

Corruption

A well-established civil society consists of many different elements, all of which are equally important for society to function and each has its own specific role. One of them is non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are numerous and varied NGOs in the world yet only a few have succeeded in receiving world-wide recognition, acceptance and respect. Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Doctors Without Borders are just some such NGOs.

However, today I would like to refer to one particular, extremely important organization that also belongs to the aforementioned group - Transparency International. For years, this organization has been dealing with and combating a terrible plague that has spread throughout every country in the world - corruption.

Transparency International was founded in 1993 by Peter Eigen, a German who for decades served as the World Bank's Project Manager for South America and Africa. The organization started as a one-room office with a telephone and has since developed into a large institution with its headquarters in Berlin and branch offices in 100 countries. Aware of the devastating effects corruption has on society and its development - by erasing the line between public and private interests as well as weakening the confidence of citizens in the institutions that should serve them - and its efficiency in combating this has made Transparency International one of the most successful NGOs in the world. No country in the world has been able to exterminate this plague - a plague that appears to be a misfortunate bi-product of human nature. Iceland and Finland are the two most corruption-free countries, while Chad and Bangladesh are the worst off. However, when assessing the level of corruption in a country, it is important to differentiate between wide-spread corruption at peripheral levels and corruption that impregnates the very core of a country, including leading members of government.

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for this year, on the list of 159 countries Croatia is at 71. In practical terms, that means that Croatia is more corrupt than most EU member states, but less corrupt than two EU members.

Since countries in the past have succeeded in joining the EU despite their high level of corruption, Croatia should not be

tempted to conclude that the issue of corruption is not going to be a serious obstacle in the negotiating process. Such an approach would be a misleading one. Firstly, the Commission is nowadays taking the corruption issue much more seriously, which is evident in the pressure being placed on Romania and Bulgaria, the next two countries in line to join the EU. Secondly, the objective of a country such as Croatia should not be to suppress corruption for the sole purpose of facilitating negotiations, but to create a country with a healthy society and prosperous political and economic life.

With the support of the Government and the OSCE, Transparency International organized a very important conference entitled "Enforcing Global Anti-Corruption Standards" in Brijuni. Deputy

Prime Minister, Damir Polančec, and Justice Minister, Ana Lovrin, insisted in their opening statements on a formal and clear determination of the executive authorities to combat this serious problem. At the same time, recalling the Government's recent adoption of a three-year national plan for combating corruption, Ms. Lovrin highlighted the list of measures the Government plans to implement in order



to detect, prevent, and sanction corruption. The government's Anti-Corruption Plan will most likely include the possibility of extending beyond 2008. It would have been fitting for the Government to have stated in the Plan that its final objective was to extinguish corruption. But as wonderful as it sounds, it would not have been a very realistic statement. Croatia has moved down the CPI index from 51 in 2002 to 71 in 2005, with the specific areas of political parties, parliamentary activities, the police, judiciary and medical service singled out as the most corrupt sectors in the country.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to envision Croatia moving up to the top of the CPI index. It is, however, realistic to hope that with a lot of hard work and the implementation of the new Anti-Corruption Plan, Croatia will be able to climb a significant number of places up the CPI ladder so that within a year, Croatia is at a similar level to the 25 EU member-states and adopts a degree of zero tolerance.

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes
Head of the OSCE Mission to Croatia

Minority Rights

Calendar

16 June – Coming back from the presentation of the Mid-Term Review in Vienna, HOM attends a diplomatic excursion in Styria, in the south of Austria, to mark the end of Austria's EU Presidency. The event was organized by the Austrian Embassy in Zagreb.

21 June – DHOM and Mission members attend the "Lika in Focus" event in Udbina, organised by the humanitarian NGO ADRA on the implementation of its post-war regeneration and development program.

26 June – Zadar Archbishop Msgr. Prenda and Orthodox Vladika Fotije will meet with HOM and the Serb minority MP Milorad Pupovac in Zadar.

27 June – International Community Principals (the OSCE, EC Delegation, UNHCR and US Embassy) meet with Development Minister Božidar Kalmeta for the monthly plenary session on issues related to refugee return.

4 July – Monthly plenary session on war crimes trials, which includes the Justice Ministry, the Chief State Attorney, as well as representatives from the Supreme Court, OSCE, ICTY, and EC Delegation.

5 July - National Roundtable on Racism and Intolerance in Croatia, organised in Zagreb by ECRI – the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

9 – 10 July - "Completing Europe's Southern Dimension: The Values that Bind Us" summit, hosted by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader in Dubrovnik.



Zadar celebrates cultural diversity

In April 2005, Zadar County's seven minorities - the Albanian, Bosniak, Hungarian, Italian, Macedonian, Serb and Slovenian - formed a working group that has been meeting ever since on a monthly basis. This year, the group identified two projects to undertake. The first was a joint magazine, and the second was an event to mark International Day of Cultural Diversity. For both, time was short. From the idea to its inception, a mere four months were available. Added to this was the fact that no one had any real experience in organising such ambitious projects, nor raising the required funds. But most challenging of all was getting all the minorities to agree on issues as they arose - a true learning experience.

The group busily began project planning, writing, organising, and lobbying. It really was a very full schedule. And soon their efforts came to fruition, with the Zadar City, Zadar County, Italian Consulate and OSCE Mission all welcoming and pledging money for the projects. Zadar's media even agreed to promote them.

