand, ECMI has encountered economic difficulties for a number of years. When the centre was launched, the three founders, Denmark, Germany and the sFederal State (Land) of Schleswig-Holstein, had expected that a fourth founder could be involved, e.g. the EU Commission. This expectation was not fulfilled – arguably because minority issues were understood to fall outside the EU's jurisdiction, even though grants from the EU are still envisioned in Article 4.2.b. of the Statutes. The financial resources needed to continue all the ongoing projects and envisaged programmes and to establish an appropriate and sustainable institution have not been forthcoming. Therefore, a narrow interpretation of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes, combined with the difficult financial situation, would suggest that a more concentrated focus on national minorities and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups is needed, leaving aside general anti-discrimination and human rights law and the topic of “new” minorities. It is also advisable to limit the geographical range of ECMI's activities and priorities to Western and Central Europe and to rearrange the research, information, education and consultancy engagements and the five clusters, as further described below.

## **Topic 3: ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation and finances**

The organisational structure is characterized by an inconsistency between core structural components, particularly the ambiguously implemented concept of clusters (as the main formal organisational units), and projects that define the work in a research organisation. The problem appears to be that ECMI has defined five research clusters - but its activities are mainly carried out within cross-cluster-programmes, see further below. The organisation suffers from a lack of effective operational planning, coordination, and communication. In particular, the tasks and priorities of the junior staff are relatively unclear. Project management capacity could be improved. In the Expert Panel's view, there seems to be some degree of strategic tension or ambiguity underlying the research and action-oriented activities.

Personnel management at ECMI is facing some critical challenges. One important problem is inadequate remuneration for research and junior staff, which is demotivating for the highly committed research staff. Another challenge is the high workload and ad-hoc work assignments. The centre has experienced a high degree of staff turnover in recent years, also in senior positions. Particularly

the fact that two senior research positions have remained vacant has caused issues with staff capacity and worsened organisational problems.

The financial management system is focused primarily on compliance with administrative standards derived from the budget and the funding conditions. Actual cost management systems and budgeting according to performance are implemented only in rudimentary forms.

#### **Topic 4: Assessment of ECMI field offices and activities in the wider European periphery**

The strategic and political environment in Europe since the establishment of the ECMI policy of establishing field offices has changed dramatically. The opening of European institutions towards the East arguably provided the context for ECMI's subsequent focus on Eastern Europe. Over the past decade, however, the European enlargement policy has effectively slowed down in several of the same countries and regions targeted by ECMI.

At the same time, the emergence of nationalist and so-called populist parties and governments within the EU has increased the pressure on many minorities in Europe, raising concerns for their protection and development. Following the terminology of EU integration literature, the process of "deepening" (in the European core) is not necessarily alternative and contradictory to one of "widening" (towards the European periphery). Nevertheless, especially in the case of ECMI, issues pertaining to proper allocation of resources, institutional inertia and donor dependence would suggest the need for a re-examination of the relation between deepening and widening, and of presence in the field.

The 2010 Partnership Agreement between ECMI Flensburg and Caucasus/Kosovo (page 1) states: "While it had been initially envisaged by the ECMI board to achieve complete separation of ECMI Flensburg and its two regional entities by establishing nationally registered and legally independent structures (NGOs) for the Caucasus (in Tbilisi, Georgia) and for Kosovo (in Prishtina), it has proven advantageous to maintain in parallel the international representation offices (hereafter ECMI International Georgia and ECMI International Kosovo, aka ECMI International branches)."

One initial observation in the evaluation of ECMI's field offices is that this statement no longer appears to be supported by the current state of affairs at ECMI. Despite the specification about the existence of an ECMI Georgia in the ECMI Work Programme of 2019, this office was closed long before and is no longer active. The Kosovo office, while still active and - as will be explained below - well functioning, it has not maintained the kind of formal relation with ECMI in Flensburg that is indicated above. The presence in Ukraine, described on the website as a "regional office", has in fact been project-based throughout. There are several valuable activities and experiences in the field, but the context in which they are inscribed needs to be clarified.



## Recommendations

The panel would like to offer the Board and management (referred to below as “the centre”) some suggestions for improvements to consider in the future work of the centre.

The Panel finds it is of particular importance to give the following areas enhanced strategic attention:

- Respecting the mandate according to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the statutes;
- Rethinking research clusters;
- Strengthening human resource management and financial management;
- Revisiting the current strategy of continued expansion of ECMI activities towards the wider European periphery;
- Scrapping the denomination of “regional office” to avoid misconceptions;
- Founders should investigate increasing the core funding of ECMI.

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## 2 Background

## 2.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess ECMI activities and efficiency with focus on providing conclusions as well as recommendations on the following four topics:

1. Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg, *i.e.* the actual output in terms of academic research, advisory services and projects such as the Eastern Partnership Project. How is ECMI perceived by its stakeholders, specifically the target groups of ECMI “services”? How does the impact of ECMI measure compared to other European centres and institutions dealing with minority issues?
2. Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes, in particular with Article 2 paragraph 2 of the Statutes which states: “The objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European context through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups.” The evaluation shall specifically focus on the question of whether ECMI in its work respects the definition of minorities as stipulated in the Statutes. Under Article 3 of the Statutes, moreover, ECMI shall *carry out*:
  - a. collection, promotion and communication of research work;
  - b. construction of a European bank of data and models on minority issues;
  - c. compilation of research on minority issues and the creation of overall analyses and presentations;
  - d. participation in network research on minority issues;
  - e. promotion and communication of practical experience regarding protection of minorities through symposia, seminars and publications;
  - f. creation of fora for mitigating conflicts.
3. Advisory activities regarding minority policies. How is the ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation and finances, and is the allocation by ECMI of personnel and finances adequate and efficient?
4. Assessment of ECMI field offices and activities in the wider European periphery. Based on an account of the origins of the field offices and their current structural and financial links to the ECMI headquarters in Flensburg and analysis of the ongoing projects in Eastern Europe, the evaluation considers the benefits of field offices.

## 2.2 Expert Panel

The Panel consists of four senior experts, with backgrounds balanced between the academic fields of ECMI and organisational and financial matters, including outreach and international law.

Members of the Panel:

1. Chairman, Professor emeritus in Public International Law and International Human Rights Law, LL.D. (Dr. Jur.), Frederik Harhoff, Department of Law, University of Southern Denmark (Topic 1: Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg)
2. Professor Dr. Stefanie Schmahl, LL.M. (E), Chair for German and Foreign Public Law, Public International Law and European Law (Lehrstuhl für deutsches und ausländisches öffentliches Recht, Völkerrecht und Europarecht), Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg (Topic 2: Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes)
3. Professor Dr. John Siegel, Professor of Public Management, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, and Adjunct Professor of Public & Nonprofit Management, University of Potsdam (Topic 3: ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation, finances)
4. Senior Researcher Dr. Fabrizio Tassinari, Danish Institute for International Studies, (currently seconded as Executive Director to the School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute) (Topic 4: Assessment of ECMI field offices and activities in the wider European periphery).

The Danish Founder has appointed the experts for the themes “Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg” and “Impact of the activities at the ECMI field offices in Kosovo and Georgia”. The German Founders have appointed the experts for the themes “Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes” (appointed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior) and “ECMI structure” (appointed by Schleswig-Holstein).

The Danish Founder has appointed the Chairperson of the Panel.

## 2.3 Evaluation method

The Panel has reviewed ECMI’s main internal and external activities with a view to assessing ECMI’s results and efficiency. The review is based on the following bearings:

1. A review of publications, articles, reports and other documents submitted to the Panel by ECMI, including the previous external evaluations of ECMI carried out in 2007 and 2012. Also, the Partnership Agreements and the ECMI Institutional Strategy 2018-2022 (see appendices A and C);
2. A report covering ECMI’s written responses to the Panel’s questions;
3. Ten (mostly group) interviews, with the majority of interviewees having recently worked at ECMI across all levels and functions, held on January 22 and 23, and March 8 2019 and conducted by Prof. Dr. John Siegel;
4. A site visit (interviews with staff and management) at ECMI’s office in Flensburg;
5. Interviews with representatives from the field offices in Kosovo;

## 6. Interviews with stakeholders<sup>1</sup>.

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) acted as academic secretary for the Panel and assisted the Panel in conducting the evaluation. EVA was responsible for facilitating the process, including the organisational planning of the evaluation. Furthermore, EVA assisted with the planning of the site visits and producing the final report by preparing a draft report based on the written contributions by the Panel members, which are annexed to this evaluation report.

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<sup>1</sup> Audio-recorded interviews were conducted by telephone on 5th and 6th September 2019 from the offices of EVA by the Chairman of the Expert Panel with: Ms. *Judith Scholze*, Head of the Minderheitensekretariat, Berlin; Dr *Klaus Tolstrup Petersen*, Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig; and Ass. Prof. *Elena Cuijuclu*, NGO "Pilgrim-Demo", Moldova. Interviews were also attempted – albeit unsuccessfully – with: Ms. *Maria Pavlova*, Regional Liaison and development Unit, Ukraine; Ms. *Olga Pethukova*, Bureau of Inter-Ethnic Affairs, Ukraine; Ms. *Yaroslava Riznykova*, Dept. of Religious Affairs and Nationalities, Odessa, Ukraine; Prof. Dr *Joseph Marko*, Head of the Institute for Minority Rights, EURAC; and Mr. *Jan Diederichsen*, Sekretariat for the German Minority in Denmark.

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## 3 Evaluation

## Topic 1: Impact and quality of ECMI activities

### Analysis

This part of the evaluation considers:

- The scientific quality assessment of ECMI's academic publications;
- The scope and results of ECMI's teaching and communication activities;
- ECMI's cooperation with relevant authorities, universities and minorities;
- ECMI's strategy, working structures and work distribution.

### A scientific quality assessment of ECMI's academic publications

The central element of the scientific quality assessment of ECMI's publications is a review according to standard European university criteria for the approval of articles to be published in peer-reviewed academic journals or dissertations for the Ph.D.-degree, *see below*. With these criteria, the quality of ECMI's activities can be measured insofar as *written* publications are concerned. *Other* activities, such as the speeches and lectures given by ECMI's academic staff or the conferences organised by ECMI are clearly more difficult to assess in terms of their quality and impact.

Prior to the visit, the Panel had requested ECMI to forward copies of the three best publications by each academic staff member for the period 2014-2018. In compliance with this request, the Panel was provided with a list of 16 publications written by six academic staff members, including the ECMI Director, altogether totalling ca. 350 pages. Seven of these publications appeared to be relatively short but interesting ECMI Working Papers or ECMI Issue Briefs, albeit of a generally descriptive or abstract nature with limited theoretical and analytical weight.

The Panel's evaluation of the remaining nine (peer-reviewed) publications written by ECMI staff is that they are overall of high academic and scientific quality in terms of standard university criteria, *i.e.* a reasonable account of theory and methodology, a thorough analysis, coherent reasoning, accuracy, relevance, clarity, persuasiveness, authenticity, good language and reference to sources and documentation. In this respect, the Panel is satisfied that the nine ECMI publications meet the requirement in the Statute of providing novel and valuable research within the areas falling under ECMI's field of action. However, matters relating to *international law* and the *international legal framework on minority issues* are mostly dealt with in a descriptive and dogmatic manner with insufficient attention to legal context, theory and analysis.

Thus, the Panel finds that these ECMI research activities, *i.e.* the peer reviewed articles in reputable journals, are competent publications of a high academic level – despite the centre's limited resources and shortage of legal analysis. However, the majority of ECMI's publications are still brief working papers, project reports and issue briefs which, while eloquent and pertinent, do not in general qualify as fully fledged academic research worthy of submission for peer-review; this is perfectly in line with ECMI's mandate to also produce application-oriented and practical publications. Based on a review of ECMI's projects, the Panel concludes that many ECMI projects, such as the ECMI Summer Schools and the Master Course modules with training sessions on minority and diversity issues, are well organised and carried out successfully with a valuable outcome for all attending participants and students; these courses are indeed well sought after. This applies in particular for the MMTE (although not formally a "project"), which has had, and is expected to continue having important, lasting and positive impacts for the relevant minorities, governments and NGOs as well as for the public at large (cf. in particular Article 3,1.b. of the Statutes).

The Panel was also given a comprehensive list of all ECMI publications from 2014 to 2018 – more than 200 items – including ECMI handbooks, articles, reports, briefs, papers, book reviews, etc. – within each of the five clusters and with indications of the numbers of citations in other journals and books, showing that roughly 25% of ECMI's publications had been cited elsewhere. The Panel has not had the resources to review all these articles thoroughly but notes that many of them have attracted interest among other scholars and minorities and have been relied upon in part for publication in other fora. This is another indication of the positive impact of ECMI's publications.

### **Assessment of the scope and results of ECMI's teaching and communication activities**

The Panel was provided with a very long list of "Activities, Conferences and Workshops" showing all the conferences, seminars and external meetings which the Director and/or ECMI's academic staff had either attended (in most cases), organised or hosted since 2016, altogether totalling over 200 events. The Panel is not in a position to evaluate the outcome or the impact of these activities, in particular because the nature of the staff participation in many of the conferences is not explained (*i.e.* as speakers, panellists, invitees, organisers or just ordinary participants). However, the Panel observes that it must have required a lot of travel and, accordingly, absence from the ECMI HQ. On the other hand, ECMI's presence at these events has undoubtedly contributed to making ECMI more visible to the public eye.

The Panel was also given a list of altogether 73 "Lectures Held by ECMI Researchers", which is strong documentation of ECMI's communication activities by 17 past and present ECMI researchers since 2016. Many of the lectures were delivered abroad (Kyrgyzstan, The Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Poland, Indonesia, etc.) but most of the lectures were given at Flensburg University. The titles of these lectures suggest a wide range of issues relating to minorities, and provide a good picture of the variety of research and teaching topics undertaken at ECMI over the years.

Finally, the Panel received a list of "ECMI Advisory Services and Action-oriented Research Projects". The list merely indicates the responsible organiser and the titles of the teaching seminars and advisory services, most of which have been carried out by or through the ECMI Office in Kosovo. It is not possible for the Panel to fully assess the quality and impact of these many events (58 altogether) based on the list alone, not least because the list does not indicate accurately the duration, purpose and attendance of each activity. However, the list does offer an overall impression of the character and substance of the centre's teaching and research activities, the majority of which appear to have a concrete and practical focus (such as language training, access to education and social services, employment, integration, etc.).

In addition, ECMI's publication of its two journals, the European Yearbook of Minority Issues (EYMI) and the electronic Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE) are well esteemed and appear to have included several excellent articles in the review period 2014-18. Most of these articles are, however, authored by academics outside ECMI.

### **Assessment of ECMI's cooperation with relevant authorities, universities and minorities**

The Panel was given an overview of "Current Collaborations and Networks with European Universities and Research Institutions" showing that ECMI has entered into formal cooperation agreements with a large number of universities (36), the Council of Europe, EU and OSCE, and an even longer list of informal cooperation schemes with universities & institutions. Judging from the scope and number of these cooperation schemes, it seems that ECMI is indeed well connected with most of the relevant authorities, but the Panel is unable to fully assess the nature of these contacts.



### **Assessment of ECMI's strategy, working structures and work distribution**

In ECMI's Institutional Strategy 2018-2022, the centre sets out its intention to continue working on the basis of the organisational strategy that was established in 2009, with five clusters or topics on which the centre's researchers should focus their attention: (1) Citizenship and Ethics, (2) Conflict and Security, (3) Culture and Diversity, (4) Justice and Governance, and (5) Politics and Civil Society.

According to the Director's account, these five clusters were designed to serve as tools for concentrating the research activities on certain topics, rather than having the researchers engage in more or less uncoordinated activities. Yet the five clusters were also meant to be flexible to allow the head of each cluster to decide, along with the members of the cluster, which projects to engage in, assuming the project was within the centre's mandate. To achieve maximum flexibility, moreover, one researcher could well be a member of several clusters simultaneously.

However, one of the difficulties with this cluster-structure is, first of all, that there is an obvious degree of overlap between the cluster-topics (e.g. between conflict (2) and culture (3), as culture is often the root of conflict), and the same kind of real-life problems occur in several clusters. Secondly, a proper functioning of each cluster requires that sufficient manpower and resources are available – which is clearly not the case. According to the cluster staffing scheme for 2019, the *Justice & Governance* cluster only has one senior researcher attached, while the Conflict & Security cluster currently has none. As a result, the clusters are simply overstretched due to the available manpower. Thirdly, there seems to be only little cooperation and coordination between the clusters in the sense that there is no overall leadership setting out directions for each cluster and setting the necessary priorities. Despite these five clusters and the activities based on them, many topics tackled by ECMI have transverse relevance. ECMI research activities over the last decade reveal that several topics appeared regularly in the work of every cluster, albeit addressed from the respective scientific perspectives.

### **Cross-cluster programmes**

In order to overcome some of these difficulties, the ECMI established cross-cluster programmes, such as the Non-Territorial Autonomy Cross-Cluster-Programme or the Roma Empowerment. These programmes have worked well in general but have tended to make at least partly the clusters redundant. The Panel notes that the very need to create cross-cluster programmes highlights some of the shortcomings in organising the research in fixed clusters in the first place.

ECMI's work structures are difficult because of the shortage of permanent staff, which prompted the centre to hire a number of interns to boost the centre's research capacities. However, while interns are useful and skilful, they are only allowed to stay for a maximum of 3 months (according to German law) which makes it very difficult to benefit fully from their work.

The insufficiency of funds has led ECMI to venture into new geographical areas towards the East, where it is easier to attract project funds. This, however, is a vulnerable strategy because the centre risks weakening established networks and relations as it is forced to drive its activities more and more eastwards, further away from the western European base on which the centre was originally established.

### **Networks**

According to the mandate laid down in Articles 2 and 3 of the Statutes, ECMI participates in various research networks on minority issues. The aim of such networking is exchanging scientific knowledge and creating the "critical mass" in terms of institutional capacities that do not exist at the centre. It is highly positive that ECMI has strong cooperation with the two universities in the border region between Germany and Denmark. It is also to be welcomed that ECMI has established

close cooperation with the European Academy in Bolzano and with universities in Romania and Scotland. Furthermore, ECMI's networking spans far beyond the European Research Area, e.g. the cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities. The centre would be incapable of carrying out its functions without having access to all the information, insight and experience that comes out of well-established existing networks. The Panel accepts, on the other hand, that it is quite difficult to explain in detail just how these networks work in practice.

The cooperation with the Council of Europe at the operational level, especially around the two legal instruments that constitute the core of minority rights in Europe: the FCNM (Framework Convention on National Minorities) and the ECRML (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages), is very useful, particularly with regard to the "Thematic Commentaries" issued by the Advisory Committee to the FCNM. The ECMI Director's membership of the Advisory Committee to the FCNM facilitates knowledge that feeds into the centre's research and activities. The same is true for the cooperation with further international organisations or institutions. Recently, ECMI has achieved partner status in the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM), a government membership group. The centre has also entered into a close cooperation with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, at both operational and management levels. Various UN institutions are also part of ECMI's networking, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities, with whom cooperation on the 2019 annual "Minority Forum" focusing on indigenous languages and multilingualism is planned. Cooperation with the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency has so far only materialised through the Civil Society Platform, of which ECMI is a member. Cooperation with these actors constitutes a major component in the aim to support governments in transforming European standards into operational policies benefiting minorities.

ECMI is also in contact with various local stakeholder organisations and has established a formal annual "Minority Roundtable" which provides a platform for information exchange between representatives of minorities and the researchers. The purpose of the annual roundtable is to discuss specific topics that have had relevance for the life of the minorities during the past year. ECMI also participates in the "Dialog Forum Norden" which promotes dialogue between minorities and the majority, and this has brought the local municipalities closer to each other. ECMI has also developed a good relationship with the "Federal Union of European Nationalities".

### **Interviews with stakeholders**

The interviewed stakeholders have participated in different activities with ECMI, such as action-oriented projects, training, conferences, etc. In general, the perception of the activities is that they are well-run and contribute to more awareness of minority issues.

One issue raised in the interviews is that ECMI's work is generally visible and well-known in the border region between Germany and Denmark, where it has played an important role in the relations between local minorities and the various Government- and Länder-agencies, including the Region's Universities. However, the stakeholders' question whether there is sufficient general awareness of ECMI among the public and NGO-circles in relation to minority issues further away from the border region or abroad.

Another issue raised by the stakeholders in the interviews is the balance between long-term research and short-term action-oriented projects. In recent years, regrettably, ECMI has produced less fundamental research and more specific action-oriented projects. One possible explanation for this shift, in the stakeholders' view, is that it has become increasingly difficult to attract funding for wider and longer research projects.

## Conclusions

The quality of ECMI's academic publications is high in the sense that the research-based articles published in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in books, etc., meet the criteria for qualified academic research. However, the Panel notes that a large proportion of written submissions published by ECMI's academic staff (briefs, working papers, etc.) do not fully qualify as academic research; the scale of the centre's real academic output is, therefore, relatively small.

The impact of these publications and the centre's other activities (lectures, etc.), in contrast, is more difficult to assess. Judging from the number of citations of articles and the number of lectures and presentations, however, the Panel is satisfied that the centre's activities in Flensburg and elsewhere have had a positive impact in general.

The number of lectures and presentations offered by ECMI's director and the academic staff is impressive and suggests that ECMI's teaching and communication activities are valuable and have a positive impact. However, the centre's "Norm Criteria" requiring each academic staff member to produce and publish at least 1 article per year in a peer-reviewed journal do not seem to have been fulfilled in this period (2014-18).

The Panel notes that ECMI has entered into cooperation agreements with a large number of universities, government authorities and NGOs. However, the Panel is unable to provide a viable assessment of the practical impact of these agreements. In respect of the centre's cooperation with minorities, the Panel concludes from the material in the external evaluation 2018-19 that the centre has in fact established useful connections with a number of minorities, including teaching and training sessions.

The Panel finds that there seems to be an increasingly difficult relationship between the available funds and the geographical orientation of the work covered by ECMI; the eastbound expansion of ECMI's territorial coverage into minority issues in Eurasian regions, such as Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and Tadzikiistan appears to have become a means of financial survival rather than the result of well-planned, focused and substantive research priorities, which is unsustainable in the long run.

## Topic 2: Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes

This part of the evaluation considers Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI's Statutes, which describes both the meaning of minority for the purpose of the foundation as well as the geographical limitation of the centre's activities in Europe. According to this provision, "[t]he objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups."

### Analysis

#### Research clusters with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI Statutes

The research and consultancy projects conducted at ECMI in this evaluation period cover the five research areas assigned to the five clusters with a varying density. In practice, however, some of the research clusters lack sufficient resources (human and/or financial) or go partially beyond the mandate in the field of national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups

(see below). Most of the tasks are carried out by ECMI in thematically oriented cross-cluster-programmes, which also speaks in favour of a revision of the organisational structures.

However, this does not apply to the clusters “*Justice and Governance*” and “*Conflict and Security*”, which, in the Panel’s view, should both be upheld, at least with regard to their content. These two clusters essentially relate to the protection of national minorities or other traditional ethnic groups. The programmes carried out are of high quality. The compilation and critical evaluation of the monitoring processes within the framework of the Council of Europe conventions for the protection of minorities and their reception in the domestic legal order of the contracting states is, for instance, of very high value. Even beyond that programme, the *Justice and Governance* cluster has left strong marks in the centre’s research output. The *Conflict and Security* cluster with regard to minority issues and ethnic diversity has also traditionally been a strength of ECMI’s work and has found high-profile expression in several publications and action-oriented work initiatives. The “Non-recognised Territorial Entities Programme”, which is part of the *Conflict and Security* cluster, fits in very well with ECMI’s mandate and is both innovative and much needed, since de facto territorial entities are generally not monitored by the international community. Non-recognised territorial entities are one of the biggest challenges in contemporary international law and relations. Many NGOs operate in these regions, especially with humanitarian and educational issues. But at present, only two authoritative reports on the minority rights situation in these entities have been published (on Transnistria and on Abkhazia) upon the request of the UN and the EU respectively. There is no doubt that research activities by ECMI on non-recognised territorial entities can generate a high degree of added value. Against this background, it is to be hoped that the *Conflict and Security* cluster, which is currently not operational due to the dismissal of the senior researcher, will soon become active again.

The cluster *Citizenship and Ethics* has been strengthened in recent years and occupies, with its aim to create bridges between minority and majority communities, a prominent place in ECMI’s research programme, which is in full accordance with the mandate. In contrast, the Politics and Civil Society cluster, in the opinion of the Expert Panel, does not feature very prominently in ECMI publications and action-oriented work.

The greatest risks to the compatibility of ECMI’s work with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes exist in connection with the *Culture and Diversity* cluster. This cluster involves a series of projects addressing the specific challenges of the so-called “new” minorities (migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers). In fact, the differing cultural and religious traditions of these minorities are often perceived as alien and extraneous by the host society. Against this backdrop, it might seem sensible to explore the narratives and historical myths of these minorities in a comparative perspective, and to contrast the results with the rights of recognised or autochthonous ethnic minorities. On the other hand, research on “new” minorities risks going beyond the narrow mandate of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes, which explicitly addresses only national and autochthonous ethnic minorities.

