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www.advocacy-center.org

NGOs to Build Self Regulatory Environment for Effectively Fighting Corruption

Civil society can play a significant role in fighting corruption in the public sector, but to be effective, it must build its own public credibility by fighting corruption within itself. The issue of corruption in civil society was discussed by local NGO and media representatives during a public debate organized by ATRC and “Organization for Democracy, Anticorruption and Dignity - Çohu” on April 3.

Discussion panelists included Barbara Hall - IREX Kosovo Civil Society Program, Berat Buzhala - *Express* newspaper and Bashkim Rrahmani - Foundation for Democratic Initiatives. In their presentations, they discussed what NGOs should do to be transparent, who should fight corruption in civil society, public perception of corruption in civil society and donors' role in increasing transparency within civil society.

Panelists, as well as other participants noted that corruption cases in civil society are affecting its credibility and legitimacy, which can result in a loss of public trust.

Code of Ethics for NGOs Alban Bokshi from Çohu presented a draft text of a code of ethics for NGOs, stressing that it would improve public perception towards NGOs. “A code of ethics for NGOs would improve their image and be an example towards citizens and government for good governance and transparency - for a free and democratic civil society,” he said.



Participants debate the issue of corruption in civil society

The debate concluded with selecting a group of NGO representatives (Çohu, ATRC, Avonet, Riinvest, Kosovo Women's Network, Youth Network and the NGO Forum of Gjakova), which will be responsible for informing and coordinating NGOs throughout Kosovo in drafting a final common code of ethics.

For more information regarding the code of ethics for NGOs, please contact: organizatacohu@yahoo.com



A training session at ATRC on April 20

ATRC Organizes NGO Training Sessions

ATRC conducted three training workshops in April on NGO management, project proposal writing, fundraising and donor relations. The trainings were part of this year's workshop series, which is open to all registered Kosovo NGOs, as ATRC clients. NGOs that are not registered, but are interested in receiving ATRC services (free of charge for Kosovo NGOs), can fill in the registration form that is available both online www.advocacy-center.org and at the ATRC office: St. Agim Ramadani, Nr.15, Prishtina.

NGO Flash News

“I Decide for Myself” Campaign against Human Trafficking

The nongovernmental organization “INTEGRA” implemented the second edition of its campaign against the trafficking of human beings entitled “I decide for myself” in April.

Through the dissemination of informative printed materials and screening of the U.S. film, “Dying to Leave,” on places frequented by many people, the campaign aims to inform and raise awareness among citizens about issues related to human trafficking.

The campaign team traveled to the ten Kosovo municipalities involved in this campaign (Gjakova - Djakovica, Ferizaj - Uroshevac, Lipjan - Lipjan, Gjilan - Gnjilane, Skenderaj - Serbica, Vushtrri - Vuçitër, Drenas - Glogovac, Klina - Klina, Istog - Istok and Podujeva - Podujevo).

INTEGRA is implementing this campaign as part of its program against the trafficking of human beings, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Government of Finland and Prime Minister's Office for Good Governance.



Civil society cooperation with the Offices of the President and Prime Minister

“Civil Society Should Offer Solutions, Not Only be Critical towards Political Facets”

ATRC organized a roundtable meeting on March 28 between local NGOs and the political advisers for civil society of the President and Prime Minister of Kosovo, Samet Dalipi and Jahja Lluka, to establish new mechanisms of cooperation based on civil society's needs.

NGO representatives and the political advisers drafted several recommendations, aiming to create stronger ties between governmental and civil society



sectors. The recommendations drafted during this meeting included:

- Civil society to be involved actively in drafting the Kosovo budget.

- Part of Kosovo's budget to be set aside for NGOs.

- Civil society and governing institutions to have frequent meetings, and their cooperation with central governing institutions to be focused on advocacy issues.

- The government office for gender issues to be converted into an agency.

- An ethical code to be drafted and implemented by the central government.

- The process of approving laws to be sped up.

- All draft laws should be posted on the government web-site before being approved by the

parliament.

- A national council for disabled people should be founded.

- The Law for assistance of families of disabled people should be approved.

Jahja Lluka, adviser of the Prime Minister, informed NGOs that the chief of the executive governing body, Agim Çeku, is interested in founding a civil society panel, which he would inform and report to directly.

In addition, Lluka stated, “In the near future, the Office of the Prime Minister will present a project regarding civil society's engagement in the process of implementing standards for Kosovo.”

NGO representatives commented that civil society should offer specific recommendations and not only be critical towards all facets operating in Kosovo.

Governing Institutions and NGO Sector to Initiate New Communication Form

Local NGO representatives and Hashim Thaçi, leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and a member of the Negotiation Team for Kosovo's final political status, held a meeting on March 22 at ATRC to discuss challenges of opposition parties towards government and negotiations for the final status of Kosovo.

The meeting, organized by ATRC, aimed to bring together members of the negotiation team and civil society representatives.

The historical process of solving the issue of Kosovo's final status and fa-

cing a bad government, Hashim Thaçi identified as the main challenges of opposition parties in Kosovo.

Women NGO representatives raised the issue of involving women on the ne-



Hashim Thaçi informs local NGOs about challenges of opposition

gotiation team and demanded that Thaçi take concrete steps towards this issue and not continue to make empty promises like those heard before.

“Status is an issue for all Kosovo citizens, whether they are men or women,” Thaçi agreed.

Most of the participants noted that NGOs and governing institutions should contribute to the general debate initiated by civil society on issues of concern for Kosovo citizens, and also, initiate a new communication form between these two sectors.