The joint magazine - "Zadarski Most Prijateljstva" or "The Zadar Bridge of Friendship" - literally came off the press half-an-hour prior to its launching on May

19. Zadar Prefect Ivo Grbić reiterated how proud he was that such a magazine was established in his county.

Two days later, Zadar's Deputy Mayor officially began celebrations marking International Cultural Diversity Day in the popular Zadar gallery Arsenal. The spacious gallery floor was literally packed with visitors, and they were not disappointed. Over six hours of live music and dance performances, poetry readings and theatrical pieces

were performed in different languages and various cultures. Guests could also taste various ethnic cuisines and admire the ethnic handicrafts on display.

The gathering brought together people from all ages and ethnicities, who joined together in song and dance. There were even those that had returned to Zadar for the first time in 16 years. Many Zadar residents commented

that it felt like "old times". The result: City and County authorities now want to include this event in their yearly calendar and are no longer afraid of holding such a gathering outdoors. And although this is just a small step in the overall situation, it proves that cultural events can be used as a tool to promote integration and even reconciliation.

Renate Herrmanns,
Head of Field Office Zadar



Field Office in Focus: Gospić

FO Gospić helps disabled returnees

The majority of us in the field are aware of how important casework is, knowing that even the most simple of acts, such as listening and giving even the most basic advice, can really give some people hope and motivation. As the repossession of property is coming to an end, FO Gospić has gradually began focusing on providing alternative housing care to former holders of occupancy/tenancy rights (OTR). However, even in these cases priority has to be given to disabled persons who have nowhere to return.

At the initiative of Branko Čujić, Secretary of the Lika-Senj Association for the Blind, FO Gospić researched and identified four disabled (blind) returnees who urgently needed housing care.

One such case was Nikola Radaković (62), a former OTR holder from Lički Osik who applied for housing care last year. Given the late submission of his application, Mr Radaković would certainly have to wait a long time before receiving housing care, which is why FO Gospić informed Mission Headquarters and the Croatian government of his case. As a result, Mr Radaković was put on a priority list for housing care and within no time received a positive reply to his application. Last month, Mr Radaković and his wife moved into their new flat in

Lički Osik. The whole process had taken less than a year, which is quite an achievement considering how time-consuming such procedures usually are.

FO Gospić staff accompanied Mr Radaković during his first visit to his new flat. Watching the elderly gentleman visualize his new home by touching the walls and catching a glimpse of the flat's contours was really a moving moment. "I cannot believe this, when can we move in?" Mr Radaković constantly repeated, never daring to believe that he would live enough to see his new flat.

Another successful case was that of Danica Kovačević (59) who returned to Croatia four years ago. She is visually impaired and has been living with relatives in Donji Lapac. The FO contacted her and explained to her the procedure for housing care. Through the help of the Mission's Return and Integration team, as in the previous case, Ms Kovačević today enjoys a one room apartment in Donji Lapac. Although handicapped, Ms Kovačević's spirit and motivation are an inspiration. Today, she is teaching herself on an old computer and overcomes the hurdle of being visually impaired every day.

Although there are many people waiting for alternative housing care it is good to see that, with a little push, help reaches those most vulnerable.

At a glance:

- The Head of Field Office (FO) Gospić is **Stephanie V. Grepo**
- FO Gospić opened on November 2004, after being relocated from Korenica. There is now an unmanned office in Korenica, which is open to the public on Wednesdays.
- The total number of staff working at FO Gospić is:
3 International Mission Members
7 Local Mission Members
- FO Gospić covers the Lika-Senj County, which includes four towns and eight municipalities and is the biggest county in Croatia.
- Geographically, the Lika-Senj County lies to the north of the Zadar County; south of the Primorsko-Goranska County; and borders Bosnia and Herzegovina to the east. It is the most sparsely populated county in Croatia, approximately 50,000 inhabitants.
- The Lika-Senj County was greatly affected by the recent war, particularly around Gospić where the heaviest fighting occurred.
- The town of Gospić is the economic, administrative and political center of the Lika-Senj County.

Human rights workshops for primary school children in Lika

We all know that without human rights awareness, it is not possible to advocate for their protection. With this in mind, FO Gospić brought the Teachers Academy from Gospić together with the Zagreb-based NGO "Mali korak" on a project that promotes the incorporation of human rights education in primary schools. Nearly 30 students at the Teachers Academy—the future teachers of Croatia—attended a multi-day training seminar on verbal and non-verbal communication, conflict resolution, human rights and social skills. As a follow-up to the training, a subset of the trained students are currently holding workshops at nine primary schools throughout Lika-Senj County in order to put into practice what they learned at the training. Schools in the so-called Areas of Special State Concern, or war-affected areas, were particularly targeted and as a result, a total of nearly 200 primary school pupils are being introduced to the topic of human rights through these workshops.



Vladimirka Telenta Field Office Gospić team, November 2005

Photo Gallery



Above: Ambassadors Carlos Sanchez de Boado and Francesco Bascone with Serb returnees during their visit to FO Zadar, 9 May 2006.



Above: HOM Ambassador Jorge Fuentes and Vukovar Mayor Tomislav Šota open the new FO Vukovar office, 17 May 2006.



Above: Development Minister Božidar Kalmeta visits MHQ, 23 May 2006.



Above: OSCE spokespersons roundtable in Split, 8-9 June 2006.

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