It is certainly true that international legal instruments are silent when it comes to a precise definition of a national minority. As far as ECMI’s Strategies 2012-2017 and 2018-2022 point out, the definition of a minority needs to be revisited, since the world is becoming increasingly complex in terms of individual memberships, identities, communication and mobility; this opinion is acceptable from a dogmatic legal scientific perspective. There are, in fact, convincing socio-political and human rights reasons why the (legally non-binding) definitions of minority advanced in the second half of the 20th century (such as the one proposed by F. Capotorti) can no longer be seen as viable or authoritative for the societal changes of the beginning of the 21st century. In addition, the lack of a common definition on national minority in international law reflects that the existence of a national minority is more a question of fact and politics rather than of law. At least, it can be said that

the question of recognition by states of a group as a “national minority” is far from having been resolved. Identities and self-identification of ethnic groups, which are essential under international minority law (e.g. see Article 3 FCNM), remain dynamic phenomena.

Nevertheless, Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes is narrowly worded. For a teleological extension and dynamic interpretation of the minority term mentioned there, the ECMI Statutes do not provide any clues. The views of the founders, which are voiced in meetings with ECMI staff, clearly oppose the application of a broad and dynamic concept of minorities; a comprehensive and open-ended definition would carry the risk of diluting ECMI’s originally euro-centric purpose and background, and it would seriously exceed the centre’s financial capacity. As reported during the Panel’s site-visit in January 2019, aspects related to the interpretation of the term minority are indeed discussed from time to time by the board and the centre. However, expanding the definition has not been sanctioned by the founders. One additional reason for this more rigorous understanding of the term “national or autochthonous ethnic minority” certainly lies in the fact that the status of “new” minorities differs from that of national minorities, which have had a history of coexistence with the majority for generations and enjoy higher levels of integration in a country’s social and political cultures. Furthermore, from a legal and international standard setting perspective, there are significant differences between “traditional” minorities and “new” minorities such as immigrants or asylum-seekers. While the protection of minorities is relevant for ethnic minority groups residing in homelands, immigrants or asylum seekers are subject to international law on aliens and to the general human rights scheme. Since ECMI’s research has to be mandate-driven, the focus of its programmes should be on policy-making in relation to recognised or traditional ethnic minority groups residing in homelands, and not on immigration or asylum policies.

### **Cross-Cluster-Programmes with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI Statutes**

The Cross-Cluster-Programmes largely comply with the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes. This particularly applies to the “Roma Empowerment” programme. Although not recognised as an official national minority in all European countries, Roma are the most marginalised and vulnerable (autochthonous) ethnic community in the European continent. A better understanding of the differentiated nature of their communities and their needs is urgently required. This is even more so, as ECMI has rightly identified the lack of a synchronised and coordinated approach to their problems. ECMI has longstanding and successful experience with the protection and inclusion of Roma communities in the Balkans and in Georgia and has recently created new partnerships in the area of Roma empowerment in Serbia. The centre focuses on the cultural and educational rights of Roma communities while leaving basic human rights protection to human rights organisations.

As regards the cross-cluster-programme on “*Non-Territorial Autonomy*”, the academic study of this form of autonomy has long stood in the shadow of the study of territorial autonomy arrangements. The design, functioning, and implementation of non-territorial autonomy policies in public management are generally neglected in academia. This is mainly due to the fact that none of the international documents that are relevant for national minority protection have included any reference to non-territorial autonomy arrangements. However, such arrangements can indeed foster a sense of democracy and “ownership” among the affected national minorities, and they therefore constitute a new and attractive research field. This research project is also highly innovative, since it improves academic knowledge of models and policies of non-territorial autonomy through the compilation and description of empirical data and an overall critical assessment of the potential and the risks of non-territorial autonomy policy.

The ECMI “Border Region Governance Programme” is also a relevant tool, since many of Europe’s national minorities have their homelands in border regions. The phenomenon of ethno-cultural

diversity in border regions is a relatively well-researched topic in academic research. The study of border regions is complex since they and their populations belong to different political and legal systems, and the affiliation to different systems produces different contextual factors. It falls well within ECMI's research areas to highlight how national minorities and ethno-cultural groups can facilitate cross-border relations through their economic and social skills as well as through their multilingual and cultural ties. They may also promote regional development of an area and become a strategic element through the consolidation of horizontal partnerships across borders. ECMI's presence in one of Europe's most peaceful border regions offers an excellent opportunity to conduct comparative studies and suggest recommendations for other border regions in Europe.

According to its mandate, ECMI is to collect, promote, analyse and communicate research on minority issues, including constructing a European databank of models of minority accommodation. The aim is to provide policy makers and minority representatives with state-of-the-art knowledge about the situation of minorities and the protection schemes adopted in Europe. The Minority Map and Timeline in Europe (MMTE) is, therefore and without any doubt, the flagship project of ECMI par excellence. It is intended to help develop ECMI's own goals and projects on minority issues and to act as a central clearinghouse website that provides information on diverse ethnic minority communities in a timely, straightforward and reliable manner. The MMTE fulfils a crucial part of the mandate of ECMI in terms of documenting minority situations and informing both the academic community and a broader public about minority communities and their associated main issues across Europe. Currently, MMTE is under development, since several country and minority profile drafts have had to be reviewed and adjusted, but it is hoped that it will become operational in the very near future.

Some other ECMI cross-cluster-programmes concentrate primarily on human rights issues, as they focus on the enhancement of diversity protection in Europe. This is especially true for the project "*Teaching in Diversity*" which aims at providing school teachers with skills and competences for teaching diversity, non-discrimination and equality. In various areas, ECMI has built a multi-dimensional research portfolio within the topics of discrimination and recognition, including the fight against discrimination on various grounds, such as national, ethnic or social origin, gender, language, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other status. It is certainly true that national and ethnic minorities often experience multiple discriminations on several grounds due to their membership of a minority and other reasons. There is also widespread consensus in political science and human rights literature that the term "protection of minorities" should be replaced by a more dynamic concept of "management of diversity". Nevertheless, projects concentrating on non-discrimination, diversity and equality involve risks of exceeding the mandate under Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. ECMI's undeniable strength lies in the field of minority protection. Therefore, the centre should not compete with other institutions that are dedicated to general human rights protection and anti-discrimination policies, e.g. the German Institute for Human Rights (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte).

### **Geographical priorities with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI Statutes**

ECMI's mandate, according to Articles 2 of the Statutes, is Europe. The centre interprets the term "Europe" widely as the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and those relevant of the OSCE, which currently counts 57 participating states. This, in the view of the Expert Panel, stretches the centre's activities too far to the East. However, despite its extended interpretation of "Europe" within the OSCE meaning, ECMI does exclude North America and Mongolia from its activities.

A strong segment of the programmes of ECMI is centred on minority issues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Western Balkans and, most recently, Central Asia. This is not surprising bearing in mind the centre's focus on action-oriented work together with the biographical and geographical

backgrounds and academic specialisations of ECMI's researchers. ECMI has with good reason chosen to focus on Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and minority-majority issues in these regions. But the centre has also chosen to address minority conflicts in central Asia at the expense – at least to some degree – of research within the fields of conflict transformation, state construction and institution building.

This entails a risk that ECMI will focus too much on states that are not part of the European continent in strict geographical and geopolitical terms (despite their inclusion in the OSCE). Indeed, ECMI has provided governments in Central Asia with valuable advice and transfer of knowledge. The strategy may be relevant, but it is doubtful whether it is workable in the present financial and resource circumstances. Central Asia is a very diverse region in terms of approaches to minority issues and protection. Disputed territories and borders between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan contribute to the escalation of inter-ethnic tensions. It is undeniable that Central Asia is within the reach of Europe's normative power, but it remains doubtful whether Central Asia is really within the reach of ECMI's "European" mandate according to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes.

Minority issues in Western Europe still deserve strengthening as a research focus of the centre, since experience with the Council of Europe conventions on the protection of minorities demonstrates that deficiencies in the institutional arrangements and societal set-ups concerning minorities are to be found as much in Western European states as in Eastern Europe. The research on national minorities residing in the so-called "denial countries", such as Greece and France, could be intensified. In addition, Western Europe has been recently confronted with separatism movements, e.g. in Scotland and Catalonia, and populism is re-emerging all over Europe. The rise of populism and nationalism has had a strong impact on refugees and migrants, but there seems to be a spill-over effect into the discourse on national and ethnic minority protection, which especially affects the Roma communities. The geographical focus of ECMI's activities, therefore, needs a certain reorientation towards the minority issues of Western Europe. A strengthening of this area would of course require the recruitment of one or two experienced social/political scientists or lawyers of a comparable orientation.

### **Publication, information and documentation with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI Statutes**

Publication, information and documentation of national and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic minority research and projects are among the core tasks of ECMI's mandate under Article 3, read in conjunction with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes.

One of the strengths of ECMI is that research at the centre is conducted in a multi-disciplinary manner, so that, in principle, various disciplinary and methodological approaches are employed. The research methods are identified by each research staff member in order to address the subject matter adequately. ECMI has, however, formulated requirements defining that the research conducted should be systematic, cumulative, evidence-based, non-subjective and generalising. This activates different academic traditions and methodologies at ECMI, coming from political science, anthropology, economics, ethnography, history, sociology and law – although the centre's research on international legal aspects relating to minorities has been less prominent.

Against this backdrop, both the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE) and the European Yearbook of Minority Issues (EYMI), of which ECMI is a co-publisher, are of impressive scientific value. The published research articles and book reviews do not all consistently focus on the relatively narrow mandate of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes. Rather, in both publications, minority rights and minority issues come to the fore in their entire breadth, including diversity protection and migration issues, and are also dealt with from a non-European perspective.

However, this sweeping approach cannot and should not be avoided in interdisciplinary and international journals. An academic journal that meets scientific standards and wants to achieve lasting effects must absorb and process the dynamic currents of the discourses in the various scientific disciplines. In the Panel's view, ECMI succeeds excellently in both publication types.

### **Advisory activities and action-oriented work with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 and Article 3 of ECMI Statutes**

Article 3 of the ECMI Statutes requires that the centre must engage in advisory activities regarding minority policies, cf. Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. Part of ECMI's mandate is consequently formulated as constructive conflict management and advisory services (action-oriented work). As such, ECMI has addressed the task of action-oriented projects in strategy papers defining goals for, and expectations to the activities conducted by the centre. ECMI's advisory services include requests generally from inside Europe but also from outside Europe, normally procured by European governments or institutions.

The actual action-oriented projects and advisory services conducted by ECMI vary a lot in substance, scope, and proportions. As explained above, these activities mostly, but not fully, match the mandate laid down in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. The achievements in this area appear to be outstanding, and the work seems to have had a positive impact in the field. As a general rule, however, action-oriented projects are more time-consuming and require more commitment than projects of a strictly practical design. Research-driven projects are generally of higher quality and longer duration and have better chances of leaving a positive impact in the field. ECMI deserves praise for the apparent priority given to research-driven projects, but the synergies between applied research and action-oriented projects could be further deepened and increased. Therefore, again, ECMI should be reluctant to extend its research to Central Asian countries, at least while no effective and adequately financially resourced cooperation with partners in Central Asia is secured. A further expansion of ECMI programmes to the Arab world, as apparently intended by the centre, should be completely avoided, since it oversteps ECMI's mandate.

## **Conclusions**

The ECMI mandate is unique for Europe and perhaps for the world. After more than 20 years of its existence, ECMI has become well respected by several governments, international organisations and the epistemic community as a serious actor in minority protection and minority studies. With its limited framework and precarious external funding in mind, it is remarkable what the foundation has achieved, both as a research institute and a capacity-building organisation in minority issues.

Based on the submitted reports and documentation, as well as the background material made available, the expert Panel concludes that ECMI generally operates according to its mandate as defined by the founding governments in Article 2, paragraph 2 and Article 3 of the Statutes. However, the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes indicate clearly that a more concentrated focus on national minorities and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups is needed, leaving aside general anti-discrimination law and the topic of "new" minorities. It is also advisable to downsize the range of ECMI's activities in terms of the geographical priorities and to seek a reduction of the research portfolio and the five clusters as described above.



## **Topic 3: ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation and finances**

This part of the evaluation considers the adequacy and efficiency of:

- the organisational structure of the ECMI, with focus on assignment of tasks, processes, coordination, and cooperation with field offices;
- the management of human resources, with focus on staffing, compensation, and personnel development;
- the use of financial resources, with focus on financial management, financial accounting, auditing, and the use of third-party funds.

### **Analysis**

#### **Organisational structure**

At the beginning of 2019, ECMI comprised 20 staff positions, of which two were not filled. ECMI tasks thus need to be assigned clearly and appropriately according to the centre's mandate and mission, resources, and its projects and stakeholder expectations, but also in order to guarantee the reliable and efficient functioning of the organisation in general.

The organisational structure is characterised by some key components:

- the differentiation of clusters as basic organisational units;
- the important role of projects;
- the nature of the work (administration vs. research);
- a categorisation of job families;
- the division of work between the headquarters (HQ) in Flensburg and the field offices.

The five clusters can be considered the fundamental units of the organisational plan (see 3.1). The concept of clusters is plausible at first sight, notably because it aims at comprehensive inter-disciplinary cooperation and expertise, and at avoiding selective perceptions of the complex problems the centre is dealing with. The clusters are supposed to be managed by Heads of Clusters at the level of (post-doctoral) senior researchers, which is appropriate given the demanding expert tasks.

However, taking a closer look at the organisational reality, a certain discrepancy between the idea and practice becomes apparent. At the time of the site visit, two out of the five Head of Cluster positions were vacant, one was filled permanently, one was filled with an acting head of clusters, and one was managed by the Director (supposedly part-time). Under such circumstances with insufficient staff capacity, the cluster structure cannot function properly. The problem is further intensified due to an unbalanced staffing situation at the junior researcher level.

In addition, several interviewees at ECMI expressed their doubts about the purposefulness of the cluster structure, both as an idea and in practice. For many, it was difficult to describe what a cluster is or should be, how it differs from other types of organisational units (for example departments, divisions, competence centres, etc.), and what the added value of the cluster approach is.

Even though 'cluster' is a modern term with symbolic meaning, it does not seem capable of providing a stable and efficient research environment – something required by the organisation and its members. Indeed, only few interviewees defended the idea. One interviewee stated that "90% of the work is cross-cluster", and another stated that clusters were rather "a story to the outside world".

That raises the question of how the centre is actually structured, if the clusters are not functioning well. Another problem occurs due to the fact that the work of ECMI has become mainly organised as projects, both externally mandated and funded as well as internally defined. The results of the interviews imply that there is an implicit struggle between two organisational logics: the logic of permanent tasks based on the mandate and the resulting functions as expressed in the denomination of the clusters, on the one hand, and the particular demands of projects on the other hand. It remains unclear how these two parallel structures with their respective underlying logics are connected and to what extent they can be mutually supportive, if at all.

In any research organisation, projects play a crucial role in the organisation of its activities. As the centre is funded to a large extent by external grants that are assigned to projects, project portfolio management and project management are a fact of daily life. Even though ECMI and its staff have a lot of experience in successfully planning and implementing projects, it seems like the centre is not structured as a project organisation. However, the employees refer mainly to projects if asked about their tasks, not clusters. In that sense the cluster idea seems to be relatively ineffective, and the centre's project organisation seems to be relatively effective. The ECMI is capable of planning projects and convincing several external funding institutions to provide resources for its activities in a competitive environment. Nonetheless, interviewees expressed the need for improvement in terms of consistently and professionally managing projects, inter alia with regard to sharing knowledge and experience, providing sufficient time and capacity for project planning, and project control. For example, an internal handbook on project management was suggested. Furthermore, it does not always seem clear who is the project manager or leader, and thus who carries the responsibility for a project as a whole. Deficiencies in project management are reflected in problems with large projects, such as EEP and MMTE.

The nature of the work and, thereby, the job characteristics can be divided into administrative tasks and research work. Given that ECMI in Flensburg is the headquarters, administrative and managerial functions account for approximately half the positions. The planning, controlling, funding and organisation of projects can be considered mainly *administrative* tasks, whereas the implementation of the projects mainly involves *research* activities (literature analysis, applying theories and empirical methodologies, field studies, documenting, reporting and publishing results). Thus, research activities in the narrow sense constitute the minor proportion of the overall task assignments at ECMI. This fact creates a conflict with the centre's self-perception as a research institution. Furthermore, strains emerge from the fact that many employees consider themselves to be working as researchers, not as administrators or managers. This is most obviously the case for not only the Junior and Senior Research Associates but even for the so-called Project Assistants and Project Research Associates.

The impact of this underlying conflict is highlighted by a perception among the junior researchers and project assistants who reported unanimously that job profiles are often unclear, particularly regarding the distinction between Junior Researchers and Project Assistants. Task assignments and job descriptions are not necessarily as defined in contracts, and respective definitions do not really matter. Complaints about unequal distribution of work across time and personnel were aired several times. Overlaps and lack of clarity of task assignments can and sometimes do result in frustration and conflict. Prioritisation of tasks is also deficient, e.g. with regard to balancing priorities of individuals, teams and the organisation. Interviewees stated that they did not have

enough time to work profoundly, consistently and sustainably in one area of research, keeping researchers unsatisfied with the results. In this context, some interviewees feel that there are too many projects for the available capacities at ECMI. Another relevant concern is that there is too much travelling and working while travelling, which "shouldn't be a routine or expected".

Again, at first sight the differentiation between postdoctoral Senior Research Associates, Junior Research Associates who are usually doctoral candidates, and Project Assistants (or Project Research Associates) who are also MA-level university graduates is plausible. According to the centre's internal guidelines, Senior Research Associates (SRA) and Junior Research Associates (JRA) are expected to use approximately 50% of their time on applied research, 20% on policy studies and capacity-building, and 30% on dissemination, administration and other ad hoc work, unless otherwise stipulated in employment contracts. For Project Research Associates (PRA), the percentages are 80% on project work (research, administration and dissemination) and 20% on own research, unless otherwise stipulated in employment contracts. These percentages are guidelines, and exceptions from these norms can occur if special conditions so require, and if ECMI's management considers it important for the institution. Nonetheless, there seems to be consensus among employees of all three categories that the boundaries between these functions in general and jobs or tasks in particular are indistinct and that these percentages are rarely observed. Maybe the job title of 'Research Associate' is misleading, since research is an important part of the job, but not its exclusive area of responsibility; perhaps naming them 'Experts' would be a more appropriate title, given the diverse task assignments.

Regardless of job titles, what is more important is that junior staff are not clearly assigned to any particular cluster and/or project and, hence, to organisational units. The logical consequence is a lack of supervision and coordination, even though this practice might be useful in terms of flexibility. Nonetheless, some interviewees regret that research and tasks are not self-initiated but rather on demand, and that there is relatively little room for field research.

One interviewee claimed that "work planning is insufficient"; it would be no exception to be "fixing and mixing.....rather than doing things right in the first place". The problem of vague job descriptions is intensified due to the fact that assignments are also changing, and that often unclear expectations result in insecurity and uncertainty. Even if these findings only mainly hold true for the junior staff and not for core administrative functions, this concerns ECMI's 'machine room' and, thus, implies shortfalls in the efficiency and adequacy of organisational structure in a key area of activity and among a major part of the staff. Interviewees suggested that contracts should be updated and individual research plans for researchers be formulated. Another widespread assertion at the centre is that it is common to be confronted spontaneously with *ad hoc* work assignments, often with relatively short deadlines and high workloads, limiting the capacity for routine/planned work and, thus, compromising predictability.

It should be mentioned that the respective findings from the interviews coincide with issues discussed at an informal meeting of staff organised in October 2018 by the so-called Equality Unit, a unit representing the employees and their legitimate interests, as well as with statements made in a letter of complaint by senior research staff addressed to the Executive Board in May 2017. At this point, it is worth noting that no official body representing the employees (equivalent to a German "Betriebs-/Personalrat") has yet been established.

Furthermore, Project Assistants feel disadvantaged, and inconsistencies with their roles in the projects increase tensions. For example, a Junior Research Associate might be in charge of managing a relatively complex externally funded project, whereas a Senior Research Associate is only dealing with his or her individual research endeavours.

Procedures within ECMI are roughly defined in the handbook for employees, but there are no discernible efforts to systematically analyse or optimise the working processes.

Generally, a major issue seems to be *coordination*, which is strongly connected with another matter: *communication*. Coordination could be ensured by a clear hierarchy (headed by the director or, partly, by senior researchers), plans, rules, or horizontal self-adjustment. However, none of these mechanisms seems to be effective. The lack of project coordination is obvious and hardly surprising given that no position or communication routines exist for that specific purpose. Several interviewees expressed regrets that the position of the Deputy Director had been abolished without proper replacement. Generally, the management team, and who belongs to it, is not precisely defined; and senior researchers are not considered part of it.

Apparently, avenues for formal communication vertically and horizontally are insufficient, further exacerbating coordination deficits. The monthly general staff meeting is relatively short and held in a top-down style. This seems to be the only internal communication routine. Appraisal reviews are (if at all) held between the Director and Senior Research Associates. Generally, a lack of involvement by senior management in everyday routines is perceived as problematic in some statements. Interviewees considered insufficient information, for example concerning meetings with and decisions of external donors/partners, as problematic. A reason for this could be the Director's extensive span of control, a symptom of the lack of an intermediate level of the hierarchy, , e.g., a deputy director.

Communication is strongly linked to organisational culture. Several interviewees mentioned or implied that problems and ambiguities are not talked about, and that informal relationships are influential. Informal communication is crucial because it ensures at least a minimum level of horizontal communication. The lack of information and communication "leads to tensions and gossip"; the working atmosphere is "not the very best". Criticism causes defence mechanisms; the policy on participation is inconsistent.

Regarding the macro-structure of ECMI, a few points can be highlighted:

- The field offices generally work autonomously apart from initiation and bookkeeping, which are centralised in the headquarters. Challenges concern intercultural communication and management, travel, and formal procedures in light of the different cultures of compliance. Particularly the Kosovo endeavour works independently from the headquarters.
- The Executive Board is involved in organisational issues only to a small extent. For example, it is only informed about the strategy instead of determining it; according to one interviewee, the board "does not have enough time to go into the details"; another states that the Executive Board should talk to other people and not only the Director.
- The Advisory Board has not held meetings for a long time; it serves to foster the centre's networking rather than being involved in strategic (not to mention operational) decisions. However, some members do participate in activities of the ECMI.

### **Human resource management**

As for any research organisation, qualified and committed staff are essential. At ECMI, clearly very motivated and qualified people are working together towards accomplishing the centre's mission and contributing to understanding and solving minority issues in Europe.

In 2019, ECMI comprises:

- 13 positions (12.5 FTE<sup>2</sup> nominal, 9.8 FTE actual) financed from structural funds;
- 7 positions (6.5 FTE nominal, 5.8 FTE actual) from project funds, plus limited capacity from student assistants.

Hiring processes for two Senior Research Associate (SRA) positions were under way in the first quarter of 2019. The fact that for a period of approximately two years these crucial positions remained vacant requires a closer examination of the respective circumstances. In 2017 and 2018, ECMI was in a crisis regarding its staffing situation. In a letter to the executive board (which was later distributed to other stakeholders), several employees, the majority of them senior researchers, complained about unfair treatment, working conditions, pay and the state of the research at the centre. At the same time, a sexual harassment case also emerged. As a result of these incidents, some key staff in senior research positions had to leave ECMI. These incidents, particularly the sexual harassment case, had an almost traumatic effect on the staff, leading to the foundation of the Equality Unit, the loss of substantial research capacity, discussions about intercultural and diversity issues, as well as binding the attention and resources of senior management. Only recently do the centre and its staff seem to have recovered from these events.

The high level of staff turnover is considered critical, particularly regarding SRAs. A greater continuity in staffing would be generally desirable. Given that two SRA positions were vacant, two clusters were de facto not functional. For a third one, its functionality was at least questionable since it is managed part-time by ECMI's Director, who is already busy enough managing the centre as a whole and representing it to the external environment. Staffing of the clusters at junior level was also very uneven, as mentioned and illustrated in the previous section. The centre is not yet in a situation where the clusters are staffed to at least a minimum extent. A similar, though less dramatic situation seems to be the case with the projects. Obviously, deficiencies in organisational structures correlate with a problematic staffing situation. In that context, it also appears questionable whether the job chart ("Stellenplan") is adequately aligned with the organisational structure and the project portfolio. One interviewee expressed doubts by stating that ECMI employs "too few people for too big goals". Moreover, the job chart does not include consultants working on a fee basis. In addition, this consultancy status seems to be ill-defined and offered to individuals in non-transparent and somewhat arbitrary ways. Also, the hiring process is questionable if Heads of Clusters/SRA are not involved in hiring and HR policies.

