



Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova-Republic of Kosovo
Qeveria - Vlada - Government

Ministria e Administrimit të Pushtetit Lokal
Ministarstvo Administracije Lokalne Samouprave
Ministry of Local Government Administration

Interview with Sadri Ferati, minister of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, regarding the preparations on the implementation of the decentralization process

There are no dilemmas



Decentralization in Kosovo, although it has been politicized before it was decided on that, first aims to advance good governance, transparency and efficacy of the public services through all the country. This is what minister Ferati says, decided to move forward with this process. “We cannot dare and it won’t be let to create dilemmas in this phase that Serbians refuse the decentralization in a part of Kosova, and Albanians do the same in another part, because then we’ll be equal with those groups of people that exactly have as motive the detention of the strengthening of the Kosovo state”.

Prishtina, 13 May – Decentralization has its effects and both aims are grave, says minister of the Ministry of Local Government Administration, Sadri Ferati, in an interview for “Lajm”. According to him, one is the strengthening of each municipality in Kosova and the second, the possibility that the Serbian community gets integrated through the structures of local government.

Lajm: *Decentralization in Kosova was estimated as painful compromise for the independence. Now, when more than a year has passed after the declaring of the independence, have started also the preparations for the implementation of this process. How it is difficult to convince the parties that the local government reform is not a process to deepen the inter-ethnic division, but to integrate them in a new society?*

Ferati: Actually there is nothing easy in the aspect of the citizens’ conviction to win the full support, this because unfortunately, decentralization is politicized without taking the decision on it yet, in 2006. All the estimations that the Ahtisaari Package is a compromise are not referred to the decentralization, because all the states around, in region and widely, regardless whether there has been a memorandum or package, decentralization has been seen as the best form of the government and always in the interest of citizens. There has been a compromise to the number of municipalities, initially the Kosovo party in the negotiations has offered to municipalities, Graçanica and Partesh, whereas Serbian party had refused and required 20 municipalities. Thus, between the proposal of Albanians for two municipalities and Serbians for 20, was decided the establishment of 5+1 new municipalities.

Lajm: *What effects has the implementation of the decentralization in Kosova?*

Ferati: Decentralization has its effects and both aims are grave. One is the strengthening of each municipality in Kosova and the second the possibility that the Serbian community to get integrated through the structures of local government. This is the main aim of the decentralization according our model.

Lajm: *Implementation of the decentralization process is considered one of the main standards that Kosova should fulfill to accelerate the integration in the European Union. Do you have the support of the Government in this aspect, since in the opinion this process has started to be identified with two names, yours and of the chief of International Civilian Office, Pieter Faith?*

Ferati: Absolutely, the implementation of the Ahtisaari Package has had higher conditions than the realization of standards itself, thus in the future we should use during our peregrination in the signing of the Memorandum of Stabilization-Association and approaching to the full entrée in the European Integration. There exists the general support, both from the president and prime minister, and this has resulted in the creation of an inter-ministerial group on decentralization. It is understandable that more active and main bearer of the process are we as ministry, and according the mandate, in supervision of the implementation is the International Civilian Office (ICO) and its chief Pieter Faith with the team. ICO except being supervisor of this process is assisting a lot in this process and is welcomed from us. However, we will always appeal a higher functioning of the governmental cabinet, but all the Kosova society as well, because this process can be successful and can be implemented in a shorter time only with the full functioning of

all the Kosovo society, thus Serbian community too. Without the functioning of this community we cannot implement and enforce those rights that belong to them.

Lajm: *The establishment of the 5+1 new municipalities is expected to happen with the holding of the next local elections. How is the will of Serbians to participate in these elections and to elect their legitimate municipal structures?*

Ferati: The establishment of whatever municipality can be done only with the creation of the democratic legitimacy, in conformity with laws. Thus on the occasion of the organization of local elections from the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo. Initially the refusal of citizens and leaders of the Serbian community has been massive, probably close to the absolute. Now we have a change of the situation and their readiness to be in contact, in dialogue with us, to explain the process, to give more information, to give the possibility for them to be within the concept is increasing. The fact that we have had several meetings with Serbian inhabitants is one of the proofs. Then the participation of lots of local Serbian leaders in our meetings and in the conversations in different occasions shows a high interest. Lately, on the occasion of the process of announcement of the vacancy announcement for the preparatory teams and the applying of around 200 Serbians proves a movement that in a way satisfies us, but not much, because this doesn't prove yet for a massive participation. There exists a difference of the interest in the localities as well. There is not this interest in all the localities.

