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can be found on
ATRC web site:
www.advocacy-center.org

Roundtable on civil society and public participation

Civil Society Participation in Decision-making Processes is Key for Sustainable Development

Representatives of civil society organizations, local and central level government bodies and experts discussed public participation in the context of local development planning at a cross sector roundtable held at the Grand Hotel, Prishtina on June 14. The meeting aimed to further the discussion on one principle of good governance - civic engagement in decision-making processes.

"Participation of citizens in decision-making is seen as one of the key elements of civic societies and democratic processes," organizers outlined at the roundtable, a joint initiative of ATRC, UN Habitat and the Office for Good Governance within the Prime Minister's Office.

According to the organizers, participation of citizens in decision-making is also "an effective way in which the government and public can work together to address development issues such as the improvement of local infrastructure, shelter, reduction of poverty, upgrading the urban environment, economic development and improvement of the safety standards for children and women in urban areas."

While government representatives urged civil society to develop strategies for linking citizens with the government, NGO representatives complained that

civil society has been ignored by the government.

Igbal Rogova, Executive Director of the Kosovo Women's Network suggested that a new standard

for civil society participation in decision-making processes be established in Kosovo.

"Civil society should serve as a bridge between decision-makers and citizens."

Margriet Struijf, Head of the Netherlands Office in Prishtina

After sharing experiences on the engagement of civil society in decision-making



The Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ardian Gjini, urges for transparent decision-making processes in Kosovo on June 14

processes, participants identified conditions which need to be met to improve this process, such as: reforming the election system, establishing closer cooperation between NGOs and political parties, opening information centers for citizens in every municipality of Kosovo, activating citizens, building citizens' trust in government institutions, increasing government officials' participation in public debates and increasing donor support for locations throughout Kosovo.

This roundtable was developed in cooperation with representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Local Government Administration and Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms.

Aspects of good governance identified at this meeting will be addressed in a conference on good governance scheduled for September 2006.



The roundtable of civil society and government on public participation in decision-making processes, June 14

Civil Society Capacity Building in Post-Conflict Societies:

The Experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo

The International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) published in June a praxis paper on capacity building in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Executive Summary of this paper states that it investigates the approaches and methods applied to NGO capacity building in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) and Kosovo during parallel and ongoing experiences of internationally determined post-conflict social, political and economic rehabilitation and transition. Capacity building in both settings is a new term, having arrived with equally novel concepts such as the 'NGO', 'civil society', 'democracy', and 'good governance' as part of a broader development discourse driving efforts to re-establish social cohesion and fashion new states according to Western-style liberal democracy.

Early on, NGO capacity building became equated with training to build the individual skills deemed necessary for instilling professionalism in B&H and Kosovo's civil societies, whose emergence was artificially stimulated by easy access to foreign funds for the delivery of humanitarian aid and the provision of essential services, the report states.

You can find the full text of this praxis paper at: <http://www.intrac.org/pages/PraxisPaper9.html>

Public discussion on "Pension and Invalidity Insurance" draft law

Pensioners Seek Law Guaranteeing the Welfare of Current and Future Pensioners in Kosovo



Representatives of Kosovo pensioners discuss "Pension and Invalidity Insurance" draft law on July 10

Representatives of associations and unions of pensioners in Kosovo; civil society; the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare; the Commission on Health, Work and Social Welfare of the National Assembly; and legal experts discussed the "Pension and Invalidity Insurance" draft law at a public discussion organized by ATRC at restaurant/gallery "Hani i 2 Robertëve" in Prishtina on July 10.

Participants aimed to compile specific recommendations for this draft law in order for it to be as

comprehensive as possible.

During the meeting, representatives from the Association of Pensioners of Kosovo, Union of Pensioners and Work Invalids, Association of Work Invalids, Union of

Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo and Association of Retired and Invalid Miners of Kosovo introduced their recommendations and remarks for the draft law, which will be sent by August 15 to the government commission engaged in harmonizing the proposals regarding this draft law before handing it over to the government.

Participants repeated their demand that the status of pensioners be addressed urgently.