The staffing situation is not, however, the major concern. Several interviewees, particularly at junior level, consider *salaries* the "biggest issue", for example claiming that compared to the official public service pay scheme (which also applies to public universities and research institutions), monthly salaries would be "€500 too low". Research staff are obviously very frustrated and demotivated by their remuneration. This is in contrast to the administrative staff, who see deficiencies when comparing to the significantly higher wage level in nearby Denmark but do not seem too troubled with their salaries. The analysis of current salaries confirms that compensation is clearly inadequate for researchers. A rough calculation, taking account of the current part-time working arrangement, concludes that for all employees currently working at ECMI in SRA, JRA or PA/PRA positions, the required increase in salaries would add up to a total of ca. €10,000 per month plus additional employer-costs (e.g. social insurance contributions). Consequently, if the personnel

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<sup>2</sup> FTE = Full Time Equivalent staff capacity.

budget is not to be increased significantly, an adequate compensation can only be achieved by either increasing external funding or reducing the number of positions, or both.

Employees at all levels and functions are very dedicated and motivated according to various interview statements. Conversely, there are also several reasons for demotivation apart from salary levels (referring to the structural deficiencies pointed out in the previous section), such as:

- working extra hours, also at weekends and while traveling, and unclear and conflicting expectations;
- leadership, “few rewards”, a perceived lack of appreciation, communication and participation deficiencies;
- ad-hoc work;
- rest and vacation time not always respected, as people are contacted in what are considered emergencies;
- the location of ECMI in Flensburg. (It has been chosen for obvious reasons, but does create a challenge for hiring staff due its peripheral geographical location.)

Time-limited contracts cause insecurity; the criteria for prolongation are unclear to staff, resulting in a somewhat precarious situation with a potential impact on the legal status of employees with a foreign citizenship. In this context, the particular challenges of international employees from non-EU countries, especially those on time-limited contracts, need to be kept in mind; these employees depend on sufficient salary to pay their living costs but also to maintain their legal status.

The conflict between high levels of commitment and problematic working conditions increases burnout-risks, for example with a high level of ambition on the one hand, and working extra hours without appropriate recognition on the other. Issues regarding working conditions can at least partly be attributed to fact that no formal staff representation has yet been established, even though the creation of the equality units can be considered an important step in that direction. Moreover, staff should be better informed about their rights.

In order to allow for regular communication about the individual work situation, annual reviews or performance appraisals should take place. However, this is not the case for most employees. According to the interviews, individual evaluation is inconsistent and problematic, because it usually takes place when things go wrong rather than on a continuous, systematic basis. Reviews could also be an occasion to routinely talk about qualification and career development. Qualification development is generally considered to be good but unsystematic. For example, senior researchers that are not being qualified as leaders, time for training, e.g. in project management, is lacking, and academic methodology and theory are not systematically trained. Knowledge transfer and sharing are deficient, which is particularly problematic regarding project management.

In addition, it should be mentioned that the budget authorizes only €3,000 p.a. for personnel development (mathematically, that equates to € 150 per employee!). This contrasts with planned executive travel expenses of €15,000 and overall personnel expenses totalling over €600,000.

### **Financial Management**

The third main topic this evaluation is financial management and the use of financial resources. Therefore, emphasis is placed on:

- the overall financial situation of ECMI as reflected in some key indicators;

- accounting and budgeting systems;
- strategic challenges with regards to funding, alignment and efficiency.

Looking at ECMI's key financial indicators for the last three years and its plans for this and next year, a significant decrease in income and expenses can be observed, with the exception of increases in 2018. What is more interesting is the volatility of these indicators, being dependent on external funding and the stable grants from the founding institutions, which account for annual income of € 926,000 in total.

As a logical consequence of this development, ECMI produced deficits in 2017 and 2018 of, respectively, ca. € 160,000 and € 105,000. These deficits are substantial, considering the fact that total income in 2017 was ca. € 1,054,000 and € 1,204,950 in 2018. Logically, the total reserves decreased as well. This may have something to do with income for projects occurring later than expenses, as only parts of grants are received earlier than expenses (i.e. for project staff salaries). Nonetheless, the financial situation of ECMI seems to be slowly deteriorating. Even though there were still reserves of approximately € 500,000, it should be noted that this is less than the annual personnel expenses. It also seems relatively optimistic that the budgets for 2019 and 2020 assume that further deficits can be avoided.

The volatility of surplus and deficit can to a large extent be explained by the income category of "earmarked allocation of funds for research, publications and projects", basically comprising external project funds and, hence, signalling the effectiveness of fundraising from the headquarters. As mentioned above, these considerations ignore the respective developments in the field offices, which, particularly for the Kosovo office, were very effective in generating funding for projects.

Fundraising from the headquarters has been less effective than expected according to the budget plan, as the actual results were much lower than the planned € 250,000 p.a. For 2019 and 2020, the plan for generating earmarked funds for research, publications and projects has been reduced to € 100,000 p.a. – a development that might be more realistic but is also debatable, since it is clearly an expectation of the founders that their continuous grants should leverage funding from other external sources. However, the executive board on which the founders are represented has apparently accepted this revision.

Nonetheless, funding is a strategic challenge, and funding frames the strategy. Strategic choices with regards to funding can be generally formulated thus: Is the ECMI supposed to grow in terms of funding, or should it maximize its impact with the given funds? Is it able and willing to pay adequate salaries if this means a significant reduction in the number of positions? One interviewee sees the centre "at a crossroad" in the sense of the dilemma of scaling down versus an expectation of growth. In this context, it seems to be clear that the founding institutions do not intend to increase their financial contributions. This dilemma raises questions about priorities within ECMI's activities, for example whether or not advisory work is sufficiently financed.

Therefore, internal transparency and management of costs and expenses are necessary, both in general as well as for projects. The respective systems do not seem to be too sophisticated, as can be expected from a small non-profit organisation with a relatively stable basic income and an absence of clear performance goals and objectives. The ECMI and its management are relatively autonomous in the way it allocates its resources, as long as it generally complies with general standards of parsimony and efficiency. In light of the small size of the organisation and the transparency required by funding institutions (in practical terms: the executive board and auditors), cost awareness seems to be adequate in general. It is, however, a different question as to whether incentives

for an efficient use of resources are effectively in place, but at least simple cost management systems are institutionalised in the organisation.

Cost assessment and financial planning seem to be rather rudimentary and incremental. The fundamental process of budgeting is organised by the senior management. There seems to be little involvement of senior researchers and project leaders. To some extent, financial planning is integrated in project planning, particularly in the formulation of project proposals and respective cost calculations. Relevant expertise is located mainly in the administration, and particularly at its head. However, some interviewees mentioned a lack of time to gather resources for projects and the perception that there is no systematic resource planning for projects.

The current system of financial management is rather simple, traditional, and focused on compliance with the diverse standards by which ECMI is funded. Different stakeholders have to be addressed appropriately and according to their respective formal requirements; interviewees mentioned that “different cultures” have to be dealt with. Some specific funding institutions are considered to be challenging and laborious, mainly due to formalistic procedures, costly requirements, drawn out routine decision-making processes, short term demands for information, etc. Managing these complexities is doubtlessly a major challenge and requires a lot of effort, for example in terms of bookkeeping.

Regarding financial planning systems, budgeting and accounting are based on categories or types of expenses (and incomes), not on projects or outputs as cost-drivers. This is problematic, since budgeting is neither linked with organisational strategy, nor performance, nor organisational structures such as clusters or projects. For example, when the draft budget is presented and authorized by the executive board, its members do not know what exactly the appropriations (and full costs) are for specific projects or outputs (such as a summer school or a category of publications). The major issue in this regard is the missing allotment of personnel expenses (comprising approx. 60 percent of the recent budget) to output categories or organisational units. Thus, the executive board (or ultimately the funding institutions) do not know exactly what it is ‘buying’ from the centre in terms of outputs or even outcomes. This problem is intensified through the fact that the budget does not contain any goals or objectives, even though these can be interpreted in the light of the annual programme (as some kind of performance or activity plan for one fiscal year) or the ECMI strategy document. Furthermore, another difficulty is measuring performance in action or applied research projects.

Theoretically, a performance-oriented budget should be reflected in a cost accounting system using the same categories and with a clear allocation of resources and responsibilities to organisational units and individuals (i.e. project managers). Practically, such a system is not yet discernible at ECMI. Thus, it is difficult to put a ‘price tag’ on outputs and/or projects, which would be relevant not only for planning and setting priorities but also for transparency about the efforts needed for respective results. Such a system, which could be implemented in a pragmatic manner, would also allow for comparison between actual costs of activities and projects, and previous plans or calculations.

As a consequence of the current situation, control of third-party funds is concentrated primarily on formal compliance, which is clearly important and challenging for ECMI. There are no indications of ineffectiveness in this regard. However, a different strategic approach could be considered, assuming that specific financial expertise is useful for successfully applying for funds, and that this expertise needs to be used in close cooperation with researchers and research-based project managers.



A more fundamental question is how efficiency can be measured and guaranteed in the decisions and activities throughout the centre. Efficiency can be considered – in very simple terms – as the ratio between inputs and outputs, particularly between costs (the use of resources in financial terms) and the *quantity* and *quality* (including the effectiveness) of published research results, teaching or advisory services provided to actors in the field. Efficiency in that sense is a function of incentives and transparency. The latter can be improved, as implied above, by cost accounting and performance measurement. Both kinds of information need to be linked and available in a useful form when decisions are made, especially those on resource allocation and project planning. Setting appropriate incentives is much more complex, because it means changing individual and collective behaviour.

### **Strategic alignment, communication and leadership**

Even if this part of the evaluation was not assigned explicitly to deal with strategy, communication and leadership, it is legitimate and necessary to – at least briefly – comment on these crucial functions of managing an organisation like ECMI. Fundamental issues identified in the evaluation process can only be addressed properly if they are considered in the broader frame and context of the organisation and the way it is managed (or rather manages itself) strategically.

ECMI has an explicit strategy (as a plan) laid out in strategy documents and an implicit, emergent strategy (as a pattern). Both types of strategy constitute the realised strategy that ultimately has an impact on the centre's organisational change, capabilities and performance. However, it seems that deliberate and emergent strategies are not always consistent, and that functional strategies (both deliberate and emergent) particularly with regards to structure and resource management are not adequately integrated:

- Organisational structure oscillates between the strategic concept of clusters and projects that emerge at least partly due to funding opportunities or decentral initiatives.
- The intended top-down strategy is not sufficiently translated into operational planning, coordination and communication. Particularly (but not only) junior staff strategy and priorities are unclear. Strategic goals are not substantiated in individual, operational objectives.
- Even if senior management considers strategy as setting the organisation's agenda and vision, researchers cannot see how their suggestions are reflected in the strategy – if they had a chance to participate in the strategy process in the first place.
- The ambiguity concerning tasks and roles represents a strategic tension between research and action-orientation. The idea of applied research is not yet appropriately conceptualised for practical use and sense-making at the operational level.
- People management at ECMI is not only facing critical challenges, but it seems that the strategic relevance of these issues is only partly perceived and addressed.
- Certainly, there is a lack of effective communication routines that would allow for collaborative self-reflection and systematic organisational learning, the latter being a prerequisite for building and fostering organisational capabilities. Instead, it can be assumed that ECMI's capabilities have decreased during recent years, e.g. due to fluctuation.
- Since the financial management system is focused primarily on compliance, cost management and performance orientation in the budgeting are weakly institutionalised. There is no clear link between resource allocations and intended results.
- Fundamental strategic choices with regards to the resource base of the organisation have to be made: Is ECMI supposed to grow in terms of funding or should it maximise its impact with the given funds? Is it able and willing to pay adequate salaries if this means a significantly reduced number of positions? How will the centre address the challenge of its digital transformation?

Effective internal communication – both horizontally and vertically – is the key to not only strategy formation, but also to organisational development and leadership. Therefore, employees need appreciation and encouragement.

## **Conclusions**

The organisational structure is characterised by an inconsistency of core structural components, particularly the (ambiguously implemented) concept of clusters (as, formally, main organisational units) and projects that define the work in a research organisation. The organisation suffers from a lack of effective operational planning, coordination and communication. Particularly, junior staff tasks and priorities are relatively unclear. Project management capacity could be improved. Underlying the ambiguity concerning tasks and roles is a strategic tension between research and action-oriented activities.

Personnel management at ECMI is facing critical challenges. One important problem is inadequate remuneration for research and junior staff, which is demotivating for the highly committed research staff; as are overworking and ad-hoc work assignments. The centre has experienced a high level of staff turnover in recent years, also in senior positions. Particularly, the fact that two senior researcher positions have remained vacant has caused problems in staff capacity and worsened organisational problems.

The financial management system is focused primarily on compliance with administrative standards derived from the budget and the funding conditions. Actual cost management systems and budgeting according to performance are implemented only in rudimentary forms.

## **Topic 4: Assessment of ECMI field offices and activities in the wider European periphery**

### **Analysis**

Over the past two decades, ECMI has pursued a strategy of widening of its activities and geographical reach. This materialised in the opening (and subsequent closure) of some field offices in the wider European periphery, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and in the Balkans. This part of the evaluation concentrates on the assessment of field offices and of activities within, or in some cases beyond, the core European area, as defined in terms of Council of Europe membership.

### **Georgia office**

The reasons for the closure of the Georgia office precede the reporting period for this evaluation. The signs of a gradual disengagement from Georgia were already apparent in the 2012 evaluation of the Georgia office carried out by the Centre for Evaluation (CEval), entitled “ECMI Georgia Activities Evaluation”, which concluded: “The ECMI Georgia office will one day be closed down.” If this happens any time soon, it will most probably result in a less effective way of working for the CNM. It is recommended to use the synergies between these two needs (the need to close down the Georgia office of ECMI and the need of the CNM to become self-sustainable) and consider integrating ECMI staff into the CNM, funded by UNDP and UNAG, and possibly by one of the donors that counted on ECMI for the realisation of their projects (e.g. the Council of Europe or the Norwegian or Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs). In this way, the CNM could count with ECMI’s deep knowledge concerning minority issues in Georgia and could also rely on the excellent contacts of ECMI staff (p. 18). Since 2004, ECMI has been present in Georgia, when they had an office in the capital Tbilisi that

covered the South Caucasus region. It was the Danish and the Norwegian Ministries of Foreign Affairs that helped fund the field office in Georgia in the beginning. The field office in Georgia primarily focused on Minority-Majority Relations, Dialogue and Consultation, Capacity Building and Policy Formation, Governmental and Institutional Support and Research and Documentation.

At a board meeting in 2008, it was decided that the ECMI regional offices at that time, including ECMI Georgia, would be incorporated independently in the respective states where they were located. This decision was based on economic reasons. The field office had not succeeded in gaining enough funding for their projects, and in the end the board decided that it was not economically sustainable to keep the field office in Georgia as a part of ECMI Flensburg. When ECMI Georgia was incorporated in the state of Georgia, a partnership agreement was made between the state of Georgia and ECMI, which meant that the field office was changed to a legally independent NGO. The NGO closed in 2017 due to insufficient funding.

In 2018, ECMI Flensburg stated that it had relaunched its activities in Georgia through a cooperation with a partner organisation called “Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism” (CSEM), which is part of the university in Tbilisi. By relaunching its activities, ECMI is now more active in Georgia, and they have a senior researcher at ECMI Flensburg who cooperates with the university in Tbilisi. Formally, there is no ECMI office in Georgia, and, presently, ECMI has no plan to establish one. Its presence in Georgia is currently reduced to cooperation with the university.

### **Kosovo office**

As far as the ECMI Kosovo office is concerned, the overall impression gained by the Panel, following interviews both in Flensburg and with the Director of the Kosovo office in Pristina, is that the Kosovo office is a successful reality, which, if anything, deserves more support. However, the correlation between the work and strategies of ECMI Kosovo and ECMI Flensburg is tenuous at best, and the conditions for ECMI Kosovo to maintain its denomination as an ECMI office should be carefully weighed.

The office in Kosovo started operating in 2001 as a branch office of ECMI and became an independent NGO in 2009. Today the office of Kosovo is characterized as an independent regional entity under the ECMI umbrella. With a budget of about € 700,000, the office is entirely self-funded, and 95% of the fundraising is done independently from ECMI Flensburg. It employs 19 fulltime, plus around 15 consultants and paralegals working in the field. The office focuses on two main areas:

- 1) Advisory services and consultancy work for the office of the president and the office of the prime minister in Kosovo. ECMI provides support and expertise and develops legislation for the minorities in Kosovo.
- 2) Groundwork, where ECMI works on a public policy level to make minority voices heard. Focus is especially on women and children.

Organisationally, one reason why ECMI Kosovo has grown increasingly independent is that fundraising from ECMI Flensburg was too cumbersome and not a flexible enough operation at a financial level, so it was easier for both parts if ECMI Kosovo was not funded by Flensburg. EU is the biggest donor to the Kosovo Office at the moment. All funding is competitively based.

The Danish and German governments do not fund ECMI Kosovo; its work is based on external donors. According to the ECMI Kosovo Director, Adrian Zeqiri, the brand of ECMI has added a lot of value to their work in Kosovo. At the same time, however, if their work had not been good, the brand alone could not have saved them.

## **Eastern Europe**

In Eastern Europe, ECMI is involved in a promising variety of projects, especially in Western Ukraine. These are focused, well-delimited and targeted, as well as being self-sustainable from a financial perspective. Until 2017, it ran a successful project on the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) funded by the Danish government for 3 years. It delivered a lot of results in terms of raising awareness via events and publications (some 52 activities in total). The project was designed around two working groups of public servants, minority servants, etc. and mixed nationalities from the East. As a result, there was a very valuable element of peer-exchange between the groups.

Following its expiration, the project continued in Ukraine only, although with a different focus on regional administration and with a specific view on how national minorities in different regions participate in the regional development. The focus is still on peer-to-peer learning: minority community to minority community on national minority issues.

Another smaller project in Ukraine (budgeted at € 50,000) was funded by the German government and focused on youth participation, i.e. youth participation in Ukraine. It delivered one kick-off meeting in Ukraine, two workshops and one final event.

The work carried out in Eastern Europe appears meaningful, focused and targeted.

## **Conclusions**

The strategic and political environment in Europe since the establishment of the ECMI policy of establishing field offices has changed dramatically. The opening of European institutions towards the East arguably provided the context for this move. Over the past decade, however, the European enlargement policy has effectively slowed down, and in some cases ground to a halt in several of the same countries and regions targeted by ECMI. At the same time, the emergence of nativist, nationalist and so-called populist parties and governments within the EU heightens the need to address minority issues within Europe. Following the terminology of EU integration literature, the process of “deepening” (in the European core) is not necessarily alternative and contradictory to one of “widening” (towards the European periphery). But especially in the case of ECMI, issues pertaining to proper allocation of resources, institutional inertia, donor dependence would invite a re-examination of the relation between deepening and widening, and of its presence in the field.

The 2010 Partnership Agreement between ECMI Flensburg and Caucasus/Kosovo states: While it had been initially envisaged by the ECMI board to achieve complete separation of ECMI Flensburg and its two regional entities by establishing nationally registered and legally independent structures (NGOs) for the Caucasus (in Tbilisi, Georgia) and for Kosovo (in Prishtina), it has proven advantageous to maintain in parallel the international representation offices (hereafter ECMI International Georgia and ECMI International Kosovo, aka ECMI international branches).

One first, general observation at this part of the evaluation is that this statement no longer appears to be relevant to the current state of affairs at ECMI. Despite the specification about the existence of an ECMI Georgia in the ECMI Work Programme of 2019, this office was closed long before, and is no longer active. The Kosovo office, while still active and - as will be explained below - well functioning, has not maintained the kind of formal bond indicated above. The presence in Ukraine, described on the website as a “regional office”, has in fact been project-based throughout. There are several valuable activities and experiences in the field, but the context in which they are presented needs to be clarified.

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## 4 Recommendations

The Panel finds that it is of particular importance to give the following areas enhanced strategic attention:

## **Respecting the mandate according to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes**

ECMI has been experiencing economic difficulties for a number of years. The financial resources necessary to service all the ongoing projects and envisaged programmes, and to run an efficient institution, have not been forthcoming. Therefore, not only the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes but also the difficult financial situation clearly indicate that a more concentrated focus on national minorities and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups is required, leaving aside general anti-discrimination law and the topic of “new” minorities. It is also advisable to downsize the range of ECMI’s activities with regard to its geographical priorities and to seek a reduction of the research profile. The Panel, therefore, recommends the centre to adhere more strictly to the mandate as laid down in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. General matters of anti-discrimination and, in particular, the topic of “new” minorities should be left aside. The same applies to the geographical range of activities in countries which do not belong to the Council of Europe.

## **Rethinking the research cluster**

In principle, ECMI’s five research clusters could make sense in terms of the organisation’s stability. Clearly, however, there is room for improvement:

- Individual tasks and roles should be redefined and be made generally binding. Job families in research should be clearly distinguishable. Renaming research positions could be discussed, e.g. to ‘Senior/Junior Experts’.
- The suitability for purpose of the cluster structure should be reconsidered in the light of possible alternatives, such as centres of competence, areas of expertise, or a project-based structure. Clusters (or the respective subsequent category of units) should generally be managed by a fulltime Senior Research Associate and be staffed with a clearly defined additional capacity of junior researchers.
- The position of a Project and/or Research Coordinator should be created and filled as soon as possible. Alternatively, a management team consisting of the Director and the Senior Research Associates could improve coordination. Effectiveness of such communication would be essential to the successful working of this model.
- Generally, internal communication routines should be redesigned for the sake of effective vertical (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontal communication across functions and projects.

## **Strengthening human resource management and financial management**

Personnel management at ECMI is facing critical challenges. One significant problem is the inappropriately inadequate compensation for research and junior staff, which demotivates the intrinsically highly committed research staff. Overwork and ad-hoc work assignments contribute to a de-

terioration of motivation and the attractiveness of working at ECMI. In addition, the centre has experienced a high level of staff turnover and shortages in recent years, also in senior positions. Particularly, two long-term vacant senior research positions have caused problems for staff capacity and have increased organisational challenges.

The Expert Panel recommends that:

- The compensation system should be fundamentally re-adjusted according to the German TV-L pay scheme.
- A strategy should be formulated and implemented that allows for a long-term increase in salaries, transparency of payments and fairness.
- The logical consequence would be that in the future the ECMI will probably employ fewer staff with better compensation.
- Organisational units (clusters and/or projects) must be endowed with adequate minimum staff capacity, both at senior and junior levels.
- Under these circumstances, clear and effective guidelines are needed on how to deal with extra work, limited work capacity and, thus, how to set priorities.
- The creation of an employee representation could be considered.
- Staff qualification development efforts and knowledge sharing should not only be systematically improved and institutionalised, but also supported by a substantial financial push.
- Annual performance reviews for all employees should be established in order to clarify individual tasks and objectives, negotiate qualification and career development, and to communicate appreciation and feedback.

The financial management system is currently focused primarily on compliance. In that sense, it also seems to be successful, given the diverse and complex regulatory environment the ECMI operates in. However, actual cost management systems are implemented only in rudimentary forms, and performance budgeting is weakly institutionalised. One major challenge is that personnel costs are not yet clearly attributed to tasks, organisational units or projects. Additionally, key financial indicators point to the need for reconsidering the financial foundation, with particular regard to fundraising which might be professionalised.

The Panel recommends that:

- A pragmatic cost-planning and cost-accounting system – including personnel costs – should be introduced and aligned with project management and organisational structures.
- The ECMI should introduce a performance budgeting system, including a structure based on output or organisational units (clusters or projects) and performance targets and indicators.
- Generally, incentives for the efficient use of resources should be reconsidered, for instance flexibility in terms of lump-sum budgets for projects or organisational units.

## **ECMI should rethink its organisational structure**

One key issue to be addressed strategically is making the centre a more attractive place to work in. ECMI could benefit from a phase of consolidation, focusing on re-thinking its organisational structure, closing the internal communication gap, and implementing an effective strategy for the centre's research and project management. Proper attention should be paid, particularly by senior

management, to aligning organisational structures and processes efficiently with people and financial management systems. If this process is to succeed, the ideas and creativity of ECMI employees at all levels and functions need to be included in a more participatory way and in alignment with the centre's mission. In this context, attention should be paid to the – doubtlessly complex – links between organisational performance, capabilities, routines, structures, resources, mission and strategy.

## **Revisiting the current strategy of continued expansion of ECMI activities towards the wider European periphery**

As a matter of strategy, ECMI should reconsider whether it is sustainable to pursue a strategy of continued expansion of ECMI activities towards the wider European periphery - as opposed to Western and Central Europe. This assessment pertains to the capabilities of ECMI, as much as to the political and normative climate in Europe, which has changed in recent years.

The Panel has registered an apparent imbalance between the way in which field projects and activities are organised and presented and the actual resources available to carry them out. There is a tendency towards over-stretching, also voiced by the programme staff, which needs to be measured especially against the specialisation of the staff and the extent to which ECMI can attract new staff. There seems to be an obvious need to focus the centre's work and concentrate the available financial resources on *fewer* activities and programmes – rather than taking up new tasks further away from the original core European areas in order to attract more resources.

