



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Municipal Court-Flow Process Report

One of the most pressing challenges to the credibility of Kosovo's courts has been a backlog of thousands of cases and the slow pace of resolving them.

USAID's Justice System Reform Activity conducted studies on this serious problem throughout five district and five municipal courts. The resulting report was presented to municipal court officials and administrators on November 22-23.

The report provides a clear, unbiased picture of the pace of litigation. It examined the size and age of pending cases, how long cases are taking to be completed, and specific stages or processes within cases that commonly cause delays.

Most importantly, the report offers concrete suggestions on reducing the backlog of cases while managing courts in a more efficient manner.

Kosovo Legal Education

Law professors, government employees, judges, prosecutors and lawyers gathered on November 23 for a one-day brainstorming session on ways to improve legal education in Kosovo. The session, sponsored by the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), enabled the specialists and practitioners to assess curricula, teaching methodologies and training resources.

Participants emphasized the need for practical training for students who are expected to work in such areas as the judiciary, commercial law, and European Union integration issues.



Mr. Osman Havolli, Judge with Municipal Court
discussing legal education

Other recommendations included starting court internships, holding mock trials at the Law Faculty, changing the curriculum to include more skill-building in areas such as legal writing and reviewing textbooks to ensure that information is updated and of high quality.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

Cross-boundary Cooperation

Breaking the boundaries for regional cooperation was an issue addressed by Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director, at a regional economic development conference on November 17-18 in Pristina.

Organized by the Regional Enterprise Agency (REA), the conference brought together business development agencies and business associations from the Western Balkans to discuss opportunities for cross-boundary cooperation.

The conference is a first step toward more ambitious activities to promote local economic development in the Balkans and build consensus between local governments and civil society organizations.

The result, will be a greater economic cooperation among municipalities, chambers of commerce, and government officials.

USAID/Kosovo has been engaged in local economic development through its Economic and Democracy and Governance programs. In the past USAID has been active in the regional Business roundtables, which resulted in building communication between local and regional businesses.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Finding a Balance Among Three State Authorities

On November 15, USAID/Kosovo organized a reception to honor 11 legal practitioners who participated in two USAID-supported trainings, a justice system reform study tour to the U.S. and a bulletin writing training program.

The training programs were designed for practitioners working to build a legal system that supports better democratic processes, market reforms, and fair and transparent administration of justice.

As Philip Goldberg, US Chief of Mission, said, "Rule of law is more than just a justice issue for Kosovo ... it's an economic issue and social issue - and you can strengthen Kosovo's rule of law by applying what you learned."

Halit Muharremi, legal advisor to the President and a participant in the justice reform study tour said, "We received a lot of information and various important materials on the topics addressed, but most importantly we gained experience in the areas of independence, interdependence, and checks and balances between three different state authorities."



Zivojin Jokanovic, attorney from Mitrovicë/a and Hydajet Hyseni, Member of Parliament, discuss the US study tour.

The study tour was designed to offer information and techniques that help Kosovar legal practitioners develop a range of skills, including: the process of nominating, selecting, and promoting judges; judicial ethics; managing the judicial budget process; administrative systems; developing policy-making processes that encourage participation by all levels of the legal system.

The participants also observed the strategic planning process and the methods of implementing these strategies in the US courts.

Upcoming Events

November 30, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USA Mission Director will dedicate an infrastructure project in the village of Smaq/Smac, Prizren Municipality

December 1, Dr. Ken Yamashita will be speaking at the Kosovo and UN Pledge on HIV/AIDS, one-day conference marking the international day against HIV/AIDS

December 6, USAID will honor 150 Kosovars, participants of USAID-sponsored trainings at a ceremony.



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