



MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society Engagement in Drafting Kosovo's Constitution

Kosovo civil society organizations discussed opportunities to participate in the drafting of Kosovo's Constitution at a debate organized by IREX/Kosovo Civil Society Project.

The panel consisted of legal experts and civil society representatives, both members of the Constitutional Commission, as well as representatives of civil society groups. Organizations that had been successful in advocating the Commission for consideration of their interests and concerns discussed their experiences, both positive and negative.

In accordance with Ahtisaari's proposal for Kosovo's final status, the President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu, nominated a commission to draft a Constitution. While the work of the commission hasn't been public, several NGOs have presented their ideas and interests to the Commission and were able to incorporate their recommendations into the draft document. As the draft Constitution is out for public comment, the debate provided lessons learned for other civil society organizations trying to advocate for their interests.

The IREX/Kosovo Civil Society Project is a three-year activity aimed at strengthening the civil society in Kosovo.

Studio goes live

On Friday February 1 the new control room at independent Kosovo TV station RTV21 went "live" for the first time.

The equipment was majority funded by USAID's Kosovo Media Assistance Program (KMAP) with a grant of \$250,000, though the station also contributed to the installation from its own resources. This new digital facility will allow the station to use its stu-

dios in order to transmit sound and pictures of top professional quality. The next stage, again funded by KMAP, is a new camera system, which will be transferable between the station's four studios. This support is matched by grants to the other independent Kosovo-wide TV station KTV.



Broadcasting live from RTV 21

One of KMAP's key tasks is to ensure the business viability of targeted media outlets in Kosovo. Both KTV and RTV21 are now sustainable businesses generating income from advertising and subscription. RTV21 has the highest audience share of TV stations in Kosovo at 31.5% and KTV's share is growing strongly at 23.4%.

RTV 21 is one of two national television stations supported through the Kosovo Media Assistance Program (KMAP). Currently it broadcasts 24 hours a day. IREX provides a mixture of technical assistance as well as equipment grants so that the station can improve the quality of its news, become financially sustainable as well as increase the professionalism of journalists.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Developing Local Government

Mayors of Kosovo municipalities and three pilot municipalities, thirty in total, gathered in Pristina on February 14th to discuss challenges and

lis
"N
lo
ac
m
sa
or
dc

Th
U:
je
m
U:
"U
In
Bu
th
ne
U:
m
ce
m

Th
gc
de
ar

opportunities facing the development of local government in Kosovo.

The roundtable also brought together key officials within the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) and USAID to help establish effective partnerships among all stakeholders.

"MLGA will bear the main responsibility in reforming the local government, establishing new municipalities according to Ahtisaari's Proposal, and supporting municipalities to provide better services to citizens," said Minister Sadik Ferati. "This process is not an easy one, and we rely on our partners like USAID and other donors."

The event served as an opportunity to introduce USAID's Effective Municipal Initiative, a three-year project that will provide assistance to the MLGA and municipalities across Kosovo. Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Director, addressed the Mayors, saying "USAID is prepared, through its Effective Municipalities Initiative, to help stand up these new municipalities. But we, of course, are only helpers. We encourage those of you who are affected by the creation of these new municipalities to work with the Government, USAID, other donors, and representatives of the new municipalities to ensure a smooth transition and successful implementation of these important self-government and human rights requirements."

The discussions raised several issues related to local government reform, including new legislation and devolution of competencies, territorial reorganization and fiscal decentralization.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Better Schools for Students in Three Villages

The school building in Bistrica, [Leposavic/q municipality], which serves children from three surrounding villages, is functional again after rehabilitation works completed in January.

The four-room building was in poor condition thus impossible for regular classes to take place. Following several meetings with community representatives, USAID partner Community Development Fund (CDF) undertook a project to repair or replace the roof, floor, ceiling, doors and windows, toilets, and electrical system. The school rehabilitation has provided a suitable learning environment for students of Bistrica, Koshtove and Ceraje villages.

Community Development Fund, a local NGO, is partnering with USAID to address small-scale infrastructure needs throughout Kosovo.



February 27, Dr. Michael Farbman, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director will speak at the 3rd Assembly Meeting of the Association of Municipalities of Kosovo.

March 13, USAID/Kosovo will honor 138 participants of USAID's Focusing on Results Enhancing Capacity Across Sectors in Transition (FORECAST) trainings, organized in 2007.

U.S. Agency for International Development
Arbëria (Dragodan), Ismail Qemali st., nr. 1
Phone: ++ 381 38 243 673
Fax: ++ 381 38 249 493

For more information visit www.usaid.gov/missions/kosovo and www.pristina.usmission.gov or contact us at kosovousaidinfo@usaid.gov