The proposed work in Central Asia should be analysed in this light. It may well be justified for ECMI to investigate minority issues in Eurasia, but utmost caution should be exercised in reaching the decision to pursue this track. Following recommendations 1 and 2, caution pertains to the overall political and strategic climate in Central Asia (which is resistant to reform), the appeal of European norms in this part of the world, and the judgment of whether desk-work, which may or may not be followed by an action project, is even an appropriate allocation of resources for this geographical area. At present, the recommendation of this evaluation would counsel against pursuing this project further.

Western, Central and Southern Europe: In light of the changed geopolitical and normative context in Europe, including the rise of nationalist forces throughout the continent, ECMI should rebalance its work at the fringes of the European periphery with new forms of interaction, cooperation or presence in Central, Western and Southern Europe. This should not be attained by opening field offices, nor even necessarily by launching new projects; it could be attained by formalising partnerships with local institutions, like ECMI has done in Georgia. This could help maximize the role of ECMI as a hub for the systematic study of minorities issues in Europe. Such a network-based structure is already partly existing, judging by the linkages that ECMI's top management has throughout Europe. A formalisation, e.g. by signing a joint Memorandum of Understanding with the relevant counterparts, would help cement ECMI's reputation and carve out its comparative advantage vis-à-vis country-specific outfits.

The Panel, therefore, suggests that ECMI should downsize its activities and concentrate on projects closer to the EU, where a viable network is already available. This, however, may well raise other problems, such as losing funds and publicity.



## **Scrapping the denomination of “regional office” to avoid misconceptions.**

The presentation of the “regional offices” needs to be made clearer. Judging by, for example, the website and the Annual Programme 2019, it is not possible to deduce that the Georgia office/NGO was closed down and that the Kosovo field office is effectively running as an entirely separate entity, nor that there is no Ukraine office per se. The Annual Programme and the website are PR and information tools and, as such, the information provided there should be more accurate. It is imperative that the Annual Programme and the website are amended and republished to reflect the actual status of the work in these regions.

Based on the above, it is recommended that the denomination of “regional office” be scrapped altogether to avoid misconceptions. The project-based approach, e.g. as carried out in Eastern Europe, should be continued and consolidated, as this is in alignment with a proper allocation of resources and level of ambition. As a result, it is recommended that the notion of “regional office” is replaced by “focus area(s)”.

The Kosovo entity still retains the brand and name ECMI. If ECMI Flensburg is to retain a degree of ownership of the brand and the work being done in Kosovo, it is recommended that the founders pay, via ECMI Flensburg, 20% of the Kosovo office Director’s salary. In return, the said Director should be formally included in the proceedings of the ECMI Executive Board, as a permanent observer.

## **Founders should increase the core funding of ECMI**

The Panel recalls the recommendation of the 2007 evaluation report that Founders should increase the core funding of ECMI to enable the centre to fulfil its mandate without having to rely so heavily on external project-funding. ECMI’s external funding currently exceeds the core funding and is increasingly used to cover *internal* costs such as administration and overheads, which in the long run is unsustainable. For this reason, the Panel wishes to *support* the recommendation made to the Founders in the previous evaluation report to increase the annual core budget in order to ensure sufficient resources for administration, research activities and the personal development of senior researchers. Increased core funding could, if considered necessary, be provided on the condition that the centre meets pre-defined performance indicators for its new strategy, research priorities and projects.

# Appendiks A – List of documents provided by ECMI

- Three best publications from each researcher at ECMI
- A list over publications from ECMI including; number of citations, Journal impact factor, H-index
- A list of activities; conferences, workshops etc. ECMI researchers have participated in
- A list over lectures held by ECMI researchers
- A presentation and assessment of the impact of ECMI's research and activities from both Flensburg, Kosovo and Georgia. (Has the research projects changed anything in the affected regions)
- A list over collaborations and networks with universities and research institutes in Europe
- A description of the target groups/users/customers of the ECMI services
- A description of ECMI's advisory services and action-oriented research projects
- Performance-indicators for ECMI
- Strategy documents that can give an overview over the organization
- A list of personnel at ECMI and the field offices
- Terms of employment for ECMI employees
- Recruitment strategy
- ECMI Institutional Funding Strategy 2012-2016 (or the newest version)
- ECMI Framework Strategy 2012-2016 (or the newest version)
- ECMI Institutional Strategy 2012-2016 (or the newest version)
- The United Nations Declaration on Minorities
- Globalization and 'Minority' Cultures
- ECMI Annual Budget
- Composition of ECMI Board and Advisory Council: Statutes of the Foundation
- ECMI Neighbourhood Strategy 2014-2016
- ECMI Eastern Partnership Programme
- Case Study Kosovo
- Case Study Georgia
- ECMI Institutional Strategy 2012-2017
- ECMI Institutional Strategy 2018-2022
- ECMI Partnership Agreement Kosovo

- ECMI Partnership Agreement Georgia
- Kosovo Implementation Agreement
- ECMI Board Meeting Minutes regarding Partnership Agreements

# Appendiks B – Programme for site visit

## January 29<sup>th</sup>

09:00	Arrival at ECMI – Welcome and Introduction / tour of the house with director
09:30	Meeting on ECMI Strategies, research and actions – Board Chairman Dr. Jørgen Kuehl
10:15	Meeting on ECMI Strategies, research and actions – Director, Prof. Dr. Tove Malloy
11:15	Coffee break
11:30	Meeting with heads of clusters
12:30	Lunch
13:30	Meeting with Researchers (all)
14:30	Coffee break
14:45	Discussions with Advisory Council Representative, Partners
	Skype meeting with Dr. Jennifer Jackson Preece
	Phone interview with Prof. Dr. Rainer Hofmann
	Skype meeting with Mr Boriss Cilevics

## January 30<sup>th</sup>

08:30	Meeting on ECMI Research Activities
09:30	Meeting on ECMI Constructive Conflict Management and Advisory Services
10:30	Meeting on ECMI Networking and Co-operation
11:00	Meeting on ECMI Publication, information and documentation
11:30	Meeting on ECMI Organisation, staffing and related issues
12:00	Lunch
12:30	Closing meeting (ECMI Director and Expert Panel)
13:15	Closing Meeting (Expert Panel only)

# Appendiks C – Publications reviewed

The following is a list of a selected publications from each of the ECMI researchers in the time period 2014-2018.

Malloy, T. "The European Regime and the Applicability of the UN Declaration" in Rainer Hofmann and Ugo Caruso (eds.), *The United Nations Declaration on Minorities. An Academic Account on the Occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*. Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2014.

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Malloy, T. "National Minorities between Protection and Empowerment: Towards a Theory of Empowerment," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 2, 2014. Available at: <https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2014/Malloy.pdf>

Djordjevic, L. & Malloy, T. (with Cernega, S.) *Drafting Domestic Legislation Provisioning National Minority Rights: the Dos and the Don'ts According to the Council of Europe*, ECMI Working Paper No. 104, 2017. Available at: <https://www.ecmi.de/publications/detail/104-drafting-domestic-legislation-provisioning-national-minority-rights-the-dos-and-donts-according-to-the-council-of-europe-383/>

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Popova Z, Minority participation in Kosovo elections – opportunities and challenges (2013) ECMI working paper 69, <http://www.ecmi.de/publications/detail/69-minority-participation-in-kosovo-elections-opportunities-and-challenges-270/>

Cârstocea, A. & Cârstocea, R. "The Roma in Moldova", ECMI Report, #69, March 2017. Available at: <https://www.ecmi.de/publications/detail/69-the-roma-in-moldova-364/> 2

Cârstocea, A. “Review of the 2014 Monitoring Process of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities”, *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, 13, 2016, pp. 233–247.

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Malloy, T. & Wolf, S. “Linguistic Minority Rights in the Danish-German Border Region: Reciprocity and Public Administration Policies”, *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights*, 23, 2016, pp. 485-504. Available at: <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/10.1163/15718115-02304002>

# Appendiks D – Topic 1: Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg by Professor emeritus in Public International Law and International Human Rights Law, LL.D. (Dr. Jur.), Frederik Harhoff

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) was established in January 1998 by the Kingdom of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal State Schleswig-Holstein (referred to as the founders) with the objective to “deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy”, (Article 2 of the ECMI Statutes). – At the same time, a bilateral agreement was entered into by the (then) Danish Ministry of Information, Technology and Research and the German Ministry of the Interior to ensure, inter alia, a periodic evaluation of the ECMI every four years by an independent scientific expert commission established by the founders, cf. Article 8 of the bilateral agreement. By Internal Memorandum of 17th September 2018, the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education (Styrelsen for Forskning og Uddannelse) under the Danish Ministry for Education and Research established a panel of four senior experts with experience and knowledge of ECMI’s activities, including organisational and financial matters and international law.

According to the Panel’s Terms of Reference, the purpose of this evaluation is to “assess ECMI’s activities and efficiency” with focus on providing conclusions as well as recommendations on four particular themes:

1. Impact and quality of the activities of ECMI Flensburg, i.e. the actual output in terms of academic research, advisory services and projects, such as the Eastern Partnership Project. How is ECMI perceived by its stakeholders, specifically the target groups for ECMI “services”? How does the impact of ECMI measure compared to other European centres and institutions dealing with minority issues?
2. Compliance of ECMI’s activities with the ECMI Statutes, in particular with Article 2 paragraph 2 of the Statutes, which states: “The objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups.” The evaluation shall specifically focus on the question of whether ECMI in its work respects the definition of minorities as stipulated in the Statutes.
3. ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation and finances. Is the allocation by ECMI of personnel and finances adequate and efficient?
4. Impact of the activities of the ECMI field offices in Kosovo and Georgia: This is to be based on an investigation of the origin of the offices, their current structural and financial links to the ECMI headquarters in Flensburg, their overall activities, partners and stakeholders. Focus

should be on the actual output of the field offices in relation to ECMI's core research, information and consultancy work.

The Danish Agency's Terms of Reference further specify that the evaluation is to be conducted as the Expert Panel's "peer review of the main internal and external activities at ECMI as well ECMI's efficiency", and that each panel member is required to provide, individually, a written assessment of one of the above-mentioned themes which will ultimately be included as an appendix to the Panel's final report. Each of the four topics has been assigned to individual members in the order of their appearance.

The Panel visited ECMI in Flensburg on 29 – 30 January 2019 and met with the Chairman of the Board, the head of the ECMI Advisory Council (by Skype), Dr. Hoffman (by telephone), Mr. Cilevičs (by Skype), both of the Advisory Council members, and with ECMI staff, including the Director.

A study of the wording of the four topics outlined above will reveal an obvious and significant degree of overlap between them and that the individual contributions by the members of the Panel might, therefore, become inconveniently repetitive or coinciding. The strict assignment of particular topics to individual members of the Panel and the obligation of each member to act under the instructions of their respective Government authorities may compromise the free and fruitful cooperation between the members, as they will each be bound to focus strictly and exclusively on the topic specifically assigned to them. This is the manner and condition in which Government delegates normally operate in international consultations, but it is less conducive to the task of assessing the quality of a research institution, which involves a much larger degree of discretion and the exchange of ideas and subjective impressions between the members of the review Panel.

Any overlaps in the reports filed individually by each member of the Panel are to be ironed out by EVA in its draft final report, to which the reports will be annexed separately. For reasons of accuracy and expediency, however, it might seem preferable to leave it to the members of the Panel to draft the report by themselves and then have the language editing, etc. done by EVA, rather than requiring EVA to summarize the individual contributions and draft the final report on the basis of the members' written submissions. This entails an uneasy risk of inadvertent divergences between the final report and each member's individual contribution, which, in turn, may require delicate interpretations.

## **A scientific quality assessment of ECMI's academic publications**

The central element of the scientific quality assessment of ECMI's publications is a review according to standard European university criteria for approval of articles to be published in peer-reviewed academic journals or submission of dissertations for the Ph.D. degree. By these criteria, the quality of ECMI's activities can be measured insofar as the written publications are concerned. Other activities, such as the speeches and lectures given by ECMI's academic staff or the conferences organised by ECMI are obviously much more difficult to assess in terms of their quality. Prior to the visit, the Panel had asked ECMI to produce copies of the 3 best publications by each academic staff member from 2014-2018. In compliance with this request, the Panel was provided with a list of 16 publications written by 6 academic staff members, including the ECMI Director, altogether amounting to ca. 350 pages. Seven of these publications had appeared as relatively short but interesting ECMI Working Papers or ECMI Issue Briefs, albeit of a generally descriptive or abstract nature with limited theoretical and analytical weight.



The Panel's evaluation of the remaining 9 publications written by ECMI staff is that they are largely of high academic and scientific quality in terms of following the university standard criteria applied by the Panel in its evaluation, i.e. a clear account of theory and method, a thorough analysis, reasoning, coherence, accuracy, relevance, clarity and persuasiveness, authenticity and reference to sources/documentation. In this respect, the Panel is satisfied that these ECMI publications meet the requirement in the Statute of providing novel and valuable research within the areas falling under ECMI's field of action. However, matters relating to international law and the international legal framework on minority issues are mostly dealt with in a descriptive and dogmatic manner, with less attention to legal theory and analysis.

Thus, the Panel finds that these ECMI research activities, i.e. the peer-reviewed articles in reputable journals, are competent publications at a high level – despite the centre's limited resources and scarcity of legal analysis. However, the majority of ECMI's publications are still short working papers and issue briefs which, while indeed eloquent and pertinent, do not in general qualify as fully fledged academic research capable of submission for peer-review.

The Panel also finds that many ECMI projects, such as the ECMI Summer Schools and the Master Course modules with training sessions on minority and diversity issues and, in particular, the MMTE (although not formally a "project"), have had, and will continue to have important lasting and positive impacts for the relevant minorities, governments and NGOs as well as for the public at large, cf. in particular Article 3,1.b. of the Statutes in relation to MMTE.

The Panel was also given a comprehensive list of all ECMI publications from 2014 to 2018 – more than 200 – including ECMI handbooks, articles, reports, briefs, papers, book reviews, etc. – within each of the 5 clusters and with indications of the numbers of citations in other journals and books (showing that roughly 25% of the publications had been cited else-where). The Panel has not had the resources to review all these articles but notes that many of them have attracted interest among other scholars and minorities and have been relied upon in part for publication in other fora. This is another indication of the positive impact of ECMI's publications.

Conclusion: The quality of ECMI's academic publications is high in the sense that the re-search-based articles published in peer-reviewed journals and chapters in books, etc. certainly meet the criteria for qualified academic research. However, the Panel notes that a large part the of written submissions published by ECMI's academic staff itself (briefs, working papers, etc.) do not qualify as academic research; the size of the centre's truly academic out-put is, therefore, relatively small.

The impact of these publications and the centre's other activities (lectures, etc.), in contrast, is more difficult to assess. Judging from the number of citations of articles and the number of lectures and presentations, however, the Panel is able to conclude that the centre's activities in Flensburg have had a positive impact in general.

## **Assessment of the scope and results of ECMI's teaching and communication activities**

The Panel was provided with a very long list of "Activities, Conferences and Workshops" showing all the conferences, seminars and external meetings which the Director and/or ECMI's academic staff had either attended (in most cases), organised or hosted since 2016, altogether amounting to over 200 events. The Panel is not in a position to evaluate the outcome or the impact of these activities, in particular because the nature of the staff's participation in the many conferences is unclear (i.e. as speakers, invitees, organisers or ordinary participants?). However, the Panel observes that this

participation must have required a lot of travelling and, accordingly, absence from the ECMI HQ. On the other hand, ECMI's presence at these events has undoubtedly contributed to making ECMI more visible in the public eye.

The Panel was also given a list of altogether 73 "Lectures Held by ECMI Researchers", which offers a more substantial impression of ECMI's communication activities by 17 past and pre-sent ECMI researchers since 2016; many of the lectures were held abroad (Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Poland, Indonesia, etc.), but most of the lectures were given at either the Europa-Universität in Flensburg or at Flensburg University. The titles of these lectures suggest a wide range of issues relating to minorities and also offer a good picture of the variety of research topics undertaken at ECMI over the years.

Finally, the Panel received a list of "ECMI Advisory Services and Action-oriented Research Projects". The list merely indicates the responsible organiser and the titles of the teaching seminars and advisory services, most of which have been carried out by or through the ECMI Office in Kosovo. It is not possible for the Panel to fully assess the quality and impact of these many events (58 altogether) on the basis of the list alone, not least because the list does not indicate accurately the duration of each activity. However, the list leaves an overall impression of the character and substance of the centre's teaching and research activities, the majority of which appear to have a concrete and practical focus (such as language training, access to education and social services, employment, integration, etc.).

In addition, ECMI's publication of its two journals, the European Yearbook of Minority Issues (EYMI) and the electronic Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE) are well-esteemed and appear to have included several excellent articles in the review period 2014-18. Most of these articles, however, are authored by academics outside ECMI.

Conclusion: The number of lectures and presentations offered by ECMI's Director and the academic staff is impressive and suggests that ECMI's teaching and communication activities are valuable and have a positive impact. However, the centres "Norm Criteria" requiring each academic staff member to produce and publish at least 1 article per year in peer-reviewed journal do not seem to have been fulfilled during this period (2014-18).

## **Assessment of the centre's cooperation with relevant authorities, universities and minorities**

The Panel was given an overview of "Current Collaborations and Networks with European Universities and Research Institutions" showing that ECMI has entered into formal cooperation agreements with a large number of universities (36), the Council of Europe, EU and OSCE, and an even longer list of informal cooperation schemes with universities and institutions.

Conclusion: The Panel notes that ECMI has entered cooperation agreements with a large number of universities, government authorities and NGOs. However, the Panel is unable to provide a viable assessment of the practical impact of these agreements. In respect of the centre's cooperation with minorities, the Panel concludes from the material in the external evaluation 2018-19 that the centre has in fact established useful connections with minorities, including teaching and training sessions.

## **Assessment of ECMI's strategy, working structures and distribution of work**

In ECMI's Institutional Strategy 2018-2022, ECMI sets out to continue the organisational strategy that was established in 2009 with 5 clusters, or topics, on which the centre's re-searchers should focus their attention: (1) Citizenship and Ethics, (2) Conflict and Security, (3) Culture and Diversity, (4) Justice and Governance, and (5) Politics and Civil Society.

According to the Director's account, these 5 clusters were designed to serve as tools to concentrate the research activities on certain topics, rather than having the researchers engage in more or less uncoordinated activities. Yet the 5 clusters were also meant to be flexible, so as to allow the head of each cluster to decide, along with the members of the cluster, which projects to engage in, as long as the project was within the centre's mandate. To achieve maximum flexibility, moreover, one researcher could well be a member of several clusters simultaneously.

The difficulty with this cluster-structure, however, is first of all that there is an obvious degree of overlap between the cluster-topics, e.g. between conflict (2) and culture (3), as culture is often the root of conflict; i.e. the same kinds of real-life problems occur in several clusters. Secondly, a proper functioning of each cluster requires sufficient manpower and resources, which is clearly not the case. According to the cluster staffing scheme for 2019, the Justice & Governance cluster has only one senior researcher attached, while the Conflict & Security cluster currently has none. As a result, the clusters are simply overstretched due to the available manpower. Thirdly, there seems to be only little cooperation and coordination between the clusters in the sense that there is no overall leadership setting out directions for each cluster and deciding the necessary priorities. In order to overcome some of these difficulties, ECMI established cross-cluster programs, such as the Non-Territorial Autonomy Cross-Cluster-Program or the Roma Empowerment. These programmes have worked well in general but have tended to make the clusters redundant.

The work structures are difficult because of the lack of staff; interns, who are a very useful work component, are only allowed to stay for a maximum of 3 months (according to German law), which makes it very difficult to benefit fully from their work.

The shortage of funds at ECMI has led the centre to venture into new geographical areas towards the East, where it is easier to attract funds. This, however, is a vulnerable strategy because the centre risks losing established networks and relations as it is forced to drive its activities more and more towards the East.

Conclusion: The Panel finds that there seems to be an increasing discrepancy between the available funds and the scope of the work covered by ECMI. The expansion of ECMI's geo-graphical coverage appears to have become a means of financial and reputational survival, which is not sustainable in the long run. The Panel, therefore, suggests that ECMI downsize its activities and concentrate on projects closer to the EU, where there is a viable network already available. This, however, may well raise other problems, such as losing funds and publicity.

# Appendiks E – Topic 2: Compliance of ECMI activities with the ECMI Statutes by Professor Dr. Stefanie Schmahl

## Introduction

This report contains the results of an external evaluation of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) and represents my opinions as an individual expert. The evaluation has been conducted in 2018/2019 on the basis of the submitted papers and documents of ECMI as well as on the basis of a site visit at the headquarters of ECMI in Flensburg, which took place 29-30 January 2019. This evaluation report is a component of the overall evaluation of ECMI, which has been carried out by a scientific Panel consisting of three further individual experts from Germany and Denmark with different thematic priorities. The Danish Evaluation Institute has been commissioned to assist the Panel in this process.

In accordance with the contract concluded in June 2018 between the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and myself as an independent expert, my evaluation report will concentrate on the subject "Compliance of ECMI's activities with the ECMI Statutes, in particular with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes". In this context, the evaluation examines in principle the three defined main tasks of ECMI – research, documentation and advisory services – by specifically focusing on the question of whether ECMI, in its work, respects the definition of minorities as stipulated in the Statutes. The other three themes subject to evaluation by my fellow Panel members relate to: (1) the impact and quality of the activities of ECMI; (2) the structure of ECMI with respect to personnel, organisation and finances; and (3) the impact of the activities of the ECMI field offices in Kosovo and Georgia.

My evaluation will be based essentially on a document analysis, in particular relating to publicly available documents provided by ECMI. In addition, findings will be used which I obtained on the basis of the interviews with ECMI staff during the site visit in January 2019. Thematically, the report primarily focuses on ECMI's research strategy, its publications and services rendered, without making particular reference to ECMI's field offices.

## Background and purpose

On 29 January 1998, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal State (Land) Schleswig-Holstein (hereinafter referred to as the founders) established ECMI as a foundation under civil law, located in Flensburg, Germany. On the same date, the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Information, Technology and Research of the Kingdom of Denmark entered into a mutual agreement. Article 8 of this agreement stipulates that ECMI's activities, according to its regulations, and ECMI's efficiency are to be evaluated by an independent, scientific commission. The evaluation is to take place every four years. The founders acknowledged the need for additional financial means, as expressed by ECMI, and decided to advance the first evaluation to the second half of 2001. Following the four-year evalua-

tion cycle, the second evaluation of ECMI was initiated at the end of 2006 and carried out at the beginning of 2007. The third evaluation cycle was conducted in 2011 and completed in 2012. This report is part of the fourth evaluation cycle, which started in October 2018 and is supposed to be completed in autumn 2019.

The present evaluation will focus on ECMI's substantive performance in terms of research, documentation and action-oriented work with regard to the overall mandate of the centre, with particular reference to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes. According to this provision, "[t]he objective of the Foundation shall be to deal with the concerns of minorities and majorities and the problems arising from these in a European perspective through research, information and consultancy. Minorities, within the meaning of the law on foundations and endowments, are national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups".

Under Article 3 of the ECMI Statutes, mandate-based activities of the foundation in accordance with the purpose of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes shall include the following actions: (1) collection, promotion and communication of research work on issues of minorities; (2) construction of a European bank of data and models on minority issues and possible solutions; (3) compilation of research on minority issues and the creation of overall analyses and presentations; (4) participation in network research on minority issues; (5) promotion and communication of practical experience regarding protection of minorities through symposia, seminars and publications; (6) creation of fora for mitigating conflicts; and (7) advisory activities regarding minority policies.

## **Evaluation method**

The evaluation is a peer review of the main internal and external activities at ECMI, with a particular view to Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI's Statutes, which describes both the meaning of minority for the purpose of the foundation as well as the geo-graphical limitation of the centre's activities to Europe. The evaluation includes an analysis of the main actions taken by ECMI to follow-up on the 2012 evaluation, an assessment of the strategic direction and of the results of the research, information, and consultancy conducted at and by the centre.

In the first part of this report the strategies, general performances and main activities of ECMI will be summarised, before, in the second part, evaluating these activities mainly in the light of the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of ECMI's Statutes. Since ECMI's field offices in Kosovo and Georgia are the subject of the evaluation of one of my fellow Panel members, their work and focus are not – or at most only casually – addressed in this report.

## **Strategy, general performance and main activities of ECMI**

The following observations will mostly concentrate on the Strategy 2012-2017 and the new Strategy 2018-2022 as well as on the Annual Reports and the Annual Programmes rendered by ECMI during and for the aforementioned time-periods.

