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THE ADVOCATE

Supporting the NGO community

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Local elections debates

ATRC Contributes to Voters' Education on Policy Issues



The public debate in Ferizaj on October 20

Citizens in every town of Kosovo had the opportunity to gather information and ask questions to political parties' nominees running for mayors on local elections, through 27 public meetings organized by Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (GAP).

The meetings held in October and November gathered around 13,000 participants in Kaçanik, Viti/Vitina, Ferizaj/Urosevac, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/a, Novobërd/a, Podujevë/o, Obiliq/c, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Drenas/Gillogovac, Malishevë/Malishevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Dra

gash, Suhareka/Suvareka, Prizren, Gjakova/Djakovica, Deçan/Decane, Peja/Pec, Istog/k, Klinë/a, Skenderaj/Srbica, Shtërpce/Sterpce, Shtime/Shtimlje, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovicë/a, Vushtrri/Vucitrna and Pristina.

This initiative aimed to contribute to voters' education on policy issues through informative election debates which focused on the issues needed to be discussed during the elections and pressed political parties for coherent political ideas and

plans to realistically tackle Kosovo's social and economic problems.

The issues discussed were brought to a broad public debate with audience participation and broadcasts on the main national TV station RTK and twenty-seven local radio and TV stations all over Kosovo.

Citizens' concerns raised during the debates were about unemployment, corruption, illegal constructions, procedures of getting documents at the municipal offices, and sanitation.

The local elections were held in November 17.

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



The debates held in October and November gathered around 13,000 participants in 27 towns

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ATRC announcement**Best Article Competition on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence**

ATRC and the United Nations Development Program in Kosovo have announced the award competition for the best journalistic story on gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence - published or broadcasted in Kosovo media during the period of October 7 and December 7, 2007.

This initiative is an opportunity to publicly recognize the contributions of journalists who through their stories tackle violence against women/domestic violence. The award categories for the best story on this topic are: best aired story on radio/television, and best printed story on newspaper/magazine.

Those interested to apply must fill in the application form, which is available online at www.advocacy-center.org. In addition, you should provide three copies of the published/broadcasted stories (scanned or on CD) to the ATRC office in Prishtina, St. Agim Ramadani No.15. The winners will be announced in December.



For more information contact 038 244 810 or info@advocacy-center.org

Elections 2007**NGO Coalition "Democracy in Action" Plays the Leading Civil Society Role on Kosovo Elections**

Demokracia në Veprim
Demokratija na Delu
Democracy in Action

Kosovo NGO coalition "Democracy in Action" monitored general and local elections held on November 17. The coalition of eleven NGOs 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' election campaign, education of voters, parallel counting of votes (PCV) and publication of early results.

PCV is an election monitoring method which consists of frequent reporting by

monitors to the data collection center before the results are exposed to public. Through SMS messages, coalition monitors from each polling station reported the percentage of public participation on election, results for Kosovo Assembly, Municipal Assemblies and Mayors.

The released results of "Democracy in Action" on the same voting day enabled the public, local and international media, political parties, and other interested groups a correct view of preliminary elections results. "The pa-

rallel counting of votes aims to avoid tensions among the public by not knowing what's going on and waiting long for the first results," Leon Malazogu, representative of "Democracy in Action," said.

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

For more information, visit www.democracy2007.net

**ATRC Trains Kosovo Journalists and Municipal Officials on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence**

In October and November, ATRC trained Kosovo media journalists and municipal officials on gender equality, violence against women and domestic violence. The two training workshops covered components of human rights, women rights, gender equality, violence against women (VAW): frameworks and methods, and current legislation against VAW in Kosovo.

The workshop dedicated for newspaper, radio and television journalists paid particular attention on infor-

ming media representatives about myths and traditional practices, international documents against VAW, the role of judiciary and police and their performance against VAW issues and debates, importance of violence against women related statistics, and reporting cases of domestic violence.

The training for municipal officials focused on providing them the necessary methods and practices for successful advocacy, lobbying, fund raising, and the importance of networking

for a greater impact.

The ATRC training workshops aimed to provide participants with the tools, know-how and expertise that they need to influence change in their communities. The initiative was supported by UNDP.

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

NGO "Down Syndrome Kosovo" Establishes Formal Partnership with European Down Syndrome Association

The non-governmental organization "Down Syndrome Kosovo - DSK" attended the International Congress for the Down Syndrome held in Pula, Croatia, in October.

The Congress was an opportunity for DSK representatives to gather information on the best practices, the latest scientific research related to the treatment of persons with the Down syndrome and their education and employment.

DSK focused its presentation on increasing the level of information of the Down syndrome among the parents and decision-making institutions and the need for establishment of an education and training center for children with Down syndrome, parents and professionals.

The congress also served as a forum for DSK to establish formal partnerships and contacts with European institutions, universities, clinics, NGOs, etc.