Lajm: *Ministry of Local Government this last months is focused more in the north of Mitrovica to work in that part where the interest of Serbians is lower. Is Mitrovica the central point of the focus of Government for the implementation of the decentralization?*

Ferati: It is true that there are months that in our priorities and engagements is Mitrovica for some reasons. Except that citizens there live really bad, as in the other places they need to create their optimism that they will be able to be citizens of their own city, their municipality, with the elementary rights of the return in their property, to be active participants in all phases of the construction of those institutions and to be happy for this through the employment in those institutions and in the all other fields. By the other hand, certainly in Mitrovica both communities are powerful and give the impression of disintegration and of a cementation in the current situation, of non-communication of people, ideas, and goods. Each minimal result in Mitrovica, creates credibility in this process, in other parts in wider steps, thus this has been the reasons that we had announced this city as a priority. Mitrovica is the generator of the acceleration of the decentralization process.

Lajm: *What if local Serbians won't participate in elections or in a low number, will the new foreseen municipalities will establish according the Ahtisaari Package?*

Ferati: I will express once again the readiness of the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo and in general all the commitment together with the partners, to be committed to develop the concept, to be in contact with the citizens, and in the first place it's our duty is to assist the citizens of Serbian community, so they move from the situation they have, because they are really confused. Then they have pressure, they have also material interest and are afraid that, if they integrate in the Kosovo society and if they recognize the Kosovo institutions, they will be authorized from Belgrade in the stopping of

charities. We are doing everything to help them because they need this. In any case, taking into consideration that not in all localities we have satisfactory movements, we already express our compassion if in a locality is tarried the implementation of this process and that they will remain for another phase. Absolutely they will come again in the implementation of this process, because there is no other alternative. For each loss of time for them we will feel sorry.

Lajm: *In a conference held in Ohrid of Macedonia you have stressed the 17 November as possible of the holding of next local elections. If Serbians require still time to participate in the local elections, is there any possibility that you insist in the postponement of the local elections for spring?*

Ferati: I have stressed correctly that 17 November is mandatory date, because with the mandate is appointed that the local elections should be held this year and 17 November is mandatory date. It is in the president competence, after the consultations with the leaders of political parties to take the last decision. For us the participation of a mass of Serbians citizens in elections is of a special interest. Each guaranty that a bigger treatment in the technical aspect to have a bigger preparation, a bigger functioning of the Serbian community, wouldn't exclude the possibility to have consideration. But I'm not seeing it as such. Now the situation is black and white. They're either convinced to enter in the process or aren't convinced and won't enter in the process. I'm not a believer to postpone the elections for this motive because nothing in quality cannot be achieved, within 1 or 2 months.

Lajm: *Except Serbians, who have refused decentralization for political reasons, Albanians as well especially in some parts of Kosova continue to oppose this process. For example, how will you convince the inhabitants of the Pasjak village, which is settled two kilometers far from Gjilan, to accept to be put under the administration of the municipality of Novobërda that is settled 30 kilometers farther?*

Ferati: I believe that no one had easier that in the creation of the Unity Group, than in the technical aspects that have been treated in Vienna, there was nothing easy. But what is called proposal of the president Ahtisaari, that we wanted and accepted in a one-sided way and from that we have received the biggest part of the products from that package. Thus, the right of the citizens of Kosova to self-determine that has resulted with the fair political will, legitimate and historic that the citizens of Kosova to declare their independence from whatever state around. Now we have the Republic of Kosova as an independent and Sovran country in all its borders, with obstacles of the functioning of all the Kosova society. Thus we should contribute ourselves toward this second issue. That is the right and integration of all the citizens in order that the Kosova society shows itself functional, wherewith we prove our ability to construct society, to keep a state. We should return the given trust to all the powerful states of Kosova that have helped and have recognized as a state. In this grave aims we shouldn't be victim of feelings and perceptions, either of individuals or some village that would feel bad, because the benefits are huge. But we will discuss in any case and will engage to guarantee to those citizens a good life. I think that the difference in 10 minutes travel left or right, in an independent functional Kosova, with powerful local institutions won't be an obstacle for anyone; at the contrary it would contribute a huge damage. We will see in three years

whether these villages have benefit and will be able to reconsider all the positions. But we cannot dare and it won't be let to create dilemmas in this phase that Serbians refuse the decentralization in a part of Kosova, and Albanians do the same in another part, because then we'll be equal with those groups of people that exactly have as motive the detention of the strengthening of the Kosovo state.

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