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ATRC Launches Training & Consultancy Services for 2006

On February 9, ATRC announced the first training workshop under the Kosovo Civil Society Program (KCSP), entitled "Introduction to Advocacy and Coalition Building".

The workshop is part of a series of training workshops scheduled for 2006, and which is open to all Kosovo NGOs that have registered as ATRC clients (see registration information below).

As a full-service NGO training and support organization, ATRC, in 2006, will provide consultancy and training programs designed to meet the current and evolving needs of the NGO sector in Kosovo. ATRC services include basic and advanced training and consultancy in key areas of organizational development, project management and advocacy.

This year ATRC will provide four different types of consul-



A training session at ATRC

tancy and training services:

Workshops
One on one consultancy
Customized trainings
Special development training program

With these services ATRC aims to fulfill its mission, which is to provide NGOs with the tools, know-how and expertise that will contribute to the development of their full potential and enable them to achieve their strategic goals in

an effective and sustainable manner.

This year, all services provided by ATRC are free of charge to Kosovo NGOs that have been registered as ATRC clients.

NGOs can register with ATRC by filling 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 Funding Opportunities

Balkan Trust for Democracy to Focus Funding on Kosovo

G | M | F On February 2, ATRC organized a meeting with NGO representatives and Mr. Marcel Grogan, program officer for the Balkan Trust for Democracy; which is a project of the U.S.-based German Marshall Fund. The meeting aimed to inform local NGOs about Balkan Trust's principal program areas and funding opportunities.

Grogan outlined Balkan Trust's funding objectives, current priorities and appli-

cation procedures, as well as available funds for the region. "Linking Citizens with Government,' and 'Regional Cooperation and Collaboration' are the objectives of grant making," he stated.

Balkan Trust awards grants to civic groups, indigenous NGOs, media, think tanks, governments and educational institutions.

Grogan stressed that this year Balkan Trust is focusing on Kosovo with special interest on the process of decentralization and

young people.

The Balkan Trust for Democracy is a 10-year, \$27 million grant-making initiative that supports good governance in Southeastern Europe.

For more information, please visit:

www.gmfus.org/balkantrust. Donor presentations are part of an ATRC program that seeks to link NGOs with funding opportunities and donors with NGOs that have similar interests.

ATRC Upcoming Events

March 22: Roundtable Discussion "Challenges of Opposition towards Government and Negotiations for Final Status" with Mr. Hashim Thaçi, leader of DPK

April 4-6: NGO Management Training

April 12: Fundraising & Donor Relations Training

Regional NGOs Share Experiences in Slovakia

In January, three representatives of Kosovo NGOs Riinvest, DokuFest and ATRC attended a ten-day study visit in Bratislava, Slovakia, organized by the Slovakian based People in a Peril Association, with support from the Open Society Foundation. The purpose of the study visit was for Bosnian, Serbian and Kosovo NGO representatives to share experiences with and learn from Slovak NGOs' good practices during the EU Accession process.

During this visit, participants met a diverse group of twenty-five NGOs, including foundations, watch-dogs, think tanks and organizations dealing with anti-corruption and EU integration. Slovakia has a very developed civil society that played a crucial role in ousting the former neo-authoritarian government of Vladimir Meciar, which eventually led to the restoration of democratic values in Slovakia and EU integration.

There were many issues that participating organizations from the West Balkans learned from their counterparts in Slovakia, including the financial sustainability of NGOs.

Although West Balkan NGOs, including Kosovo NGOs, currently receive financial support from foreign sources, Slovaks pointed out that this will not continue forever. In Slovakia, few NGOs survived after foreign financial support was withdrawn. Local funding became crucial. Considering that Kosovo could move in a similar direction, NGOs should start looking for other means of financial support, such as local funding, Slovak NGOs said.

ATRC and IREX/KMAP roundtable

Access to Official Documents Still Limited

ATRC and IREX/ Kosovo Media Assistance Program organized a roundtable discussion on 7 February at ATRC where government, NGO and media representatives gathered to address issues related to the implementation of the Law on Access to Official Documents.

Kushtrim Shaipi from local think tank Kosovo Research and Documentation Institute (KODI) moderated the roundtable, which opened a debate on the development of mechanisms for implementing the Law. Although three years have passed since its adoption by the National Assembly, the Law's application has been delayed.

Panelists included Besim Kajtazi - Ministry of Public Services, Jusuf Osmani - National Archives, Berat Buzhala - Association of Professional Journalists and Naim Krasniqi - Office of the Ombudsman, Mitrovica region.

