



DEMOCRACY AND INSTITUTIONS

Civil society and the latest political developments

Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo, called on civil society "not to become part of any political lobby or an instrument of a political party as you will lose the quality you possess," at a meeting on political developments and the role of civil society.

Organized by the Advocacy and Training Resource Center (ATRC) in cooperation with the Office of the President of Kosovo, the roundtable meeting held on July 18 aimed to build discussion on the latest political developments in Kosovo, and the possible role and contribution of civil society in Kosovo's current situation.



Fatmir Sejdiu, President of Kosovo meets civil society representatives

The discussion was part of a series of meetings organized by ATRC, a partner in USAID's civil society program, along with the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

Gaining new knowledge on budget planning

New techniques on planning and managing budgets were introduced to the executives of six Kosovo municipalities during a training organized by USAID's Local Government Initiative.

"The training outlined four stages of presenting the budget to the audience in comparison to the previous methodology which offered only one, thus making it easier for the citizens to better identify their needs", says Musa Rexha, director of the department for budget and finances in Peja/Pec, and a participant in the training.

The training is designed to accommodate the needs of local administrators by introducing new mechanisms, and tools for planning and managing a budget.

USAID's Local Government Initiative is a three-year program designed to assist municipal government in improving their skills toward building a responsible and transparent local government.

MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Gender and ethnicity in media

Results of a survey on participation of women and different ethnicities in Kosovar media conducted in April 2006 was recently released publicly. The report presents detailed findings based on responses from 108 journalists from 39 media organizations in Kosovo.

According to the report, female staff represent roughly one third of all media employees in Kosovo, based on the media outlets providing staff data, while over half of the all the Kosovar media organizations surveyed broadcast or publish only in one language. One third (7 out of 21) of the organizations reported having staff of other ethnicities. Only 2 of these organizations reported having managers of other ethnicities, and 5 have senior editors of other ethnicities.

The experiences of focus group participants point toward the potential impact female journalists can have on the future of Kosovo and society in general. During the focus groups, participants passionately recounted stories of female journalists' daunting obstacles and tense situations, and responding with professionalism,

creativity and courage. Most importantly, they succeeded not only in getting a story, but also in creating an impact on their organizations, their communities and beyond.

As stated in one focus group, journalists can contribute toward shared understanding among communities. "Being women, we can be leaders on this issue now and in the future. The fact that we are women launches a meaningful message of not wanting conflicts or wars and wanting to protect our husbands, sons, and fathers. This is the foundation of our work in journalism."

A number of conclusions have been drawn from these findings. Key among them is that, despite equal conditions between men and women in hiring and promotions, women are underrepresented both in staff overall and in management of media organizations.

The survey was supported by USAID's Kosovo Media Assistance Project (KMAP), a three year project helping Kosovar media improve reporting especially on cross-cutting issues such as gender and ethnicity.

Discussing the draft law on pension and invalidity insurance

Public hearings organized throughout Kosovo resulted in specific recommendations to the draft law on pensions and invalidity insurance.

The recommendations will be handed to a commission engaged in harmonizing the proposals before the law is passed to the Kosovo Assembly. The aim of the public hearings was to address and discuss issues affecting pensioners and compile a list of recommendations for the draft law in order for it to be as comprehensive as possible.

Public hearings were organized in Peja/Pec, Gjakovë/Djakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Prizren, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Pristina. The hearings brought together local representatives of the Association of Pensioners of Kosovo, Union of Pensioners and Work Invalids, Association

of Work Invalids, Union of Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo and Association of Retired and Invalid Miners. The hearings were organized by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), in cooperation with local NGO's in the respective municipalities.

ATRC is a partner of USAID's civil society program along with the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Art Yourself

"**A**rt Yourself" is a workshop and the place to be for everyone interested in painting this summer. The workshop is a joint project of young artists and Balkans Youth Without Borders (BYWB).

"This is a project for everyone, the ones who like to paint for pleasure and the ones who study painting" says Ilir Lloncari, leader of the Youth Center in Pristina. "The workshop is a place for everyone, primarily youth."

The workshop will be open throughout the summer and will conclude with an exhibition at the end of September. Through these types of initiatives, the Youth Center aims to assist in raising awareness about the role of arts in society.

BYWB is a regional project of National Albanian American Council, and supported by USAID.

Upcoming Events

August 11, Heather Goldman, USAID/Kosovo Acting Mission Director will visit USAID activities in Gjilan/Gnjilane region.

August, USAID/Kosovo will launch the new Kosovo Community Reconciliation Program, a partnership with Freedom House



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