### **Research clusters**

Since 2009, ECMI has been organised in a flexible research structure composed of five research clusters, namely: (1) Citizenship and Ethics, (2) Conflict and Security, (3) Culture and Diversity, (4) Justice and Governance, and (5) Politics and Civil Society. The current 2018-2022 Strategy continues this organisation of flexible research clusters, instead of having traditional departments which are considered as being more static. While the Citizenship and Ethics Cluster seeks to improve the understanding of social cohesion through the lens of citizenship acts and ethical behaviour, by focusing on minorities as actors, the Conflict and Security Cluster focuses primarily on issues relating

to promoting reconciliation and inter-community dialogue, identifying and preventing threats to security, and analysing the functioning and impact of institutional mechanisms developed for the protection of minorities' security. The Culture and Diversity Cluster's research aim is, in principle, one of inter-culturalism. It aims at contributing to the policy-making process devoted to fostering intercultural dialogue and societal cohesion by identifying and researching cross-cutting issues. The Justice and Governance Cluster seeks to promote effectiveness of minority protection and to provide its contribution to overcoming the existing shortcomings in implementation and protection of national minority rights. The Politics and Civil Society Cluster finally aims at interpreting various types of discourses about minorities in order to grasp potential societal changes conditioned by the changing political context.

During recent years, active citizenship and respectful intercultural exchange are the main topics that are treated in the Citizenship and Ethics Cluster. ECMI's research efforts through issue briefs, reports and working papers examine frameworks of governance for citizenship action and for an open and respectful dialogue. Following on from the previous successful project on "Bridge Building and Integration in Diverse Societies", ECMI plans a follow-up project on "Theorizing Bridge Building Actors and Actions", which seeks to examine actors who take initiatives to create bridges between minority-majority communities. An additional project aims at identifying areas where members of ethno-cultural minorities participate on the basis of their cultural capital and intercultural skills in governance networks. The European Union as a potential substitute for "external homeland" is a further study project which will concentrate on the EU taking over the role of a homeland for ethnic minorities without a kin-state.

The Conflict and Security Cluster approaches contemporary challenges relating to the security of minority groups under the broader umbrella of minority rights' protection. ECMI monitors specific situations and issues that have the potential to threaten the security of minorities with the aim of creating an early warning system. The centre also examines the link between the protection of minority rights and security perceptions of minorities. A particular focus is on Albanian language rights in Macedonia and on the 2018 elections in Bosnia. In addition, ECMI analyses the lessons learned from past initiatives to reconcile inter-ethnic tensions in former Yugoslavia in order to create a manual for inter-ethnic dialogue. Finally, the cluster compiles, systematises and monitors the human and minority rights scheme in non-recognised territorial entities such as Northern Cyprus, Transnistria, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno Karabakh on an annual basis. Through a number of research and consultancy projects, the Culture and Diversity Cluster addresses the management of cultural and linguistic diversity. This cluster aims at contributing to the policy-making process devoted to fostering intercultural dialogue and societal cohesion with respect to democracy, human and cultural rights through a series of working papers and action-oriented work. For instance, ECMI analyses the legal status of minorities in Europe as well as the recognition and sense of belonging in the "new" minorities landscape of Germany. Within both projects, ECMI tries to identify areas of self-identification of both "old" and "new" minorities and to analyse narratives and historical myths in a comparative perspective. A further project is dedicated to minority rights in educational matters. Under ECMI leadership, a consortium consisting of ten partners from seven countries implemented the "Teaching in Diversity" project (sponsored by Erasmus+ and KA2) in order to support teachers and educators from all over Europe in facing the challenges that come with increasing cultural diversity in schools. The project developed, inter alia, a training course, a handbook and an online learning platform on the management of diversity and non-discrimination at schools in six different languages. In a similar manner, the cluster concentrates on "Media and diversity" and on "Linguistic diversity" by looking at both the behaviour of the majority public regarding minorities and the interaction between policies on languages, education and media, as well as their impact on minority rights.

An effective protection of national minorities presupposes a clear and consistent normative framework in domestic legislation, established institutional arrangements to implement the set norms, and effective remedies and protection mechanisms in case of violation of guaranteed rights. These areas form the core of the Justice and Governance Cluster. As a member of an international research network, ECMI explores the processing of ethnic sensitive data in various European states. It further identifies and reviews the effectiveness of the monitoring procedures of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). This review is mainly carried out by a pilot case study on how the states parties to the aforementioned conventions comply with the recommendations resulting from the monitoring. In addition, ECMI will start to explore the tensions between the protection of the state language and the protection of minority languages in communication with public authorities. The cluster further aims to explore the practice of states parties to the FCNM regarding the instruments for minority participation in local public affairs. Lastly, ECMI plans to undertake an in-depth investigation of how minority issues are tackled within the jurisprudence of constitutional courts in Europe.

The capacity of national, ethnic and linguistic minority groups to exert influence over decisions taken at various state levels (central, regional and local) constitutes a fundamental benchmark of a peaceful and democratic society. The Politics and Civil Society Cluster is, therefore, focused on the institutional framework, the organisational patterns and the ideological and empowerment dimension for minority groups' participation in both political and civic life. Through applied research, ECMI explores the role of minorities in diverse federal and decentralised political systems and analyses the processes of identity formation of ethnic minorities striving to achieve officially recognised status by the states in which they reside. A further project aims at exploring the impact of the contemporary retreat of the welfare state in various European states on the rising socio-economic inequality of national and ethnic minorities, including, in particular, the Roma community.

### **Cross-cluster-programmes**

Despite these five clusters and the activities based on them, many topics tackled by ECMI have transversal relevance. In particular, ECMI research activities over the last decade reveal that several topics appeared regularly in the work of every cluster, though addressed from their respective scientific perspectives. Therefore, ECMI has, namely in last strategy period, developed several cross-cluster-programmes.

Within the cross-cluster-programme entitled “Roma Empowerment”, ECMI analyses the current stage of development of national and European policies targeting Roma. For instance, with its research programme on the “European minority” of Roma, ECMI aims not only to address the complexity of Roma inclusion but also to promote the need for a general policy shift from integration to Roma empowerment. Thereby, ECMI focuses on the cultural and educational rights of Roma communities (regardless of their official status as “national minority”) while leaving basic questions of general human rights protection aside, which are typically addressed by human rights institutions. Furthermore, ECMI concentrates on Roma participation in public life and in decision-making processes. Action-oriented projects have been implemented through ECMI's offices in Georgia and Kosovo, as well as in six countries in the Western Balkans, from the ECMI headquarters in Flensburg. A new GIZ funded action-project is under development for Serbia.

For several years and through numerous publications, ECMI has tried to improve knowledge of non-territorial autonomy as a relevant tool for minority protection and as an alternative solution for territorial disputes or secession claims. Existing non-territorial autonomy for ethno-cultural minority groups ranges from formal self-government arrangements to informal programmatic co-decision type arrangements. The aim of the Non-Territorial Autonomy Cross-Cluster-Programme is thus to analyse existing non-territorial autonomy arrangements, to identify good practices for the

protection of ethno-cultural minorities against assimilation and to examine the possibility of exporting them or some elements thereof to similar environments. The programme consists of research and publication efforts by ECMI with several academic partners, in particular within the European Non-Territorial Autonomy Network (ETAN), which combines interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and training. Some results have been disseminated through a planned five-volume book series with Oxford University Press, with two volumes published in 2015, and a third one anticipated in 2019. Within the framework of a specific partnership with EURAC Research (Bolzano/Bozen, Italy), the Babes-Bolyai University and the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (both located in Cluj-Napoca/Klausenburg, Romania), ECMI has developed a website, “Autonomy Arrangements in the World”, which disseminates research on both non-territorial autonomy and territorial autonomy ([www.world-autonomies.info](http://www.world-autonomies.info)).

The ECMI Border Region Governance Programme aims at multidimensional analyses of cross-border cooperation involving national and ethno-cultural minorities as well as local actors and authorities. The functional dimension of the border region analysis relates to how national minorities and ethno-cultural groups cooperate with their kin and other groups across the borders. The institutional dimension of the programme is related to cooperation across borders, and the ideational dimension assesses the sense of belonging to a cross-border living area.

With the ECMI Mainstreaming Programme, the centre pays attention to mainstreaming by trying to identify whether the adopted legal regulations or public policies are sensitive to the needs of national minorities, and also how their implementation affects national minorities. Mainstreaming should help to identify not only sectors of direct relevance for minorities, as is done with rights aimed to preserve specific minority identity, but also those of indirect relevance coming from different domains of policy-making.

Under the umbrella of the National Minority Indicators Programme, ECMI has since 2000 implemented indicator projects aimed at designing indicators for minority rights in order to measure the performance of international human and minority rights treaties from the general perspective of policy analysis. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), indicators are parameters derived from information describing the state of a phenomenon. ECMI wishes to improve the application of minority indicators and produce toolkits and handbooks that may be of use to monitors, public servants and NGOs that are involved in monitoring minority protection.

The adoption and implementation of minority standards in the countries in the post-Soviet space pose particular challenges. Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, policies towards ethnic and national communities in the successor states differ to a great extent. Therefore, ECMI's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Programmes aim at identifying individual country cases and at building a comparative regional and cross-regional perspective for the adaptation of existing models for minority protection. ECMI's current projects are mainly related to the successor states of the former USSR in Eastern Europe, namely Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. In 2011, ECMI established a Belarus Programme with the aim of addressing minority issues at various levels. While Belarus is a large and strategically important country in Europe, it remains a blind-spot on the continental map of ethnic minorities. Belarus is not a Council of Europe member, and even though it is a participating state in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), it is not covered by the activities of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Belarus has a comprehensive legal and institutional system of minority protection, which inherits Soviet approaches and is basically unaffected by the contemporary Europe-an minority rights regime.



Particular attention in recent years has also been paid to Moldova, which is deeply divided along language lines and various national minorities, such as Ukrainians, Gagauzians and Bulgarians. However, since Moldova continues to face a number of serious economic and political challenges, the protection of the rights of national minorities is rather poor. Russia's de facto control over Transnistria and the deep Moldovan/Romania-Russian language divide cause tensions which pervade all aspects of life in Moldova. ECMI has, therefore, been implementing a major governance programme in Moldova, and it plans to continue its work on the protection of the rights of national minorities, particularly in the priority areas of linguistic diversity, access to education, participation, representation and consultation of national minorities. In the period 2005 to 2008, ECMI worked extensively to enhance the functioning of the Gagauzian autonomy arrangements, resulting in an agreement between the two sides on the status of the autonomy mediated by ECMI. The Gagauzian autonomy arrangement, fostered by ECMI, shall be enhanced in the future through technical assistance offered by the centre.

Another ongoing ECMI cross-cluster-programme focuses on Ukraine – a country which has a long history of being a multicultural society. In spite of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, the Ukrainian government has continued to enhance national minority protection. From 2014 to 2017, ECMI has been implementing a major governance programme in Ukraine focusing on the rights of national minorities in direct cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture. ECMI plans to review Ukrainian legislation to clarify the legal situation by mainstreaming minority protection in all relevant legislation that supports the substantive minority rights spelled out in a revised Law on National Minorities. Following these successful (partly finished, partly still ongoing) projects in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, ECMI intends to additionally turn its attention towards the Soviet successor states in Central Asia, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Since its establishment, ECMI has – in accordance with its mandate under Article 3 of the Statutes to construct a European bank of data and models on minority issues – attempted to create a clickable map of ethnic groups in Europe, first named as “Ethno-political Map of Europe”, later (since 2010) as “Minority Map and Timeline in Europe” (MMTE). The “Ethno-political Map of Europe” was conceived as a documentation device to collect and disseminate in a smart and readable way huge amounts of factual information about minorities across the ECMI geographical mandate. A large portion of the map remained, however, under-developed for years, partially due to lack of staff. In 2010, a re-evaluation effort was made and an external consultant engaged to reconceptualise it. A totally new concept, the cross-cluster-programme MMTE, was developed and was finally launched in 2014. This shall be operational as an online tool in 2019. MMTE is a unique interactive online tool for the dissemination of knowledge about diverse communities in Europe. It aims to provide reliable scholarly information about recognised and non-recognised minorities in their specific contexts across Europe while applying a broad understanding of Europe that includes the Caucasus and Central Asia. In three sections, the user can learn visually and interactively about where and how a minority community currently lives, how it developed in relation to the state of residence, and how its development over time impacts central aspects of its current situation. This project will also cover the so-called “denial states” that do not recognise any ethnic minorities.

### **Geographical priorities**

ECMI's geographical mandate according to Articles 2 and 3 of the Statutes is Europe. The centre interprets the term “Europe” widely as the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and relevant participants of the OSCE, which currently counts 57 participating states. However, despite its extended interpretation of “Europe” within the OSCE meaning, ECMI excludes North America and Mongolia from its activities.

ECMI's list of priority countries and regions includes Eastern Europe, with particular focus on Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine (see above), the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans. In the latter two regions, the programmes that ECMI carried out were so successful that they partly led to the creation of field offices. ECMI has implemented a range of action-oriented projects in the South Caucasus region with a main focus on Georgia. It has provided support to parliamentary institutions in Georgia on legislative issues and has offered support to government bodies in implementing international conventions, in particular the FCNM and the ECRML. These activities led, in 2004, to the creation of the ECMI Caucasus office in Tbilisi, which, however, was closed in 2017 due to insufficient funding. However, in 2018, ECMI gained a new partner organisation in Georgia, the Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CSEM). In cooperation with CSEM, ECMI currently conducts specific research objectives for Georgia, which include identifying and exploring instruments for strengthening political participation, decentralisation and education for national minorities. In contrast, the other two countries in the Caucasus region, Armenia and Azerbaijan, have proven to be significantly closed and not ready for substantive changes in minority protection. The complex inter-ethnic relations in the Western Balkans also put the protection of national minorities among the ECMI research priorities. Although the region is usually taken as a whole, the dynamics of minority issues vary among the countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia). Therefore, ECMI focuses on the legal framework of national minorities in these different Western Balkan States and analyses the quality of protection in a comparative way. ECMI's Kosovo office is the main actor in protecting and promoting minority rights in the Balkans.

ECMI's recent research efforts also extend to Central Asia, which is a very diverse region in terms of approaches to minority issues and protection. Disputed territories and borders between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan contribute to the escalation of inter-ethnic tensions. ECMI will begin to build a knowledge bank regarding minority protection in Central Asia. The research will identify areas which can benefit from the adaptation of existing models for minority protection.

### **Publication, information and documentation**

Publication, information and documentation of national and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic minority research and projects are among the core tasks of ECMI's mandate under Article 3, read in conjunction with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes.

Since its establishment, ECMI has published various products online and on paper, such as ECMI Issue Briefs, ECMI Working Papers and ECMI Reports, and it maintains a full list of projects on its website (<http://www.ecmi.de>). ECMI's online papers and publications constitute one of the most important tools in supporting the mandate. The peer-reviewed Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE), with three issues per year, is a flagship of the centre's electronic publications and has been re-launched during the most recent strategic period. The Journal targets practitioners and academics, with the intention of creating debate and discussion on minority-majority issues and on theoretical approaches to these by presenting the work of ECMI beyond the strictly academic publications. Addressing minority issues across a broad range of studies, JEMIE is a multi-disciplinary electronic journal that seeks to publish critical analyses of policies and developments in Europe, but ECMI also welcomes contributions from a non-European perspective. In addition, ECMI maintains a legal database and a clickable map of Europe, MMTE, providing data on areas of ethno-political importance (see above).

ECMI has also engaged extensively in external publishing since the establishment of the centre. The European Yearbook of Minority Issues (EYMI) is the flagship external journal of the centre. Until 2016, it was published in cooperation with the European Academy of Bolzano. In 2016, the Yearbook was re-conceptualised, and a new team of partners was constituted. EYMI is now published in cooperation with Abo Akademi University, Babes-Bolyai University, the Hungarian Academy of Science, the University of Glasgow and the European Academy, Bolzano. It is published with the

renowned publisher Brill/Nijhoff. EYMI provides a critical review of contemporary developments in minority-majority relations combining analysis, commentary, and documentation in relation to international legal developments and domestic legislation affecting minorities in Europe. The yearbook usually includes a chapter (written by a member of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency) on the latest developments in the European Union with regard to minority issues and minority protection. Further external publications of ECMI and/or its staff have also been published. Of outstanding scientific value and international visibility is the planned five-volume book series with the prestigious publisher Oxford University Press on questions of non-territorial autonomy (see above). Furthermore, ECMI has published a commentary on minority cases litigated before the European Court of Human Rights (A. Moucheboeuf, *Minority Rights Jurisprudence Digest*, Council of Europe, 2006), and ECMI Director T. Malloy is one of the co-editors of a Commentary to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Brill, 2018).

ECMI also maintains a library. The ECMI Library is an independent collection of books, journals and grey literature (such as working papers, issue briefs and reports) of more than 3,000 items covering many aspects of minority issues within the fields of international relations, ethnic conflicts, and minority protection. It has been re-structured around the need to furnish the researchers with electronic means of data and text while also assisting external parties with requests. The book collection has recently been transferred to the Danish Central Library and is now available as an open stock reference library. The ECMI librarian is assigned to the Danish Central Library twice a week to assist users in finding their way around the collection. The fact that the ECMI book collection is openly viewable is a major milestone in the history of the centre. Moreover, the ECMI Library engages in cooperation and exchange agreements with other libraries and institutes providing access to a range of international sources of information through the ECMI website.

ECMI's website comprises first and foremost an external presentation and introduction to ECMI as a whole. A variety of information is available, including items such as listings of projects and research activities, databases, online papers and issue briefs, library access, conferences and seminars. The website also presents subordinate websites for ECMI's regional offices and activities, e.g. in Kosovo.

### **Advisory activities and action-oriented work**

Article 3 of the ECMI Statutes requires that the centre must engage in advisory activities regarding minority policies, as enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. Part of ECMI's mandate is consequently formulated as constructive conflict management and advisory services (action-oriented work). As such, ECMI has addressed the task of action-oriented projects in strategy papers defining goals for and expectations to the activities conducted by the centre. ECMI's advisory services include requests generally from inside Europe but also from outside Europe, normally procured by European governments or institutions.

The extensive geographical activities of ECMI's research projects in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Western Balkans are regularly accompanied by action priorities. The ECMI's action-oriented part focuses on institution-building through advisory services, with the aim of transferring minority protection knowledge to these regions. Generally, the action-oriented work is based on external grants and developed jointly with ECMI's project offices and local representatives. ECMI was active with action-oriented projects in South Caucasus and in five countries of the Eastern Partnership (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and in four of the Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia). ECMI has been successful in implementing large action projects in both Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. However, these programmes will not be continued, and separate projects in Moldova and Ukraine will be pursued (see above). Currently, ECMI is planning to enlarge these cooperation programmes to partners in

Central Asia, Turkey and Syria. Finally, ECMI has participated in the emerging networks assessing the viability of minority protection in the Arab world.

### **Promotion and communication of practical experience**

ECMI's mandate under Articles 2 and 3 of the Statutes also requires that the centre promotes and communicates practical experience regarding protection of minorities through symposia, seminars and publications. Since its establishment, ECMI has been active in arranging or attending conferences or seminars. For instance, over the last ten years, members of the ECMI team have participated in the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities' expert workshops and meetings, and the High Commissioner regularly visits ECMI's headquarters in Flensburg for working meetings to exchange views on minority issues. All in all, the conference activities of ECMI vary in scope, content, and size, and occasionally generate a readable output, e.g. conference papers or reports. ECMI is also active in conflict management workshops and, from time to time, holds on-site public lectures at ECMI's Flensburg premises. These events are publicised via the ECMI website, press releases and invitations but generally not through the local media. Efforts to make visible and disseminate the activities of ECMI are made, but could be strengthened further.

Also training courses have been an integral part of many ECMI's projects over the years. They have a two-pronged approach in that they support the regional associates in their projects and establish training modules for local authorities, NGOs, public institutions, governmental agencies and international organisations in Europe. Training courses are offered in-house and at various locations, sometimes also via e-training. The establishment of an overall Training Unit has not been reached. Trainings courses remain tailor-made to the aims of a project or programme and to the regions in question.

Furthermore, a multi-disciplinary ECMI Master level course has been taught by ECMI researchers as an elective course at the Europa-Universität Flensburg since 2011. The Master module is also exported to partners such as the University of Swansea and the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. It aims to provide in-depth knowledge and robust skills in minority issues of the 21st century. The target group are graduate students as well as students who wish to continue their education in social sciences and humanities. The course is divided into three major parts: (1) history and international law and relations, (2) concepts and theories, and (3) politics and policy.

In 2011, the centre established the ECMI Summer School which aims at students and potential future PhD students of minority issues. Since ECMI is not attached to a university, the summer school provides the function of connecting ECMI's re-search with interdisciplinary teaching. The method of teaching is informal and includes workshops, roundtables, discussion, etc. The ECMI Summer School has been offered every summer since 2011 either in Flensburg or in relevant locations in Europe. For instance, whereas the 2011 Summer School organised in Flensburg worked under the specific title of "National Minorities and Border Regions", the 2019 Summer School will take place in Berlin and focus on the year 1989 and its international consequences, particularly for minorities living in Germany and its border regions. However, despite its varying subjects and new methods of teaching, all ECMI Summer Schools continue to offer standard lectures on national minorities and border regions.

The ECMI Internship Programme has operated since the establishment of ECMI. It offers young scholars an opportunity to experience the working environment of international research and project work on minority issues at ECMI's headquarters in Flensburg. ECMI receives more than 100 applications per year, but is only able to accommodate around 20 (usually unpaid) interns.

## Networking and partnerships

According to the mandate laid down in Articles 2 and 3 of the Statutes, ECMI participates in various research networks on minority issues. The aim of such networking is the exchange of scientific knowledge as well as creating the “critical mass” in terms of institutional capacities that does not exist at the centre. It is highly positive that ECMI has a strong cooperation with the two universities in the border region between Germany and Denmark. It is also to be welcomed that ECMI has a close cooperation with the European Academy in Bolzano and with universities in Romania and Scotland. Furthermore, ECMI’s networking even spans far beyond the European Research Area, for instance with regard to its cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities.

The centre’s close cooperation with the Council of Europe at the operational level, especially around the two legal instruments that constitute the core of minority rights in Europe, the FCNM and the ECRML, is considered to be very useful, in particular with regard to the “Thematic Commentaries” issued by the Advisory Committee to the FCNM. The ECMI Director’s membership of the Advisory Committee to the FCNM facilitates knowledge that feeds into the centre’s research and activities. The same is true for the cooperation with other international organisations and institutions. Recently, ECMI has achieved partner status in the Council of Europe’s Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM), a government membership group. The centre has also entered into a close cooperation with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities at both the operational and management levels. Various UN institutions are also part of ECMI’s networking, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on Minorities, with whom a cooperation on the 2019 annual “Minority Forum” focusing on indigenous languages and multilingualism is planned. Cooperation with the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has so far only materialised through the Civil Society Platform, of which ECMI is a member. Cooperation with these actors constitutes a major component in the aim to support governments in transforming European standards into operational policies benefitting minorities.

It is also worth mentioning that ECMI is in contact with various local stakeholder organisations. ECMI has established a formal annual “Minority Roundtable” which provides a platform for information exchange between representatives of the minorities and the researchers. The purpose of the annual roundtable is to discuss specific topics that have had particular relevance in the life of the minorities during the past year. ECMI also participates in the “Dialog Forum Norden” which promotes dialogue between minorities and the majority, and this has brought the local municipalities closer together. ECMI has also developed a good relationship with the “Federal Union of European Nationalities”.

## Evaluation with special regard to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes

### Research clusters

ECMI’s five research clusters make sense in terms of organisation stability. The division of research fields into research clusters and the detailed dividing lines may always be disputed. In terms of organisational culture, however, it is important that a certain distribution of tasks can operate over a certain period of time, which *prima facie* speaks in favour of keeping the research clusters. On the other hand, another distribution – or more precisely a reduction – of topics might be easily imagined. The research and consultancy projects conducted at ECMI in this evaluation period cover the five research competence areas, although with varying densities. Some of the research clusters lack enforcement in practice or go partially beyond the mandate in the field of national minorities and other traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups (see below). Most of the tasks are carried out by ECMI in thematically oriented cross-cluster-programmes, which also speaks in favour of a revision of the organisational structures.

However, this does not apply to the clusters “Justice and Governance” and “Conflict and Security” which, in the opinion of the expert, should both be upheld. These two clusters essentially relate to the protection of national minorities or other traditional ethnic groups. The programmes carried out are of good, mostly even high quality. The compilation and critical evaluation of the monitoring processes within the framework of the Council of Europe conventions for the protection of minorities and their reception in the domestic legal order of the contracting states is, for instance, of the highest value. Even beyond that programme, the Justice and Governance Cluster has left strong marks in the centre’s research output. The Conflict and Security Cluster concerning minority issues and ethnic diversity has also traditionally been a strength of ECMI’s work and has found high-profile expression in a number of publications and action-oriented work. The “Non-recognised Territorial Entities Programme”, which is part of the Conflict and Security Cluster, fits in very well with ECMI’s mandate and is both innovative and much needed, since *de facto* territorial entities are not monitored by the international community. Non-recognised territorial entities are one of the biggest conundrums in international law and relations. Many NGOs operate in these regions, especially with humanitarian and educational issues. But at present, only two authoritative reports on the minority rights situation in these entities have been published (on Transnistria and on Abkhazia) upon the request of the UN and the EU, respectively. There is no doubt that research activities by ECMI on non-recognised territorial entities can generate a high degree of added value. Against this background, it is to be hoped that the Conflict and Security Cluster, which is currently not operational due to the dismissal of the senior researcher, will soon become active again.