Besim Kajtazi explained the changes made to the draft Administrative Instruction on the implementation of the Law on Access to Official Documents after receiving comments from other institutions and organizations.

IREX/USAID, the Ombudsman's Office, Independent Media Commission, OSCE and National Archives sent their comments to the Ministry of Public Services after a public debate organized by this ministry on 8 December to discuss the draft Administrative Instruction.

"The comments that we received helped a lot in clarifying the draft Administrative Instruction for the Law on Access to Official Documents," Kajtazi said.

Despite the improvements made on the draft Administrative Instruction, media and NGO representatives expressed their concerns about the power that this

draft gives public institution regarding documents classified as sensitive.

The current situation in Ko-



Participants debating access to official documents

sovo prohibits journalists' access to information, Berat Buzhala from the Association of Professional Journalists stressed.

Most participants noted that even though the law was adopted, its implementation is limited.

Peja Youth Network Urges Greater Involvement of Young People in Civil Society

Around the world, youth are involved in pushing processes forward. In Kosovo, the Peja Youth Network (PYN), which represents seven participating youth NGOs and Youth Centers from Peja Municipality, is jointly promoting youth groups' ideas and projects for better serving the needs of their communities.

As a multiethnic network, these youth groups launched promotional campaigns to inform the public of Peja about important local and national developments. For example, in 2005 they worked to raise community awareness about Standards for Kosovo. PYN also trains

young people; building their capacities in specific fields, such as advocacy, interethnic dialogue, human rights, conflict management, strategic planning and managing of NGOs.

"This network has brought together Albanians, Serbs, Bosnians, Egyptians and Roma to attend different trainings inside and outside Kosovo," PYN Coordinator Vlora Latifi said.

Since its establishment in 2002, PYN has implemented many activities towards reconciliation, such as the "Youth Initiative for Reconciliation 2004" project, which focused on awareness-raising public campaigns, inter-ethnic dialogue promotion, inter-eth-

nic dialogue, advocacy and youth reconciliation initiatives.

One of the main problems that PYN encounters is the lack of willingness among Serbian community youth to get involved in network activities, according to Vlora Latifi.

She urges young people from all regions and communities in Kosovo to be more active and willing to get involved with non-government organizations.

The PYN Assembly sets PYN priorities and elects the network's seven-member executive board every six months. PYN also supports the work of youth networks in three other towns: Klina, Deçan and Istog.

"Forum 2015" roundtable**Institutions, Civil Society Discuss Link between Paying Taxes and Public Services**

"Forum 2015" organized a roundtable on 19 January at the Grand Hotel Pristina to discuss Riinvest Institute's findings from a recent study entitled "Fiscal Culture and Budget Sustainability."

The roundtable opened a debate on how fiscal culture affects budget sustainability, overall development and improving the quality of public services. "Fiscal culture" could be defined as a process in which the community takes part in decisions about public revenue (tax) collection and expenditures.

Most of the citizens interviewed by Riinvest had critical views towards budget management and expenditures. They believed that better public services would encourage more people to pay taxes.

However, Minister of Economy and Finances Haki Shatri noted that citizens have a responsibility as well. "They are not aware of the importance of paying taxes in order to have a sustainable and efficient budget system," he said.

Representatives from civil society stressed that compliance with taxes requires good governance.

Representatives from civil society, the Parliament, government, UNMIK, international institutions and organizations, university experts and media participated.

"Forum 2015" is a coalition between Kosovo Foundation for Open Society - Soros and Riinvest that aims to unite civil society activities in Kosovo towards Euro-Atlantic integration.

For more information, please contact:
riinvest@riinvestinstitute.org

An Open Letter**NGO Cohu Demands Accountability for Former National Assembly President Nexhat Daci's New Luxury Vehicle**

Ford Diplomat VIP

Organization for democracy, anti-corruption and dignity, Cohu, called for transparency from the highest legislative institution in the country in regards to a luxury vehicle purchased by Nexhat Daci.

Cohu made this demand through an open letter, sent in January to the Presidency of the Kosovo Assembly, Chairmen of the Parliamentary Groups, and Chairman of the Commission for Public Peti-

tions and Demands.

