The Director of the Institute for Spatial Planning (ISP), Ilir Gjinolli, discussed the draft document “Spatial Plan for Kosovo 2005 - 2015+” with civil society representatives at a roundtable organized by ATRC on May 23.

Through a visual presentation, Gjinolli informed participants about the spatial development strategy of Kosovo, which is based on:

a) development of a strong urban network for economic development, b) development and conservation of natural resources, and c) development of strategic links.

“The Spatial Plan is a document that should promote the common interests of Kosovo residents, accelerating economic development, improving the quality of life and simultaneously protecting natural resources and cultural heritage,” Gjinolli said.

Throughout his presentation, Gjinolli emphasized that this document will remain flexible.

The Institute for Spatial Planning in the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning compiled this draft document. Presently, the public can participate in suggesting revisions prior to the document being handed over to the government.

The Spatial Plan for Kosovo 2005 - 2015+, entitled “Kosovo our Home,” is a result of joint efforts between the government, experts in different fields and civil society representatives, under the coordination of ISP.

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

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**“Kosovo our Home”**


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**“Europe Wait for Us!”**


On May 9, more than 50 children from Prishtina ended their carnival at the National Assembly office, holding European flags and cheering “Europe wait for us,” to mark the Day of Europe.

The pupils of primary school “Faik Konica” met with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, who vowed that their future will be in Europe.

“Everyone calls Europe the old continent, but you children will make this continent younger,” Sejdiu said.

NGO “INTEGRA” organized the carnival as part of its project called “Europe Wait for Us!”. The project aims to promote freedom of movement, raise awareness about the European integration process and initiate debates on this issue between citizens and governing structures of Kosovo.
Olof Palme International Center Urges Kosovo NGOs to Submit Better Project Proposals

Coordinator of Olof Palme International Center in Prishtina, Levent Biçaku, informed local NGO representatives about the Palme Center’s programs at a meeting organized by ATRC on May 16. Biçaku outlined funding objectives and priorities, application procedures, as well as available funds for the Western Balkans.

“Funding priorities include democracy, human rights and peace,” Biçaku stated. He said that “Kosovo will be a higher priority for regional Palme Center funding.” He urged NGO representatives to submit better project proposals because “the chances of being funded depend on the quality of project proposals.”

August 15 is the deadline to apply for Palme Center’s funding. Donor presentations are part of an ATRC program that seeks to link NGOs with funding opportunities and donors with NGOs that have similar interests.

NGOs Discuss Decentralization Process

Lutfi Haziri, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government Administration, briefed local NGO representatives about the latest developments in the decentralization process in Kosovo, during a roundtable discussion on April 26. The meeting, organized by ATRC, aimed to discuss civil society’s contribution towards the decentralization process.

Haziri emphasized that the Kosovo government and Serbia are discussing local government administration reforms to better serve the needs of all citizens.

“The principals of the Kosovo delegation regarding decentralization are based on interethnic relations for an integrated environment,” he said.

Decentralization based on a multiethnic society sets the pace for functional and financially sustainable municipalities, Haziri noted. He referred to good decentralization practices in Macedonia and Slovenia.

Participants commented that Kosovo would be unstable if it were to be separated ethnically.

Civil Society Continues Contribution towards Accountable Governance in Kosovo

On May 12, ATRC organized a roundtable discussion between Ramush Haradinaj, leader of the political party “Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës - AAK,” and local non-governmental organizations to discuss the latest political developments in Kosovo.

Haradinaj praised the role that civil society has played in successful developments in Kosovo, urging it to “continue its contribution towards better and more accountable governance.”

Participants suggested that political parties should better understand the role and importance of civil society. They mentioned the problems Kosovo society is facing, such as unemployment, student protests at the University of Prishtina and corruption in public institutions.
NGO Initiated Debates

“Kosovo in Europe”

ATRC and Youth Initiative for Human Rights organized on May 18 a discussion between Stephen Heintz, President of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) and civil society representatives, entitled “Kosovo in Europe.” The discussion focused on developments regarding negotiations about the future status of Kosovo, Union integration, interethnic relations and the role and contribution of civil society in supporting official dialogue.

“RBF will continue to focus primarily on Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, while reserving flexibility to support exceptional regional and cross-frontier efforts,” Heintz said.