The cluster Citizenship and Ethics has been strengthened in recent years and occupies, with its aim to create bridges between minority and majority communities, a prominent place in the ECMI research programme, which is in full accordance with the mandate. In contrast, the Politics and Civil Society Cluster, in the opinion of the expert, does not feature very prominently in ECMI publications and action-oriented work.

According to the expert, the greatest risks to the compatibility of ECMI’s work with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes exist in connection with the Culture and Diversity Cluster. This cluster carries out a series of projects addressing the specific challenges of the so-called “new” minorities (migrants, immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers). In fact, the differing cultural and religious traditions of these minorities are often perceived as alien by the host society. Against this backdrop, it might seem sensible to explore the narratives and historical myths of these minorities in a comparative perspective, and to contrast the results with the rights of recognised or autochthonous ethnic minorities. On the other hand, research on “new” minorities risks going beyond the narrow mandate of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes, which explicitly addresses only national and autochthonous ethnic minorities.

It is certainly true that international legal instruments are silent when it comes to the definition of a national minority. As far as ECMI’s Strategies 2012-2017 and 2018-2022 point out that the definition of a minority needs to be revisited, since the world is becoming increasingly complex in terms of individual memberships, identities, communication and mobility, this opinion is acceptable from a dogmatic legal scientific perspective. There are, in fact, convincing socio-political and human rights reasons why the (legally non-binding) definitions of “minority” advanced in the second half of the 20th century (such as the one proposed by F. Capotorti) can hardly be seen as viable or authoritative for the societal changes of the beginning of the 21st century. In addition, the lack of a common definition on national minority in international law reflects the reality that the existence of a national minority is more a question of fact and politics rather than of law. At least, it can be said that the question of state recognition of a group as national minority is far away from having been resolved. Identities and self-identification of ethnic groups, which are essential under international minority law (e.g. see Article 3 FCNM), remain dynamic phenomena. In many states, struggles are present between groups striving for recognition as national minorities and authorities

denying such recognition. In that way, the so-called “new” minorities may indeed bring an additional perspective to the issue. This is all the more so, since the international legal instruments, including the Council of Europe conventions, are generally inspired by the wish to be “living instruments” and to enable a flexible approach by the contracting states.

Nevertheless, Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes is narrowly worded. For a teleological extension and dynamic interpretation of the minority term mentioned there, the ECMI Statutes do not provide any clues. The views of the founders, which are voiced in meetings with ECMI staff, clearly oppose the application of a broad and dynamic concept of minorities. As reported at the site visit in January 2019, aspects related to the interpretation of the term minority are from time to time discussed by the board and the centre. However, expanding the definition has not been sanctioned by the founders. The reason for this more rigorous understanding of the term “national or autochthonous ethnic minority” certainly lies in the fact that the status of “new” minorities differs from that of national minorities which have a history of coexistence with the majority for generations and enjoy higher levels of integration in a country’s social and political cultures. Furthermore, from a legal and international standard-setting perspective, there are, at least in parts, significant differences between “traditional minorities” and “new minorities” such as immigrants or asylum-seekers. While the protection of minorities is relevant for ethnic minority groups re-siding in homelands, immigrants or asylum seekers are subject to international law on aliens and to the general human rights scheme. Since ECMI’s research has to be mandate-driven, the focus of its programmes should be on policy-making in relation to recognised or traditional ethnic minority groups residing in homelands, and not on immigration or asylum policies.

### **Cross-cluster-programmes**

The cross-cluster-programmes largely comply, in the opinion of the expert, with the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes. This particularly applies to the “Roma Empowerment” programme. Although not recognised as an official national minority in all European countries, Roma are the most marginalised and vulnerable (autochthonous) ethnic community in the European continent. A better understanding of the differentiated nature of their communities and their needs is urgently required. This is even more so, as ECMI has rightly identified the lack of a synchronised and coordinated approach to the problems. ECMI has longstanding and successful experience with the protection and inclusion of Roma communities in the Balkans and in Georgia and has recently created new partnerships in the area of Roma empowerment in Serbia. The centre focuses on the cultural and educational rights of Roma communities while leaving basic human rights protection to human rights organisations.

As regards the cross-cluster-programme on “Non-Territorial Autonomy”, the academic study of non-territorial autonomy has long stood in the shadow of the study of territorial autonomy arrangements. The design, functioning and implementation of non-territorial autonomy policies in public management are generally neglected in academia. This is mainly due to the fact that none of the international documents relevant for national minority protection actually mention non-territorial autonomy arrangements. However, such arrangements can foster a sense of democracy and “ownership” among the affected national minorities, and they are, therefore, a very valuable and attractive research field. This research project is also highly innovative, since it improves academic knowledge of models and policies for non-territorial autonomy through the compilation and description of empirical data and an overall critical assessment of the potentials and the risks of non-territorial autonomy policy.

The ECMI “Border Region Governance Programme” is also a relevant tool, since many of Europe’s national minorities have their homelands in border regions. The phenomenon of ethno-cultural diversity in border regions is a relatively new topic in academic research. The study of border regions is complex, since they and their populations belong to different political and legal systems,

and the affiliations to different systems produce different contextual factors. National minorities and ethno-cultural groups may facilitate cross-border relations through their economic and social skills as well as through their multilingualism and cultural ties. They may foster regional development of an area, becoming a strategic element through the consolidation of horizontal partnerships across borders. ECMI's presence in one of Europe's most peaceful border regions presents an excellent opportunity to conduct comparative studies and suggest recommendations for other border regions in Europe.

According to its mandate, ECMI is to collect, promote, analyse and communicate re-search on minority issues, including constructing a European databank of models of minority accommodation. The aim is to provide policy makers and minority representatives with state-of-the-art knowledge about the situation of minorities and the protection schemes adopted in Europe. The "Minority Map and Timeline in Europe" (MMTE) is, therefore and without any doubt, the flagship project of ECMI par excellence. It is intended to help develop ECMI's own goals and projects on minority issues and to act as a central clearinghouse website that provides information on diverse ethnic minority communities in a timely, straightforward and reliable manner. The MMTE fulfils a crucial part of the mandate of ECMI in terms of documenting minority situations and informing both the academic community and a broader public about minority communities and their associated main issues across Europe. Currently, MMTE is under development, since several country and minority profile drafts have had to be reviewed and adjusted, but it is hoped that it will become operational in the very near future.

However, some other ECMI cross-cluster-programmes concentrate primarily on general human rights issues, as they focus on the enhancement of diversity protection in Europe. This is especially true for the project "Teaching in Diversity" which aims at providing school teachers with skills and competences for teaching diversity, non-discrimination and equality. In various areas, ECMI has built a multi-dimensional research portfolio within the topics of discrimination and recognition, including the fight against discrimination on various grounds, such as national, ethnic or social origin, gender, language, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other status. It is certainly true that national and ethnic minorities often experience multiple discriminations on several grounds due to their membership of a minority and other reasons. There is also widespread consensus in political science and human rights literature that the term "protection of minorities" should be replaced by the more dynamic concept of "management of diversity". Nevertheless, projects concentrating on non-discrimination, diversity and equality involve risks of exceeding the mandate under Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. ECMI's undeniable strength lies in the field of minority protection. Therefore, the centre should not compete with other institutions that are dedicated to general human rights protection and anti-discrimination policies, e.g. the German Institute for Human Rights (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte).

### **Geographical priorities**

A strong segment of the programmes of ECMI is centred on minority issues in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Western Balkans and, most recently, Central Asia. This is not astonishing bearing in mind the focus on action-oriented work together with the biographical backgrounds and academic specialisations of ECMI's re-searchers. ECMI has with good reason chosen to focus on Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and minority-majority issues in these regions. This strategy is relevant and seems workable, in particular because ECMI has gained the trust of local actors, which is obviously crucial. The submitted documentation and the publications of recent years also indicate that ECMI has rightly decided to focus less on research within the fields of conflict transformation, state construction and institution building. However, there is a risk that ECMI will focus too much on states that are not part of the European continent in strict geographical and geopolitical terms (despite their inclusion in the OSCE). ECMI has provided governments in Central Asia with advice and knowledge transfer. It is undeniable that Central Asia is within the reach of Europe's



normative power, but it remains doubtful whether Central Asia is really within the scope of ECMI's mandate according to Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes.

On the other hand, in the opinion of the expert, minority issues in Western Europe deserve strengthening as a research focus of the centre, since experience with the Council of Europe conventions on the protection of minorities demonstrates that deficiencies in the institutional arrangements and societal set-ups concerning minorities are to be found as much in Western European states as in Eastern Europe. The research on national minorities residing in the so-called “denial countries”, such as Greece and France, could be intensified. In addition, Western Europe has been recently confronted with separatism movements in Scotland and Catalonia, and populism is re-emerging all over Europe. The rise of populism has had a strong impact on refugees and migrants, but there seems to be a spill-over effect into the discourse on national and ethnic minority protection, which especially affects the Roma communities. The geographical focus of ECMI's activities, therefore, requires a certain reorientation towards minority issues of Western Europe. A strengthening of this area would, of course, require the recruitment of one or two experienced social/political scientists or lawyers of a comparable orientation.

### **Publication, information and documentation**

One of the strengths of ECMI is that research at the centre is conducted in a multi-disciplinary manner, so that, in principle, various disciplinary and methodological approaches are employed. The appropriate research methods are identified freely by each research staff member in order to address the subject matter adequately. ECMI has, however, formulated requirements defining that the research conducted should be systematic, cumulative, evidence-based, non-subjective and generalising. This activates different academic traditions and methodologies at ECMI, coming from political science, anthropology, economics, ethnography, history, sociology and law – although the centre's research on international legal aspects relating to minorities has been less prominent. Against this backdrop, both the Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE) and the European Yearbook of Minority Issues (EYMI), of which ECMI is a co-publisher, are of impressive scientific value. The published research articles and book reviews do not all consistently focus on the relatively narrow mandate of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the ECMI Statutes. Rather, in both publications, minority rights and minority issues come to the fore in their entire breadth, including diversity protection and migration issues, and are also tackled from a non-European perspective. However, this sweeping approach cannot and should not be avoided in inter-disciplinary and international journals. An academic journal that meets scientific standards and wants to achieve lasting effects must absorb and process the dynamic currents of the discourses in the various scientific disciplines. In the opinion of the expert, ECMI succeeds excellently with both publication types.

### **Advisory activities and action-oriented work**

The actual action-oriented projects and advisory services conducted by ECMI vary a lot in substance, scope, and proportions. As explained above, these activities mostly, but not fully, match the mandate enshrined in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes. Nevertheless, the expert is generally impressed with the documentation of ECMI's action-oriented work. The achievements in this area appear to be outstanding, and the work seems to have had an impact in the field, which is very positive. However, a cautionary note is needed here. As a general rule, action-oriented projects are more time consuming and require more commitment than projects of a strictly practical design. Research-driven projects are generally of higher quality, and they have better chances of a positive impact in the field. ECMI deserves praise for the apparent priority given to research-driven projects, but in the eyes of the expert the synergies between applied research and action-oriented projects could be further deepened and increased. Therefore, ECMI should be reluctant to extend its research to Central Asian countries, at least as long as and to the extent that no effective and adequately financially resourced cooperation with partners in Central Asia is secured. A further

expansion of ECMI programmes to the Arab world, as apparently intended by the centre, should be completely avoided, since it clearly oversteps ECMI's mandate.

### Supplementary comments

With regard to the above described evaluation fields “Promotion and Communication of Practical Experiences” and “Networking and Partnerships”, the expert can only offer few suggestions, since these fields are essentially executed by ECMI in an exemplary manner. The suggestions relate only to the training courses and the annual “Minority Roundtable”. Until now, it has not been feasible to establish a portfolio of paradigm-relevant training courses and to establish a consistent training unit at the centre. This is not entirely satisfactory, as there is no central focal point within ECMI tracking the quality of training. The annual “Minority Roundtable” is a valuable forum for the exchange of knowledge and views about topical issues that concern minorities and which have importance for the centre's research and future projects, and this should, therefore, be intensified through more frequent meetings, e.g. twice a year.

### Conclusions

The ECMI mandate is unique for Europe and perhaps for the world. After more than 20 years of its existence, ECMI has become well respected by several governments, international organisations and the epistemic community as a serious actor in minority protection and minority studies. With its limited framework and precarious external funding in mind, it is remarkable what the foundation has achieved, both as a re-search institute and a capacity-building organisation in minority issues. Based on the submitted reports and documentation, as well as the background material made available, the expert concludes that ECMI generally operates according to its mandate as defined by the founding governments in Article 2, paragraph 2 and Article 3 of the Statutes. On the other hand, ECMI has experienced economic difficulties for several years. When the centre was launched, it was an expectation of the three founders, Denmark, Germany and the Federal State (Land) of Schleswig-Holstein that a fourth founder could be established, e.g. the EU Commission. This expectation was not fulfilled – arguably because minority issues were understood as falling outside EU jurisdiction. The financial resources needed to continue all the ongoing projects and envisaged programmes and to conduct an appropriate and sustainable institution have not been forthcoming. Therefore, not only the requirements of Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Statutes but also the current difficult financial situation clearly indicate that a more concentrated focus on national minorities and traditional (autochthonous) ethnic groups is needed, leaving aside anti-discrimination and general human rights law and the topic of “new” minorities. It is also advisable to downsize the range of ECMI's activities with regard to its geographical priorities and to seek a reduction of the research portfolio and the five clusters as described above.

# Appendiks F – Topic 3: ECMI structure with respect to personnel, organisation, finances by Professor Dr. John Siegel

This report briefly summarises the results of the evaluation of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), considering the adequacy and efficiency of:

- the organisational structure of ECMI;
- personnel management at the centre;
- ECMI's use of its financial resources.

The analysis and recommendations are based on data from internal sources, mainly documents and interviews provided by staff at all levels and with diverse functions. Limitations of the research design should be considered when interpreting the findings and conclusions of this report, which focuses on crucial issues regarding the three topics.

Key findings of the evaluation can be summarised as follows:

- The organisational structure is characterised by an inconsistency of core structural components, particularly the (ambiguously implemented) concept of clusters (as, formally, main organisational units) and projects that define the work in a research organisation. The organisation suffers from a lack of effective operational planning, coordination, and communication. Particularly, junior staff tasks and priorities are relatively unclear. Project management capacity could be improved. Underlying the ambiguity concerning tasks and roles is a strategic tension between research and action-oriented activities.
- Personnel management at ECMI is facing critical challenges. One important issue is compensation for research and junior staff, which is inadequate and demotivates the highly committed research staff; as do overwork and ad-hoc work assignments. The centre has experienced a high level of staff fluctuation in recent years, also in senior positions. Particularly, the fact that two senior researcher positions have been vacant has caused problems for staff capacity and worsened organisational problems.
- The financial management system is focused primarily on compliance. Actual cost management systems are implemented only in rudimentary forms. Performance budgeting is weakly institutionalised.

Conclusions in terms of recommendations in order to address the issues can be summarised as follows:

- Strategy, structures, people management and resource allocation should be re-aligned. Therefore, more intensive and effective communication is necessary, as is transparency and self-reflection.
- Tasks and roles should be redefined and generally binding.
- Organisational units (clusters and/or projects) must be endowed with sufficient minimum staff capacity, both at senior and junior levels.
- A position of Project and/or Research Coordinator should be created and filled as soon as possible. Alternatively, a management team consisting of the Director and the Senior Research Associates could improve coordination.
- Internal communication routines should be enhanced.
- Compensation should be adequate, in accordance with the German TV-L pay scheme. Therefore, a strategy should be formulated and implemented that allows for long-term increases in salaries, transparency of payment and fairness.
- Qualifying staff and knowledge sharing should be systematically improved.
- A pragmatic cost-planning and cost-accounting system should be introduced and aligned with project management and organisational structure. Incentives for efficient use of resources should be reconsidered.
- ECMI should introduce a basic performance budgeting system.

## **Evaluation**

### **Organisational structure**

At the beginning of 2019, ECMI comprised 20 positions, of which two were vacant. Thus, tasks need to be assigned clearly and appropriately according to the centre's mandate and mission, projects, and stakeholder expectations, but also in order to guarantee the reliable and efficient functioning of ECMI in general.

The organisational structure is characterised by some key components:

- the differentiation of clusters as basic organisational units;
- the important role of projects;
- the nature of the work (administration vs. research);
- the categorisation of job families; and
- the separation of work between the headquarters (HQ) in Flensburg and the field offices.

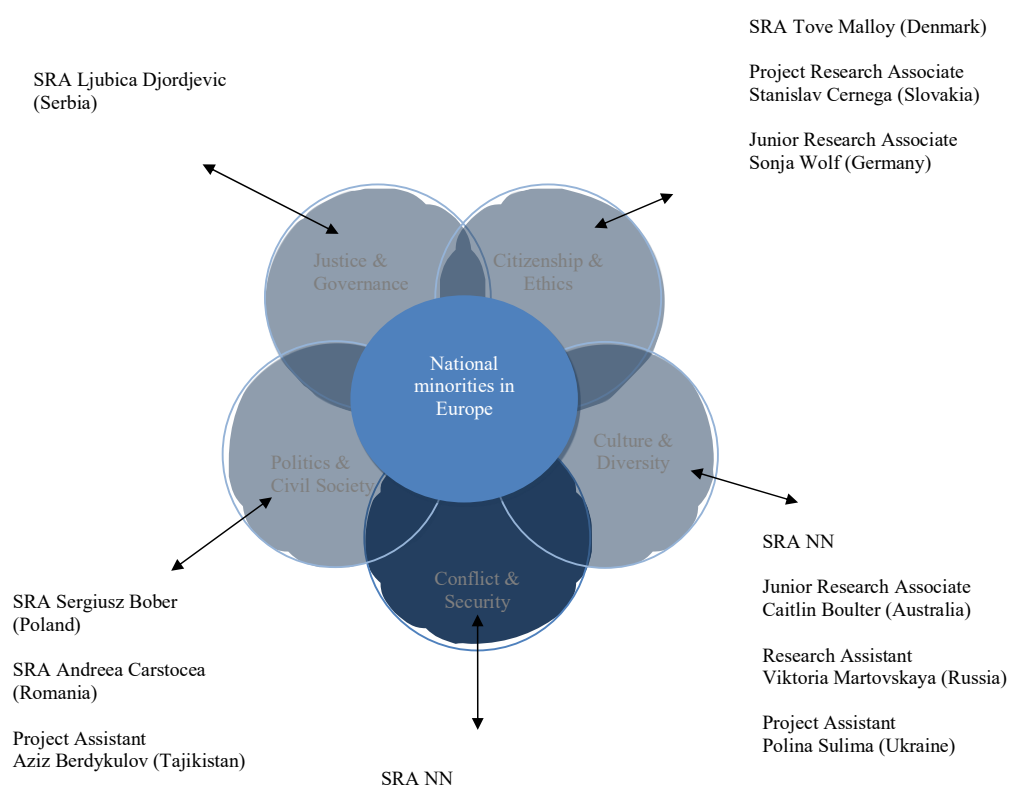
The five clusters can be considered the fundamental units of the organisational plan: Justice and Governance, Politics and Civil Society, Conflict and Security, Culture and Diversity, and Citizenship and Ethics. The concept of the clusters is plausible at first sight, notably because it is aiming at comprehensive, inter-disciplinary cooperation and expertise and at avoiding selective perceptions

of the complex and immoral nature of problems the centre is dealing with. The clusters are supposed to be managed by Heads of Clusters at the level of (post-doctoral) senior researchers, which is appropriate given the demanding expert tasks.

However, taking a closer look at the organisational reality, a certain discrepancy between the idea and the practice becomes apparent. At the time of the site visit, two out of the five positions were vacant, one was filled permanently, one was filled with an acting head of clusters, and one was managed by the Director (supposedly half-time). Under such circumstances, the cluster structure cannot function practically, since that would require sufficient staff capacity. The problem is increased due to an unbalanced staffing situation at junior researcher level. The following figure provided by ECMI illustrates the situation.

FIGURE F.1

## Cluster staffing 2019



Furthermore, several interviewees expressed their doubts about the purposefulness of the cluster structure as an idea and in practice. For many, it was difficult to describe what a cluster is or is supposed to be, how it differs from other types of organisational units (for example departments, divisions, competence centres, etc.), what the added value of the cluster approach is. Even though 'cluster' is a modern term with symbolic meaning, it does not seem to deliver the structure that is expected by the organisation and its members. Obviously, very few interviewees defended the idea. One interviewee stated that "90% of the work is cross-clusters"; another one stated that clusters were rather "a story to the outside world".

That raises the question of how the centre is actually structured if the clusters are not a fully convincing answer. Another problem occurs when the fact is taken into account that the work of ECMI is organised to a large extent in the form of projects, both externally mandated and funded as well as internally defined. The results of the interviews imply that there is an implicit struggle between organisational logics: the logic of permanent tasks based on the mandate and the resulting functions as expressed in (the denomination of) the clusters on the one hand, and the projects on the other hand. It remains unclear, how these two parallel structures with their respective underlying logics are connected.

As for any research organisation, projects play a crucial role in organising its activities. As the centre is funded to a large extent by external grants that are assigned to projects, project portfolio management and project management are existential. Even though ECMI and its staff have a lot of experience in successfully planning and implementing projects, it seems like the centre is not structured as a project organisation. However, the employees refer mainly to projects when asked about their tasks, not clusters. In that sense the cluster idea seems to be relatively ineffective. Project organisation seems to be relatively effective. The ECMI is capable of planning projects and, on this basis, of convincing several external funding institutions to provide resources for its activities in a competitive environment. Nonetheless, interviewees expressed room for improvement in terms of consistently and professionally managing projects, inter alia with regards to sharing knowledge and experience, sufficient time and capacity for project planning, and project controlling. For example, an internal handbook on project management was suggested. Furthermore, it seems not always clear who is the project manager or leader, and thus who carries the responsibility for a project as a whole. Deficiencies in project management are reflected in problems with large projects, such as EEP and MMTE.

The nature of work and, thus, job characteristics can be differentiated between administrative tasks on the one hand, and research work on the other. Given that ECMI in Flensburg is the headquarters, administrative and managerial functions account for approximately half of the positions. Considering projects, the planning and controlling, funding and organising parts can be considered mainly administrative, whereas the implementation of the projects mainly concerns research activities (literature analysis, applying theories and empirical methods, documenting, reporting and publishing results). Thus, research activities in the narrow sense constitute the minor part of the overall task assignments at ECMI. This fact creates a conflict with the centre's self-perception as a (applied) research institute. Furthermore, issues emerge from the fact that many employees consider themselves working as researchers, not as administrators or managers. This is most obviously the case for 'Junior' and 'Senior Research Associates' but also even for so-called Project Assistants/Project Research Associates.

The relevance of this underlying role conflict is emphasised through a perception that is dominant at the level of junior researchers and project assistants. The younger staff unanimously reported that job profiles are often unclear, particularly regarding the distinction between those two categories of junior staff. Task assignments and job descriptions are not necessarily as defined in contracts, or respective definitions do not really matter. Complaints about unequal distribution of work across time and persons were mentioned several times. Overlapping and lack of clarity of task assignments can and sometimes do result in frustration and conflict. Prioritisation of tasks is also deficient, e.g. with regards to balancing priorities of individuals, teams and the organisation. Interviewees stated they did not have enough time to work profoundly and sustainably in one area of research, keeping researchers unsatisfied with the results. In this context, it is worth noting that some interviewees feel that there are too many projects for the given capacities at ECMI. Another relevant concern is that there was too much traveling and working while traveling, which "shouldn't be a routine or expected".

Again, at first sight the differentiation between postdoctoral Senior Research Associates, Junior Research Associates, who are usually doctoral candidates, and Project Assistants (or Project Research Associates), who are also MA-level university graduates, is plausible. According to the centre's internal guidelines, "Senior Research Associates (SRA) and Junior Research Associates (JRA) are expected to use approximately 50% of their time on applied research, 20% on policy studies and capacity-building, and 30% on dissemination, administration and other ad hoc work, unless otherwise stipulated in employment contracts. For Project Research Associates (PRA), the percentage is 80% on project work (research, administration and dissemination) and 20% on own research, unless otherwise stipulated in employment contracts. These percentages are guidelines, and exceptions can occur from these norms if special conditions require it, and if ECMI's management considers it important for the institution." Nonetheless, there seems to be consensus between employees of all three categories that the boundaries between these functions in general and jobs or tasks in particular are indistinct. Maybe the job title of 'Research Associate' is misleading, since research is an important part of the job function, not its exclusive dedication; probably naming them 'Experts' would be more appropriate, given their diverse task assignments.

Regardless of job titles, what is more important is the fact that junior staff are not clearly assigned to clusters and/or projects, and, hence, organisational units. The logical consequence is a lack of supervision and coordination, even though this practise might be useful in terms of flexibility. Nonetheless, some interviewees regret that research and tasks are not self-initiated, but rather on demand, and that there is relatively little room for field research.