The letter was signed by five other local NGOs: the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, Association of Pensioners, Association of Professional Journalists, Coalition "Germia 2005" and Kosovo Women's Network. It read:

Your office's lack of transparency in purchasing the "Ford Diplomat VIP 2005" vehicle at a very high and unrealistic price and at a time when poverty is deepening in Kosovo, has increased doubts regarding law violations, the abuse of public money, and corruption. In addition, following public accusations against your office, you have promised a public

explanation regarding this issue. Based on the laws adopted by the Kosovo Assembly, the public and organizations that signed this letter, ask you, as one of the senior Kosovo leaders, to offer the promised transparency in order to lay the groundwork for the application of a primary principle for democracy - accountability.

Being accountable in buying such an expensive vehicle would not only fulfill this principle of extreme importance for democracy, but also would be in the interest of citizens and would rid the institution from accusations regarding this case.

For the full letter or more information, please contact:
organizatacohu@yahoo.com

NGO Funding Opportunities**Call for Proposals for Youth Projects in Southeastern Europe**

Schüler Helfen Leben, a charitable organization from Germany, has called for proposals to help young people in Southeastern Europe.

This organization supports youth projects in Southeastern Europe towards reconciliation and freedom in the region. It has donated over €13 million for more than a hundred projects in Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Romania.

Schüler Helfen Leben is an independent initiative, which provides quick and non-bureaucratic help to young people, for young people.

In 2006, it is looking to

fund non-profit organizations that propose to use the donations for projects in Southeastern Europe.

Grantees must focus on direct support for children, young people and students in Southeastern Europe: Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova.

Projects should enable young people's access to education, a better upbringing and care/guidance. Projects should also:

a) Be open to all young people, regardless of gender, beliefs, nationality, economic situation and

social grouping, and b) Impart the capabilities and the knowledge needed for young people to be able to grow into responsibly mature, critical-thinking citizens of a democratic state and to allow them to be financially independent.

The deadline for applications is 15 March 2006.

For more information regarding formal selection criteria, selection procedures, financial conditions, duration of support, legitimacy of the applicant, etc., please contact:
+49 (0)30-30831692 or visit:
www.schueler-helfen-leben.de



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International Civil Society Developments

NGOs Start Environmental Initiative in Bosnia

The Young Researchers of Banja Luka in partnership with the Ecco Team from Sarajevo and the Tuzla Centre for Environment and Energy started the "Civil Society Local Level Environmental Initiative" project in January with support from the EU.

The project aims to achieve concrete cooperation between environmental associations and local government on specific environmental issues of local importance.

It aims to create a positive ambience for public participation in planning and decision-making processes at

the local level, support environmental associations in terms of access to informa-

tion, raise public awareness and advocate for environmental education.

Under this initiative, NGOs plan to implement five small pilot-projects, a total value of €10,000.

The Young Researchers of Banja Luka and partners will support the joint efforts of local associations and local self-government designed to mobilize their internal resources and identify sustainable solutions for protecting and improving the environment.



Ferhadija street is the most popular pedestrian street in Sarajevo

Source: One World Southeast Europe

A Common, Global Framework of Nonprofits as Players in Civil Society

The worldwide growth of nonprofit organizations has given citizens a greater capacity to improve the quality of their lives and to establish peaceful cross-border networks. But the legal frameworks within which these organizations operate differ across countries, as well as within those countries with federal or decentralized systems. The laws may vary in such matters as the requirements for incorporation; the restrictions on organizations' operating powers; the rules on reporting, dissolution, and forms of reorganization such as mergers and divestitures; the requirements for public accountability and transparency; the restrictions relating to public support and financial transactions; the designated measures of performance; the extent of political participation allowed; the fiscal benefits, such as tax exemptions

and eligibility for government grants, available to some or all nonprofits; and the scope of formal and informal penalties that can be imposed on organizations, their leadership, supporters, and members.

Is there a single conceptual lens - one that operates regardless of an organization's mission, capacity, and location - through which NGOs can be viewed, craft model laws, assess their performance, and thereby render common assistance? What is the common platform upon which all of this might be built?

The underlying commonality cannot be that they are charities, for some nonprofits are not. It cannot be that they do not have a profit motive, for increasing numbers of them do, although by American law, this cannot be a principal motive for their existence.

On one of the latest journals of International Center For Not-For-Profit Law is argued that, that common underlying feature of all nonprofits is (a) they are social capital assets, (b) they exist to be agents of the public, (c) they advance their purposes through the public policy process, and (d) their purpose and their performance are best viewed through the principal-agent concept from contract and employment law.

Thus, every nonprofit can be described as a social capital asset and agent of the public in a structured relationship with the public it serves. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.icnpl.org/journal/v018iss1/art3.htm>

Source: The International Center For Not-For-Profit Law.

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