

focus KOSOVO

Newsletter of OPIC partners in Kosovo
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A Clearer Focus

Dear reader,

We are starting a new Newsletter. This will be the first issue of an informative paper for foreign audiences regarding events within the civil society of Kosovo. A quarterly publication from January-April 2014, the newsletter will feature the work of Olof Palme International Center partners in Kosovo, as well as news concerning civil society and public authorities in the country. Civil society today is considered one of the main factors of a country's democratic consolidation. It is playing an increasingly important role in the governance and development in the world. In most countries, however, knowledge about the situation and the forms of the civil society is limited. Kosovo is one of the countries that has claimed to have embraced democratic values, thus the role of civil society in this context is increasingly important. Currently civil society in Kosovo is experiencing a number of developments but still faces big challenges. Although some civil society organizations in Kosovo are raising their human capacity and financial resources, the bulk of the sector remains heavily dependent on international funding. OPIC, in cooperation with its partners in Kosovo, is making efforts to bring about substantial changes in this direction with hopes that the partnership between public authorities and civil society becomes structured and stable, so that the citizen can be part of democratic decision-making.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy our newsletter,
EC Ma Ndryshe

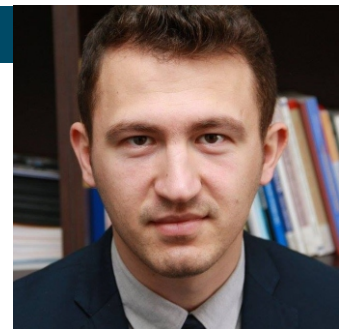
A Genuine Watchdog Role

On the day when he formally assumed his post, the mayor of Lipjan Municipality was accused of violating the law. CSO Youth Association for Human Rights (YAHR) which oversees the work of the municipality concluded that the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for Communities violated the law regarding local self-government. In this case, the mayor may propose the appointment but he cannot legally make the decision on his own. In these circumstances, after the reaction of YAHR, at the second meeting of the Municipal

Assembly on January 29, 2014 the deputy mayor was elected on the basis of the recommendations that were made by the supervisor of the Municipal Assembly. This is yet another case in which civil society action has fought to prevent malpractice and has therefore served as a watchdog over state institutions. Follow the TV story of this case. In the following links you can find more information on monitoring activities of YAHR in this municipality: YAHR monitoring and FB page.

5-QUESTION INTERVIEW

Internal democracy of political parties



Since Kosovo underwent an election period, this issue of the newsletter conducted a short interview with Albert Krasniqi from the KIPRED Institute. Albert offers his views on the democratization of political parties in Kosovo.

1. How do you assess democracy within Kosovo political parties?

Political parties are now starting to make the first steps towards their internal democratization, in response to a growing demand from their membership. But, still many of them remain far from democratic practices because the decision making is centralized to the leader or a close group around him/her.

2. What are the main challenges to the democratization of the political parties?

The biggest challenge is the reduction of the impact that leaders have on their own political parties. Most of them, being the founders, consider the political parties to be more like their private properties, rather than as a common association that represents general interest. A remaining challenge is the empowerment of their local branches and especially the involvement of the membership on drafting policies and selection of party representatives.

3. What have you done to promote internal democratization of political parties?

Thanks to the "Internal Democracy in Political Parties" project, within a year we trained over 400 representatives for democratic practices of locally

popular political parties, including branch chairs, local assembly members and other party members. Also, through continuous advocacy and publishing reports on this topic, we tried to increase the awareness of members and leaders of political parties on the importance of internal party democracy.

4. Has your project affected the political parties to be more democratic and how?

Our largest concentration is on the broad membership and branches, where the results are slower but in the long run are larger. During this period, the biggest impact we see is the steps taken by the political parties in increasing financial transparency and periodic reporting to the membership.

5. Will the quality of democratic representation improve in the next Parliament of Kosovo?

Everything will depend on the progress of the June 8 election. The more free, fair, and regular these elections are, the greater the democratic representation will be. The list of candidates for MP, however, was followed by much unhappiness as a result of non-adherence to internal democratic practices.