One interviewee claimed that "work planning is insufficient"; it would be no exception to be "fixing and mixing" – "rather than doing things right in the first place". The problem of vague job descriptions is intensified due to the fact that assignments are also changing, and that (often unclear) expectations result in insecurity and uncertainty. Even if these findings hold true mainly for the junior staff and not for core administrative functions, this concerns the ECMI's 'machine room', and, thus, implies deficiencies in the efficiency and adequacy of organisational structure in a key area of activity and for a major proportion of the staff. Interviewees suggested that contracts should be updated, and individual research plans for researchers should be formulated. Another widespread assertion is that it is common at the centre to be confronted with ad hoc work assignments, often with relatively short deadlines and high workloads, limiting the capacity for routine/planned work and, thus, compromising predictability.

It should be mentioned that the respective findings from the interviews coincide with issues discussed in an informal meeting of staff organised in October 2018 by the so-called Equality Unit, which also represents the employees and their legitimate interests, as well as through statements in a letter of complaint by senior research staff addressed to the Executive Board in May 2017. At this point, it is worth noting that no official body representing the employees (equivalent to a German "Betriebs-/Personalrat") has yet been established.

Furthermore, Project Assistants feel disadvantaged, and inconsistencies regarding project roles increase tensions. For example, a Junior Research Associate might be in charge of managing a relatively complex externally funded project, whereas a Senior Research Associate is only dealing with his or her individual research endeavours.

Processes within ECMI are roughly defined in the handbook for employees, but there are no discernible efforts to systematically analyse or optimise processes.

Generally, a major issue seems to be coordination, which is strongly connected with another one: communication. Coordination could be ensured by hierarchy (headed by the Director or, partly, by senior researchers), plans, rules, or horizontal self-adjustment. However, none of these mechanisms seem to be effective. The lack of project coordination is obvious and hardly surprising given that no respective position or communication routines for that specific purpose exist. Several interviewees expressed regrets that the position of the Deputy Director had been abolished without proper replacement. Generally, the management team and who belongs to it is not precisely defined; apparently, senior researchers do not belong to it.

Apparently, capacity for formal communication vertically and horizontally is insufficient, further impairing coordination. The monthly general staff meeting is relatively short and held in a top-down style. This seems to be the only internal communication routine. Appraisal reviews are (if at all) held between the Director and Senior Research Associates. Generally, the lack of senior management involvement in everyday routines is perceived as problematic in some statements. Interviewees considered insufficient information, for example about meetings with/decisions of external donors/partners, as problematic. A reason for this could be the Director's extensive span of control resulting from the fact that there is no intermediate level of hierarchy.

Communication is strongly linked to organisational culture. Several interviewees mentioned or implied that problems and ambiguities are not talked about, and that informal relationships are influential. Informal communication is crucial, because it ensures at least a minimum level of horizontal communication. The lack of information/communication "leads to tensions and gossip"; the working atmosphere is "not the very best". Criticism causes defence mechanisms; the policy on participation is inconsistent.

Regarding the macro-structure of ECMI, a few points can be mentioned:

- The field offices generally work autonomously, apart from initiation and bookkeeping which are centralised at the headquarters. Challenges concern intercultural communication and management, travelling, and formal procedures in the light of different cultures of compliance. Particularly the Kosovo endeavour works independently from the headquarters.
- The Executive Board is involved in organisational issues only to a small extent. For example, it is only informed about the strategy, rather than determining it. According to one interviewee, the board "does not have enough time to go into the details"; another statement was that the Executive Board should talk to other people, and not only the Director.
- The Advisory Board has not held meetings for a long time; it serves to foster the centre's networking rather than being involved in strategic (not to mention operational) decisions. However, some members do participate in activities of the ECMI.

To conclude, it can be highlighted that ECMI's organisational structure is characterised by an inconsistency of core structural components, particularly the (ambiguously implemented) concept of clusters (as, formally, main organisational units) and projects that define the work in a research organisation. Furthermore, the organisation suffers from a lack of effective operational planning, coordination, and communication. Particularly, junior staff tasks and priorities are relatively unclear. Project management capacity could be improved. Underlying the ambiguity concerning tasks and roles is a strategic tension between research and action-oriented activities.



Clearly, there is room for improvement:

- Individual tasks and roles should be redefined and generally binding. Job families in research should be clearly distinct. Renaming researchers' positions, for example to 'Senior/Junior Experts', could be discussed.
- The usefulness of the cluster structure should be reconsidered in the light of possible alternatives, such as centres of competence, areas of expertise, or a project-based structure. Clusters (or the respective follow-up category of units) should generally be managed by a fulltime SRA and be staffed with a clearly defined additional capacity of junior researchers.
- The position of a Project and/or Research Coordinator should be created and filled as soon as possible. Alternatively, a management team consisting of the Director and the Senior Research Associates could improve coordination. The effectiveness of such communication would be essential to this model working successfully.
- Generally, internal communication routines should be redesigned for the sake of effective vertical (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontal communication across functions and projects.

### **Personnel management**

As for any research organisation, a qualified and committed staff is essential. At ECMI, obviously very motivated and qualified people work together to accomplish the centre's mission and to contribute to understanding and solving minority issues in Europe. In this section, four major aspects of personnel, or people management (terms that are preferred by the author instead of the more common 'human resources management') are considered closely:

- the recent staffing situation;
- compensation/salaries;
- factors contributing to motivation and demotivation;
- qualification/personnel development.

In 2019, ECMI comprises;

- 13 positions (12,5 FTE nominal, 9,8 FTE actual) financed from structural funds; and
- 7 positions (6,5 FTE nominal, 5,8 FTE actual) from project funds; plus
- limited capacity from student assistants.

Hiring processes for two Senior Research Associate (SRA) positions were underway in the first quarter of 2019. The fact that over a period of circa two years these crucial positions remained vacant invites a closer look at the respective circumstances. In 2017 and 2018, ECMI was in a crisis regarding its staff situation. In a letter to the executive board (which was later distributed to other stakeholders) several employees, the majority of them senior researchers, complained about unfair treatment, working conditions, payment and the state of research at the centre. At the same time, a sexual harassment case emerged. As a result of these incidents, some key staff in senior research positions left ECMI, some voluntarily and some as result of legal actions. These incidents, particularly the sexual harassment case, had an almost traumatic effect on the staff, leading to the foundation of the Equality Unit, the loss of substantial research capacity, discussions about intercultural and diversity issues, as well as binding the attention and resources of senior management. Only recently, have the centre and its staff seemed to recover from these events.

The high level of staff turnover is considered critical, particularly regarding SRAs. A higher continuity in staffing would generally be desirable. Given that two SRA positions were vacant, two clusters were de facto not functional. For a third one, this is at least questionable since it is managed part-time by ECMI's Director, who is busy enough managing the centre as a whole and representing it to the external environment. Staffing of the clusters at junior level was also very uneven, as mentioned and illustrated in the previous section. The centre is not yet in a situation where the clusters are sufficiently staffed to at least a minimum extent. A similar, though less dramatic situation seems to be the case with the projects. Obviously, deficiencies in organisational structures correlate with a problematic staffing situation. In that context, it also appears questionable whether the job chart ("Stellenplan") is adequately aligned with the organisational structure and the project portfolio. One interviewee expressed doubts by stating that ECMI employs "too few people for too big goals". Moreover, the job chart does not contain the consultants working on a fee basis. In addition, this latter status seems to be ill-defined and offered to individuals in non-transparent and somewhat arbitrary ways. Also, the hiring process is questionable if Heads of Clusters/SRAs are not involved in hiring and HR policies.

However, the staffing situation is not the major concern regarding personnel management; the major issue is compensation. Several interviewees particularly at junior level consider salaries the "biggest issue", for example claiming that compared to the official pay scheme of the public service (which also applies to public universities and research institutions), monthly salaries were "€500 too low". Obviously, research staff are very frustrated about and demotivated by compensation – as opposed to the administrative staff, who see deficiencies compared to the significantly higher level of wages in neighbouring Denmark but do not seem too troubled by their salaries.

The analysis of the current salaries confirms that compensation levels are clearly inadequate. The major problem, however, is the attribution of jobs to pay grades in terms of the labour agreement of the German States ("Länder"; "Tarifvertrag der Deutschen Länder/TV-L"). First of all, it should be noted that applying this scheme is appropriate for ECMI, since it is partly funded by the German state (even though this does not create a legal obligation to comply with the TV-L pay scheme), and most other researchers in German universities and research institutions in the public sector pay their employees accordingly, making it seem unfair to deviate from that standard. Based on these assumptions, which are obviously not shared by ECMI's management, several aspects can be considered problematic:

- At the moment, Junior Research Associates (JRA), mostly Ph.D. students, are attributed to paygrade ("Entgeltgruppe") TV-L E 8, which is appropriate for routine clerical jobs that do not require higher education! Similar research institutions and universities usually pay their junior researchers according to TV-L E 13, which is the lowest pay grade for jobs requiring higher education at Masters level (which is a formal prerequisite for being a Ph.D. student). The difference is dramatic. For example, two fulltime JRAs at ECMI are being paid € 2,500 and 2,600 per month (before taxes, social insurances, etc.), respectively. According to the TV-L E 13 pay grade, their salary should amount to at least € 3,800 per month, i.e. ca. 50 percent more!
- At the moment, Project Assistants or Project Research Assistants (PA/PRA), all of them holding Masters degrees, are attributed to paygrade TV-L E 8 as well. Given that tasks are often similar to those of junior researchers who should be paid according to TV-L E 13, it is possible to argue for a similar pay grade. If it were assumed that the high level of qualification is not absolutely necessary for performing PA/PRA tasks appropriately, it is still obvious that an academic qualification (at least at Bachelor level) is needed, as well as substantial qualifications and professional skills in research methods, project management skills, social competences, etc. Consequently, compensation should be at least according to TV-L E 11. The difference here is even more dramatic. For example, two fulltime PA/PRA at ECMI are being paid € 1,800 per month (before taxes, social

insurances etc.), respectively. According to the TV-L E 11 pay grade, their salary should amount to at least € 3,300 per month – almost 80 percent more!

- In fact, € 1,800 per month is much less than what would be appropriate even for TV-L E 8 pay grade, which would require the salary to be at least € 2,700 per month – a difference of € 900 or 50 percent! It is perhaps relevant to note that the minimum wage in Germany is about € 1,600 per month for a fulltime position.
- Somewhat more ambiguous is the adequacy of compensation for Senior Research Associates (SRA). Two of them are currently paid at grade TV-L E 10, which is clearly insufficient for the above mentioned reasons. It could be argued that senior postdoctoral researchers should be paid better than junior researchers; that would imply TV-L E 14 (at least € 4,100 per month). However, it is typical and legitimate to pay the SRAs also according to TV-L E 13 if experience levels are taken into account as the TV-L mandates. Thus, for example, with three years of relevant working experience the salary within TV-L E 13 would increase to ca. € 4,400 per month.

A rough calculation considering the current part-time working arrangements concludes that for all employees currently working at the ECMI in SRA, JRA or PA/PRA positions, the necessary increase in salaries would add up to ca. € 10,000 per month plus additional costs for the employer, e.g. social insurance contributions. Consequently, if the budget for personnel expenses is not supposed to increase significantly, adequate compensation levels can only be achieved by either increasing external funding or by reducing the number of positions, or both.

Employees at all levels and functions are very dedicated and motivated according to various interview statements. Other factors contributing to the employees' commitment were mentioned in the interviews as driving motivation:

- identification with ECMI and its mission and topics;
- a good team spirit;
- qualification/training;
- working in the English language and in an international team;
- flexibility, e.g. regarding working hours;
- a generous travel policy;
- optional writing leave;
- the centre's reputation.

On the other hand, there are also a number of reasons for demotivation, apart from salary level (referring to the structural deficiencies pointed out in the previous section), such as:

- working extra hours, at weekends and while traveling;
- unclear and conflicting expectations;
- leadership, "few rewards", a perceived lack of appreciation, communication and participation deficiencies;
- ad-hoc work;
- rest and vacation time not always respected; people are contacted in what are considered emergencies;

- the location of ECMI in Flensburg - this has been chosen for obvious reasons, but it creates a challenge to hiring staff due its peripheral geographical position.

Time-limited contracts cause insecurity; criteria for prolongation are unclear to staff, resulting in a somewhat precarious employment situation, with potential impact on the legal status for some employees with foreign citizenship. In this context, the particular challenges of international employees from non-EU countries, especially those on time-limited contracts, should be kept in mind. These people depend on an adequate salary to pay their living costs, but also in order to maintain their legal status.

The conflict between commitment and some problematic working conditions increases burnout risks, with, for example, a high level of ambition on the one hand, and working extra hours without appropriate compensation and appreciation on the other. Issues regarding working conditions can at least partly be attributed to the fact that no formal staff representation has yet been established, even though the creation of the equality units can be considered an important step in that direction. Moreover, staff should be better informed about their rights.

In order to allow for regular communication about the individual work situation, annual reviews or performance appraisals should take place. This is not the case for most employees. According to the interviews, individual evaluation is inconsistent and problematic and usually takes place when things go wrong, but not on a continuous, systematic basis.

Reviews could also be an occasion to routinely talk about qualification and career development. Qualification development is generally considered to be good but unsystematic. For example, senior researchers not being qualified as leaders, lack of time for training (e.g. in project management), academic methodology and theory are not systematically trained. Knowledge transfer/sharing is deficient – and particularly problematic in relation to project management. In addition, it should be mentioned that the budget only authorises € 3,000 p.a. for personnel development (which equates to € 150 per employee!); this contrasts with planned executive travel expenses of € 15,000 and overall personnel expenses of over € 600,000.

To conclude, personnel management at ECMI is facing critical challenges. One important problem is the inappropriate compensation for research and junior staff, which is not adequate and, thus, demotivates the intrinsically highly committed research staff. Overwork and ad-hoc work assignments contribute to the deterioration of motivation and the attractiveness of working at ECMI. In addition, the centre has experienced a high level of staffing fluctuation in recent years, also with senior positions. Particularly, the fact that two senior research positions have been vacant has caused problems with staff capacity and worsened organisational problems.

As a consequence of these findings:

- The compensation system should be fundamentally re-adjusted according to the German TV-L pay scheme.
- A strategy should be formulated and implemented that allows for a long-term increase in salaries, transparency of payments and fairness.
- The logical consequence would be that in future, the ECMI will probably employ fewer staff with better compensation.
- Organisational units (clusters and/or projects) must be endowed with adequate minimum staff capacity, both at senior and junior levels.

- Under these circumstances, clear and effective guidelines are needed on how to deal with extra work, more limited work capacity, and, thus, setting priorities.
- A formal employee representation should be established.
- Qualification development for the staff and knowledge sharing should not only be systematically improved and institutionalised, but also supported by a substantial financial push.
- Annual performance reviews for all employees should be established in order to clarify individual tasks and objectives, negotiate qualification and career development, and to communicate feedback and appreciation.

## Financial management

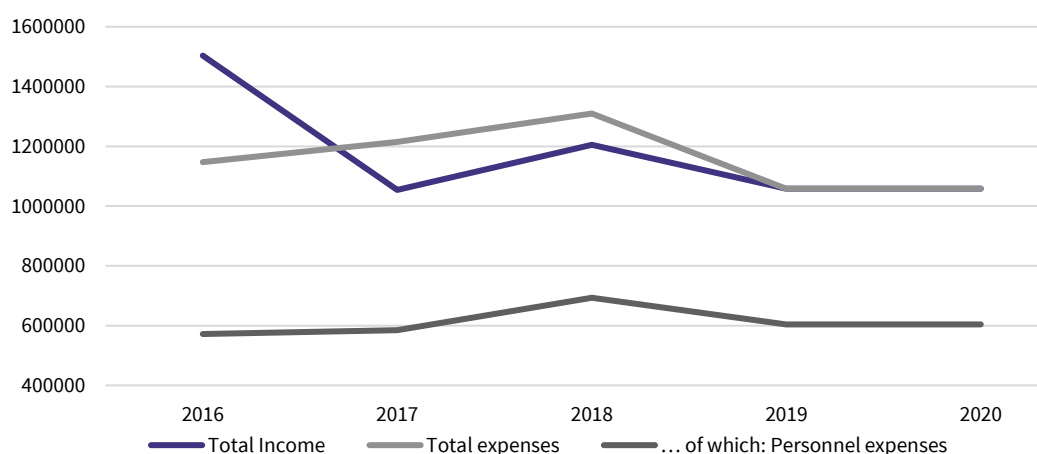
Financial management and the use of financial resources are the third main topic addressed by this evaluation. Therefore, emphasis is placed on:

- the overall financial situation of ECMI as reflected in certain key indicators;
- accounting and budgeting systems;
- strategic challenges with regards to funding, alignment and efficiency.

Since the headquarters is the focus of the evaluation, the following paragraphs dealing with ECMI's financial situation consider only the financial situation there, and not in the field offices, e.g. Kosovo.

**FIGURE F.2**

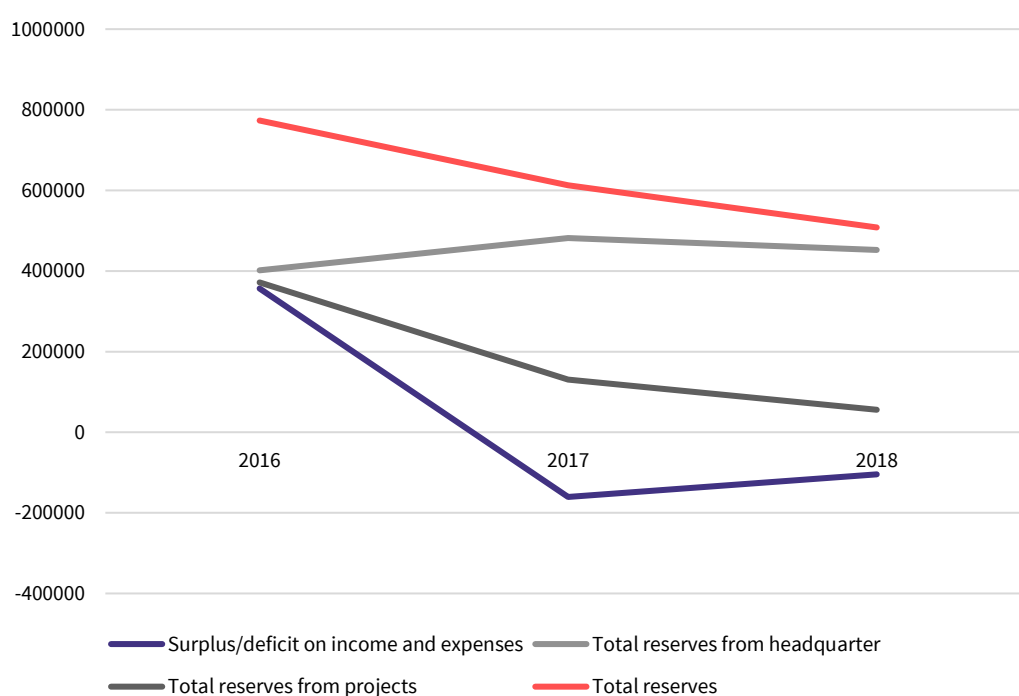
### Key financial performance indicators (cont'd)(in €)



Source: BDO Audit reports 2016 18; Budget Plan 2019/2020

Looking at ECMI's key financial indicators for the last three years and the plans for this and next year, a significant decrease in income and expenses can be observed, with the exception of increases in 2018. What is more interesting is the volatility of these indicators, being dependent on external funding and the stable grants from the founding institutions, which account for an annual income of € 926,000 in total.

As a logical consequence of this development, ECMI produced a deficit in 2017 and 2018 of ca. € 160,000 and € 105,000, respectively. These deficits are substantial, based on the fact that the overall income was at ca. € 1,054,000 in 2017 and € 1,204,950 in 2018. Logically, the total reserves decreased as well. This may have something to do with payments for projects, where income occurs later than the expenses, because only parts of grants are received earlier than payments, e.g. for project staff salaries. Nonetheless, the financial situation of ECMI seems to be deteriorating slowly. Even though there were still reserves of approximately € 500,000, it should be noted that this is less than the annual personnel expenses. It also seems relatively optimistic that the budgets for 2019 and 2020 assume that further deficits can be avoided.

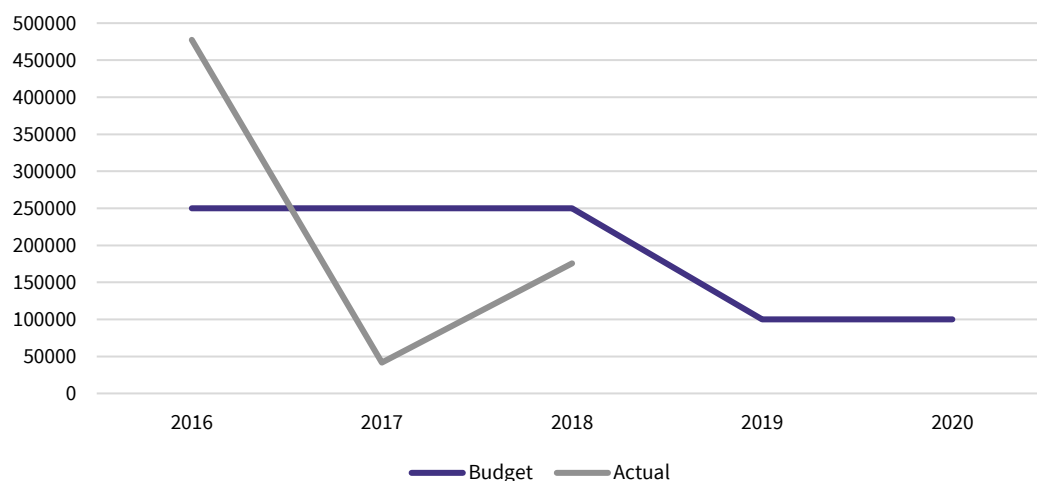
**FIGURE F.3****Key financial performance indicators (cont'd)(in €)**

Source: BDO Audit reports 2016-18

The volatility of the surplus/deficit can be explained to a large extent by the income category of earmarked allocations of funds for research, publications and projects, which basically comprise external project funds, and, thus, signals the effectiveness of fundraising from by the headquarters. As mentioned above, these considerations ignore the respective developments in the field offices, where particularly the Kosovo office was very effective in generating funding for projects.

**FIGURE F.4**

### Earmarked allocations of funds for research, publications and projects (in €)



Source: BDO Audit reports 2016/18; Budget Plan 2019/20

Fundraising from the headquarters has been less effective than expected according to the budget plan, as the actual results were much lower than the € 250,000 p.a. For 2019 and 2020, the plan for generating earmarked funds for research, publications and projects has been reduced to € 100,000 p.a. – a trend that might be more realistic but is also debatable, since it is clearly an expectation of the founders that their continuous grants should leverage funding from other external sources. However, the executive board on which the founders are represented apparently accepted this revision.

Nonetheless, funding is a strategic challenge, as funding frames the strategy. Strategic choices with regards to funding may thus be summarised: Is the ECMI supposed to grow in terms of funding, or should it rather maximise its impact with the given funds? Is it able and willing to pay adequate salaries if this means a significantly smaller number of positions? One interviewee sees the centre “at a crossroads” in the sense of the dilemma between scaling down versus an expectation of growth. In this context, it seems to be clear that the founding institutions do not intend to increase their financial contributions. This dilemma raises questions about priorities in ECMI’s activities, e.g. to what extent is advisory work sufficiently financed?

Therefore, internal transparency and management of costs (or expenses) is necessary, both in general as well as for projects. The respective systems do not seem to be as sophisticated as could be expected from a small non-profit organisation with a relatively stable basic income on the one hand, and an absence of clear performance goals and objectives on the other. ECMI management is relatively autonomous in the way it allocates its resources, as long as it generally complies with general standards of parsimony and efficiency. In the light of the organisation’s small size and the necessary transparency to funding institutions (practically, that is to the executive board and the auditors), cost awareness seems to be adequate in general. It is, however, a different question as to whether incentives for an efficient use of resources have effectively been put into place, and only simple cost management systems are institutionalised in the organisation.

Costing and financial planning seem to be rather rudimentary and incremental. The fundamental process of budgeting is organised by the senior management. There seems to be little involvement of senior researchers and project leaders. To some extent, financial planning is integrated in project planning, particularly in the formulation of project proposals and respective cost calculations. Relevant expertise is located mainly in the administration, and particularly at its head. However, some interviewees mentioned a lack of time to gather resources for projects and the perception that there is no systematic resource planning for projects.

The current system of financial management is rather simple, traditional, and focused on compliance with the diverse standards the ECMI is funded by. Different stakeholders have to be addressed appropriately and according to their respective formal requirements; interviewees mentioned that, in this sense, “different cultures” have to be dealt with. Some specific funding institutions are considered to be challenging and laborious, mainly due to formalistic procedures, costly requirements, drawn out routine decision-making processes, short term demands for information, etc. A particular issue in this regard is that the annual payment from the German Federal Government usually only arrives relatively late during the fiscal year. Managing these complexities is doubtlessly a major challenge and requires a lot of effort, e.g. on bookkeeping.