For more information, see www.rbf.org

“Interethnic Dialogue”

Civil society and government representatives discussed on May 11 the issue of interethnic dialogue, which they consider to be a precondition for stability and prosperity in Kosovo.

Dozens of Kosovo journalists protested the new Administrative Instruction for implementing the Law on Access to Official Documents for a half hour in front of the government building in Pristina.

Civil society and government representatives discussed on May 11 the issue of interethnic dialogue, which they consider to be a precondition for stability and prosperity in Kosovo. This issue was discussed at a cross sector roundtable meeting, held in Pristina and organized by the Western Balkan Initiative.

For more information, contact the Western Balkan Initiative: 038 247 689

Farmers Cross Ethnic Lines, Form Cooperative

Serbian and Albanian farmers have lived side by side as neighbors in Rahovec municipality for decades. They tended their land and sold their products independently. With only a bit of land, sometimes selling their products was difficult.

“Collecting and selling agricultural products is very difficult for farmers. A cooperative provides farmers with a place to collect and distribute products, which enables them to sell their products more easily,” Syylejman Balaj, a farmer and President of the cooperative Agrokop, said.

The Kosova Development Center (KDC), a NGO from Gjakova that seeks to improve the social economy of agricultural communities, began a project to support cooperation between different ethnic groups in Rahovec last fall.

KDC facilitated meetings between farmers of different ethnic groups; offered trainings on agriculture, which they could attend together; and, tried to provide support wherever it was needed. KDC also assisted the farmers in preparing their statute so that they could register.

“They decided to work together,” KDC Executive Director Ismet Isufi explained. “We didn’t push them. We just supported them.” He explained that communities must choose to come together on their own. While NGOs can support this, they cannot force this process, he said.

After nearly six months of informal talks, 20 farmers from Rahovec formally registered their agricultural cooperative, “Agrokop,” in May. In order for it to work, each farmer had to give their land, some money and agree to organize together.

The cooperative is the first of its kind in Kosovo. The Executive Director is Marjin Šaciq, a Serb, and the President is Sylejman Balaj, an Albanian. There are eight Serb and twelve Albanian members.

“The cooperative will employ new people in agricultural services, bring farmers together and provide them with trainings and consultancy,” Balaj said.

Working together has many benefits for the farmers. They can buy inputs and prepare their land together, which will decrease individual farmers’ costs. By pooling their products, they can sell to larger buyers and make more income. Their agreement can motivate other communities to work together in the future, according to Isufi.

This project was made possible with support from the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives and funded by USAID.
NGO Anticorruption Coalition Distributes Posters, Warns that Kosovo Can Become “A Banana Republic”

The Anticorruption Coalition distributed posters throughout Kosovo on May 8, informing citizens about the risks that the incumbent corrupt political structure presents. The activity is part of a campaign implemented by the “Organization for Democracy, Anticorruption and Dignity - Çohu” and its local NGO partners.

The posters read “United around Corruption” and “Banana Republic of Kosovo,” which “intend to show the contradiction between patriotic phrases used by politicians and the real jeopardy in which Kosovo finds itself on its route towards a quasi-mobster manner of governance,” the media announcement issued by Çohu said.

The Anticorruption Coalition was established on May 4 and includes the following local NGOs: Çohu, Urban FM, Llap Civic Initiative, Initiative for Peace, Youth Center of Dragash, Fisnikët, Elita, Kcic, Alarm Movement, KEK Independent Trade-Union, Syri i Vizionit, Avonet and Community Building Mitrovica.

For more information, contact organizata-cychu@yahoo.com

Building Trust in NGOs

Greater Public Trust Can be Built by Adopting Codes of Conduct

Among the general public, there is greater trust of groups who do not place profit as their number one goal. NGOs are therefore more trusted than companies. Trust is a non-displaceable and vital part of relationships and the image of NGOs.

Public trust of NGOs comes from two main sources: performance and accountability. Performance means the useful social value placed on projects which support positive and enduring change. NGO codes of conduct are a tool that can support accountability.

NGOs should adopt codes of conduct for two reasons. They can defend NGOs against criticisms of being secretive, non-transparent about funding sources, less than rigorous with management procedures and practices and without democratic processes. By establishing definite standards of ethical behavior, corporate governance and financial transparency, codes enable NGOs to build their support bases and give them greater credibility and authority in their activities.

NGOs in several countries now work under codes of conduct.

Source: Global Development Research Center

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