Ilaz Kurteshi, Chair of the

Association of Pensioners of Kosovo commented that the content of this draft law was comprehensive, including all issues of importance for pensioners. "But the value of the law is its implementation," Kurteshi said.

Naim Hoda from the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare said that the demands from the Association of Pensioners influenced the start of public discussions towards a more qualitative draft law.

The legal document was drafted by the Ministry of Work and Social Welfare.

In June, ATRC in cooperation with seven other local NGOs organized regional public discussions on this issue in seven towns: Gji-lan, Ferizaj, Prizren, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Prishtina and Peja. The meetings were supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation.

Introducing a local NGO

"World Child Kosovo" Protects and Supports Kosovo Children and Youth

World Child Kosovo is a non-governmental, non-political and nonreligious organization established in January 2002. The World Child Kosovo team started seven years ago as a creative workshop program of War Child Holland, which aimed to help Kosovo children overcome traumatic experiences from the last war. After establishing itself as World Child Kosovo, this NGO continued to expand, develop and enhance its programs in new areas, including teachers, youth and children with special needs. World Child Kosovo aims to:

- Increase awareness of children and young people about the environment where they live and overcome psychosocial problems through creative and sports activities;
- Protect the rights of children and youth and support them to overcome any difficulties that they face in society;
- Bring different ethnic groups closer to each other through various creative activities;
- Stimulate and support new creative developments in Kosovo's education system.



World Child Kosovo is a NGO, established in 2002

Source: www.worldchildkosova.com

For more information visit this website, or contact: worldchildkosova@yahoo.com

Low Public Participation in Discussion of Draft "Spatial Plan for Kosovo 2005 - 2015+," says ISP

Representatives of the Institute for Spatial Planning (ISP) discussed the draft document "Spatial Plan for Kosovo 2005 - 2015+" with civil society, at a roundtable meeting organized by ATRC on July 4.

Through a visual presentation, Luan Nushi, Deputy Director of ISP informed participants about the spatial development strategy for Kosovo, emphasizing that it was "based on several pieces of research." His presentation focused on the settlement pattern of this draft spatial plan.

Participants expressed their concern about the protection of natural resources, saying they should be institutionally protected while being rationally used.

ISP complained about low levels of public participation in discussing the draft spatial plan, entitled "Kosovo our Home."

This was the second such public discussion organized by ATRC. The previous discussion was held on May 23, led by Ilir Gjinolli, Director of ISP.

The public can participate in suggesting revisions during the next two months prior to the document being handed over to the government.



Citizens can send their comments or suggestions to: komentet.planihapesinor@yahoo.com or komentet.planihapesinor@ks-gov.net

Civil Society Representatives Call for Election System Reform in Kosovo

The Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), in cooperation with the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) organized on June 5 a roundtable meeting entitled "Election Legislation in Kosovo: Who? What? When? How?"

The meeting, attended by representatives of local and international institutions, political parties and civil society, resulted in several conclusions:

- Worrying trends such as decreasing voter turnout and less governmental legitimacy can be observed.
- Citizen participation needs to increase and the suggested reforms need to



be coupled with institutional and organizational reforms in order to obtain a noticeable effect.

- The election system needs to be changed: there is a consensus regarding the use of open lists and proportional representation.

- A single law on elections or an "Election Code" that would regulate national, local and mayoral elections is needed.

- The processes of reforms and drafting new election legislation should be all-inclusive, including civil society and all ethnic communities.

- Since many entities are dealing with the issue of elections, UNMIK/OSCE, the government and respective ministries, National Assembly and relevant committees, civil society, donors and other actors need to coordinate their activities.

- It is imperative that Kosovo citizens have increasingly more ownership in this process and that competences are transferred to Kosovo actors gradually, but faster.