Consultative committee established in municipality of Novoberda

The Advocacy Training and Resource Center is advocating for the establishment of consultative committees in four Kosovo municipalities: Gjilan, Novoberda, Kamenica and Vitia, in order to enable citizens' participation in the decision making process. The request of the ATRC for establishment of such committees was approved on April 24, 2014 by the Municipal Assembly of Novoberda. The ATRC will continue to advocate this issue. [Read more on this process.](#)



Trainings for municipality authorities and civil society

During March-April 2014 under the "Active Citizens - Accountable and Transparent Municipality" project, the ATRC held training workshops on "Corporate Planning and Participatory Governance and Budgeting", designed for municipal authorities and civil society representatives of Gjilan, Novoberda, Kamenica and Vitia municipalities. The aim of the workshops was to build capacities, increase awareness of both parties, and share information on citizen's involvement in the decision-making processes. [Read the publication here.](#)

Training on policy-making

On 16 April 2014, Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute has organized its first training module for membership groups on the policy-making cycle for a more inclusive representation in Kosovo. With the active participation of membership groups in the decision-making process, government representatives will be able to make and implement more effective policies. Main training topics included the approach of membership groups identifying a problem, evaluation of their political positions, and methods how they have to influence policy-making. ([Click here to view the description](#)). ([Click here to view the FB and master photo](#)).



Focus groups with membership groups

On March 4 & 6, the Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute has organized two focus groups with membership associations to closely assess their needs and get their confirmation to continue to organize joint activities for the next two years. Such collective type meetings are a good method for D4D to clearly understand the issues of membership groups in order to proceed with the planned activities. ([Click here to view the description](#)). ([Click here to view the FB and master photo](#)).

Rural women require strong leadership

CSO "Syri i Vizionit" held leadership training for women from the rural municipalities Peja, Klina, Istog and Rahovec. During these meetings it was noted that the position of women in decision-making is not enviable. Participants in this training have subsequently vowed that they will be more insistent in their demands from the institutions.

Women's voice must be heard in society

In the trainings held in the field of advocacy by CSO "Syri i Vizionit" with women from communities from Peja, Klina, Istog and Rahovec, it was reiterated that their voice should be heard in institutions and in society. The trainings informed and prepared women in these areas to enhance their participation in society in order to make their voices more powerful.



Series of focus groups with community groups

EC Ma Ndryshe organized a series of focus groups with seven community groups in Prizren, aiming to identify their needs and vision changes with regards to urban planning in the city. The focus groups targeted seven community groups in the city, namely: youth, women, elders, people with special needs, poor neighbourhoods (informal settlements), culture and environment. The project is soon expected to enter into its second phase of translating the community needs and concerns into implementable urban plans in the city of Prizren. Read the 2013 report of the project.



"Transparency Forum" established

Following several months of consultations between civil society members and media representatives, a joint platform of civil society activists and media was set up in Prizren. Symbolically titled the "Transparency Forum", it was created in March 2014 in an effort to find approaches to increase institutional transparency. For more details see here.

Culture in Kosovo state policy



On 20 March 2014, the focus group "Culture in Kosovo state policies" was held by ODA Theatre in the framework of the Forum for Cultural Development project. It aims to further develop and strengthen the Cultural Forum established in 2011, offering advices and valuable knowledge about Kosovo's cultural policies. Focus group discussion was held about the topics of project research which analyzes resources and limitation of Kosovo culture scene. More information on the work of Cultural Forum is available at <http://forumikulturor.net>.

Pro WO+MAN research report



Peer Educators Network – PEN has published a research report on gender mainstreaming capacities within the "Pro WO+MAN" project. The research conducted utilized mixed methods approach (design) and included 103 individuals engaged in 13 local CSOs (OPIC partners in Kosovo) who have filled out the questionnaire and participated in two focus groups. Read the full research report.

Roundtables "Youth Against Inequalities"

On March 19th and 21st two round-table discussion were organized in Gjiilan and Gjakova as part of the "Youth Against Inequalities" project, implemented by Peer Educators Network – PEN. This project aims to promote gender equality through enhancing the capacities of young people and CSOs focused on gender related issues as well as to mobilize youth and policy makers to engage in community development and civic life in the region of Gjakova and Gjiilan. The aim of these round-tables was to discuss the good practices, lessons learned, achievements and future of this project.

