

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Every child counts – Birth registration in Kosovo

Prishtine/Pristina, 04 March 2009 - UNICEF, the Ministry of Interior, and Prism Research company launch the report 'Every child counts – Birth registration in Kosovo.'

Birth registration is the permanent and official administrative state record of a child's existence and is fundamental to the realization of children's rights and practical needs. Securing children's right to be registered will allow them to get a passport, open a bank account, obtain credit, vote and find employment.

Absence of birth registration leaves statistics agency without accurate data and prevents the calculation of relevant statistical indicators such as birth and death rates, etc. In the absence of reliable registry data about the number and age of children and families, it is impossible to develop plans for school facilities, number of teachers, necessary education materials.

The current report reveals that even though some municipalities have achieved universal birth registration, some challenges remain at the Kosovo wide level. Compared to Central and South Eastern Europe, Kosovo has a low birth registration rate. The report gives evidence of ethnic disparities with the highest rate of non-registration by members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities who are most likely to not register their children, followed by Albanians and Turk communities.

There are also municipal disparities noted: while in some municipalities universal birth registration has been achieved; in others, birth non-registration reaches up to more than 20%.

The most common gap in the system is that there are complex administrative procedures and lack of clarity among public officials about ways to deal with some legal provisions.

The study also reveals that communities lack information about the importance of birth registration and its procedures. The birth registration process is very often perceived as expensive and complicated. In some cases, especially with Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian, communities do not have any documentation required from parents in order to register their children.

The establishment of an efficient civil status registration system, at both local and central level is a priority of the MIA for 2009 and it will no doubt improve the overall situation. However, allocation of additional resources and specific measures are required so that the birth registration services are accessible to every single household and to all communities in Kosovo.

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