Regarding financial planning systems, budgeting and accounting are based on categories of expenses (and incomes), not on projects or outputs as cost-drivers. This is problematic, since budgeting is neither linked to organisational strategy, nor performance or organisational structures such as clusters or projects. For example, when the draft budget is presented and authorised by the executive board, its members do not exactly know what the appropriations (and full costs) are for specific projects or outputs (such as a summer school or a category of publications). The major issue in this regard is the missing allotment of personnel expenses (comprising approx. 60 percent of the recent budget) to output categories or organisational units. This kind of ‘performance budgeting’ is common in Denmark and German local government, but (as yet) not at the federal or state level in Germany. Thus, the executive board (or ultimately the funding institutions) do not know exactly what they are ‘buying’ from the centre in terms of outputs or even outcomes. This problem is intensified through the fact that the budget does not contain any goals or objectives, even though these can be interpreted in the light of the annual programme (as some kind of performance or, rather, activity plan for one (fiscal) year) or the ECMI strategy document. Furthermore, another difficulty is measuring performance in action or applied research projects.

Theoretically, a performance-oriented budget should be reflected in a cost accounting system using the same categories, with a clear allocation of resources and lines of responsibility to organisational units and individual (project) managers. In practice, such a system is not yet discernible at ECMI. Thus, it is difficult to put a ‘price tag’ on outputs and/or projects, which would be relevant for planning and setting priorities but also for transparency about the effort for respective results. Such a system, which could be implemented in a pragmatic manner, would also allow for comparison between actual costs of activities and projects, and previous plans or calculations.

As a consequence of the current situation, controlling of third-party funds is concentrating primarily on formal compliance, which is clearly important and challenging for ECMI. There are no indications for ineffectiveness in this regard. However, a different strategic approach could be considered in addition to that, assuming that specific financial expertise is useful for successfully applying for funds and that this expertise needs to be used in close cooperation with researchers and research-based project managers.



A more fundamental question is how efficiency can be measured and guaranteed in the decisions and activities throughout the centre. Efficiency can be considered – in very simple terms – as the ratio between inputs and outputs, particularly between costs (the use of resources in financial terms) and the quantity and quality (including the effectiveness) of published research results, teaching or advisory services provided to actors in the field. Efficiency in that sense is a function of incentives and transparency. The latter can be improved, as implied above, by cost accounting and performance measurement. Both kinds of information need to be linked and available in a useful form when decisions are made, especially those on resource allocation and project planning. Setting appropriate incentives is much more complex, because it means changing individual and collective behaviour.

Two examples can be used to take a closer, more practical look at this challenge: time and money for travelling and pro bono advisory work for creating goodwill in institutions potentially funding ECMI projects. If a project receives a lump-sum budget, the project manager will decide how he or she can make the best use of the money, for instance, travelling to a conference that is a “nice” but not a “need to attend”, or hiring a student for a mini-job assisting in transcribing interview data for two weeks for the same amount. The manager probably wouldn’t choose to travel. If an employee is authorised to spend the same amount for that conference and nothing else, he/she probably would travel if possible. For ECMI employees, it is difficult to understand why an incremental salary increase is denied while there is sufficient money to attend a conference that is not really necessary (perhaps because there are funds left in a project that must be spent before the end-of-year). The other example could be that the motivation to write an Issue Brief ad-hoc for a specific donor depends on the probability of the donor granting project funds for a research project in the employee’s personal area of interest; and is it legitimate to produce an output ‘for free’ if costs are incurred by the centre regardless? A simple but incomplete answer to similar questions is whether efficiency counts as an argument in decision-making, and whether it can be brought up in respective situations on a valid basis. A possible consequence of these examples could be the introduction of lump-sum budgets for projects and/or organisational units and/or categories of outputs (e.g. a budget of € 10,000 p.a. for issue briefs including all kinds of costs incurred), which could be used relatively flexibly across cost categories. Another consequence of this would be assigning staff to particular tasks they have an (economic) interest in.

In a nutshell, the current financial management system is primarily focused on compliance. In that sense it also seems to be successful, given the diverse and complex regulatory environment the ECMI is operating in. However, actual cost management systems are implemented only in rudimentary forms, and performance budgeting is weakly institutionalised. One major challenge is that personnel costs are not yet clearly attributed to tasks, organisational units and projects. In addition, key financial indicators point to a need for reconsidering the financial basis with particular regard to fundraising which, could be professionalised.

Accordingly:

- A pragmatic cost-planning and cost-accounting system – including personnel costs – should be introduced and aligned with project management and organisational structure.
- The ECMI should introduce a performance budgeting system, including a structure based on output or organisational units (clusters or projects), performance targets and indicators.
- Generally, incentives for the efficient use of resources should be reconsidered, for instance flexibility in terms of lump-sum budgets for projects or organisational units.

### Strategic alignment, communication, and leadership

Even if this (part of the) evaluation was not assigned explicitly to deal with strategy, communication and leadership, it is legitimate and also necessary to – at least briefly – comment on these crucial functions of managing an organisation like ECMI. Fundamental issues identified in the evaluation process can only be addressed properly if they are considered in a broader frame and context of the organisation and the way it is managed (or rather manages itself) strategically.

ECMI has an explicit strategy (as a plan) laid out in strategy documents. It also has an implicit, emergent strategy (as a pattern). Both types of strategy constitute the realised strategy that ultimately has an impact on the centre's organisational change, capabilities and performance. However, it seems that deliberate and emergent strategies are not always consistent, and that functional strategies (both deliberate and emergent) particularly with regards to structure and resource management are not adequately integrated:

- Organisational structure oscillates between the strategic concept of clusters and projects that emerge at least partly due to funding opportunities or decentral initiatives.
- The intended top-down strategy is not sufficiently translated into operational planning, coordination and communication. Particularly (but not only) for junior staff, strategy and priorities are unclear. Strategic goals are not substantiated in individual, operational objectives.
- Even if senior management considers strategy as setting the organisation's agenda and vision, researchers cannot see how their suggestions were reflected in the strategy – assuming they had a chance to participate in the strategy process in the first place.
- The ambiguity concerning tasks and roles represents a strategic tension between research and action-orientation. The idea of applied research is not yet appropriately conceptualised for practical use and sensemaking at the operational level.
- Personnel management at ECMI is not only facing critical challenges, but, more importantly, it seems that the strategic relevance of these issues is only partly perceived and addressed.
- Certainly, there is a lack of effective communication routines that would allow for collaborative self-reflection and systematic organisational learning, the latter being a prerequisite for building and fostering organisational capabilities. Instead, it can be assumed that ECMI's capabilities have decreased during the last years, e.g. due to fluctuation.
- Since the financial management system is focussed primarily on compliance, cost management and performance orientation in budgeting are weakly institutionalised. There is no clear link between resource allocations and (intended) results.
- Fundamental strategic choices with regards to the resource base of the organisation must be made. Some examples: Is the ECMI supposed to grow in terms of funding or should it rather maximise its impact with the given funds? Is the centre able and willing to pay adequate salaries if this means a significantly reduced number of positions? How will the centre address the challenge of its digital transformation?

As mentioned briefly in section B, effective internal communication – both horizontally and vertically – is the key, not only to strategy formation but also to organisational development and leadership. Therefore, employees need appreciation and encouragement.

## Conclusion

This report briefly summarises the results of the evaluation of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), and considers the adequacy and efficiency of:

- the organisational structure of ECMI;
- the management of people working at the centre; and
- the centre's use of its financial resources.

The analysis and recommendations are based on data from internal sources: mainly documents provided by, and interviews with staff at all levels and from diverse functions. Limitations of the research design should be considered when interpreting the findings and conclusions of this report, which focuses on crucial issues regarding the three topics.

The organisational structure is characterised by an inconsistency of core structural components, particularly the (ambiguously implemented) concept of clusters (as, formally, main organisational units) and projects that define the work in a research organisation. Furthermore, the organisation suffers from a lack of effective operational planning, coordination and communication. Particularly junior staff tasks and priorities are relatively unclear. Project management capacity could be improved. Underlying the ambiguity concerning tasks and roles is a strategic tension between research and action-oriented activities.

Obviously, there is room for improvement. Individual tasks and roles should be redefined and made generally binding. The usefulness of the cluster structure should be reconsidered in the light of possible alternatives, such as centres of competence, areas of expertise, or a project-based structure. Furthermore, the position of a Project and/or Research Coordinator should be created and filled as soon as possible. Alternatively, a management team consisting of the Director and the Senior Research Associates could improve coordination. However, effectiveness of communication would be essential to the success of this model. Generally, internal communication routines should be redesigned for the sake of effective vertical (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontal communication across functions and projects.

Personnel management at ECMI is facing critical challenges. One important problem is the inappropriate compensation for research and junior staff, which is inadequate and, thus, demotivates the otherwise intrinsically highly committed research staff. Overwork and ad-hoc work assignments contribute to the deterioration of motivation and of the attractiveness of working at ECMI. Besides this, the centre has experienced a high level of staff fluctuation in recent years, also with senior positions. Particularly the fact that two senior researcher positions have remained vacant has caused problems with staff capacity, and this has worsened organisational problems.

As a consequence of these critical deficiencies, the compensation system should be fundamentally re-adjusted according to the German TV-L pay scheme. Therefore, a strategy should be formulated and implemented that allows for a long-term increase in salaries, transparency of payment, and fairness. The logical consequence would be that, in the future, ECMI will probably employ fewer staff with better compensation. Such new circumstances will require clear and effective guidelines on how to deal with extra work, a more limited work capacity, and, thus, setting priorities. Organisational units (clusters and/or projects) must be endowed with sufficient minimum staff capacity, both at senior and junior levels. Furthermore, qualification development efforts for the staff and knowledge sharing should not only be systematically improved and institutionalised, but also supported by a substantial financial commitment.

The financial management system is currently primarily focused on compliance. In that sense, it also seems to be successful, given the diverse and complex regulatory environment the ECMI operates in. However, actual cost management systems are implemented only in rudimentary forms, and performance budgeting is weakly institutionalised. One major challenge is that personnel costs are not yet clearly attributed to tasks, organisational units or projects. In addition, key financial indicators point to a need for reconsidering the financial basis, with particular regard to fundraising which could be professionalised.

Accordingly, a pragmatic cost-planning and cost-accounting system – including personnel costs – should be introduced and aligned with the project management and organisational structure. ECMI should introduce a performance budgeting system, including a structure that is based on output or organisational units (clusters or projects) and performance targets and indicators. Generally, incentives for the efficient use of resources should be reconsidered, for instance flexibility through lump-sum budgets for projects or organisational units.

In the light of these recommendations, it can also be pointed out that ECMI could benefit from a phase of consolidation, focusing on re-thinking organisational structure, closing the internal communication gap, and implementing an effective strategy. Proper attention should be paid, particularly by senior management, to aligning organisational structures and processes efficiently with people and financial management systems. If this change process is to be successful, the ideas and creativity of people – at all levels and functions – working for ECMI and its mission should be included in a participatory way. One key issue to be addressed strategically is making the centre a more attractive place to work in.

This process of consolidation and re-alignment, as well as managing ECMI in general, should be strategically principled, but tactically flexible. Stakeholders and their expectations should be taken seriously, and tensions and conflicts should be discussed openly. In this context, attention should be paid to the – doubtlessly complex – links between organisational performance, capabilities, routines, structures, resources, mission, and strategy. Furthermore, focus should be on reducing inconsistencies between talk, decision and action, as well as on consequently implementing necessary changes. As one member of the advisory board pointed out, ECMI has not yet fully exploited its potential” and “can do much better”.

# Appendiks G – Topic 4: Assessment of ECMI field offices and activities in the wider European periphery

## by Dr. Fabrizio Tassinari

Question 4: Assessment of ECMI's field offices and activities in the wider European periphery. Based on an account of the origins of the field offices and their current structural and financial links to the ECMI headquarters in Flensburg and an analysis of the ongoing projects in Eastern Europe, the evaluation considers the benefit of field offices.

### Introduction

Over the past two decades, ECMI has pursued a strategy of widening its activities and geographical reach. This materialised in the opening (and subsequent closure) of some field offices in the wider European periphery, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and in the Balkans. This part of the evaluation concentrates on the assessment of field offices and of activities within, or in some cases, beyond the core European area, the latter being defined in terms of Council of Europe membership.

This evaluation will concentrate on the Georgia and Kosovo offices and the activities carried out by ECMI in Eastern Europe. It will assess the backstory of the Georgia office, it will analyse the situation as regards the Kosovo office, and it will assess activities in Eastern Europe. The report will conclude by providing seven key recommendations for the future. The key finding of this report, bringing the recommendations together, is that, while ambitious from an operational perspective, this outreach strategy in the field needs to be retooled from its current form, in order to prevent a knock-on effect for the effectiveness and coherence of ECMI operations as a whole.

### Assignment and method

This report on the organisational structure of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) and its financial and personnel management is part of a wider evaluation and should not be considered isolated from the three other parts, which deal with the centre's outputs and impacts, the fulfilling of and compliance with its mandate, and the work of its field activities in several regional offices. The author was commissioned by one of the three founders, namely the State ("Land") Government of Schleswig-Holstein, and assigned by the State Chancellery of Schleswig-Holstein with evaluating the adequacy and efficiency of:

- the organisational structure of ECMI, in particular the assignment of tasks, processes, coordination, and cooperation with the field offices;
- the management of human resources, in particular staffing, compensation, and personnel development;
- the use of financial resources, in particular financial management, financial accounting, auditing, and the use of third-party funds.

A previous evaluation initiated by the founders had not covered these topics. Thus, this evaluation is the first comprehensive analysis of the management of ECMI regarding organisational and resource-related topics.

In order to collect the necessary data, a mixed-methods approach was chosen. Relevant information was obtained from mainly from two sources: documents and interviews. Firstly, a comprehensive document analysis was conducted. Therefore, relevant texts and numerical documents were identified, selected, read and analysed according to the categories presented by the evaluation assignment. For example, the analysis included documents such as ECMI's annual reports, strategy documents, annual financial statements from the external auditor, internal financial documents and reports, the Director's statements on questions from the evaluation panel, job charts and a salary list. In addition, several documents were provided during or after the interviews and the site visit.

Secondly, the author personally conducted more than ten (mostly group) interviews, with the majority of interviewees recently working at ECMI across all levels and functions. The interviews took place on January 22 and 23, and March 8, 2019. Furthermore, several interviews/meetings were held during the evaluation panel's site visit in Flensburg on Jan 29 and 30, 2019. The information gathered during the interviews was protocolled and analysed according to the categories in the evaluation assignment. Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. This report avoids statement referring to individual persons, even though there are issues related to individuals.

Some limitations in the evaluation design must be considered when reading this report: Interviewees were mostly selected by ECMI's management. Documents could only be taken into account when presented to the author by ECMI's management or when publicly accessible. The data applied (particularly from group interviews) is ambiguous and can be biased and inconsistent. Only internal sources have been taken into account; and perceptions of external stakeholders might differ.

This report avoids lengthy descriptions of the status quo. It focuses on the presentation and explanation of crucial issues regarding the three evaluation topics with the intention of pointing out potential improvements to be considered by ECMI.

## Analysis

### Georgia Office

The reasons for the closure of the Georgia office precede the reporting period in question. The signs of a gradual disengagement from Georgia were already apparent in the 2012 evaluation of the Georgia office carried out by Centre for Evaluation (CEval) entitled "ECMI Georgia Activities Evaluation", and concludes:



The ECMI Georgia Office one day will be closed down. If this happens any time soon, it will most probably result in a less effective way of working for the CNM. It is recommended to use the synergies between these two needs (the need to close down the Georgia office of ECMI and the need of the CNM to become self-sustainable) and consider integrating ECMI staff into the CNM, funded by UNDP and UNAG, possibly by one of the donors that counted on ECMI for the realisation of their projects (e.g. the Council of Europe or the Norwegian or Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This way, the CNM would count with ECMI's deep knowledge concerning minority issues in Georgia and could also rely on the excellent contacts of the ECMI staff. (p. 18)

Since 2004, ECMI has been present in Georgia, where they had an office in the capital Tbilisi that covered the South Caucasus region. It was the Danish and the Norwegian Ministries of Foreign Affairs that helped fund the field office in Georgia in the beginning. The field office in Georgia primarily focused on Minority-Majority Relations, Dialogue and Consultation, Capacity Building and Policy Formation, Governmental and Institutional Support and Research and Documentation.

At a board meeting in 2008 it was decided that the ECMI regional offices at that time, including ECMI Georgia, would be incorporated independently in the respective states where they were located. The decision was based on economic reasons. The field office had not succeeded in getting enough funding for their projects, and in the end the board decided that it was not economically sustainable to keep the field office in Georgia as a part of ECMI Flensburg.

When ECMI Georgia was incorporated in the state of Georgia, a partnership agreement was made between the state of Georgia and ECMI, which meant that the field office was changed to a legally independent NGO. The NGO closed in 2017, due to insufficient funding.

In 2018, ECMI Flensburg stated that it was relaunching its activities in Georgia through a cooperation with a partner organisation called “Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism” (CSEM), which is a part of the university in Tbilisi. By relaunching its activities, ECMI is now more active in Georgia, and they have a senior researcher at ECMI Flensburg who cooperates with the university in Tbilisi. Formally, there is no ECMI office in Georgia and, at present, ECMI has no plans for establishing one. Their presence in Georgia is currently through the cooperation with the university.

## **Kosovo Office**

As far as the ECMI Kosovo office is concerned, the overall impression gathered by this evaluator, also following interviews both in Flensburg and with the Director of the Kosovo office in Pristina, is that the Kosovo office is a successful reality, which, if anything, deserves more support. However, the correlation between the work and strategy of ECMI Kosovo and ECMI Flensburg is tenuous at best, and the conditions for ECMI Kosovo to maintain the denomination of ECMI office should be carefully weighed.

The office in Kosovo started operating in 2001 as a branch office of ECMI and became an independent NGO in 2009. Today, the Kosovo office is characterized as an independent regional entity under the ECMI umbrella. With a budget of about 700,000 euros, the office is entirely self-funded, and 95% of the fundraising is done independently from ECMI Flensburg. It employs 19 fulltime, plus 15 or so consultants and paralegals working in the field. The office focuses on two main areas: 1) Advisory services and consultancy work for the office of the president and the office of the prime minister in Kosovo. ECMI provides support and expertise and develops legislation for the minorities in Kosovo. 2) Groundwork, where ECMI works on a public policy level to make minority voices heard. Focus is especially on women and children.

Organisationally, one reason why ECMI Kosovo has grown increasingly independent is that fundraising from ECMI Flensburg was too cumbersome and not a flexible enough operation at a financial level, so it was easier for both parties if ECMI Kosovo was not funded by Flensburg. The EU is the biggest donor to the Kosovo Office at the moment. All funding is competitively based.

The Danish and German Governments do not fund ECMI Kosovo. According to the ECMI Kosovo Director Adrian Zeqiri, the brand of ECMI has added a lot of value to their work in Kosovo. At the same time, the work being based on external donors, if their work had not been good, the brand could not have saved them.

## Eastern Europe

In Eastern Europe, ECMI is displaying a promising variety of projects, especially in Western Ukraine. These are focused, well-delimited and targeted, as well as being self-sustainable from a financial perspective. Until 2017, it ran a successful project on the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus) funded by the Danish government for 3 years. It delivered a lot of results in terms of raising awareness via events and publications (some 52 activities in total). The project was designed around two working groups of public servants, minority servants, etc. and mixed nationalities from the East. As a result, there was a very relevant element of peer-to-peer exchange between the groups.

Following its expiration, the project continued in Ukraine only, though with a different focus on regional administration, with a specific view on how national minorities in different regions participate in the regional development. The focus is still on peer-to-peer learning: minority community to minority community, on national minority issues.

Another smaller project in Ukraine (budgeted at 50,000 euros) was funded by the German government and focused on youth participation: Youth participation in Ukraine. It delivered one kick off meeting in Ukraine, two workshops and one final event. The work carried out in Eastern Europe appears meaningful, focused and targeted.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The strategic and political environment in Europe since the establishment of the ECMI policy of establishing field offices has changed dramatically. The opening of European institutions towards the East arguably provided the context for this move. Over the past decade, however, the European enlargement policy has effectively slowed down, and in some cases ground to a halt in several of the same countries and regions targeted by ECMI. At the same time, the emergence of nativist, nationalist and so-called populist parties and governments within the EU heightens the need to address minority issues within Europe. Following the terminology of EU integration literature, the process of “deepening” (in the European core) is not necessarily alternative and contradictory to one of “widening” (towards the European periphery). But especially in the case of ECMI, issues pertaining to proper allocation of resources, institutional inertia, donor dependence would invite a re-examination of the relation between deepening and widening and of its presence in the field.

In the 2010 Partnership Agreement between ECMI Flensburg and Caucasus/Kosovo it is stated: While it had been initially envisaged by the ECMI board to achieve complete separation of ECMI Flensburg and its two regional entities by establishing nationally registered and legally independent structures (NGOs) for the Caucasus (in Tbilisi, Georgia) and for Kosovo (in Prishtina), it has proven advantageous to maintain in parallel the international representation offices (hereafter ECMI International Georgia and ECMI International Kosovo aka ECMI International branches). One first, general conclusion of this evaluation is that this statement no longer appears to be sustained by the current state of affairs at ECMI. Despite the specification about the existence of an ECMI Georgia in the ECMI Work Program of 2019, this office was closed down long before and is no longer active. The Kosovo office, while it is still active and, as will be explained below, well-functioning, it has not maintained the kind of formal bond indicated above. The presence in Ukraine, described in the website as “regional office”, has in fact been project-based throughout. There are several valuable activities and experiences in the field, but the context in which they are inscribed needs to be clarified.



The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Deepening vs. widening: A strategic assessment should be carried out to reconsider whether it is sustainable to pursue a strategy of continued expansion of ECMI activities towards the wider European periphery as opposed to consolidating what ECMI has achieved or is doing in the current setting; not least deepening what it could do in Western and Central Europe. This assessment pertains as much to the capabilities of ECMI, as to the political and normative climate in Europe, which has changed in recent years.
2. Capabilities/Expectations gap: This evaluator has registered an apparent imbalance between the way in which field projects and activities are organised and presented and the actual resources available to carry them out. There is a tendency towards over-stretching, voiced also by the program staff, which needs to be especially measured against the specialisations of the staff and the extent to which ECMI can attract new staff.
3. Central Asia: The proposed work in Central Asia should be analysed in this light. Exploratory deskwork to ascertain the relevance and need for ECMI expertise in this part of the world is justified. But utmost caution should be exercised when deciding whether this work should be pursued. Following recommendations 1 and 2, caution pertains to the overall political and strategic climate in Central Asia (which is resistant to reform), the appeal of European norms in this area of the world, and the judgment over whether even deskwork that is not followed by an action project is an appropriate allocation of resources. At present, the recommendation of this evaluator would counsel against pursuing this project further.
4. Western, Central and Southern Europe: In light of the changed geopolitical and normative context in Europe, including the rise of nativist and nationalist forces throughout the continent, ECMI should reconsider rebalancing the work at the fringes of the European periphery with new forms of interaction, cooperation or presence in Central, Western and Southern Europe. This should not be attained by opening field offices nor even necessarily by launching new projects; it could be attained by formalising partnerships with local institutions, similar to that which ECMI has done in Georgia, which could help maximise the role of ECMI as a hub for the systematic study of minorities issues in Europe. Such a network-based structure already partly exists, judging by the linkages that ECMI's top management has throughout Europe; a formalisation of this, e.g. by the signing of a joint Memorandum of Understanding with relevant counterparts, would help cement ECMI's reputation and carve out its comparative advantage vis-à-vis country-specific outfits.
5. Transparency: The presentation of the "regional offices" needs to be made clearer. Judging by, for example, the website and the Annual Program 2019, it is not possible to deduce that the Georgia office/NGO has been closed down and that the Kosovo one is effectively running as an entirely separate entity, nor that there is no Ukraine office per se. The Annual Program and the website are PR and information tools and, as such, the information provided there should be more accurate. It is imperative that the Annual Program and the website are amended and reprinted to reflect the actual status of the work in these regions.
6. Focus areas and regional office: Based on the above, it is recommended that the denomination of "regional office" is scrapped altogether to avoid misconceptions. The project-based approach carried out in, for example, Eastern Europe should be continued and consolidated, as this goes in the right direction for a proper allocation of resources and level of ambition. As a result, it is recommended that the notion of "regional office" is replaced by "focus areas".
7. ECMI Kosovo: The Kosovo entity still retains the brand and name ECMI. If ECMI Flensburg is to retain a degree of ownership of the brand and work being done in Kosovo, it is recommended that the founders pay, via ECMI Flensburg, 20% of the Kosovo office Director's salary. This in

return for the formal inclusion of said Director in the proceedings of the ECMI Executive Board, as a permanent observer.

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