Meetings held on the occasion of the formation of informal groups of women

Within the "Active Women in Community" project, Communication for Social Development (CSD) held coordination meetings with representatives of the Municipality of Partesh and Klllokot. Within the above-mentioned project CSD aims to strengthen non-formal education through an informal group of women.

Active women in the community

A symposium on "Women's rights and the role of women in the community" was held 11-13 April 2014 in Skopje, by CSD was attended by members of the informal groups of women from the municipality Kllokot, Partesh and Gracanica. Participants had the opportunity to gain knowledge on international law as well as the important dates, the treatment of women in the community and in politics.

Series of focus groups with community groups

From January to April 2014 CSO Experimental Studio Group (ESG) in cooperation with Gorazdevac Radio/TV production made four short stories; Media in Kosovo, Family life of a Serbian returnee in Gorazdevac, Return to Rudice village, Klina and the reconstruction of primary school in Vidanje, Klina. CSO ESG, in cooperation with five Albanian and Bosnian local radio stations in Peja, Klina and Istog

municipalities, produced 15 campaigns focusing on gender issues, the promotion of stable interethnic relations and equal opportunities for all the communities, and stopping the exploitation of children. In March 2014, CSO ESG facilitated a three-day seminar assisting Serbian community members to acquire skills and knowledge for active participation in CSO and private sectors.

Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian integration strategy

The Roma & Ashkalia Documentation Center produced an informative brochure with an outline of the strategy for integration of the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities, with the aim to raise community awareness. The RADC field workers started to disseminate brochures within communities, and share them with municipal officers in Podujeva, Fushë Kosova, Lipjan, Ferizaj, Obiliq and Gracanica.

Joint Platform of the CSO's working with Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian issues

Members of the Joint Platform had two meetings in Peja with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the first meeting the focus was to make the long and short term strategy for the Platform. In the second

meeting Platform members worked on the recommendation for the Kosovo Government related to the existing strategy that will end in 2015 and recommendations for the new policy strategy 2016 – 2020.

Restelica and Bresana require infrastructure investment

Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) organized a meeting between residents of Bresana, Restelica and officials of the Dragash Municipality. The purpose of the meeting was to present the needs of the citizens of these villages and to address them to their municipal authorities to seek possible solution. Read more.

Publication of monitoring report

Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI) has published the quarterly report of monitoring the municipalities in the region of Prizren covering the January – April 2014 period. This report reflects the findings of the legal and procedural violations during assembly sessions and reveals the lack of respect for legal obligations by these institutions. Read the quarterly monitoring report.



Formalization of local communities' structures

The first step taken by the Women's Association in January 2014 was the formalization of the structures of local communities and their future engagement. The first activity was held in the Municipal Assembly Meeting and the purpose of it was to lobby the previous decision of the mayor which had licensed the chairmen of Local Communities. Organization of the second meeting with the Chairmen of the Municipality in April focused on organizing and structuring these

local communities in relation to the municipality. In addition, the Women's Association held the following activities as part of the project including 12 roundtables with local community, 8 meetings with the heads of local communities, 2 training sessions with the chairmen of local communities (preparation of project proposals and leadership), establishment of the local council and establishment of the commission for the local community regulation reform.

Democratic governance of political parties at the local level

KIPRED Institute is continuing the implementation of the project "Internal Democracy in Political Parties", which its primary purpose is to promote the very best practises of democratic governance of political parties' branches across Kosovo. More about the project and efforts to democratize political parties in Kosovo can be found here.

Empowerment of women in decision-making



The round-table titled "Empowering women in decision-making institutions in the municipality of Lipljan" was organized by Youth Association for Human Rights. Participants in the meeting were Chairman of Lipljan Municipality, Imri Ahmeti, Head of the Municipal Assembly, participants from the institution of the judiciary, and civil society in Lipljan. YAHR presented a research report on the participation of women in local institutions Lipjan. In addition, during January – April 2014, YAHR has issued 11 press releases by which the public has become more informed about the irregularities that occurred in Lipljan municipality.

