

DETAILS

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The reality of local electronic media

"Weak sustainability, poor journalistic and management standards, deficits in programming." These findings of the recently published Analysis of Local Electronic Media in Kosovo by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo draw a devastating picture of the sector. However, "not everything is negative", states media analyst Eberhard Laue. The report is unique in the field of Media Development in Kosovo and has immediately become a widely used strategic tool for International Organizations and Nongovernmental Organizations.

Julius Bott, OSCE

The violence in March 2004 was destructive and deadly. And media were widely blamed for it - at least for the extent to which hostility and bloodshed spread. Irresponsible reporting was identified and broadcasters were fined by the Temporary Media Commissioner, as the regulatory authority for media in Kosovo. However, the reports of experts and institutions also showed that very little was known about the local media.

Questions were raised: Who is behind these local radio and TV stations? What is their programming? What is their financial situation? The overall questionnaire encompassed roughly 150 topics focusing on freedom of media and access to information. The first is based on the assumption that free media do not only need the appropriate political environment. They also have to be economically sustainable to be, as much as possible, independent from outside influence. The latter focuses on citizens and their right to be informed about all events and processes in their respective society.

In order to accomplish the challenging task, each and every one of the stations was visited by media analyst Eberhard Laue, supported by Shpresa Mulliqi, Donika Shahini,



Media in Kosovo have hard time covering their operational costs and only a few can afford up to date equipment.

Srdjan Pupovac and other colleagues from the OSCE Mission field offices. In addition representatives of civil society, municipal administrations and also average citizens were asked about their opinion. "We wanted to know about the real status," says Mission's Media Support Team Leader, Angela Tenbruck. "Although a number of experts had visited a number of stations in the past, no one before has managed to produce a comprehensive analysis for the entire sector."

The answers were discouraging. "The majority of radio and TV stations do not operate in compliance with their licence application, 61 percent of the broadcasters is unable to cover expenses through operational revenue and 44 percent say more than half of their employees have changed over the last 6 to 12 months" summarizes Laue. And to top it all, audiences complained widely about unsatisfying quantity and quality of local news.

The reasons for the situation are many. First of all there is the recent history of Kosovo. Few Kosovo Albanians were employed in the media sector between 1990 and 1999.

Kosovo Albanian owned media did not exist. After 1999 this vacuum was filled quickly. Some stations didn't even ask at all for permission and when the Temporary Media Commissioner was established in June 2000 broadcasters had already mushroomed.

Most of the stations had the same goal: "informing the public" was named by the majority of media owners in the survey as their main motivation to get into broadcasting. "In many cases this remained wishful thinking" states Laue. 79 percent of the owners had never been involved in any business or had other management experience. Not to talk about media management which is a totally different story altogether. And 59 percent had never worked in journalism prior to their engagement in media.

The impact of this limited knowledge is severe. "Most of the stations dream of Kosovo-wide coverage, assuming that the bigger is the better, ignoring the next door listener and his desire for local news," says Laue. The reactions of citizens are similarly criti-

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Sven Lindholm

Spokesperson, OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Dear Readers,

In early 2000, the OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media published a study made by Mark Thompson on international assistance to media in the western Balkans. A telling section on Kosovo states: "UNMIK was deployed into an informational and legal vacuum" and "by the autumn [of 1999], the media scene was busy, even crowded." At the time of this analysis there were only five or six daily newspapers, various magazines, some 40 radio stations, but little television.

Within the next year electronic media proliferated, reaching over 100 throughout Kosovo. The growth was haphazard in technical terms and it seemed that many, including international donors, were less concerned about programme content than about getting something on air.

In time broadcast media became licensed through the Temporary Media Commissioner.

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cal. Due to the lack of local newspapers local TV and radio is the only source of information.

But even if stations would develop concepts for their key audience – most of them would not be able to implement them. Insufficient finances limit also human resources. As a consequence more and more stations reduce their programming and convert into "juke-boxes": playing nothing but music, living off paid wishes and greetings. Newscasts are often re-broadcasted from stations like Deutsche Welle, BBC or Voice of America. 61 percent of the owners have to contribute their own money or rely on family abroad, donors or KFOR, states the report. The latter with their long term contracts for airtime purchase turned out to be the most important supporter of broadcasters.

"It is important to understand, that KFOR's interest concentrates on unconditional access to broadcasters to emanate their programs and messages," explains Laue. "This approach should not be confused with OSCE's and other organizations intentions in media development." However, the report and its presentation started a dialogue between the OSCE and KFOR. A forum with all stakeholders is planned for December.

The presentation of the report had a similar impact regarding other players. Responses ranged from "excellent work" and "you confirmed what we had always thought, but

And more recently the editors of Kosovo's major newspapers, with OSCE support, signed a Press Code and agreed to establish a Press Council.

These are a few of the many steps forward – ones in which the international community and Kosovo media have worked on together. There are a few others which are highlighted in this DETAILS, such as the KOSMA network, which connects nearly 30 Serbian language stations throughout Kosovo.

And then there is training. International donors have invested a fair amount in building the capacities of local media – from journalists and editors, to marketing managers. More specialized courses, like the Deutsche Welle Akademie, have now become the norm. More importantly, the OSCE-supported Kosovo Media Institute will be the institution – formed by the media, for the media – to provide professional training. It will complement the undergraduate courses that will be provided by the planned Journalism Department of in the University of Pristina, and the postgraduate degrees offered by the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication.

This DETAILS also mentions a tool being given by the OSCE – guidelines for media and police on how rule of law institution and the institution which guards the public's right to know can better interact. The OSCE also is supporting the government's proposal to

were never able to prove" to "a very valuable tool for our future strategy development." In some cases the analysis had direct impact on ongoing activities. The OSCE Mission is now using the results to adjust its strategy for helping establish a more sustainable and qualitative electronic media sector.

However, not all findings were negative. There are also a small number of stations on the air with a good understanding of what the audience expects and what role media could play in a democratic society. Radio Contact Plus in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica north, for example, is highly regarded for its news and informative programs. Radio Tema in Ferizaj/Uroševac and Radio Dodona in Glogovc/Glogovac have developed efficient concepts for maintaining good relationship between their radio station and their audience.

A number of other media outlets could also be pointed out for all of their positive practices. However, one radio station catches the attention for the simplicity of its story. Radio Restelica, located in a secluded village way up in the mountains, is due to lack of almost any other communication technology a real community station. If a doctor is needed, he is asked to help through the radio. If an accident happens, people are mobilized through the radio. If somebody marries it is also on the air so that the village can celebrate. Only in the event of a death it's different: then the owner turns the transmitters off, and still everybody knows.

decriminalize defamation, thus eradicating "the chilling effect", as the Freedom of Media Representative calls it, enabling journalists to work in a freer atmosphere.

However not is all bright and rosy, as the first article points out. The reality is that most local media are not sustainable in their present state. Media will have to begin looking at ways to survive, or economic realities will force them off the air. The market cannot sustain present numbers.

