



CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

Decentralization: Hearing Kosovo's position

The latest developments in decentralization were addressed by Lutfi Haziri, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government Administration at a roundtable discussion with civil society on April 26 in Pristina.

Haziri, a leader of the negotiation team on decentralization, gave a chronological review of the decentralization process. He said Kosovo's government is working toward the reformation of local government administration so that it can better serve the needs of all citizens.

"The principles of Kosovo delegation regarding decentralization are based on interethnic relations for an integrated environment," said Haziri. He reviewed regional decentralization practices as implemented in Macedonia and Slovenia, noting that "Decentralization of the local government, based on a multiethnic society, sets the pace for efficient and financially sustainable municipalities."

This roundtable discussion was organized by the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), a partner in USAID's civil society program along with the International Research & Exchanges Board and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives, in an effort to discuss the contribution of civil society toward the decentralization process.

Reading a treasury report

Reading and understanding a treasury report was the topic of a briefing for journalists held on May 10 in Pristina. The workshop increased journalists' ability to report on this technical area by helping them understand the financial reports which are regularly published by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF's) Treasury Department.

In addition, a Tax Administration representative provided an overview of the taxation system, the Tax



Presenting the taxation system

Administration's obligations to taxpayers and taxpayers' rights and responsibilities.

Fifteen journalists, including many major daily newspapers, RTV21 and several news wire services, attended the briefing.

The workshop was organized by the Press and Public Information Office of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in close cooperation with the Treasury Department and Tax Administration, and with technical assistance provided by the USAID's Economic Development Initiative, a institutional development project implemented by the BearingPoint Inc.

Municipal officials learn management skills

Methods of increasing skills in staff management at the municipal level were addressed at a training held in Pristina April 27-28.

Participants were municipal personnel managers and Chief Executive Officers, who learned ways to increase their professionalism in staff management.

Participants talked about the nature of their positions, and their strengths and weaknesses, especially as public administration becomes directed toward serving citizens. Requirements for staff reduction at the municipal level, as well as the changes needed for the 2007-2009 municipal budget format and its impact on reporting about staffing in the local government, were also discussed.

The training was organized by the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration (KIPA) in cooperation with USAID's Local Government Initiative (LGI), implemented by RTI International.

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Albanian and Serbian Kosovar journalists prepare team reports

Albanian and Serbian Kosovar journalists from six local TV stations gathered for the second Kosovo Team Reporting Workshop on April 26-27. Organized by USAID's Support to Peace and Stability in Kosovo project, the team reporting activity engaged pairs of Albanian and Serbian Kosovar local TV stations from three geographic areas of Kosovo in producing joint 30-minute documentaries. The documentaries will explore the perspectives of the two communities on present and future life in Kosovo.

TV Vali and DTV (Gjilan/Gnjilane area), TV-Tema (Ferizaj/Urosevac) and TV-Herc (Shterpce/Sterpce); and TV Mitrovica and TV Most (Mitrovica/a) started this activity in mid-March at a workshop during which the journalists and cameramen agreed on the overall approach, editorial guidelines, production standards, and initial story concepts for their joint documentaries. Following the workshop, the teams filmed their stories and now they are jointly developing "a story" by integrating their contributions into one documentary.

The three documentaries produced by these teams will be broadcasted on the six local TV stations in early June and also shown at public screenings in their viewing areas and in Pristina.

The Support to Peace and Stability Activity aims to increase inter-ethnic media cooperation among broadcasters, and is implemented by the Academy for Educational Development.

Youth bridging ethnic divide through communication

Young people throughout the region gathered to discuss peace building initiatives at a training held in Pristina on May 9-10. Organized by the Balkans Youth Without Borders (BYWB), the meeting brought together youth from Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Albania to jointly identify and address issues of common interest, to help bridge the gap among youth of the region.

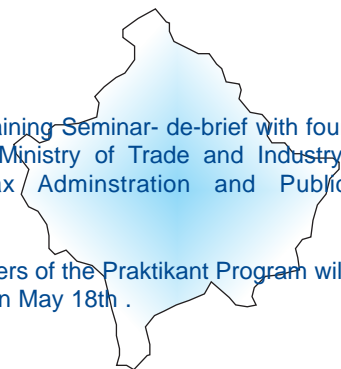
The training program aimed to eliminate fear and stereotypes by helping youth think critically about the world and their role in it. The curriculum, using cooperative and participatory learning methods, is designed to cultivate a culture of peace by creating an atmosphere of understanding, care, and respect. Through peace education, participants are encouraged to think on their own, rather than coached on what to think.

Balkans Youth without Borders is a regional USAID-supported project implemented through the National Albanian American Council in Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro.

Upcoming Events

May 15 - Anti-Corruption Training Seminar de-brief with four Kosovar officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Treasury Department, Tax Administration and Public Procurement Commission.

May 18 - Top 10 young lawyers of the Praktikant Program will be honored at a ceremony on May 18th.



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