For more information, contact info@kipred.net

NGO publication

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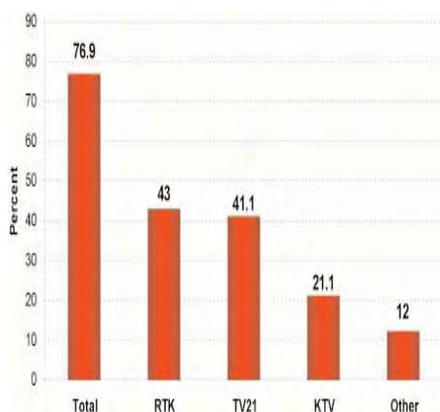
Index Kosovo published in June the results of a survey about daily newspapers, radio and TV stations in Kosovo. The fieldwork, conducted from May 23 to 29, included 1,104 respondents aged 15+ years, including Albanians

and non-Serb minorities. The figures below show the level of viewership of national TV channels and readership of dailies, according to the survey results.

The full publication, including main sources of

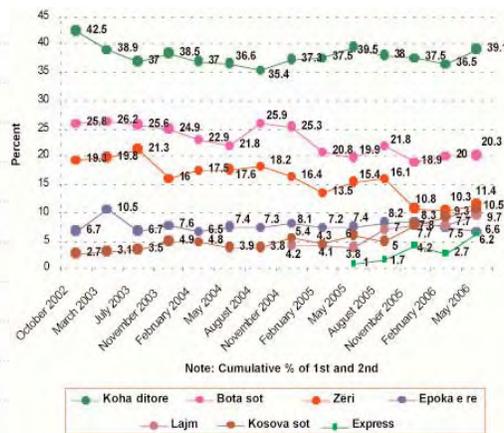
information, most trusted and most listened to radio stations, most trusted and most watched TV stations and most trusted dailies, can be found at: www.indexkosova.com (Media in Kosovo).

Viewership of National TV Channels



RTK remained the most watched TV station, with 43% of the viewership

Readership of Daily Newspapers



Koha Ditore remained the most read daily, with nearly 40% of the readership



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Principles of Democracy

The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations

In democracies, ordinary citizens may organize independent groups that serve the needs of the community or nation they live in and complement, supplement, or even challenge the work of the government. Such organizations are often called nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs, because they are not an extension of the government's offices

NGOs allow citizens to improve their society by advocating, educating, and mobilizing attention around major public issues and monitoring the conduct of government and private enterprise.

NGOs enable citizens from different backgrounds to learn to work together and build the skills, relationships, and trust necessary for good government.

NGOs serve a great variety of citizen interests. They may act as social service providers, advocates for the environment or for living standards, work standards, or as the catalysts for democratic change.

NGOs often represent the interests of those citizens who might otherwise be left out of national policy debates. They open the public discourse to people of all economic and social classes and to women and minorities.

Funding for NGOs may come from individual private donations, private trusts and philanthropies, corporations, religious institutions, international institutions, other NGOs, sales of goods and services, and even governments.

Governments and



NGOs frequently work as partners. NGOs may provide local and regional expertise and personnel on the ground for implementation of government-funded projects. NGOs may be politically unaffiliated, or they may be based on partisan ideals and seek to advance a particular cause or set of causes in the public interest.

NGOs develop local and international programs in virtually all areas that contribute to the promotion of the principles of democracy, including:

- human rights (by promoting international standards and monitoring for violations and abuses),
- rule of law (through low-cost or free legal aid, educating all citizens regarding their rights, and advo-

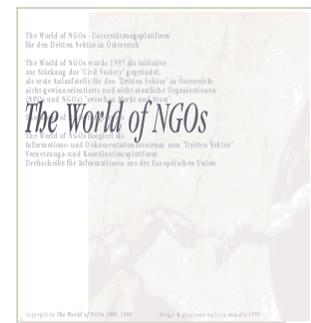
cating for legal reforms),
-women's participation (by preparing them for political participation and protecting them from socioeconomic discrimination),

-civic education (through education programs focusing on the role of the citizen in a democratic and diverse society),

-a free press (by promoting independent media, training journalists, and setting standards for ethical journalism),

-political party development (through election monitoring by trained domestic observers and nonpartisan voter registration drives), and

-government accountability (by conducting policy analysis and serving as watchdogs over governmental actions).



Source: Usinfo.state.gov

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