The Minority Media Strategy that was adopted by the government earlier this year should do much to ensure that non-Albanian Communities have access to media in their own language, and grants will be provided to support the expansion and sustainability of minority media outlets.

Yet the OSCE will not simply push aside its media development mandate, but the basic development has been done. The institutions which the Mission has helped set up – the Independent Media Commission, the Press Council, and the Kosovo Media Institute which will begin operating next year – will take on greater authority as locally-run institutions looking out for the interests of Kosovo's media

We hope that you will find this DETAILS interesting, in particular the type and breadth of work done by the OSCE office in Lipjan/Lipljan. Our work does have an impact on people's lives.

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TV Journalists in Gjilan/Gnjilane given a helping hand

Radka Betcheva, OSCE

Neglected in terms of its importance, local news media – from rural radio stations to suburban newsletters – are nonetheless the information source of first choice for many citizens. By virtue of their proximity to a particular area, local journalists can best provide information tailored to the needs of a specific community or geographical audience. Combining reports on local issues with relevant national news, stories of local origin have an important affect upon regional public opinion and, in turn, the wider public as a whole.

If producing unbiased, qualitative and informative reports, local news media can ensure that municipal and community leaders are held accountable for their decisions, and can, more generally, exert influence on the processes of democratization and post-conflict reconciliation. Local news media are especially important during a transitional period, such as that currently underway in Kosovo, where the ability of media to motivate and actively involve people in social process, such as the implementation of Standards for Kosovo, is crucial.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane, the OSCE has been working to upgrade the professional skills of regional television journalists. Stemming from the OSCE Mission in Kosovo's work

to ensure that the media functions in accordance with respected journalistic standards, the aim was primarily to improve reporting on local issues and encourage a higher level of professionalism, responsibility and accountability to audiences.

Between July and September, seventeen keen local television journalists from Gjilan/Gnjilane region were selected by the OSCE Office to take part in two workshops delivered by trainers from the Deutsche Welle Akademie – the German International Centre for the Training of Journalists. Topics covered were news production and documentaries and reporting.

The journalists – working for both Kosovo Serbian and Kosovo Albanian local television stations – were guided by the Akademie trainers so as to improve their news reporting on local political, economical and social issues. Their stories were thoroughly discussed and analyzed by both participants and trainers. Practical advice and recommendations were offered by the trainers and examples of research and writing from Germany and elsewhere were shared amongst all.

“What I like about these workshops is that they've been really very practical - especially

the production part,” said Vjosë Kryeziu, a journalist at TV VALI, after one session,

During the documentary and reporting workshop, media production samples of the participants, who came from Kosovo Serbian, Albanian and Roma communities, were screened and discussed. A documentary about the 1999 war, produced by an Albanian TV station provoked discussions about reporting in a post-conflict environment.

“For me, the talk about ‘5 shot theory’ was probably the most interesting part of the workshops,” said Gyner Muja, a cameraman at TV MEN. “In the exercises, I learned how to take proper pictures and to send a message to the audience through the pictures I shoot.”

Both trainings appeared to be highly appreciated by the participants, who seemed to agree that the knowledge that they acquired was very useful for their professional activities. Nenad Naskovic, from TV ZOOM, was particularly positive after the final training session: “I'm convinced that we've improved our knowledge and skills. In the future, these workshops can only help me in my work, so I can deal successfully with any difficult situations I come across.”



Training on news and documentaries production provided to number of Gjilan/Gnjilane region journalists from July to September 2005 included a number of practical exercises.

Decriminalization of defamation and insult

Mevlyde Salihu, OSCE

A Kosovo delegation comprised of four members of the Kosovo Assembly's Media Committee and two legal advisors to the Prime Minister traveled to Strasbourg, France, on 12 October 2005 to attend an experts' meeting organized by the Council of Europe to review Kosovo's Draft Law on Defamation and Insult.

This Draft Law, initially developed by the Kosovo's Prime Ministers Legal Office, in cooperation with international and national experts, and with the assistance of the OSCE Mission and the Temporary Media Commissioner two months ago, should soon be put up for the adoption by the Assembly. Once adopted, it will decriminalize defamation and insult.

This means that charges of defamation and insults raised in Kosovo will no longer be treated as a criminal act but under the Civil Law. Proven cases of defamation will no longer be subject to sentencing with imprisonment but rather with monetary fines and other penalties that may include publishing public apologies and retractions.

In Kosovo there have been a number of recorded cases of a journalist being sentenced to imprisonment over insult or defamation. These records date from both before and after the 1999 conflict period.

"There was a case in June 2004 of a media correspondent from Prizren who was sentenced to imprisonment but released on bail. Since the Law on Defamation and Insult is still a part of the Criminal Law these journalists, if sentenced again in the near future, would have to serve the time in prison," said Shpresa Mulliqi, Assistant Programme Officer the OSCE Mission's Democratization Department. "Therefore, removing defamation legislation from the Criminal Law of Kosovo and include it in the Civil Law is of the utmost importance and urgency," she added.

The Experts' Meeting in Strasbourg was used to both review the Draft Law and incorporate Council of Europe's expertise, as well as to gain further support of the legislators for the decriminalization of defamation process.

Participants of the Strasbourg meeting now agree and hope that the Draft Law will soon be adopted and that defamation and insult will soon be decriminalized. However, the development cycle for laws have a number of stages. Draft laws go through a series of reviews, and the latest one that took place in Strasbourg is certainly not the last.

The current Draft Law on Defamation and Insult is based on a number of similar laws

developed in Southeast Europe. It is, however, adjusted to Kosovo specific conditions. "The adjustments were made to ensure that the law corresponds with Kosovan mentality and culture, as well as with the finesse that characterizes our people," said Mulliqi. "Changes that were agreed upon in Strasbourg will now be included in the Draft," she added.

The Draft Law, as it stands now, still has to be put up for a public hearing which might result in further amendments. Following the public hearing the Draft Law will be put through the adoption procedure at the Assembly and then once more, before entering into force, it will be sent to the Council of Europe, as well as to the European Court for Human Rights to ensure that it upholds human rights principles and that it is in line with other applicable laws in Europe.

Meanwhile, Kosovo media are not an exception when it comes to violating media code of conduct. "We have media in Kosovo that often distort facts and manipulate with truth. These occurrences can be classified either as an insult or as defamation," explains Mulliqi.

Nonetheless it is crucial that journalists when developing their stories, for the best or for the worst, do not fear imprisonment. While unfair or unsubstantiated written or broadcast stories are often geared against political figures, it is very important in a democracy that these same figures can not use the instrument of imprisonment to scare journalist and discourage them from publicizing on sensitive issues, like corruption or other socially unacceptable practices.