According to DSK manager Driton Bajraktari, the organization of persons with Down syndrome of Kosovo established formal partnerships with the Down Syndrome Associations of Europe, UK, Ireland, France, Italy and Slovakia.

For more information, contact downsyndromkosova@gmail.com

"Handicap" Enables Disabled Persons Easier Access on Podujeva Municipality Building

"Persons with disabilities in the town of Podujeva needed to be accompanied by a relative or friend to enter the Municipal building due to lack of proper infrastructure that would enable them an easy access on Municipal services. Since August, this infrastructure obstacle is overcome and a new ramp is built on this public building of interest for citizens. The merits for such a change for the community of disabled persons in Podujeva are related to the advocacy work of "Handicap", a local NGO.

It convinced authorities of the Municipality to build the ramp, at a meeting held in July, participated by representatives of local NGOs and Municipal Assembly. The meeting, organized by "Handicap," aimed to discuss the lack of ramps on public buildings and transport which resulted with the

municipal decision to build the first such ramp on its building.

"The ramp serves as a communication bridge between disabled persons and Municipality by enabling easier access on municipal services, and also motivates this layer of society to feel as being equally treated," Myzaferre Kastrati, Handicap representative, stated.

Handicap will continue its advocacy efforts to improve infrastructure conditions on every building of high interest for the disabled persons. The initiative was part of the project "Initiating and implementing draft laws for people with disabilities" supported by ATRC and USAID and IREX funded KCSP. This community development project focused on six towns Pristina, Peja/Pec, Prizren, Kamenicë/a, Po-

dujevë/a, and Novobërd/a aiming to improve living conditions and the position of disabled people in the Kosovo society.



"Handicap" will continue its advocacy efforts to build ramps on every building of high interest for disabled persons

For more information, contact zarsye@yahoo.com

NGO publication

Kosovan Center for Gender Studies Provides a View on Gender Issues during the UN Administration in Kosovo

The Kosovan Center for Gender Studies (KCGS) prepared a study in October addressing several aspects of accomplishments and failures in the field of gender issues during the eight years of UN administration in Kosovo. The purpose of this article is to enable a clearer picture on opportunities and conditions of work in the field of gender issues for the European Union mission in Kosovo expected to be installed after the settlement of Kosovo's final political status.

With the intention that the mistakes of the past eight years be prevented in the future, it is necessary that the EU mission in Kosovo take into consideration experiences of local actors during the 1999-2007 period, according to Luljeta Vuniqi, director of KCGS.

The article includes recommendations for the EU mission representatives in Kosovo, as well.

"EU should take into consideration achievements in the field of gender issues in the process of

planning of its mission in Kosovo. There are two obvious reasons for this: first, local experience in addressing gender issues in Kosovo can serve as a sound basis for developing effective policies in the field. This will help avoid unnecessary bureaucratic procedures and save time and funds...

For the full article, visit <http://www.kgscenter.org>



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Studying opportunities

New Center Opened to Serve the Student Community in Kosovo

In November, the Guidance Career and University Preparation Center "Emendo" was opened in Prishtina to support education of Kosovo students. The newly opened center offers individual and group counseling in developing academic and career plans; preparing applications for high school; undergraduate and graduate studies as a new student or transfer into American, Canadian and European Universities;



Photo: Grant Doolittle
For more information, contact
EmendoCenter@gmail.com

academic assistance for standardized tests TOEFL, SAT English, SAT Math and GRE; and support in identifying potential scholarships. Eligible to receive these services are all students as well as those wishing to be transferred abroad/attend programs abroad.

The deadline for admissions in most universities in United States, Canada and Europe is December/January/February.

Open Society Institute Announces Undergraduate Exchange Program

The Open Society Institute announced in October its undergraduate exchange program which supports students from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia, and Ukraine to study in the United States for one year in the field of non-degree academic studies. Applicants must currently be enrolled as a second-year student at a university in their home country to be eligible.

The program aims to assist

educational and civic development in Southeastern and Eastern Europe and Mongolia by exposing participants to a liberal-arts curriculum, different models of classroom instruction, community service work, and civil society related programming. The program combines the U.S. liberal arts academic experience with exposure to American social issues and civic development through involvement in community service-related work. The program aims

to create lasting ties among participants and their American colleagues, thereby contributing to cultural understanding and tolerance.

Participants attend a university or college in the United States for one year. While in the United States ...

For more information and application form, please

see
http://www.soros.org/initiatives/scholarship/focus_areas/undergraduate_exchange

European Commission Internships for Young Roma University Graduates

The European Commission (EC) in cooperation with the Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program announced in November call for applications for the EC internships for young Roma university graduates from Kosovo, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The internship program will run for 5 months starting with the 1st March, 2008.

For more information, including application procedures and eligibility criteria, contact rpp@osi.hu



Useful web links/resources

The deadline for submitting the applications is the January 7, 2008