



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Limit between Freedom of Expression and Hate Speech Discussed

The limit between freedom of expression and hate speech was the topic of a two-day seminar for journalists organized by the Human Rights Center of University of Prishtina.

USAID's Media Assistance Program contributed to the seminar with a presentation on media regulation in Kosovo and hate speech in media, offering an overview of the media situation in Kosovo after the war, the first United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) regulations on media, what those regulations foresee, and institutions established by the regulations, such as the Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) and Media Appeals Board. The Media Assistance Program is implemented by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX).

The presentation summarized the Media Code of Conducts for Broadcast and Print Media, as well as provisions prohibiting hate speech, and provisions of European legal instruments embodied in Kosovo's Media Code. Recent developments in media legislation were presented as well, reviewing the Law on International Media Commissioner (IMC) through which a local media regulator in Kosovo will be established, and the procedures for member nomination in the IMC Council from the civil society. The law, still in process of being implemented, was a hot topic among participants.

The presentation also addressed the Press Council, a process of self-regulation in print media. Specific discussion related to the case of the media regulator regulating both print and broadcast media, which is not the case in developed democracies, and the Declaration on Freedom of Political Debate in Media, adopted February 2004 by the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe.

This declaration sets some standards regarding freedom of expression and information through the media, freedom to criticize the state or public institutions, public debate and scrutiny over political figures and

public officials etc. Member states are asked to bring the declaration to the attention of political bodies, public authorities and the judiciary.



Municipal officials discussing priority projects

New Partnerships Aim to Help Integration in Communities

On October 14, an official ceremony to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between USAID and seven municipalities marked the beginning of Municipal Integration and Support Initiative (MISI).

The presidents of Vushtrri/Vucitrn, Obiliq/Obilic, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Ferizaj/Urosevac, Shterpce/Strpce, Klinë/Klina and Pejë/Pec signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), along with Slavisa Petkovic, Minister of Communities and Returns and Lutfi Haziri, Minister of Local Government Administration, as witnessing parties.

The ceremony marks the official extension of the previous USAID-supported program designed to assist municipalities in improving conditions for returns and integration of minorities.

"MISI has proven to be an example of a true partnership of communities and municipal government, and most importantly an example of good neighbors supporting each other," said Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director. Bajram Kosumi, Prime Minister of Kosovo, and Philip Goldberg, US Chief of Mission, spoke at the event.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

October 3-6 the Week of Kosovar Businesses

Organized by the Alliance of Kosovar Businesses (AKB) and supported by USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project, AKB completed its third annual Kosovo Business Week.

Kosovo Business Week was designed to facilitate linkages and improve the communications between domestic consumers and producers by incorporating issues and needs of producers, consumers and possible regional partners. While the "Carnival of Products," a display of Kosovo-made goods, traveled throughout Kosovo and introduced consumers to new local products, roundtable discussions at the business fair in Pristina gathered representatives from the Montenegro Business Alliance and Macedonian Chamber of North-West, who presented their experience on improving the business environment in their countries. The outcome of the roundtable was a possible regional Conference to take place in March 2006 to address common issues on improving the business environment and communication between the businesses from Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo.

In the upcoming two weeks AKB will conduct a survey of businesses and consumers on the impact of Kosovo Business Week, with recommendations from all stakeholders.

USAID's survey, "Doing Business in Kosovo," was presented during the event to promote the investment opportunities in Kosovo to regional businesspeople. USAID's KCBS project team supported AKB in event preparations, invited regional associations' representatives from Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia to present their experience as well and facilitated the working lunch for regional businesses.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Kosovo Health Professionals Learn from Canadian experience

On October 6, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director Dr. Ken Yamashita welcomed Kosovar microbiologists from the Institute of Public Health (IPH) returning from a three-week training program at the National HIV & Retrovirology Laboratories (NHRL) in Ottawa, Ontario, part of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The training provided theoretical, practical and hands-on training in HIV testing, focusing on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique for HIV and HIV-viral load monitoring. While the molecular methods learned focused on HIV, the same technology is also useful in testing for other infectious agents, such as meningitis in infants and hepatitis C.

"Our next step is for the Institute of Public Health to take measures for reconstructing three laboratories that are necessary for appropriate PCR testing," said Xhevat Jakupi, IPH doctor in residency. "Also, the institute should procure equipment and reagents for PCR that are lacking."

The training session was part of USAID's Participant Training Program (PTP) implemented by World Learning.

Upcoming Events

October 19, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director will speak at the Business Mission in Kosovo, a two day event gathering EU investors and donors in Pristina.

October 26, USAID/Municipal Integration and Support Initiative (MISI) will dedicate a kindergarten project in Zallc, Istig/Istok municipality.

October 27, Supported by USAID/KCBS, the Association of Bankers will hold the first Finance Fair in Kosovo.



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