NGO Flash News

Elbasan Hoti Elected President of Student Parliament

Students from the University of Prishtina formed their parliament and elected its leading body on April 11, a month after student elections, held on March 8.

Elbasan Hoti, representative of the "Independent Student Union" was elected president, and the two vice presidents elected were Sejdi Hoxha (Independent Student Union of Kosovo) and Gezim Qerimi (Student Peace).

Hoti vowed that during his mandate the parliament would serve as a protective mechanism for student rights.

Seventeen members of six student organizations (Independent Student Union of the University of Prishtina, Independent Student Union of Kosovo, Student Peace, Student List - Reforma, New Student Organization, and Albanian Student Union) are represented in the parliament.



Six organizations represent students of University of Prishtina at their parliament

Building a successful network

The Secret to a Successful Network Is Its Members, Kosovo Women Network Says



KWN members discuss the network's strategic plan for 2005 at an annual membership meeting

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), which advocates on behalf of women at the local, regional and international level, now has 85 member organizations of all ethnicities from throughout Kosovo, making it one of the largest functioning networks in the region.

Although established in 2000, its initial members met informally to provide moral support, share experiences and problem solve

on issues of common concern as early as the mid-1990s.

More than a decade later, the network still operates with a personal touch. "Members come first," Igballe Rogova, Executive Director of KWN explained. "We are here to serve our members. The more active members a network has, the stronger its voice in decision-making," she said.

KWN has kept members active by telephoning to personally invite them to meetings; keeping them informed through its website, e-mails, bimonthly meetings, annual report and quarterly newsletter; including them in strategic plan-

ning and evaluating KWN's work; and, regularly involving them in activities.

In every KWN advocacy campaign, members played a key role. During the campaign against violence against women and "Know Your Rights" campaign, members organized performances in their municipalities. For the "Women Propose" and "Political Parties Work for Women" campaigns, members organized meetings between electoral candidates and citizens where voters voiced their policy priorities. KWN members also united to advocate for changing the electoral system and involving women in talks concerning Kosovo's final political status.

For more information, see: www.womensnetwork.org

Media monitoring

NGOs from Kosovo and Serbia Cooperate to Monitor Print Media

On April 4, nongovernmental organization "Initiative for Peace" presented at the Grand Hotel, Prishtina a monitoring report about print media in Kosovo and Serbia, researched during September - October 2005. NGO "Fractal" from Belgrade monitored the daily press in Serbia.

The monitoring focused on articles about Kosovo's final status, the return of displaced persons and UN envoy Kai Eide's report on the implementation of Kosovo standards.

Gazmir Rraci from the "Initiative for Peace" said that

the monitoring aimed to get a realistic picture as to the impact that the print media has on the return of displaced persons and reintegration processes in Kosovo.

According to the report, three out of four Kosovo dailies have changed their way of reporting after being criticized about "aggressive, suggestive and provocative reporting" during the March 2004 riots. Serbian dailies show that Serbs are divided on the issue of Kosovo's independence.

The newspapers monitored in Kosovo and Serbia were Koha Ditore, Zëri,

Epoka e Re, Bota Sot, Danas, Politika, Veçernje Novosti and Kurir. The dailies were selected based on their circulation figures.



Eight Kosovo and Serbia newspapers are monitored by NGOs "Initiative for Peace" and "Fractal"



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An innovative idea to help victims of family violence

Women's Civic Initiative "Antico" Collects Funds to Aid Victims of Family Violence in Macedonia

Macedonian women's civic initiative "Antico" announced on April 12 the start of a campaign to collect financial and material assistance for victims of family violence.

The items collected will be sold at an auction this May



Family violence is on the rise in Macedonia, local NGOs report

at the Continental Hotel in Skopje.

The funds collected through the auction and donations are intended to fully equip the "HOPE Crisis Centre for Victims of Violence" in Macedonia.

According to Makedonka Ivanova from "Hope," the number of calls for help and reports of family violence are on the rise.

Antico is implementing this initiative under its project "Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Organizations in the Antico Network."

The legislation on family violence in Macedonia was adopted in 2004, after which organizations undertook concrete activities towards preventing family violence and providing organized assistance to victims.

Currently, Macedonia is preparing a protocol for the coordination of all NGOs and state institutions that provide assistance to victims of family violence.

Source: One World Southeast Europe

An introduction to NGO credibility and legitimacy

Building Credibility Enables NGOs to be Trusted

Credibility is one of the most critical factors affecting NGOs. Being credible is simply the perception of being trustworthy and believable.

A number of strategies can be used by NGOs to build their credibility:

- Use of academics and experts to evaluate NGO projects and activities
- Associating with national or regional associations, alliances, or forums
- Obtaining UN accreditation
- Finding credible spokespeople
- Speaking and publishing regularly
- Seeking awards and prizes as recognition for work done
- Partnering with key community, government-

tal and industry entities

- Writing case studies that tell compelling stories from people and communities they serve

- Getting some good press stories

- Understanding an NGO's strengths and larger connections, communicate the strengths and connections consistently

- Keeping a significant presence online - both web and email



NGOs play an increasingly active role in today's political and social arenas. Civil society organizations are sprouting up all over the world. Sometimes, local and international NGOs act irresponsibly and undermine the credibility of civil society in general. Organizations must be as accountable as the governments they criticize. This poses a great challenge to the NGO movement and to global democracy more generally.

- Global Policy Forum

- Generating a good image through newsletters, bulletins, press releases etc.

Source: Global Development Research Center

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