Touring across Kosovo with "Yue..."

Seven presentations of the play "Yue Madeliene Yue" and forum theater discussions held during April, in 7 locations in Kosovo, in predominantly Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. Forums aimed to raise awareness for the integration of repatriated persons in the educational system of Kosovo. Spectators were familiar with such scenes, and thus enjoyed debating with actors and each other about the prejudices toward minority groups and marginalized groups that included repatriated people as well. The central focus of this performance is a Roma family, which was forcibly expelled from Germany to Kosovo. Read more about this play.

Field research - getting to know the problems



From January to March, the CCTD team has conducted field research in more than 20 locations across Kosovo. They have been meeting people of all genders, ages, and nationalities. The main purpose of this activity was multidimensional, as the team wanted to familiarise itself with the life in the target communities, thus being able to create scenes that cover the issues as locally as possible and therefore increasing forum theatre's credibility and impact.

Who guards the guardians?

Forum 2015 has organized a roundtable to present the findings of the “Who Guards the Guardians?” study report, which was produced by CSO EC Ma Ndryshe. This study analysed key elements that determine the accountability

of civil society based on universal principles and practices which have been used as a ground to scrutinize the state of accountability of civil society in Kosovo. The publication can be downloaded [here](#).

Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development

On March 11, 2014, Kosova Civil Society Foundation presented the findings of the monitoring of a favourable environment for the development of civil society in Kosovo in 2013. The monitoring matrix environment is a tool developed by Western Balkan civil societies. It determines optimal standards that must exist in order to create a favourable environment for the development of civil society. [Read the publication.](#)



Legislative initiative by CSOs

On April 2nd, 2014 The Justice and Citizens Campaign submitted to the Assembly of Kosovo a citizen initiative. It intended to amend Article 69 of the Law on Public Financial Management and Accountability for allowing fair compensation for the victims of human rights violations. In support of this change 13.231 signatures were collected by a coalition of nine (9) partner organizations from different municipalities of Kosovo: AKTI (Fushë Kosova),

CSD (Gracanica), EC Ma Ndryshe (Prizren), Femrat Aktive të Gjakovës/Active Women of Gjakova (Gjakova), FIZH (Peja), KCBS (Gjilan), Me dorë në Zemër (Mitrovica), Mileniumi i Ri (Prishtina), and Prehja (Skenderaj). Justice and Citizens Campaign is a movement that brings together citizens and civil society groups in Kosovo to work for reforms in the justice system and to promote change through public advocacy.

Strategy for cooperation between government and civil society

Pursuant to Article 97, paragraph 4 and Article 93, paragraph 4 of Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, the Government of Kosovo during a meeting held on 5 July 2013 took the decision to approve Government Strategy and Action plan for cooperation with civil society for the year 2013 to 2017. The strategy sets the

principles of cooperation and it is built upon four main objectives. The document is an attempt to structure the government – civil society dialogue, and it will be facilitated by Civikos Platform on behalf of Kosovo civil society. Read the strategy.

Civil Society Index Kosovo

After a two year period of research, analyses and comprehensive discussions, Kosova Civil Society Foundation completed the Civil Society Index for Kosovo. Civil Society Index analyses the current state of this sector and, based on the

findings, aims to initiate concrete actions for advancing civil society in Kosovo. Civil Society Index has resulted with two concrete publications: Kosovo Analytical Country Report; and Policy Brief on civil society in Kosovo.

“Silent Balkans” documentary wins The Focal International Award

The “Silent Balkans” documentary was announced as the FOCAL International award winner. It is a documentary produced by Anemon within the “A Balkan Tale” project, in cooperation with four CSOs from the Balkans (CSO EC Ma Ndryshe, Albanian Fund for Monuments, Remont and the Center for Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Practices

and Rural Development - CeproSARD). The aim of the documentary is to raise awareness on the need for promoting the Ottoman heritage, which marks the crucial period of cultural development for the peoples of the Balkans, presenting a unique rendition of the common Ottoman past within the Balkan region. Follow here for more.

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