Since 1999, all the media conduct related complaints were, at the first instance, adjudicated by the Temporary Media Commissioner. There were cases when media faced substantially high financial fines. However, individuals feeling unsatisfied with the Commissioner's decision could go to municipal courts and raise charges under the Criminal Law. The best example is that of Prizren correspondents.

Once the new Law comes into force, it will regulate the defamation and insult complains under the Civil Law and violators will be fined and not imprisoned. In support of the Law, the Press Council and Independent Media Commission, both being established with OSCE's support, will serve as self-regulatory and regulatory bodies for print and broadcasts media respectively.



Kosovo delegation comprised of four member of the Kosovo Assembly's Media Committee and two legal advisors (to left and to right) accompanied by the Temporary Media Commissioner, Robert Gillette (center), attended the meeting organized by Council of Europe on 12 October 2005 to discuss Kosovo's Draft Law on Defamation and Insult.

Kosovo press regulates itself through the Press Council

Journalists often say that the news born in the dawn is no longer the news by the time the sun sets. To keep up with this intensive news cycle journalists around the world are constantly looking for the new news and stories. In doing so, they sometimes do not act in accordance with the Press Code of Conduct. Therefore, media monitoring and corrective interventions are needed. These are normally undertaken through self-regulatory media mechanisms.

Lizabeta Paloka, OSCE

Following the end of 1999 conflict, the work of local media was not regulated by any single domestic institution. Back then, to remedy this situation, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the Institution Building Pillar of the UN's provisional administration, established the Office of the Temporary Media Commissioner. The Office was then charged with regulating the work of both print and electronic media. But this institution, as its name says, is temporary. A long term solution to regulating the work of media lies in establishing local regulatory bodies.

Press Council established

One such body was established this summer. The Press Council, as it is called, is an association of print media outlets, and as such it serves as a self-regulatory body. The Council's main task is to monitor the conduct of print media and ensure that they adhere to the principles spelled out in the Press Code of Conduct that was adopted by all media players in spring this year. To become a Council member a print media outlet must sign on to the Press Code as well as the Council's Statute.

The members of the Press Council, representing Kosovo's leading newspapers, have vested it with considerable powers and authority. For example, the Council can impose financial fines or instruct media to print its adjudications.

Contributing to freedom of expression

However, its members do not see the Council as a body that should oppress media. They see it as a body that should contribute to freedom of expression and self-regulation. Predrag Radonjic, the Deputy Director of the Council's Board, says that the Press Council can function properly only if all willingly involved print media are careful not to impose restrictive measures.

His colleague, Gani Mehmetaj, Executive Director of the daily newspaper Bota Sot and a member of the Board, says that the Press Council should take on a role of the courts in being a first instance body to address potential media misconduct cases. "The primary reason for which the Council was created was to resolve contentious

issues before they would need to reach the courts," he says. "This way the freedom of expression would not be suffocated and at the same time the newspapers would not be used by political parties as their battlefield or a problem solving mechanism."

Council's structure

The Council now conducts its works through a Board of Members and a Secretariat. The Board is tasked with reviewing and adjudicating any potential cases of Code of Conduct violation by print media. Its members are editors in chief, or their representatives, of all member newspapers published in Albanian, Serbian, Turkish and Bosnian languages, as well as three non-media affiliated and independent members nominated and elected by majority vote of the Board Members. The Secretariat, on other hand, is there to supports the Board's work.

Press Council for the residents of Kosovo

The Press Council is a self-regulatory body of Kosovo's print media. It monitors the media conduct and reacts as necessary, but

it is also open to receive complaints. Any person who feels that certain print media has caused him/her harm has the right to file a complaint with the Council (e-mail address: presscouncil.kosovo@gmail.com). The Board will review the complaint and decide on its validity. If media is found in violation the Board will penalise that media outlet with what its considers to be an appropriate measure.

Any funds collected through fines imposed on media will be used for the Council's operations as well as to remedy damage done to any single person.

OSCE's role

To jump start the work of the Council the OSCE Mission has provided it with the initial necessary financial resources, while other media donors have also pledged their support.

Striving to promote and maintain highest standards of journalism in Kosovo, apart from the support the Mission has provided with establishing the Press Council, the OSCE will continue to monitor and support the work of the Press Council together with other media watchdogs in Kosovo.



Major print media outlets participate in work of the Kosovo's Press Council.

Professionalism and fairness among Kosovo's media enters new phase

An American journalist, Robert Gillette, arrived in Kosovo just over two years ago to serve as a Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC). Now, this institution, responsible for upholding ethical and technical standards among Kosovo's media, begins a new phase.

Chris Cycmanick, OSCE

The Office of the TMC, originally established by OSCE Mission in Kosovo under the UNMIK regulation 2000/37, is currently preparing to become the Independent Media Commission (IMC).

With the transition, the TMC will transfer its responsibility for broadcast regulation to the IMC and its duties for upholding ethics in print journalism to a Press Council.

These independent institutions are to build on the TMC's tradition of promoting European standards of professionalism and fairness among Kosovo's media. Their success will be essential to the development of Kosovo's self-governing democracy and the maintenance of a free and open society.

Robert Gillette talks at length with "Details" about his tenure as TMC and the challenges that lie ahead for the IMC.

Q: In your two and plus years as the Temporary Media Commissioner, what has been the biggest challenge your office has faced?

A: It was clear from the start, in the summer of 2003, that our biggest challenge would be to persuade the OSCE and UNMIK that building truly independent, viable and professional regulatory body required that its staff not be government employees and that they be exempt from civil service, as broadcast regulators are in most of the Europe. Unfortunately, this reality conflicts with an inflexible UNMIK policy. So nearly 30 months later, our biggest challenge from 2003 still remains our biggest challenge.

Q: What do you consider as the most significant accomplishment made during your tenure as the TMC?

A: Despite the real difficulties we have faced, my colleagues and I – Gian Pietro Caliarì and Charles Ehrlich – have been lucky to build a small team of really excellent Kosovo staff who, if our biggest challenge is resolved, will form a fully professional, stable broadcast regulator. We have also found good working partners in the Office of Prime Minister and in the Assembly to develop a full suite of media legislation that meets European standards. These include the IMC law, the draft law on public broadcasting that is now in the Assembly and a draft civil law on

defamation that is now being completed.

We worked with RTK and KEK to establish a successful public broadcasting fee that should bring full financial independence to RTK by the end of next year. This year we have successfully introduced a new, more professional form of license that clarifies the operating rules for all radio and television stations, and sets the specific technical terms and conditions for each broadcaster. This new license has been well received by Kosovo broadcasters, and we appreciate their cooperation.

Finally, with the creation of a Press Council, we have been able to end our regulation of print media – as of September – so that we could concentrate on the final stage of transition to the IMC.

What all of this means is that most of the key standards for media in Kosovo have now been accomplished, or will be in the next few months.

Q: How much do you think the general public knows about the role of the TMC?

A: Probably not very much, and certainly not as much as the public should know. The most effective form of "monitoring" broadcasters and enforcing a code of ethics is through complaints from an informed public that knows what the basic ethical requirements of broadcasting are, and knows that filing a valid complaint with the regulator will bring results. This requires a sustained, systematic public education effort by the regulator over several years. The Office of the TMC has not done this. I hope that the IMC will.

Q: Has the Press Council, the body responsible for upholding ethics in print journalism, been set up yet? How do you feel it will fare in the long term?

A: The OSCE has taken the lead in working with Kosovo print media to set up the Press Council, and it is developing well enough that we have been able to end our role in regulating print media. The Press Council has not yet begun to deal with complaints, but it will very soon. The Press Council consists of all of Kosovo's daily and weekly newspapers. They compete with each other, but they understand that they have a common interest to deal fairly and effectively with

complaints from the public – to protect and build their own credibility, and to reduce the risk of having to deal with complaints in the form of lawsuits in court. This will not be easy. The Press Council will have to find a mechanism for handling complaints that does not lead to internal feuds among its members, which would be fatal to the Press Council.

Q: What's the approximate breakdown (percentage wise) of complaints received against the print and the broadcast media? Of what nature were most of the serious complaints?

A: The great majority of complaints that we have received over the past five years – more than 90% – relate to print media. Most of these complaints arose when a newspaper failed to give a person, usually a public figure, a fair chance to respond to allegations against that person. The most serious cases in the early days of the TMC related to deliberate efforts by certain newspapers, which are no longer published, to provoke attacks against certain individuals. Fortunately, we no longer see that kind of dangerous conduct. The most serious cases in the past two years have concerned the conduct of certain media in March 2004, and violations by two newspapers of media election rules in the fall of 2004.

These two cases were exceptions to the general pattern during the last election campaign, in which nearly all media worked professionally. The two newspapers have yet to pay the fines they were assessed. We are pursuing legal action to collect those fines.

Q: Have new licenses been issued this year? If so, what were the primary criteria used in assessing the applications?

A: In December 2003 we made a limited exception to our general moratorium on new licenses. We accepted applications for new minority and multi-ethnic broadcasters, or for broadcasters to serve areas that currently had no local media. We have granted seven new licenses under this policy so far and probably will grant another two or three at most, where genuine need exists and an applicant shows real promise of professionalism and an ability to run and finance a new station.



Temporary Media Commissioner, Robert Gillette, began performing his duties in summer 2003. He is the fourth and most likely the last Commissioner. The Independent Media Commission and Press Council should take over respective responsibilities of his office in early 2006.

Q: In 2001, seven Kosovo-wide licenses were issued, however there have been none since. Do you know of any plans for the IMC to issue additional Kosovo-wide licenses?

A: Yes, we have one public and two commercial, Kosovo-wide television broadcasters (RTK, TV 21 and KTV), and two public and two commercial, Kosovo-wide radio broadcasters (Radio Kosova and Radio Blue Sky, which are part of RTK, and Radio 21 and Radio Dukagjini.) Each of these broadcasters requires a number of different frequencies, operating in various locations around Kosovo, in order to cover the entire territory. Plus, Kosovo has more than 100 other local broadcasters. As a result, the frequency spectrum in Kosovo – which is not large place – is rather full. We doubt whether there is room for another Kosovo-wide television broadcaster. And even if there were still room in the frequency spectrum, a broadcast regulator must consider whether the advertising market in this weak economy would be sufficient to support a fourth television. Television is expensive. Letting too many broadcasters eat from the same small plate risks all of them being malnourished. In any case, we cannot know the plans of the IMC until the IMC's governing Council is appointed, mainly by the Assembly. We hope this process will be finished by the end of this year. Then the TMC becomes history and the IMC becomes the permanent broadcast regulator for Kosovo.

Q: What are your future plans?

A: I'll think about that when we get to the future.

Kosovo media create their own mid-career journalism training institute

"Kosovo Media Institute has been established at the initiative and with the support of the OSCE Mission should start functioning very soon. Given that media themselves are the founders, they are expected to use Institute's services to the greatest extent possible. This primarily educational institution will contribute to the creation of a more democratic dialogue between different ethnic communities through means of modern media," said Zenun Çelaj, Institute's

Arben Hajredinaj, OSCE

Changing approach

Over the last five years, the OSCE Mission has been delivering media training programmes benefiting journalists working in Kosovo. However, it is too soon to cease its activities in this field. Rather than providing and supporting series of trainings the Mission will now support the work of the Kosovo's own journalistic educational institution – the Kosovo Media Institute.

History of the Institute

Back in March 2004, the OSCE invited the Danish School of Journalism to look into the needs towards establishing a mid-career journalistic training institution. The Danes, accompanied by representatives of the Albanian Media Institute and the Open Society Institute, held a number of meetings with key media and donor community representatives. Their findings indicated that

Kosovo's media houses wanted and needed further education and that donors were willing to support such a project.

To initiate the process of establishing the Kosovo Media Institute, the OSCE supported the initial KMI team - formed by one representative each from the Danish School of Journalism, the Albanian Media Institute, and the Belgrade based Centre for Media Professionalization – in establishing



The Memorandum of Understanding between Kosovo Media Institute, Danish School of Journalism and the OSCE Mission on the establishment and support to the Institute was signed in Prishtinë/Priština in September 2005.

Sustainability issues

After initial meetings of the KMI team with representatives of the donor community, several agencies expressed interest in supporting KMI. However, KMI's institution building requires a group of core donors who would support KMI for an estimated period of 3 years needed for its full consolidation

In the interim, KMI will develop projects and programmes towards self-financing. Moreover, the Chairman of KMI's Board, Agron Bajrami, Editor-in-Chief of *Koha Ditore*, has developed a strategic financing scheme that includes contributions from media houses. Nonetheless, having in mind the difficult

an all-inclusive KMI Working Group. The Working Group, which when established included media representatives from all regions in Kosovo, was charged with creating a platform and securing conditions for the establishment of the Institute. Their primary concerns were the quality of future training and financial sustainability.

Set objectives

The Working Group developed the KMI concept. With a consensus they agreed that the Institute should support the upgrading of professional skills, standards and ethics, as well as the development of independent, free and pluralistic media in Kosovo. The Institute is also to support the participation of Kosovo media and journalists in regional and international associations and events to develop links between local and international media professionals.

"Newsrooms and some crash courses were the only journalistic education available to us in the seventies," said Zenun Çelaj, the Deputy Chairman of the KMI Board and Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Zëri*, while talking about the importance of KMI. "This

primarily educational institution will contribute to the creation of a more democratic dialogue between different ethnic communities through means of modern media," he added.

Current status

The Kosovo Media Institute was registered as a not-for-profit legal entity on 27 October 2005. As many other media institutes in the region, of which most were founded with the help of the Danish School of Journalism, KMI will have to work very hard on becoming self-sustainable.

The OSCE Mission will secure the funds needed to "kick start" the Institute's functioning in 2006. To lower overhead expenditures, KMI is looking to cooperate with the Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communications (KIJAC), a Norwegian Government funded school of journalism providing a Master of Arts degree in journalism and serving as a pre-career educational institution.

The KMI and the KIJAC now fill the media institution building gap that has existed for a number of years.

financial situation of media in Kosovo, it is not likely that they will be able to make significant contributions to KMI's work.

In this regards, Mr. Çelaj said: "The founders of the Institute, Kosovo media, will have it hard with providing for the normal functioning of KMI. I hope that they will, however, after their professional and financial consolidation, have a vast interest to invest in their future professional upgrade with KMI. I believe that investments in the mid-career training for journalists play an important role in the development of Kosovo and the region, and especially in the creation of a tolerant and democratic environment that serves the interests of all members of our society."

In addition to serving professional development purposes, the Kosovo Media Institute is also expected to become a major partner in media development efforts, in a broader context; it is expected to take over conduct of researches and analysis of media landscape and assess the need for future improvements. These types of analysis have thus far had to be conducted by the international organizations present in Kosovo, primarily the OSCE.

KOSMA Network seeking to become a news agency in the long run

Hasan Sopa, OSCE



Ženet Mujić is the Mission's programme officer who deals with freedom of the media issues.

In the wake of the conflict in 1999, Kosovo's minority ethnic communities faced real difficulty receiving even the most basic of information from the media. Isolated by their limited access to information, only a small number of media outlets were able to provide local news and information services to minority communities in minority languages. These days, however, minority ethnic community radio stations are widely active across Kosovo, providing a unique and essential service for the different populations here.

The KOSMA Network is one such service that has been successfully delivering radio shows for Serbian-speaking minorities for over a year now. Funded through a 2001 grant from the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), the network has allowed nearly 30 radio stations to provide news and information to their listeners.

The OSCE, as the organization responsible for setting up KOSMA with the help of local partners, took on the project under its remit to support a diverse and self-sustainable media sector in Kosovo. Notwithstanding, the setting up of KOSMA arose primarily from a pressing election consideration.

Radio Gračanica produced the first programme

"The international community realized that the Serb community in the enclaves didn't really have access to information on the first Kosovo elections," says Ženet Mujić, the OSCE Programme Officer dealing with freedom of the media. By establishing a Kosovo Serb radio network, the Mission hoped to overcome the problem of disseminating information about the elections to Serbian-speaking minorities.

According to Mujić, the KOSMA Network was a challenging project that incorporated three years of technical preparation. "It evolved in January 2002 and was launched during the winter of 2002/2003 when the process of setting-up and journalists' training began." The first news programme made possible by KOSMA and produced by 'Radio Gračanica' went live on 20 September 2004 – the first time in five years that a radio programme in the Serbian language was broadcast over the whole of Kosovo.

Lack of informative programme and professional journalists

Prior to this date, most ethnic minority radio stations operated with the same weakness – a lack of informative broadcasting. "Very few produced their own programmes," says Mujić. "They mainly re-broadcast news and information from Belgrade, thus not only neglecting the reporting of events from Kosovo, but also giving room to mainly Belgrade-focused reports." Part of the problem lay in the fact that many stations lacked enough professional journalists who could prepare objective news from independent sources to a high technical and journalistic standard.

The aim of KOSMA was to create a network for all 27 existing Serbian-speaking radio stations located in Serb enclaves around Kosovo. As Mujić explains, "It was estimated that 80 percent of Kosovo Serbs would be listening to the network's member stations." These stations were divided into two primary groups: five core stations technically enabled to send and receive data; and, several smaller stations able to receive and broadcast their programme.

Radio Goraždevac an impressive radio station

KOSMA's radio news programme is produced by the five core radio stations, who rotate on a weekly basis the responsibility for its production. "Each week, the designated station receives input from the other stations, such as features, news and information related to every day life in Kosovo," says Mujić. "This is something they didn't have in the past."

The 30 minute news bulletin is divided into two parts. The first section offers local news, whereas the second covers documentary programmes. "Many people in the enclaves had no idea what was happening in other

parts of Kosovo, or even close by to where they live. This was especially true for the Serbian community, whose movement has frequently been limited to the enclaves."

In terms of providing qualitative information, the most impressive radio station is Radio Goraždevac, Mujić says. "It's a tiny station, but one that has a committed staff and produces, in my opinion, very good programmes despite the fact that they operate in difficult circumstances."

KOSMA board re-assessing membership

However, some of the radio stations, even the five core ones, face real difficulty in recruiting good quality staff. "People are constantly leaving and because of this the quality of the programmes can be affected," explains Mujić.

Another problem that KOSMA is facing is that some of the radio stations have recently decided to no longer to be a part of the network, says Mujić. "Radio Gračanica for example, was no longer willing to broadcast features and news pieces containing a 'multiethnic component'. They feared losing their listeners – who, according to them, are not used to multiethnic stories depicting Kosovo Albanian issues." In light of this, the managing board of KOSMA has had to re-assess its membership, with only 12 to 15 radio stations over the long run likely to keep broadcasting as part of the network.

As a sign of the times, when it comes to the self-sustainability of Kosovo's media as a whole, Mujić is of the opinion that all outlets, including KOSMA, have to move to making every programme sustainable in order to attract advertising revenues. "Basically, they have to move to adopting the structures in place in western countries so that you can actually evaluate every programme in terms of it losing or winning listeners. This has to happen here."

Despite the impact of self-sustainability, KOSMA is expected to retain its status as an important service and evolve as a news network. Demonstrating its wider appeal, the KOSMA news programme is not only known and listened to in Kosovo, but is also re-broadcast in some parts of Herzegovina and Montenegro. Radio stations in Herzegovina and Montenegro take the programme from one core station's website, and then re-broadcast it for their own listeners. "In a certain way, KOSMA could act as a real news agency in the long run," concludes Mujić.

Guidelines for police and media representatives

Edita Bučaj, OSCE

The relationship between journalists and police officers can frequently be strained. While one profession is under pressure to deliver news by day and by hour, the other must often tread carefully and patiently to foil criminals and bring them to justice.

It is commonplace for law enforcement officers and reporters to be the first on the scene of a crime incident. But because of their sometimes contradictory agendas, instead of working together they are sometimes prone to unnecessary suspicion and hostility towards one another. Understanding this, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo recently published a pocket guide aimed at preventing conflict and misunderstanding between the two groups.

Covering eight advice areas taken from laws and regulations applicable in Kosovo, the guidebook acts a quick reference tool. It offers tips on how police officers and journalists should handle the competing pres-

ures placed upon one another, providing practical examples on how to improve cooperation on crime stories and criminal investigations alike.

The guidebook, which is compliant with modern European best practices, seeks to break the pattern of newspapers, radio and television stations failing to consult with police officers. It also hopes to encourage police officers to work with journalists for the benefit of public safety and ordinary citizens' demand for news and information.

The production of the handbook, undertaken by the OSCE under its capacity-building mandate, should encourage the development of a healthy relationship of open communication between police and media, offering a two-way process which could bring important results in the area of rule of law. After all, both police and media have a common goal – to work for truth and justice.



A series of meetings and workshops were organized by the OSCE mission over the last year to facilitate better working relations between the police and the media.

Live action shorts highlight new Sesame Street season

Almost one year after coming to Kosovo, Sesame Street, the world famous children's programme, continues its run into 2006 with 26 new live action short films produced in Kosovo. The new content adds to 26 shorts already produced for the first season.

Chris Cycmanick, OSCE

The Kosovo edition of the Sesame Street series, sponsored by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, UNICEF, and USAID, began airing in December 2004. The programme, which combines fun and learning while teaching tolerance and respect, is voiced over in Albanian and Serbian with 52 episodes shown per year.

The locally produced live actions shorts are original content which portray daily life of children in Kosovo.

The segments include such titles as "my long walk to school" and "this is my family," as well as feature traditional dances and music, a visit to the dentist, a blind Kosovo Albanian boy teaching his sister to play piano, children of a Roma community celebrating spring, and Serbian youngsters enjoying a school puppet show.

Each film was sent to "Sesame Street Workshop" whose producers in New York reviewed each sequence and all statements of Kosovo children and to what extent the scenarios were authentic. Sesame Street's main goal is that children understand the films' messages and identify themselves with the content and that they learn from it.

Shpresa Mulliqi, OSCE Mission employee and a mother of three, says her children

always look forward to the programme. "My kids enjoy the show in any language. They're fascinated in being introduced to children from other cultures. They realize they are just like them -- the same songs, movies, and common interests. In short, they wonder why they don't socialize with

these boys and girls," Mulliqi states. "Parents even see the goodness and cultural richness of Kosovo," she adds.

The new season of Sesame Street promises to build on a foundation that teaches children the importance of core values during their tender years.



Airing of 52 weekly Sesame Street series began in December 2004. Children in Kosovo will have the pleasure to see the new 52 weekly series beginning in December 2005.

OSCE Office Lipjan/Lipljan: Welcome - Mirë se vini - Dobrodošli!

The following articles give an insight in the work of the OSCE Office in Lipjan/Lipljan that in its area of responsibility covers three municipalities - Lipjan/Lipljan, Shtime/Štimlje and Glogovc/Glogovac.

Articles written by: *Edit Kovacs, Luras Oseku, Vardon Hoxha, Mirdita Retkoceri, Berat Reçica, Predrag Rašić, Vladan Trifić*

The OSCE Office Lipjan/Lipljan is located in the area that is often being referred to as "mini Kosovo". Kosovo Serb, Roma, Ashkali, Croat and Bosniak communities coexist with the Kosovo Albanian majority community in the true meaning of that word.

According to the Head of Office, Edit Kovacs, this is the main reason why the Mission's Human Rights Expert programme was first piloted in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality. "The programme was to provide municipal authorities with the human rights expertise in order to ensure that municipal legislation and actions are compliant with international and in particular with the European human rights standards," she says and adds: "There was a fertile ground for it here." This programme was soon extended to Glogovc/Glogovac and Shtime/Štimlje.

Furthermore, the Office's Democratization Team supports the above mentioned municipalities. It monitors their work and provides advice and tailor-made capacity building programs. "There is fertile ground for these activities too," says Kovacs.

In light of the future restructuring within UNMIK and the OSCE, Kovacs expects that ties between the OSCE and the municipalities will become even stronger. The OSCE is

likely to establish Monitoring Teams in each of Kosovo's thirty municipalities. "Teams of Human Rights and Democratization Officers are envisaged to work side-by-side with our PISG counterparts on daily basis. Both our office and the municipal leaderships welcome this approach and are looking forward to its implementation early next year," says Kovacs, and adds: "As a matter of fact Lipjan/Lipljan has been selected to be amongst four pilot municipality where this approach will first be put to work."

As it is the case throughout Kosovo, no two municipalities are the same. They reflect different levels of development, demographic indicators, ethnic composition and societal realities. While most issues and challenges differ, similarities can also be discovered, e.g. the common problems of unemployment and lack of economic prospects. "The OSCE, with the help of all local and international partners on the ground endeavours to understand in-depth the complexity of the environment and respond to the needs of the communities," explains Kovacs.

She emphasizes that all the OSCE projects highlighted through the following articles address these concerns by building bridges between communities and providing for

active involvement of grass-root levels of the society in their execution and decision making processes.



Edit Kovacs heads the OSCE Office Lipjan/Lipljan since the summer of 2003.

Glogovc/Glogovac-an exception to the rule

"We did well in standards evaluation. We got remarks only on language compliance which is acceptable, as we are an 'exception', we have no minorities here," says Ibrahim Hajdari, Municipal Standards Co-ordinator in Glogovc/Glogovac. In fact, according to the standards assessment compiled by the PISG Ministry of Local Government Administration there are only two "burning" issues in Glogovc/Glogovac: non-compliance with language policy and citizens' participation in decision-making process.

Transparency as a priority

As for the first challenge, the municipal officials share the opinion of the Municipal Standards Co-ordinator. As for the citizens' participation, Ragip Gjoshi, Municipal Information Officer, says: "Transparency and accountability without any doubt com-

prise the basis of democracy. Our municipality prioritizes transparency."

Gjoshi lists achievements such as regular meetings with citizens, the municipal board and 'Spektri' Magazine – the municipal bulletin financed by the OSCE in support of the Municipal Information Officers' work. "Through the Municipal Bulletin 'Spektri', we aim at sharing the views and information on municipal activities. We also think that we do not have the right to judge on what is right or wrong – when it comes to sharing information. Our task is to inform the public," adds Gjoshi.

OSCE's support and advice appreciated

The President of the Municipal Assembly, Gani Sylaj, highly acknowledges the support and advice the OSCE has given in the process of the Standards implementation.

"We were the first municipality to publicly condemn the defacement of the road signs in Serbian language and we acted coherently. The signs were repaired immediately," Says Sylaj.

As the most significant activities of the municipality he mentions the Industrial Park of Glogovc/Glogovac. "We received a Governmental grant in the value of 3.1 million euros after winning a central level competition." Mr. Sylaj also mentions various municipal projects financed by donors, such as the World Bank and Riinvest Institute. "With this type of financial assistance the municipality managed to draft the Strategy for Local Economic Development," he says.

When asked about the problems he quickly responds: "Lack of expertise in drafting local legislation and the 'centralized way of governance' cause problems, especially in the field of municipal inspection."

OSCE's contribution to the re-integration of communities in Magurë/Magura

Relations between Kosovo Albanian, Ashkali, Serb and Roma communities in the ethnically mixed village of Magurë/Magura in Lipjan/Lipljane municipality were friendly prior to 1999 when over 1460 miners of the Magura Mines ate the same bread.

Rahim Rexhepi, local Ashkali and the coordinator of the Catch-up Classes – a joint project of the OSCE Mission and the PISG Ministry of Education, Science and Technology that supports inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in mainstream education – says these relations are pleasant again. The main challenge the village faces, however, is unemployment and lack of educational prospects.

Return process

The return process in Magurë/Magura began in mid-2002, with the first eleven Ashkali families returning to the village. According to the community representative, Hasan Avdullahu, 35 returnee families now live there.

However, not all families were strong enough to stay. Some seven families decided to leave over the last four and a half years due to lack of economic opportunities.

Assisting the Lipjan/Lipljan municipality facilitated return process of Ashkali and Roma families from the Plementina camp to Magurë/Magura through a social housing scheme, the OSCE Office initiated a very welcomed practical business training for the economically disadvantaged population. Training includes development of business skills and since August 2005 to date 250 people benefited.

Integrating society

Re-integrating a local community is not easy explains Lulzim Qerimi, Ashkali and

beneficiary of the OSCE's training. His new profession, electrician, was the key to his integration into Magurë/Magura society. "We as a community can not integrate if we don't have contacts with other communities. Until now I have worked in about 50 to 60 percent of households in Magurë/Magura. Thanks to my profession most villagers greet me when they see me around," he says. "Contact and interaction is the main reason which made me think of opening a multi-ethnic Youth Centre which would attract Ashkali, Roma and Albanian communities from three surrounding villages."

Need for education

A multi-ethnic youth centre would not be Qerimi's first initiative. With the OSCE's assistance he has already established an NGO called 'Ashkan'.

While the primary objective of 'Ashkan' is to help out all communities by providing humanitarian aid, mainly food and clothing, as well as basic computer literacy and foreign language courses, they strive to achieve sustainable development through sufficient education.

According to Qerimi, who was computer illiterate until establishing 'Ashkan', the Ashkali community has been education-wise in stagnation for the last 15 years. It was not till 2003 that a few children from the Ashkali community were welcomed to the 'Jeronim de Rada' primary school in Magurë/Magura.

The community now hopes to send more kids to school, but many of their children have an educational gap as they were not able to attend school with children of their age. In response, the OSCE Mission and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, in October 2004 began implementing a programme of Catch-up Classes designed to ease inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in mainstream education.

To date, some 70 school children from Magurë/Magura, Mostinë/Mostina, Hallaq i Vogël/Mali Halas, Dobrajë e Vogël/Mala Dobraja and Vrellë/Vrela villages have attended the Catch-up Classes. Twenty school classes a week were taught by Albanian teachers in multi-ethnic classes where student varied in age from 8 to 17 – and in one exceptional case, 25. As of the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year, the majority of these students, managed to enrol grades matching their age.

It takes knowledge to give knowledge

Rahim Rexhepi, a local Ashkali who is now a year away from his law degree, co-ordinates the Catch-up Classes programme locally. Married with seven children he wants to ensure that education is available to all and fully supports the education activities undertaken by 'Ashkan'. He also says that Ashkali with an education must pass the knowledge and skill they have to others living around them regardless of their ethnicity. "That is why I find Catch-up Classes all that important," he says.

Problems remain

But problems still remain. Avdullahu says that the community has been cut of electrical power supply since September 2005 and that no solution has yet been found. "We have approached municipality regarding this issue but we got no response," he says. He also pointed out that Ashkali are not given equal employment opportunities. "You can not find event cleaner from our community employed at health institutions," he claims and says: "We just want jobs and prospect for a brighter future."

The long-awaited privatization of the Magurë/Magura mine, envisaged for early 2006, might do just that. There are great hopes that re-opening of mine will improve economic situation and lives all communities living in the village.



35 Ashkali returnee families now live in Magurë/Magura village.

Integration through the eyes of Youth

In October 2005, members of the Lipjan/Lipljan Youth Assembly implemented their latest project. They presented Standards for Kosovo in a creative and innovative fashion. Financed by the OSCE, and supported by Irish KFOR and the PISG, the Stand-Parade (Parade on Standards for Kosovo) gave a chance to people to see how youth perceive the Standards, especially the one on freedom of movement.

Youth Assembly – the beginning

The Lipjan/Lipljan Youth Assembly was formed in June 2003 as part of OSCE's project "Youth Assemblies for Community Development". It provides young people with an opportunity to make use of their willingness for participation in the youth-related decision-making processes within the local government structures.

The Youth Assembly simulates the work of the Municipal Assembly. In Lipjan/Lipljan it is a forum of around 25 young people from all communities who feel free to express their opinion, interests and take decisions in a transparent and democratic way.

Through the programme, young people receive training on a range of topics. They learn about democracy, participatory decision making and implement projects that address their concerns and issues relating to their community.

The Youth Assembly of Lipjan/Lipljan has implemented a variety of projects. They managed to reconstruct the basketball field in Lipjan/Lipljan, near the sport youth centre. They also organized a sport tournament and made a documentary film about freedom of movement. Their latest project was the Stand Pared that sent message to all that Standards for Kosovo are important to youth.

Training, capacity building, networking

"As Youth Assembly members, we have participated in a variety of trainings, which helped us to build up a good team and gave us a useful input for our work and project implementation. We also participated in a number of training camps in Brezovica and Montenegro where we had the chance to meet, network and work with members of other Youth Assemblies from Kosovo municipalities," says Bujar Bytyqi, member of Lipjan/Lipljan Youth Assembly.

"The Youth Assembly will continue its activities next year with OSCE's financial support. The extra possibilities available to youth with the OSCE's involvement are crucial to the lasting impact of the project. Hopefully, by the end of the next year the Assemblies will be sufficiently developed to facilitate their transformation into NGOs that can raise funds internationally to ensure financial sustainability for the future beyond the OSCE," says Youth Assemblies project co-ordinator, Mathew Minns.

Achievements and challenges

"At first I thought that participating in the Youth Assembly meetings and activities was a waste of my time but after seeing results of our work I started believing otherwise," says Mirlinda Jashanica, a Youth Assembly member.

A similar view is shared by the President of the Youth Assembly, Albulena Brestovci. "My starting point was that the Youth Assembly was just another political body dictating the youth, just like the Municipal Assemblies. I don't like politics, therefore, I never thought of being a member and lastly of being its president. But after all, now I really think differently because this is a very good opportunity to establish new contacts with the youth in my municipality, in Kosovo and out of Kosovo. This is also the best chance to share our experiences in all areas of life. I am really happy that I can contribute to the Youth Assembly and through this contribute to my community, to my municipality and to Kosovo."

However, the work of the Youth Assembly is not always without obstacles and often reflects Kosovo's reality. One of the greatest challenges is to reconcile the different ethnic communities and that is what Lipjan/Lipljan Youth Assembly strives to achieve.



Stand parade organized by Lipjan/Lipljane Youth Assembly in October 2005 presented Standards for Kosovo in creative and innovative fashion.

OSCE assists small scale business development in rural areas

Today, six years after the conflict, one would agree that the overall situation in Kosovo has shown improvement. Progress has been accomplished in many areas, albeit at different paces.

Positive developments have been reached in public life as democratic institutions becoming increasingly effective. Nevertheless, the economy, especially at the local level, is in a severe condition. Shifting from a state regulated economy to an open market one is usually accompanied with challenges and difficulties. As it is often the case, rural areas are most affected.

Unemployment biggest concern

Shtime/Štimlje and Lipjan/Lipljan are no different. The economic situation is the single most important concern in these Municipalities. Estimated unemployment reaches 70 percent and is potentially higher amongst minority communities. "Our office has registered 3,213 unemployed persons out of which 1,253 are female," says Zeqeria Sadriu, Employment Officer at Shtime/Štimlje Municipality.

A similar statement was given by her counterpart from Lipjan/Lipljan Municipality, Ismet Gashi, who says that in his municipality the total number of registered unemployed persons reaches 9,902 out of which 4,090 are female. They both believe that figures are not even close to the real ones and one would assess that this might reflect the lack of peoples confidence in the ability of municipal structures to cope with these matters.

After consulting with various Municipal officials, community stakeholders from all communities and local NGO's, the OSCE Office developed the project "Capacity Building for Disadvantaged Groups in Rural Areas of Lipjan/Lipljan and Shtime/ Štimlje". The objective of this project that commenced on 1 October 2005 is to contribute to the development of small size enterprises and to secure municipal support for small scale business projects.

More than 170 persons - with a priority given to women and population from rural areas - representing all communities are now participating in a series of training sessions aimed at developing the knowledge and skills necessary to start a small scale business. Topics, such as how to conduct research before establishing a business and how to establish a business, how to market a product and how to keep track of businesses input and outputs, how to manage staff

and how to apply for business loans are all discussed throughout the training sections aiming at developing practical business skills.

Local NGOs as implementing partners

In order to ensure maximum ownership and sustainability, local NGOs have been exclusively selected to implement the projects. Youth Vision and HandiKos, both very experienced NGOs are carrying out activities in both above mentioned municipalities. Up to now trainings were organized in Shtime/Štimlje town, Lipjan/Lipljan town and Vojnovc/Vojnovce village and more than 90 participants attended so far.

One of the trainers, Bekim Grainca, explains

their approach: "We are trying to use a practical approach as much as possible. We want participants to be able to transfer the knowledge gained through the training and apply it in their daily life. We do have good contacts with participants now and we will continue to have contacts with them in the future to support them when they start facing real challenges."

The project co-ordinator for Shtime/Štimlje municipality, Tafë Fazliu, from HandiKos says that the project is well received both by the participants and the Municipal Officials because it is proving to be relevant to daily life in Kosovo. "The participants are getting used to draft business plans and to implement them. They also learn how to apply for business loans with different credit organizations," says Fazliu.



OSCE's capacity building project for members of minority groups in Lipjan/Lipljane region include development of applicable business skills.

Staro Gracko/Grackë e Vjetër: A new beginning?

The village of Staro Gracko/Grackë e Vjetër was established in the early 1920s. It was designed and built by Russian civil engineers, and was one of the first 'urbanized' villages in Kosovo. The construction of new houses has not changed the original beauty of the village. The green fields around the village and lots of trees creates a picturesque sight. A newly renovated primary school in the centre of the village and the recently built Youth Centre with a big football ground and sports field right next to it give village a fresh look.

Lack of possibilities for the citizens

This picture quickly changes after the first conversations with the villagers. Sadness, sorrow and no hope for a better future – this is what their stories tell us.

Since 1999, around 180 villagers have left the village and after the March 2004 riots six additional families fled. Meanwhile, only two families returned to the village. Residents mention the lack of the freedom of movement, isolation from other Kosovo Serb villages and lack of economic prospects as the primary reasons for the above. Employment figures are indicative: only eleven people are employed in the school and the village's health unit, two work in KPS and five are prison guards.

Furthermore, large projects implemented by international donors and the PISG Kosovo-wide somehow did not reach the village. The villagers complain that they have been forgotten by all despite a very high voter turnout in the 2002, comparing to other areas populated by Kosovo Serbs.

Support of the OSCE

Nonetheless, the OSCE has continuously helped this village. Two years ago, when English language classes and computer courses were organized in the Youth Centre in Lipjan/Lipljan town the OSCE Office extended these same activities to the Youth Centre in Staro Gracko/Grackë e vjetër.

"I am very grateful for OSCE's help and support towards our village" says Zoran Cirković, community leader and manager of the Youth Centre in Staro Gracko/Grackë e Vjetër. "Throughout all these years we have had excellent co-operation and we have supported all activities undertaken in the area. When it was hard for Kosovo Serbs to participate in the registration and elections process, the turnout of our village was over 80 percent," he said.

Referring to a recently approved project aimed at supporting and revitalizing cultural, sport and youth life in the village, Zoran Cirković expresses his gratitude:

"I would like to use this opportunity and express a special appreciation to Edit Kovacs and Predrag Rašić for all their help. The project will be of great importance for the people who decided to stay here. It will improve our quality of life. Through this project we got basic equipment for drawing and painting classes, sport section, literature section, equipment for dancing ensemble and providing chairs for cinema hall." The project is funded by the US government, managed by the OSCE's Ethnic Community Sustainability Fund (ECSF) and implemented by Youth Centre in Staro Gracko/Grackë e Vjetër.

A giant step for the village

"What future is there for the young people upon completion of school?" asks school teacher Mileva Pešić. "When noticing that our youngsters are hopeless and scared, the school staff, with the active support of village leader Zoran Cirković, decided to re-activate our Cultural Club "St. Sava". Thanks to the International Organization for Migration and the Finnish KFOR who built

the Youth Centre, we now have a place to gather all our young people. We started to organize a dance ensemble, a literature section, drawing and painting sections, a sport section and with the assistance of the OSCE we began providing computer courses and English lessons. We also organized a mobile library that visits remote villages," she says.

These initiatives are now also enjoying the financial support of the Ministry for Youth, Sport and Culture. Through its ECSF project, the OSCE is now also helping further equip the Youth Center with table tennis apparel, drawing and painting materials, folk outfits for the dance ensemble and chairs for a cinema hall.

"We are all convinced that these projects will help to create better life conditions for the village's youth. We are also hoping to get more opportunities to interact with other communities as we already have with youth of Janjevë/Janjevo. We strongly believe that time has come for us to integrate in the Kosovo society, because living detached is no longer possible," concludes Mileva Pešić.



"We strongly believe that time has come for us to integrate in the Kosovo society," says Mileva Pešić, primary school teacher from Janjevë/Janjevo.

THE GAZI NATION



Campaign of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning supported by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo