

DETAILS

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Voters Look to More than Just Colourful Promises

As the election campaign officially opened, a small donkey named Polly strolled in Pristina's city centre garnering the attention of the passers by who stopped to either stroke it or just wonder at the donkey's message.

By Zana Limani and Driton Maliqi, IWPR

The donkey was walking under huge posters picturing main political figures and containing various slogans covering almost every billboard in the city and the walls of public buildings.

Those with the donkey were representatives of 'Levizja.com,' a youth movement pushing for social changes. They introduced their four-legged friend as a mock independent candidate in the election with a banner wrapped around it that said 'Vote for me, as I guarantee you independence.'

Krenar Gashi, a 21 year old and one of the founders of Levizja said that the point of the activity was to show that people are sick and tired of voting for the empty promises of politicians, who think that they can run an election campaign having only independence on the agenda.

"People are laughing at this joke but they should really cry because that is really whatever politician we choose is likely to only profit personally from the position in the government," said Gashi.



Florim Beqiri, disappointed with what the government had done for the past three years. Photo: Hasan Sopa/OSCE

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OSCE

Krenar's disappointment in local institutions has gone to the point that he does not feel it is worth voting at all.

However, not many people believe that boycotting elections is an answer to Kosovo's problems.

Florim Beqiri, a 32 year old book-seller, said he was going to vote, even though he was deeply disappointed with what the government had done for the past three years.

"Many of our politicians gave promises based on people's low expectations; knowing that people are not educated due to a poor education system in Kosovo in the last 15 years most of the population is not aware to ask for the rights, freedoms and services it should enjoy from the state," said Beqiri.

Beqiri is convinced that the root of the institutional problems in the Kosovan society lie in the deeply corrupted party structure.

"The parties have become a sort of business," said Beqiri. "They only work for their own benefit and they don't keep their promises."

But for Beqiri, the hopes lay with the new parties and movements that have emerged during this year.

Arsim Mexhuvani, standing next to Beqiri also selling books has much the same opinion about the institutions. He said that local institutions have failed, beside many things, to make any improvement in the cultural and education areas.

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Sven Lindholm

Spokesperson, OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Dear Details readers,

Accountability is defined as being required or expected to justify actions or decisions. Government at all levels should be held accountable for what it does, otherwise it could do what it wanted and not consider what the people want or even need.

In most societies, elections often are a test for government in power, to see if voters feel if those in power have done a good job or not. Elections are the most visible form of accountability but this is something that all people should be involved in at all time between elections. People should be involved in decision-making processes.

In this way, Kosovo is no different. As this edition of Details is being published we are in the middle of an election campaign for the next Assembly of Kosovo. The Assembly and Government have been in power for three years. This election can be seen as test on how they have done, and in here you can read of a number of issues which are of great concern to the average person. Governance has been in the hands of these institutions who have received from the people the responsibility to rule.

When this campaign began, the OSCE expressed its hope that all political entities would contest for votes in a democratic manner and address issues that are impor-

tant to the public, such as job creation, education, health and many more such issues. This was because it was felt that the public should expect answers and solutions, not just promises and slogans, from their political leadership. The Assembly and the Government have great responsibility for improving the situation in Kosovo.

In general, with some exceptions, this has not happened. Debates and rallies have followed the usual pattern of previous elections of promises and slogans. What people deserve are answers and solutions.

Elections are important. This election is important. This election will result in a new Assembly and Government which will have great responsibility for improving the situation in Kosovo and taking it on the path laid out through the standards. Each voter is responsible for his or her future, and you are the ones holding the parties and politicians accountable. Political leaders should give answers and solutions. This can only help voters make an informed choice on 23 October.

Shpend October



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Mission in Kosovo

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Elections



Photo: "Levizja"

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"So why should I vote for them," said Me-xhuvani. "They had four years to prove themselves and failed miserably. Just look at the failing economy and the unsolved issue of status. They have tied their own shoe laces."

But the general feeling is very distinguishable. People feel neglected by their parties and feel that the parties do not address most of their problems.

"They just beg for our votes," said Fetije, a 20 year old student, "instead of earning them with their work."

The power cuts and lack of water, which have become almost routine, in many areas of Kosovo, present an everyday problem.

"The Government should have done something about all these power-cuts," said a middle-aged shop-owner. "I am going to give my vote to someone who offers me a solution for this problem."

According to a report on Kosovo published this September by the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, these disappointments are resulting in a decreasing voter turnout.

While 79 percent of the electorate voted in the first election in 2000, the voter percentage has fallen continually to 64 percent in 2001 and only 54 percent in the last elections in 2002.

"Voter turnout has decreased steadily from the first elections, in part perhaps because

people see no benefit to participating," the UNDP report makes clear. "In order to revise this trend, the population needs to be convinced that they can influence the political process."

The main party, Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, which has 48 out of 120 seats in parliament, have started their electoral campaign with the motto 'Freedom, Independence, Democracy.'

Melihate Termkolli, head of the electoral centre for LDK, was not convinced that people's disappointment is going to translate itself in the loss of votes for LDK.

"There has been progress in several areas and we have done everything that was in our hands to improve the situation. The people know that – our support has grown" said Termkolli.

Although achieving independence is still the main goal and top priority of the LDK, Termkolli said that this year the party has also compiled plans for easing problems such as unemployment.

The first thing they will do, if they win, is to pass laws on property and others as to create a legal base for foreign investments.

"This will boost the economy and open new jobs," said Termkolli.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, the second largest party in Kosovo, which has 26 seats in the parliament, admitted that the Assembly did not pass as many laws as they should have, mainly attributing it to poor

function within the Assembly as well as to the Government's hesitation in sponsoring laws.

PDK, whose motto is 'Work, State, Dignity', promises to decrease the unemployment from 70 to 40 percent in four years, if they win the elections.

Xhavit Haliti, head of the electoral centre for PDK said "PDK will engage in creating con-conditions for a better life and opening new jobs."

But, according to Haliti, education and culture will by no means be left behind. If PDK wins, the Ministry of Culture will invest in building and developing theatre, opera and ballet, while the Ministry of Education will provide more scholarships for outstanding students.

One of the new political subjects, participating for the first time in an election, the citizens initiative 'ORA', criticises the Provisional Institutions for bringing Kosovo in this state of depression and stagnation.

According to them, the parties in power have proven for the last five years that they cannot offer a good life and perspective to citizens, with the politics they have been following.

Labinot Salihu, a representative from ORA said that their goal was to get Kosovo out of this closed circle of degradation and stagnation and lead it to the modern world.

"Many involved in ORA, are activists of civic society, and are in touch with citizens' everyday problems and troubles," said Salihu. "Many parties neglect citizens' needs and engage for them only during election times or when they need something from them."

But, the new parties face great challenges to convince the voters who tend to give their vote to parties with more tradition. Some fear the lack of experience of the new parties is going to take Kosovo back to zero, in letting the small parties take their time until they build on enough capacity to rebuild the institutions from scratch.

"We are not sure of giving our vote to parties and people we know so well, let alone to people who have just entered politics," said Fetije Krasniqi.

Torn between the results achieved for the last three years and the colourful promises of political parties in 2004, Kosovans have to put their priorities straight and decide what difference they want to make on 23 October.

Zana Limani and Driton Maliqi are contributors for the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR).

Challenges Abound for Electorate: Provisional Institutions Take Centre Stage

On 23 October, more than 1.3 million registered voters will have the right to cast their ballots and influence the make-up of Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). The people of Kosovo will be able to select from 32 certified political entities—including political parties, citizens' initiatives and independent candidates.

By Bernard Vrban, OSCE

The electorate is voting for the 120 seat Assembly, the legislative body of the PISG. But this vote will also greatly affect the structure of the new Government, the executive branch of the PISG. Therefore, it is important to know just what these bodies do, what their competencies are, what they have done in this first mandate and what lies ahead in the second term.

Informed voters know not only the election issues, but where to turn to ensure that their voices are heard and where to seek answers to the maladies that affect society. As in any society, an educated voter is a good voter.

The Constitutional Framework spells out quite clearly the responsibilities of the PISG. The PISG are responsible for ensuring that all legislation and practices are in keeping with the relevant European and international standards and norms. Naturally, there are reserved powers (found in Chapter 8 of the Constitutional Framework) which are not within the competencies of the PISG.

The legislative role of the Assembly

Chapter 9 of the Constitutional Framework regulates the role of the Assembly of Kosovo – the highest legislative body. Assembly members are directly responsible for passing laws and resolutions within the PISG's areas of responsibility. The facets of life which the Assembly has the power to pass legislation on include, but are not limited to: labour and social welfare; health; education, science and technology; agriculture, forestry and rural development; and transport and communications.



"In the upcoming election, the Kosovo electorate will decide which political entities they believe best able to meet these challenges and to improve the quality of life of all people." Photo: Kotek/OSCE

The first Assembly of Kosovo, in its first three years, adopted more than 90 laws (according to information provided by the Assembly), though not all have been promulgated by the UN Special Representative. The first law passed was the Law on the Method for setting the level of basic pension (Law # 2002/1). Other laws have touched on a great diversity of fields, such as the laws on: external trade (2002/6), roads (2003/11), postal services (2003/18), sport (2003/24), electricity (2004/10) and precious metal products (2004/28).

Unfortunately, the Assembly has on occasion gone beyond its competencies; during the summer of 2004, the Assembly attempted to make amendments to the Constitutional Framework. Recently, a draft law on co-operation with The Hague/International Criminal Tribunal was also determined to be outside of the competencies of the PISG. Incidents like this have drawn criticism from others in the international community, not just from UNMIK.

The legislative check on the executive

The Assembly also has the responsibility to approve the Government, which consists of the Office of the Prime Minister and a number of ministries which are directly responsible for their respective areas of competency.

The priorities established for this Government in early 2002 were to: 1) consolidate the democratic structures of Kosovo; 2) increase the transparency and efficiency of the administration; 3) improve educational stan-

dards; 4) improve the quality of health; 5) promote economic development and international economic co-operation; 6) increase employment; 7) establish pension insurance and social assistance for vulnerable groups; and 8) integrate all ethnic communities into Kosovan society.

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitutional Framework and the procedural regulations, the Government has the right to propose a law, as do other actors. The Assembly, along with voting on the laws, provides advice to the government in the latter's preparation of draft laws (which are later submitted to the Assembly).

However, this is only one of the many competencies and responsibilities of the government. As the executive branch, the Government is responsible for "running" the territory. It is the institution that is actively implementing laws passed by the Assembly and promulgated by the SRSG.

Of course, the extent to which this government has been successful in meeting these priorities will be best measured by the electorate's response on 23 October. The voting public will voice their opinions in the best way possible on that day-by casting a ballot

Challenges facing the PISG

The PISG must still tackle socio-economic issues and seek to improve the lives of the residents of Kosovo. The next PISG will be responsible for the full implementation of the Standards for Kosovo. It is the incoming PISG that will either move Kosovo forward and closer to Europe by seriously accepting the job-at-hand or keep it where it is by arguing with and upstaging the international community. Their success or failure will greatly determine Kosovo's place in the region and Europe.

In the upcoming election, the Kosovo electorate will decide which political entities they believe to be best able to meet these challenges and to improve the quality of life of all people. The international community may still have some reserved powers, which are commensurate with sovereignty, but the vast majority of powers, allowing for self-governance—which is what the UN Resolution 1244 seeks to address—is already in the hands of elected and appointed local officials. The electorate should make their political leadership know who they most trust to make the necessary progress.

The websites of the Assembly of Kosovo and the Government of Kosovo can be found, respectively, at www.kuvendikosoves.org and www.pm-ksgov.net. Information therein was used for the compilation of this article.

Electricity: But at What Cost?

When someone asks the question “what is the most unbearable day-to-day problem here?” Almost immediately one hears “the power cuts!”

By Magda Hejzyk, OSCE

Normal access to electricity has been a problem for the entire population of Kosovo. What's worse, while not being able to supply regular service, the two principle power plants of the Kosovo Energy Company (KEK) in Obiliq/Obilić churn out an enormous amount of pollution in the air, posing a serious health threat to Kosovans. However, after years of neglecting the problem, it seems the issue of the plants has finally come to light, both in the local press, and from those inhabitants directly affected by the nuisance. It seems also that authorities are taking their first steps towards resolving the problem of the power plants.

KEK, in spite of its sporadic service, is still the main supplier of energy to the Kosovo market. Its two power plants, Kosovo A and B, situated close to Prishtinë/Priština in the nearby village of Obliq/Obilić, do not easily escape one's notice. The plants are huge, grey, concrete structures with 70-meter chimneys emitting tons of ash which quickly ends up covering neighboring areas in a blanket of filth.

Kosovo B, which consists of two units, is newer and has filters that work with a removal capacity of 98 percent. Kosovo A, comprised of five units, operates with a removal rate between 50 to 80 percent. One of its 200MW blocks emits about 25 tons of dust and ash per hour, 74 times the European standard for dust pollution. The lack of proper maintenance of the two plants is a major concern. Damaged or idle filters – very often turned off by workers in order to increase capacity – cause even more pollution and health risks. Thus, while plumes of smoke mean electricity in the homes of most, they're synonymous to poison for those living in the surrounding area.

The energy sector, especially in the wider region of Prishtinë/Priština, is the main polluter in Kosovo, and about 97 percent of all energy produced in Kosovo is provided through the burning of coal in power plants. The coal-burning electro-power plants of KEK emit sulfur, nitrogen and carbon oxides, as well as dust in an environment already highly polluted by automobile and generator emissions, the latter being an alternative source of energy during power cuts and a main emitter of “noise pollution.” Moreover, besides tainting the natural water supply, the plants create hills built of more than 40 million tons of ash, comprising approximately 150 hectares of agricultural land in the process.

The cocktail of polluted air, soil and water in the Obiliq/Obilić area, results in enormous health problems among the population. Vil-



“People from surrounding villages claim that ash has killed their once fertile soil” Photo: Sopa/OSCE

lages in the immediate vicinity report the highest incidence of lung diseases, upper and lower respiratory tract infections, acute diarrhea, intestinal parasitic and scabies. Blown by the wind, ashes cake one's lungs and never retreat. However, and to be fair, the health situation is not caused by the power plants alone, but also by the drinking water, a lack of sanitation and the poor personal hygiene of many. Regardless, most of it can be traced back to the plants.

People from surrounding villages claim that the ash has killed their once fertile soil. Many inhabitants of Krushec/Kruševac, a village placed between the plant and mounds of stored ashes, suffer from respiratory-tract diseases and even cancer. Those ashes, which make life very difficult in the Obiliq/Obilić area, also reach other nearby towns. For example, a stronger-than-normal wind can carry particles up to 10 kilometers – as far as Prishtinë/Priština.

Responding to the issue of pollution, Mr. Zeqir Veselaj, an advisor to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP), stated that at the moment the only way the government can influence KEK's activities is to generate laws which in the future will force the company to reduce pollution. Unfortunately, according to him, enforcement of such laws will take years. Mr. Veselaj stressed that the Ministry, established only in June 2002, can only recognize the urgent priority of establishing a strong legal framework for environmental management. To achieve this, the MESP recently completed

a report entitled *The Strategy on Environment and Sustainable Development*. At the time this article was prepared, the draft law was going through parliamentary proceedings.

According to the document, MESP's priorities concerning Obiliq/Obilić among others are: “the replacement of old equipment in the energy sector; the removal and appropriate disposal of existing ash landfills from power plants, and the rehabilitation as well as re-cultivation of craters created during the time when the exploitation of lignite was done via open-pit mines.”

The list of MESP's priorities is much longer. However, the question lingers: Will they be able to achieve all their goals? Formulating an appropriate legal framework is a step in the right direction. But then, other, more result-driven measures need to be taken soon, and not only by government authorities, but by citizens as well.

First, a good start would be enforcement of the existing law. At present, in the area of industrial pollution, it is inadequate. Second, if new filters for the plant are to be installed, and used appropriately, financing of such a purchase should be linked to a new attitude among Kosovans, one by which citizens pay their electrical bills.

Given its financial limitations, the state cannot provide citizens with cleaner and healthier energy delivery without an appropriate source of income directly linked to the usage of that energy. The path to regular and clean energy is, like many other issues, a two-way street.

Understanding the electoral system

Quick Facts

The electoral system which is set down in the Constitutional Framework is very straightforward.

It is proportional representation.

- This means that the seats in the Assembly are allocated in proportion to the number of votes each political entity receives.
- There are 120 seats in the Assembly.
- All political parties, citizens' initiatives, coalitions and independent candidates that are running in the election are competing for 100 of those seats.
- And because the electoral system being used is proportional representation it means that if one entity wins for example 60 percent of the votes that entity will get approximately 60 seats in the Assembly.
- The other 20 seats in the Assembly are known as set aside seats.
- That's because they are set aside for the smaller communities, to guarantee they can have a voice in the Assembly.
- Those seats will be allocated in proportion to the votes the political entities from smaller communities receive in the election.

"One Kosovo"

In the election for the Assembly, Kosovo is treated as one electoral district.

This is a straightforward approach.

It means that wherever a person is voting, that vote counts for the entity the person is voting for.

It gives all entities, including smaller ones, a better opportunity of winning seats as they don't have to rely on support from one particular area of Kosovo.

How do you know who you're voting for?

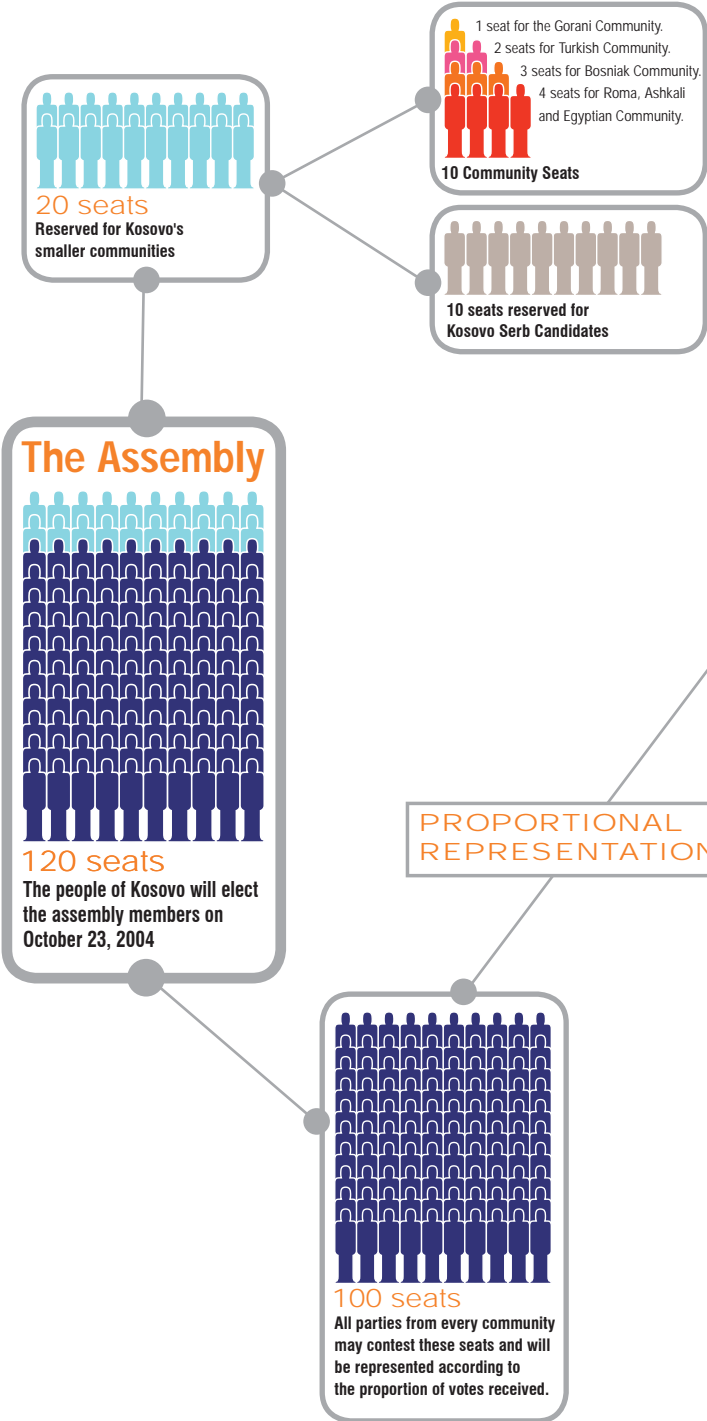
People will be voting for the entity of their choice.

There are about 1,300 candidates for all the entities competing in this year's election.

So the political entities have drawn up lists of their candidates, and the order in which they'll be elected. For instance one party may put 110 candidates forward but win only 40 seats. That means the first 40 names on the party's list will get seats in the Assembly.

You will know who those candidates are. There is information out before election day with the entities' lists of candidates, as well as at the polling stations.

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PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

WHAT DOES PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION MEAN?

Party A	=	33.0% of vote
Party B	=	12.0% of vote
Party C	=	8.0% of vote
Party D	=	3.0% of vote
Party E	=	6.0% of vote
Party F	=	4.0% of vote
Party G	=	17.0% of vote
Party H	=	8.0% of vote
Party I	=	9.0% of vote
		100.0% of vote

This translates to the following number of seats:

- Party A: 33 seats
- Party B: 12 seats
- Party C: 8 seats
- Party D: 3 seats
- Party E: 6 seats
- Party F: 4 seats
- Party G: 17 seats
- Party H: 8 seats
- Party I: 9 seats

Explanation:

If party or candidate A receives 33% of the total number of votes cast, then they will receive approximately 33% of the 100 seats, therefore, they will win 33 seats in the Assembly.

If party or candidate D receives 3% of the total number of votes cast, then they will receive approximately 3% of the 100 seats, therefore, they will win 3 seats in the Assembly.

The Peoples' Message to Kosovo's Leaders

The campaign period is already underway, but what are the main concerns of the voters and what sort of choices are they likely to have this time around?

By Hasan Sopa, OSCE

Each time a new election approaches, Kosovo's voters face a number of dilemmas. It's the time when political parties start making promises, which they themselves find difficult to deliver upon. Some know there are no conditions in which to achieve them in light of the current battered economic state, whereas the voter has little choice but to 'believe' them simply because they will have to cast their vote.

With the election just weeks away, 'Details' talked to a number of people in the street about the issues important to them. It is essential for all the people of Kosovo that this coming election is organised and held in the best possible manner as this is the next step on which Kosovo will build its democracy.

Voters vs. politicians

An opinion expressed by many was that Kosovo's political parties and politicians still lacked the required experience in exercising power. And this despite the last few years experience, including the capacity building assistance provided by the international community.

According to Miradije Asllanaj, a government employee, political party platforms need to be comprised of more than empty simple statements such as 'this is what we would like to...'. Rather, "they need to clearly spell out how they plan to implement their ideas on environmental issues, on health care, education system and so on." And they need to work on, what she calls, the 'accountability connection' between them and the voters.

Every day problems

There is no doubt that voters have the greatest voice in changing the current political scene. But, are voters aware that they really can make a difference?

"Democracy begins at the grassroots level and voters have to learn to demand more of their politicians and make them accountable," says Asllanaj. "They need to realise that the parties represent and serve them and not the other way around. On the other hand, political parties need to know that they have to work hard on their election year promises or else next time they risk losing votes."

Alma Lama an RTK journalist thinks that the future Assembly should be more efficient with their time, even in the sense of the intensity of their work. "There is no doubt that passing laws is important," she says, "but also dealing with every day problems our society faces are crucial."



No shortage of political ads on a Prishtinë/Priština street on the eve of Elections. Photo: Sopa/OSCE

She notes that the new Assembly should not continually waste time bringing up Kosovo's final status, because this is currently not up for discussion. "It's important to have clear ideas on the issue, but it is more critical to deal with concrete problems, such as drafting economic policies and creating jobs." However, she continued that the government itself admitted a lack of ideas in drafting such policies, thus, expending valuable time.

Corruption in institutions

Another concern, according to Lama is corruption. "Let's take for example the health institutions; the services are very bad and corruption flourishes every day."

"Health care in Kosovo is deplorable," says Destan Berisha who sits at an internet café. "In western countries once the patient is hospitalized, the family members feel they are in capable hands. Here it's the other way around. It's the time when the suffering begins as the patient's family and friends beg the doctors and nurses to look after their loved one, running for the medicines and everything else."

Nepotism and politics in the school system

The state of the education system often came up in our interviews as a major concern. These problems at the university level – where there seems to be a lack of professional staff, nepotism and no reforms – is how people see the system. What this equates to is a lack of investment in the future development of society.

Gëzim Krasniqi, from the student's initiative 'Tjetërqysh' (In another way), has more or less the same opinion. He says that nepotism is a concern in every department of the university and politics are often too much involved.

"I had the chance to read some of the political parties statutes where they speak about the benefits students will get if they gain power. They promise to improve students' conditions, allocate scholarships and so on," According to Krasniqi this is not the case: "If a student wants to get a scholarship then he or she has to affiliate themselves with a certain political party or else they have no chance."

Defining responsibilities

The handing over of responsibilities was another topic often raised. "There needs to be a clear definition of responsibilities," says Berisha "so that we know who is in charge of what. People do not feel any great sense of 'ownership' of the self government institutions. Rather, there is a perception, both amongst politicians and voters, that the international community still controls most aspects of the interim administration."

Berisha stressed that defining responsibilities is a crucial part of the process. Kosovo needs responsible government officials more than anything else. And, to make this happen, accountability mechanisms are required. "This is what the people of Kosovo want and this is what those involved in building a responsible society want, including the voters," concluded Berisha.

Reconstruction Programme Enters Final Stage

By Vasilija Stanić, OSCE

If the number of destroyed buildings is taken into consideration, then Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje would certainly be among those municipalities most affected by the riots which rocked Kosovo in mid-March of this year.

Two buildings most critical to the community, St. Sava School and the Medical Clinic in Bresje, were among the 139 damaged private and public structures. Now, six months later, a newly rebuilt St. Sava School has reopened. Work on the Bresje Clinic will soon follow.

"I am pleasantly surprised with the short amount of time it took to bring the school back to life; promises were kept," said the director of one of the primary schools, Radoslav Marović.

When EU High Representative Javier Solana visited the school shortly after the riots, Marović asked "what should I tell my teachers and pupils?" The school director continues: "Solana answered 'the school will be ready in September, in time for the new school year.' This happened and I'm very pleased."

Following the 1999 conflict, St. Sava School took in many students who were displaced from their original schools in Prishtinë/

Priština and Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. This included children primarily from the Kosovo Serb and Roma communities who attended classes in the Serbian language.

Approximately 300 of these pupils had to finish the last school year in the nearby village of Ugljare, where classes were organized in four shifts due to a lack of space. Now, back at St. Sava, both students and teachers are pleased with the conditions in their reconstructed school.

However, school directors emphasized that the refurbishment should not end as there remains much more to complete. This includes re-equipping cabinets for chemistry, physics and biology, as well as replacing many of the 7,500 important books which were lost. Even the gymnasium, though renovated, is no longer equipped as it used to be.

It is also important not to look at the reconstruction of the school separately from the reconstruction of other nearby buildings destroyed in March. Reconstruction of houses and creating conditions for return of displaced people that are now mostly settled in containers in Ugljare, would also enable children who are now attending the school elsewhere, to return to St. Sava School.

"I had a house in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, and both my children used to go to St. Sava School" says Jovica Rajković. "After 17 March my family and I were settled in containers. But, when the school year opened I decided to bring my family to the nearby village of Skulanovo so they could attend classes. The main reason is that my house is not reconstructed, and it's very hard for a whole family to live in a small container, especially if you keep in mind that there are often electricity cuts, no water and poor hygiene conditions...If the situation improves and conditions are created for our return, the most important being security, we would like to go back to our house so that our children can return to their school."

In Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, out of 139 structures on the list for reconstruction, 34 houses and the St. Sava School are finished, while work continues on 95 more houses as well as on the Clinic.

Bexhjet Brajshori, the president of the Central Inter Ministerial Commission for Reconstruction of the Buildings Destroyed in March, told Details that the programme is entering its final stage.

"For St. Sava School, the Kosovo Government allocated €460,000. However, the first priority is the reconstruction of residences,"

said Brajshori. He added that several NGOs were asked to assist with the technical preparations such as the organizing of tenders, monitoring the progress and reporting to the Commission.

"So far the work is going as planned and it is expected that all damaged houses in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje will be finished by the end of October," added Brajshori. "As for the Clinic, it's possible that its completion will be a bit late, but I believe it too will be finished in October."

Pupils of the Secondary Medical School are hoping that, when the Bresje Medical Clinic is finished, they will be able to attend classes of practical teaching in this institution, as they did before.



School children at the newly renovated St. Sava school in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Photo: Sopa/OSCE

Students Look for a New Set of Reforms

By Rexhep Krasniqi & Halide Sadiku, OSCE

The corridors of the University of Pristina overflow with students. The youngsters are full of life, joy, laughter, enthusiasm, energy and a longing for a brighter future. Some look concerned as they apply for courses at the University. When one asks how they feel, the answer is they'll be elated if they just manage to enroll. However, when asked about their prospects after earning a degree and studying conditions, the mood shifts as if lightning struck them.

Fatmir, 24, a student in the Engineering section noted, "I cannot describe how happy I was when I was accepted at the University, because this was to open the path to a better future. But these hopes were quickly dashed when I came into all the roadblocks—inadequate textbooks, poor lectures and little stimulation."

Shkumbin, 21, a student studying Agriculture said his primary grievance was the lack of lab materials for completing research projects. The young man sees little future in his chosen profession stating "with no development (of agriculture in Kosovo), I have no prospects here."

Gezim Krasniqi, a member of the Students' Initiative "Tjetërqysh" (In another way), reached the same conclusion as Fatmir. He added that due to shortcomings, the University of Pristina has become a factory producing jobless graduates. He goes on to question whether it's even worth it to study.

As if there weren't already enough concerns, students complain that they have yet to see any of the so-called reforms at the University.

On this issue, Fatmir sees little application as the academic personnel remain quite old and cannot adapt to changes. Shkumbin says that the reforms are applied only partly, going on to mention a three-year-long study into reforms.

Xhavit Rexhaj, a senior official in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has the same feeling about the implementation of the reforms. According to him, "reforms have been applied, but only superficially. There was a will and readiness of the University leadership for them, but the planning, participation and implementation has been carried out from top to bottom, without any real engagement by the teachers. It also depends on the age of professors – some accept them more easily, some not."

Krasniqi says that the new measures are an effort for experimenting with something which was not well planned. One of the shortcomings of the new system is that it actually cuts degree programmes from four to three years. In most cases, a university



"Reforms have been applied, but only superficially. It also depends on the age of professors – some accept them more easily, some not." Photo: Sopa/OSCE

education often takes four to six years.

According to Krasniqi, radical changes must be made if reforms are to be carried out adequately. Chief among them are reducing class sizes, providing more studying space, replacing teaching staff, updating textbooks and improving the quality of lectures. From his point of view, the current reforms should have never been allowed to go forth.

For this situation, he also blames the international community, noting that there is nothing in the list of 'standards' regarding the education system.

As the elections approach, Fatmir does not expect much to change. "I think standards will be fulfilled after the election, then the status will be solved, investments will start to come in and prospects in Kosovo should improve."

A Lost Generation of Pensioners

By Mevlyde Salihu, OSCE

A large dim space filled with smoke. Seniors playing chess at tables covered with stained tablecloths. Those not playing, pass their time whispering to each other about how they spend their days. Others sit outside and hope for better days.

This is the outlook of the pensioners' association, where the old get together.

Their wrinkled faces tell you hundreds of more sad than happy stories that made their lives difficult and interesting at that same time.

The clean, well-lit stairs leading up to the president of the associations' office gives the illusory impression that things will look better just one floor up, but leaking pipes just in front of the office sends one back to reality.

"Our situation is very difficult," says Rasim Domi, the head of the association. "After the war (in 1999), pensioners have been deprived of their status. Those above 65 years of age remain equal, regardless if they worked or not, receiving a paltry €40 per month. However, there remain a large number of those under 65 who are entitled to a pension, but receive nothing. They wait," he added.

According to Domi, only 30 percent of pensioners have somebody to look after them, the rest have to live with their paltry pension. "It is a miracle how they manage," he said, adding "we have information that people go out at night and search for bread in the garbage. They're old and the vast are majority sick."



*Rasim Domi, head of the Pensioners Association
Photo: Sopa/OSCE*

Idriz Lepaja, who is 77, is one of the lucky ones. He met the criteria to be in the new pension scheme, proving he is an inhabitant of Kosovo and older than 65. More importantly, he has children who support him.

"This is not a pension, it's social aid. I cannot buy the medicine I need with €40. After working 41 years in the Municipal Court in Podujevo, I feel hurt and disappointed knowing I cannot support myself and having to depend on my children," he said.

With so many problems after its establishment in Kosovo in 1999, the international community and the newly-created institutions in Kosovo, seemed to have forgotten about the problem.

It was only in July 2002 that the Assembly of Kosovo, one year after its creation, adopted the Law on the Method for setting the level of basic pension. This meant that people older than 65 would receive €28 per month, with an annual increase, depending on the budget. Two years later the amount has only reached €40.

However, the new scheme left people who are now retired and under 65 with nothing, even if they had been worked most of their lives. The old system guaranteed pensions by having the working generation contribute to the pension fund. On the other hand, the new system, set up after the conflict, requires that employees pay their own contributions. Current pensioners who are penniless seem to be stuck in between.

"We are aware this is not the best solution," said Nuhi Ismajli, advisor to the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare. "We have not come up with a solution for current pensioners. The scheme and laws of the past are no longer applicable. But I'm sure the new scheme, the one of a basic pension and a trust, will work in the long run."

"The solution would be with a new strong, complete government with competencies, which cannot justify itself by saying it has limited competencies, and a real opposition," concluded Ismajli.

The head of the pensioners' association also hopes that things will turnaround once the new government is in place. "Things can't get any worse," he said, adding "the first government did what it could, but it is a 'young' government. The upcoming government we elect will be able to look back and draw on the work of the previous one, do things the first one didn't do, and do them better."

But with the current economic situation in Kosovo, unemployment and a new pension system, and without a solution in sight, the situation of current pensioners will most likely further deteriorate.

Despite the declarative support by Kosovo's institutions, a lot remains to be done, and it has to be done quickly for this lost generation of workers, who have carried the heaviest of burdens.

Media Gets Its Fourth Test

By Arben Hajredinaj, OSCE

Never before have Kosovo institutions had a more important role in the organizing of free and fair elections. Among the most crucial measures of their success will be how the media chooses to report the performance of all parties involved. And, in turn, the local media will also be under the microscope.

Rules and Regulations

The guidelines for the media, established by the Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) under UNMIK drafted regulations, became the subject of debate during meetings held in September 2004 between the media and TMC. While the media accepted the regulations, reservations on its full implementation did remain.

"The election period is always sensitive and there should be set rules for the coverage of the campaign," says Agron Bajrami, editor-in-chief of the daily Koha Ditore. He expressed doubt saying that the drafting and adopting of rules is one thing, but its adequate implementation is another. Bajrami went on to note that only some of the media would cover the election campaign in a professional manner.

Zijadin Gashi, a journalist with the daily Zëri, said that despite rules requiring the media provide fair and equal representation in informative programmes of all certified entities this "is more 'desire,' than reality." To make the point, he underlined the difficulty in providing equal representation by the broadcast media since the entities vary due to their size, activities or their organizational structure in the region.

Professionalism

There is no doubt that the media plays a crucial role in shaping voters' opinion. In covering an election it is vital that they have adequate information and a great deal of this depends on access to important events. It is up to the media to be professional, infor-

mative to its readers and constantly alert in evaluating the performance of any election campaign.

Bajrami stresses the importance of voter education. He says that voters should be fully informed before making a decision. "The nature of print media allows us to delve deeper into an analysis of any statement," adding "we cannot allow the voters to elect only by the electoral speeches of party representatives, since we are accountable to be fair to the citizens."

Media Coverage

While most of the media will dedicate a significant portion of their time to the election, there will be others which do not for a variety of factors; among these this includes the high associated costs, a lack of personnel resources and even disinterest.

Valentina Čukić of Radio Contact Plus, which broadcasts in the Serbian and Roma languages, says that they will cover the general election actively only if the Serb and Roma population participate, otherwise they will only passively report on the topic. Čukić also brings up the issue of security, stressing that minorities must first have freedom of movement if they are to report throughout Kosovo.

The Albanian language print media in the region vows to report in a balanced way from the party campaigns and to analyse promises and programmes of the entities. "Our editorial policy is clear: correct, objective and unbiased reporting from our journalists," says Gashi. The countless number of election activities, namely rallies, make it nearly impossible for the media to cover them all, explains Bajrami.

The media will undoubtedly face many challenges in covering the upcoming election, but in its fourth test in last five years of covering an election, the process may seem routine.



Commonly Asked Questions on Voting

When will the elections be held?

The election for the Assembly of Kosovo will take place on 23 October, 2004. All polling stations will be open from 7:00 to 19:00. Any voter in line at 19:00 will be allowed to exercise his/her right to vote.

Am I eligible to vote?

You are eligible to vote if your birthday is before 23 October, 1986 AND you registered with the Municipal Civil Registry Centre in your municipality of residence prior to 6 August, 2004 to ensure inclusion on the 2004 voter list.

Where do I vote on Election Day?

Voters are assigned to a polling centre location based on their address of residence as recorded in the civil registry. This location is where you will appear on the voter list on Election Day.

What do I need to bring with me to vote?

You will need to take at least one of the following forms of identification:

- a valid UNMIK identification card;
- a valid UNMIK Travel Document;
- a valid UNMIK Driving License;
- a valid IDP (PZHBV) card; or,
- a valid refugee card.

I have not found the answer to my question(s), where can I get further information?

Please visit the Municipal Election Office in your area to address any other election related queries you may have. Municipal Election Commission (MEC) officials are available to answer voting questions up until one day prior to the election. On E-day there will be a voter help desk set up at each polling centre. MEC contact information appears below.



Central Election Commission
Komisioni Qendror i zgjedhjeve
Centralna Izborna Komisija

Prishtinë/Priština, Arbëri/Dragodan, Tel: +381 38 240 722 , Fax: +381 38 240 719

Code	Municipality	Name	Phone	Postal Address
1	Deçan/Dečani	Xhavit Rexhahmetaj	044 / 393 – 722	Cultural Centre
2	Gjakovë/Đakovica	Xhevdet Bytyqi	044 / 393 – 727	Cultural Centre
3	Glogovc/Glogovac	Bilall Shehu	044 / 393 – 712	Building Fabrication near Assembly
4	Gjilan/Gnjilane	Ferid Shabani	044 / 393 – 715	Local Assembly
5	Dragash/Dragaš	Sehadin Misini	044 / 393 – 726	Former Assembly Building
6	Istog/Istok	Bashkim Ademaj	044 / 393 – 723	Cultural Centre
7	Kaçanik/Kaçanik	Qemajl Hamdiu	044 / 393 – 719	Local KPS Building
8	Klinë/Klina	Idriz Dushi	044 / 393 – 724	Local Assembly
9	Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje	Skender Dumani	044 / 393 – 709	Local Assembly
10	Kamenicë/Kamenica	Agim Kastrati	044 / 393 – 722	Cultural Centre
11	Mitrovicë/Mitrovica	Gani Mikullovi	044 / 393 – 730	Local Assembly
12	Leposaviç/Leposaviq	Milosav Markovic	063 / 857 – 6839	Cultural Centre
13	Lipjan/Lipljan	Hamza Kadriu	044 / 393 – 724	Local Assembly
14	Novobërdë/Novo Brdo	Selim Mehmeti	044 / 393 – 716	Local Assembly
15	Obiliq/Obilić	Haki Krasniqi	044 / 393 – 710	Local Assembly
16	Rahovec/Orahovac	Illir Popaj	044 / 393 - 728	Fire Station
17	Pejë/Peć	Mehrije Hoti	044 / 393 – 721	Assembly Building by Cultural Centre
18	Podujevë/Podujevo	Islam Demolli	044 / 393 – 711	Local Assembly
19	Prishtinë/Priština	Fatmire Bajrami	044 / 393 – 708	Local Assembly
20	Prizren/Prizren	Nysret Bytyqi	044 / 393 – 735	Public Utilities Building
21	Skenderaj/Srbica	Imer Ahmetaj	044 / 393 – 732	Cultural Centre
22	Shtime/Štimlje	Florije Mulaj	044 / 393 – 714	Former Shopping Centre
23	Štrpce/Shtërpçë	Milan Janičijević	063 / 844 – 9943	Private House beside Assembly
24	Suharekë/Suva Reka	Refki Gega	044 / 393 – 725	Local Assembly
25	Ferizaj/Uroševac	Idriz Hetemi	044 / 393 – 718	Local Assembly
26	Viti/Vitina	Skender Hoda	044 / 393 – 717	Local Assembly
27	Vushtrri/Vučitrn	Elez Krasniqi	044 / 393 – 731	Local Assembly
28	Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok	Goran Bacvarović	063 / 855 – 0981	NGO "CCD" beside Primary School
29	Zvečan/Zvečan	Viktorija Milisavljević	063 / 895 – 0673	Private House beside Assembly
30	Malishevë/Mališevo	Rexhep Zogaj	044 / 393 – 729	Local Assembly

For further general information please refer to:

www.cec-ko.org • www.kosvoelections.org

www.zgjedhjetekosoves.org • www.kosovskiizbori.org • www.osce.org/kosovo