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Public meetings on Kosovo's new constitution

"Constitution of Kosovo Sets the Foundation for a Democratic Society"

Members of the Constitutional Commission informed citizens in every Kosovo town about the new draft constitution of their country through 42 public meetings held in January, February and March. The meetings, organized by ATRC, were conducted in two phases aiming to inform the public about the constitution-drafting process and continue with the discussion of its content and get feedback from citizens themselves.

"The Commission's goal has been to prepare a document that reflects the highest international standards, provides protection

of rights of all Kosovans and sets forth the basis for a democratic society based on rule of law. Citizens' contribution to this process has moved the commission closer in achieving this goal," Hajredin Kuci, chairperson of the Constitutional Commission, stated.

Information about the process

In January and early February, ATRC organized public meetings in 19 towns of all Kosovo regions to provide members of the public with the opportunity to be informed and have access to up to date and accurate

information on the constitution process and its importance. The first phase meetings provided information on what is a constitution, how are human rights enshrined in constitutions, how do constitutions protect the rights of communities, why is the separation of powers of the government important and how can it be addressed through a constitution, what does "rule of law" refer to and how can it become incorporated into a constitution, what is the role and mandate of the constitutional commission ...

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Young people queuing up to sign the 'New Born' sculpture in the center of Prishtina symbolizing birth of world's newest state on February 17

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"Constitution of Kosovo Sets the Foundation for a Democratic Society"

Civil Society Discusses Human Security Strategy for Kosovo

ATRC in cooperation with the Center for Study of Global Governance at London School of Economics (LSE) organized a brainstorming meeting with civil society activists and intellectuals in Kosovo on March 4 in order to develop a human security strategy with members of human security study group. This group reports to Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, in order to make sure the new EU mission in Kosovo together with KFOR gives priority to human security and deals with status issues in terms of their implications for human security.

The meeting outlined a human security strategy for Kosovo, and served to plan ways of implementing such a strategy through monitoring EU mission, organizing consultations between civil society in Kosovo and EU representatives, lobbying in Brussels and broader to European governments and civil society.

The human security study group consists of a number of leading practitioners, including former NATO commander in Kosovo General Klaus Reinhardt, former Spanish defense secretary Narcis Serra, the head of the SPD faction in the German parliament Gert Weisskirchen, as well as leading academics in areas such as international law, defense studies and human rights.

For more information, contact info@advocacy-center.org

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Public participation on the constitution-drafting

After the Commission published the draft-constitution on February 17, a Kosovo wide discussion about its content followed through public meetings in 22 towns.

"This constitution has three historical missions. First it is founding the Republic of Kosovo as an independent state. Its second mission lies on the implementation of international standards defined by Ahtisaari's proposal, and thirdly it traces the path towards a functional state based on republicanism and separation of powers", Ar-

sim Bajrami, member of the Commission, stressed on February 21.

The second phase involved public participation on the constitution-drafting process which made participants' concerns heard and enabled them to comment on the draft constitution related issues. Key

concerns raised by participants focused on sovereignty of the Kosovo state, election of the President, future defense forces, official language, definition of

subterranean wealth, undefined border issue with Macedonia, etc.

Copies of the draft-constitution were disseminated for participants in every public meeting.

To download draft-constitution and check more information, visit www.kushtetutakosoves.info



The public meeting about Kosovo's new constitution on February 21 in Pristina

Training program

ATRC Strengthens NGO Capacities for Better Community Services

ATRC has been actively involved in providing representatives of non-governmental organizations with the tools they need to influence change in their communities through its training program.

This program has offered training in organizational management, advocacy, working with the media, marketing, strategic planning, conflict management, negotiations and various other topics affecting NGOs. As organizations have encountered new challenges, ATRC has designed more advanced trainings specifically tailored to meet their needs.

In 2007, ATRC trainers provided 62 basic and advanced trainings in key areas of NGO organizatio-

nal development, management, advocacy and fund raising, in which 1278 participants of six nationalities received certificates for having successfully participated in these workshops.

"I attended few training workshops provided by ATRC trainers. This enabled me to gain important knowledge which is being very useful for my work," Sahit Hashani, a participant noted.

Since ATRC became the implementing partner for Kosovo Civil Society Program led by IREX in mid 2005, it designed and delivered training workshops on project proposal writing, advocacy and coalition building, basic financial management, NGO management, strategic planning,

communication skills, monitoring and evaluation, project cycle management, marketing communications, good governance, NGO-media relation, cost analysis, role of NGO's in civil society, conflict management and negotiations.

"I wish ATRC training services to continue in the future since that is contributing in advancement of young generations," Vitjana Kastrati, another training participant, claimed.

The training workshops were offered free of charge to Kosovo NGOs registered as ATRC clients, which includes 226 NGOs.

For more information, contact training@advocacy-center.org

New publications**"Democracy in Action" Publishes Election Reports**

NGO coalition "Democracy in Action: Elections 2007" presented two publications prepared by Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development at a conference held on March 3 in Grand Hotel, Prishtina.

Publication of "Analysis of Elections: Trends and Lessons Learned" and "Media Monitoring Report during the Elections Campaign" summarized a six-month project on monitoring of elections in Kosovo by "Democracy in Action."

"The majority of media reports monitored during the elections campaign strived to respect the journalistic code of ethics. This does not mean that they were balanced in terms of the exposure they dedicated to political parties and officials", the Media Monitoring Report says.

The coalition of eleven NGOs, which monitored general and local elections held on November 17, played the leading civil society role on public awareness about the importance and necessity of a high citizens' participation on elections. Two-thousand four hundred coalition activists monitored election process, election campaign, media coverage of political parties' campaign, conducted parallel counting of votes and published early results.

The initiative was supported by ATRC and IREX Kosovo Civil Society Program.

For more information, visit www.democracy2007.net

Education opportunities**NGO "Elena Peshkopia" Convinces Gjilan Municipality to Grant Scholarships**

The majority of citizens of Gjilan Municipality are young people who need to move to Kosovo's capital or any regional/foreign country in order to continue their university studies. But the economical status forces many of them to stop studying and as such persistence of their career. Elena Peshkopia, a local NGO, believes that granting scholarships to a certain number of students by the local government would be a solution to this issue in Gjilan. Therefore, members of "Elena Peshkopia" for four months were actively involved in advocacy efforts to make such a solution possible.

Initially, they held several meetings with Municipal authorities in an attempt to make them aware of the importance of taking decisions in favor of granting scholarships for students of Gjilan. In November and December 2007, Elena Peshkopia



The debate on Radio Energy to promote student's demand about scholarships

organized two public debates participated by representatives of education institutions, students' organizations, Youth Network of Gjilan and media. The debates aimed to increase pressure on local decision-makers to approve the students' demand.

In order to promote this demand, two radio debates were coordinated by this NGO broadcasted on Radio Energy, participated by municipal officials, students and other interested groups. Radio debates provided an opportunity for the public to be involved and make their concerns heard on this sub-

ject through phone calls.

"During the project implementation, Elena Peshkopia conducted a petition which was signed by 500 students calling for a decision that would regulate granting scholarships on annual basis", Vjollca Jakupi, project manager, explained. Afterwards the petition was sent to Municipal Assembly of Gjilan.

Achieved results

Grass roots advocacy of Elena Peshkopia has effected change within its community and municipality.

Municipal Assembly of Gjilan approved a regulation on February 18, 2008 which defines granting of 50 scholarships for successful students every year. This institution has already announces a call for application for this year scholarships.

For more information, contact vjollcajakupi@hotmail.com

Municipality of Prishtina Debates Its Draft-Statute with NGOs

Public meeting on draft-statute of Prishtina Municipality on March 6

Representatives of non-governmental organizations had the opportunity to comment and discuss the draft-statute of the Municipality of Prishtina at a public meeting organized by ATRC on

March 6 attended by the Mayor of Prishtina Isa Mustafa and members of the statute-drafting commission.

On February 21, Municipal Assembly of Prishtina approved the draft-statute to precede with a public discussion phase from February 28 to March 7 aiming to inform and get feedback from citizens, governmental bodies and civil society sector.

Mayor Mustafa's presentation for NGOs outlined the

content and the drafting process of this legal document.

Participants raised their concerns on several issues regulated by this document such as the number of discussions with citizens and public hearings with target groups prior to approval of draft-regulations, date of the day of Prishtina, Municipality's policy towards public petitions and their review process, mandate of counselors of Municipal Assembly, etc.

Draft-statute of Prishtina Municipality can be downloaded at www.prishtina-komuna.org



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National Albanian American Council Calls for Applications for Its Kosovo Leadership Program

Hope Fellowships Program of National Albanian American Council calls for applications from young people of age 18-28, representatives of civil society, university, governmental institutions and media for its Leadership Program.

The program aims to build leadership skills and capacities that would enable an active leadership in assisting Kosovo's democratic developments. Several courses are part of the program about community mobilization, public relations, research methodology, fund raising and financial planning, strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluation.

The deadline for submitting applications is March 31, 2008. Applications can be obtained from Hope Fellowships Program at Sejdi Kryeziu, Nr. 5, Qyteza Pejton, Prishtina, or downloaded from the website www.naac-hf.org.

For more information, contact 038 544 293

New report

Interethnic Dialogue in Kosovo

The Project on Ethnic Relations published a new report on February 28 about a political dialogue between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo.

The meetings between senior Kosovo Albanian and Serb leaders covered in this report took place on January 31 and February 1, 2008 in Prishtina, designed to assist in defining issues on which interethnic cooperation

is possible regardless of the status outcome. The number of consensual conclusions and recommendations that came out of this dialogue indicates that Kosovo Albanians and Serbs are more serious about their common future than it is usually reported.

For the full report visit: [http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/Political_dialogue_Ja-](http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/Political_dialogue_January_2008.pdf)

[nuary_2008.pdf](http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/Political_dialogue_January_2008.pdf)
Source: Balkan Academic News



For more information, contact per@per-usa.org

New link

World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Minority Rights Group International announced on February 27 the launch of the first online directory of the world's minorities and indigenous peoples.

The World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples covers 220 coun-

tries and dependent territories, and features profiles of about 700 minorities/indigenous peoples. It is a unique resource for policy-makers, governments, journalists, academics and all those with an interest in the field of mi-

nority rights. To access the directory, visit <http://www.minority-rights.org/directory>

Source: Balkan Academic News



Minority Rights Group International works to secure the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples