

OSCE

NEWSLETTER

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

OSCE/OMIK



Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Daan Everts, and an Independent Candidate, Kimete Berisha, talking at the ballot lottery in Pristina (see story on page 4)

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The municipal elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on 10 September signal the start of an important season of polls across South-Eastern Europe, in which the OSCE will play a significant role. Below, the Newsletter describes preparations in Skopje and on succeeding pages the work being done in Albania and Kosovo. In the next issue, the focus will be on Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Elections season opens in SE Europe

ODIHR Observation Mission deployed in Skopje during August

By Stefan Krause

In August, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the municipal elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. These elections, scheduled for 10 September, are the first in a long series of polls being held in the OSCE region this autumn.

Although the ODIHR does not always

observe local elections, there were several reasons to do so in this case: "The ODIHR monitored other key local elections in the region in the past", said Charles Magee, Head of the EOM.

"The presence of international observers during the elections can help to increase confidence in the election process and thus contribute to stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,

which is of utmost importance for the whole region."

As the ODIHR has observed local, parliamentary and presidential elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 1996, the Mission will be in a good position to assess the progress made in recent years towards meeting OSCE commitments on elections, as laid down in the 1990 Copenhagen Document.



One of the municipal elections posters on display in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The EOM started operating in Skopje on 14 August. Apart from the Head of Mission, the core staff includes six experts from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland and Sweden. The core staff members will analyse the various aspects of the elections, including candidate registration, election administration, the election campaign, complaints and appeals procedures, and media coverage of the campaign and the elections. For the latter task, a special media monitoring team will carry out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of some of the major.

Ten long-term observers from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA were deployed on 18 August. Their areas of responsibility cover the whole territory of the country, in order to provide the Mission with a comprehensive picture

of the campaign and the elections.

In addition to the core team and the long-term observers, ODIHR has asked participating States to second 80 short-term observers to monitor the electoral process on election day. As on previous missions, the EOM will also draw on members of the diplomatic community in Skopje as well as on the staff of international organizations and non-governmental organizations in order to increase the number of election-day observers.

The Mission will release a preliminary report of its findings the day after the elections. A comprehensive final report will be released around one month after the election process has been concluded.

Mr. Krause is Political Analyst with the ODIHR Election Observation Mission currently in Skopje.

Reforms pave the way for elections in Albania

Polls scheduled for 1 October in municipalities and communes

By Tim Bittiger

Local elections are scheduled for Albania on 1 October. These polls will provide Albanian voters with an important opportunity to exercise their democratic right to elect the mayors and council members for their respective municipalities and communes.

Last month, following an invitation by the Prime Minister of Albania, Ilir Meta, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission in Albania to monitor the upcoming local government elections.

“We believe that these elections are of particular significance as they are the first to take place under the provisions of the new 1998 Constitution and the new Electoral Code, adopted on 8 May”, said Eugenio Polizzi, the Co-ordinator of the ODIHR Mission.

The relevance of the forthcoming local elections, however, goes far beyond the voting process itself. In fact, the elections should be seen in the much wider context of reforms taking place in Albania.

Substantial changes are being undertaken in the fields of voter registration, electoral legislation, and election administration. At the same time, a process of decentralization is underway to strengthen local autonomy and self-government.

The reform of voter registration is taking place under an Electoral Assistance Programme. It is aimed primarily at assisting in the development of procedures to create transparent and accurate voter lists for future elections. This is necessary in view of past criticism of the voter list by domestic and international observers, including the ODIHR, during all the multi-party elections and referenda that

have taken place in Albania since 1992.

This programme is a joint undertaking by the Government of Albania, the United Nations Development Programme, the OSCE, and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), and is currently in its implementation phase. As its final output, the programme envisages an accurate and transparent computerized national voter register, which would generate a final voter list by the middle of September. Furthermore, the programme includes the issuance of identity cards to all voters and the establishment of a data centre to help maintain the electoral register, as well as to assist in future electoral processes. The computerization of voter data is also intended to have a positive impact on the civil status system. Automation could be undertaken after the elections, as suggested by the OSCE/ODIHR

civil/voter registry pilot project, conducted in 1998/99.

The programme has introduced several new registration procedures which aim to increase the transparency and accuracy of the voter list. During the first project phase, a computerized civil registry database, previously scanned for social security purposes, was updated to serve as an input or base list for the enumeration process. The second phase entailed a nationwide door-to-door enumeration of voter data, which was conducted in June and July. The data collected are currently being entered and consolidated at a central data centre in Tirana, and the programme will provide a preliminary voter list to the Central Election Commission for revision by the citizens, prior to becoming the final voter list for election day.

To enhance the transparency of the enumeration process, the OSCE Presence in Albania organised an international enumeration observation mission from 3 June to 11 July, with 25 election experts from OSCE participating States.

In its final report, the mission stated: 'in general, the aim of conducting a transparent and accurate registration was achieved'. However, shortcomings were also identified. These included a lack of communication, some poor organization, and in some cases a lack of political co-operation during the enumeration.

As to electoral legislative reform, domestic and international experts have been engaged in adapting the relevant legislation to conform to internationally recognized standards, as required by the new Albanian Constitution. For this purpose, the OSCE Presence chaired an expert working group which met almost

daily at the Presence headquarters from 8 March to 7 April this year, to try to reach agreement by consensus on a draft Electoral Code, covering all aspects of elections and referenda in Albania.

The working group was set up in accordance with a decision taken by opposition and governing coalition parties on 21 February. The governing coalition, the opposition, and the international community (represented by OSCE, the ODIHR, the Council of Europe, and the IFES) appointed five electoral experts each to participate in the talks. This



An OSCE observer checking ballots in Albania's 1997 legislative elections

forum was available to all parties wishing raise any issue of a technical or legal nature for discussion.

On 10 April, the OSCE submitted an amended draft Code to Prime Minister Meta. The Council of Ministers reviewed and adopted the document on 13 April, which Parliament passed on 8 May, with minor amendments regarding the composition of electoral commissions.

The third major component of the reform process was the establishment of a permanent independent Central Election Commission (CEC). In the past, commissions consisted of an equal number of party representatives from both political sides, which very often resulted in blockages in decision-making pro-

cesses, especially during significant phases of elections. As a consequence, the new Constitution has introduced an independent CEC, with members nominated by constitutional organs, such as the President, the High Council of Justice, and the Parliament.

Compared to previous commissions, the CEC has a major role to play in elections. It prepares, supervises, manages, and verifies all aspects of elections and referenda and announces their results (under Article 153 of the Constitution). With the local elections now only a few weeks away, there are high expectations for the CEC to fulfil its constitutional mandate. Currently, its main tasks are to register parties and candidates, to set up local election commissions, and to arrange for the preparation of election materials.

Finally, the forthcoming local elections are also closely linked to the current decentralization process. The principles of local autonomy are inherent in the Constitution, and new local government legislation is currently being passed. Local authorities will be endowed with unprecedented authority and responsibilities.

This reform might gradually allow newly elected mayors and councilors to pursue their mandates in a different manner, making use of their new functions provided under the decentralization programme. Political polarization has been repeatedly identified as a factor hampering Albania's democratization, but this could be overcome by increased local autonomy. Decentralization might also be a means of enabling local authorities to shape their political programmes to reflect local conditions and local requirements rather than following central party lines.

Mr. Bittiger is Head of the Local Government Office, OSCE Presence in Albania

Election preparations in Kosovo moving ahead

Less than two months before Election Day, preparation work by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo is in full swing. Under the new slogan “My Municipality, My Decision”, the Mission is fully engaged in the organization of transparent, free and fair elections in the province.

By Monique de Groot and Alex Nitzsche



Staff of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo working on review and inquiry cases

It is not easy to find members of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) sitting in their offices these days – with less than two months to Election Day, a flurry of activity has kept most OMIK officers constantly busy. Preparations for the municipal elections, now officially scheduled for 28 October, are in full swing: Campaign Finance Rules have been devised and adopted; a ballot lottery was held to determine the order of political parties, coalitions, independent candidates and citizens’ associations on the ballot; candidates lists are being verified; Municipal Election Commissions have been appointed throughout the province; and media procedures have been drafted.

Simultaneously, the OMIK has launched a public information campaign designed to inform Kosovar voters about the electoral process. Under a new logo and the slogan “My Municipality, My Decision”, television spots, newspaper

advertisements, flyers and posters are currently being created to be aired and distributed throughout the province.

And this is not all – a ten-day verification period concluded on 30 August, during which voters could verify their personal registration data. The statistics are impressive – between 21 and 30 August, an average of 15,000 people a day visited registration centres throughout Kosovo to check their personal data on the Provisional Voters List for accuracy. However, registration among the Serb minority was low.

“The success of the entire registration process has shown the eagerness of the Kosovar population to participate at the coming elections”, said Daan Everts, Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, commenting on the completion of the campaign.

This verification period, which was officially called the ‘Confirmation, Additions and Challenges period’, was

aimed at ensuring the transparency of the voter registration process. What now lies ahead is to correct and finalize the Voters List and to ensure that all eligible voters can exercise their right to vote on Election Day.

Another important cornerstone in the election preparations is the verification of the candidates lists. All certified political parties, coalitions, and citizens’ initiatives have submitted candidates lists, which contain a total of more than 5,500 candidates. The Central Election Commission (CEC) and the OMIK Elections Operations Department are completing an extensive screening process, to ensure all candidates are registered to vote in the municipality where they are running, that their names do not appear on any other candidates lists and that they are not members of the Kosovo Police Force or the Kosovo Protection Corps. Their names are also being checked against information from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

A very specific element in the electoral rules concerns the participation of women as political candidates. The regulation stipulates that at least 30 percent female candidates need to be included among the first 15 people on each candidates list. In order to support the role of women politicians in Kosovo and to strengthen their understanding of democratic municipal governance, at the beginning of September, the Mission was due to conduct a training workshop for women candidates.

Together with the OMIK, the CEC has been instrumental in preparing the

legal groundwork for the electoral process. Throughout the province, the commission appointed ethnically-balanced Municipal Election Commissions, which will assist in organizing and administering the election process, and adopted rules on campaign financing and the role of the media.

“With the rule on ‘Campaign Finance Disclosure and Spending Limits’, the financing of the election campaign becomes so much more transparent, and political parties and candidates will be accountable to the public for this”, explains Jeff Fischer, Director of Elections at OMIK.

As far as the rules apply to the role of the media in Kosovo, the CEC has stipu-

lated that both local and national broadcasters are required to provide free and equitable broadcast time to all certified political parties, coalitions, independent candidates and citizens’ initiatives. Paid political advertising is prohibited in the electronic media, but allowed under certain conditions in the print media.

All these activities are accompanied by an extensive public information campaign. After long deliberation, the new logo and slogan were adopted for the election campaign, and will be used on all election publications and public information materials prepared by the mission.

In addition, the weekly programme ‘Camera on Registration’ went back on

air on Radio-Television Kosovo (RTK) in mid-August. This explains every week to the electorate how the voting process functions and what, for example, returning refugees need to do in order to participate in the elections. Since 29 August, the show has been replaced by the series ‘Camera on Elections’, which is produced in co-operation with RTK and this will run every week until Election Day. An election jingle is also in preparation to serve during the campaign period.

Ms. de Groot and Mr. Nitzsche are Public Information Officers in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and the Secretariat’s Press and Public Information Section respectively.

OSCE Secretariat undergoes restructuring

Changes aimed at significantly improving OSCE’s reaction times

With the growing engagement of the OSCE in large-scale field activities, the strengthening of its operational capabilities has assumed an increasingly important priority for the Organization, as emphasized by the participating States at the OSCE Istanbul Summit in November 1999.

On 29 June, the Permanent Council decided on the steps needed to enhance these capabilities by agreeing to plans for the implementation of the Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT) concept, the opening of an Operations Centre, and the restructuring of the OSCE Secretariat in Vienna.

One of the main components of this far-reaching restructuring process will be a unified human resources management system, under the aegis of a newly-created Department for Human Resources. This system is designed to significantly improve the OSCE’s rapid reaction capacity with regard to the plan-

ning and deployment of large missions.

The new Department will bring under one roof the Mission Staffing and Training and Capacity-Building Units (both formerly part of the Conflict Prevention Centre) and the Personnel Unit (formerly under the Department for Administration and Operations), as well as the Gender Adviser.

This arrangement was recommended to the Permanent Council in a report from the Secretary General, Jan Kubis, in which he said: “The main point of my proposal is the creation of a Human Resources Department, which brings together the functions of personnel management and mission staffing, including REACT... In my opinion, a single Human Resources Department is indispensable.”

The restructuring programme will therefore facilitate the rapid recruitment and deployment of personnel in crisis situations and provide an integrated staffing mechanism for all OSCE missions and field operations. Some of the tools to be

used for this purpose will be a standardized recruitment and staffing process and a human resources Extranet, which will link the participating States, the Secretariat and OSCE’s field activities to permit the rapid exchange of information on candidates by electronic means.



OSCE Secretary General Jan Kubis

Another step in this restructuring process will be the establishment of an Operations Centre within the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) (see following article). This section will co-operate very closely with the Mission Programme Section of the CPC, previously known as the 'Mission Liaison Section', which will be the primary point of contact on all matters of relevance to the OSCE field activities, providing a general overview of all Secretariat activities in support of the implementation of the mission mandates and a focused follow-up effort. Co-operation between the two sections will ensure

smooth and consistent operational planning and the necessary information flow.

"From the perspective of improved management and support for field operations, as well as co-operation with the Chairmanship and the participating States, the philosophy behind the Programme Officer concept is important," the Secretary General stressed in his report. "This new approach should enable us to work with improved co-ordination, focus and efficiency".

The same restructuring process also sees the Department for Administration and Operations, minus the Personnel

Unit, changing its name to the Department for Support Services and Budget.

Finally, the Permanent Council also decided to move the External Co-operation Section from the CPC to the Office of the Secretary General, where it comes under his direct supervision. The section will retain its main tasks, namely to work with the Mediterranean and other Partners for Co-operation, organize OSCE seminars, maintain contact with other international organizations, as well as draft annual and other reports for the Secretary General and perform other diplomatic liaison activities.

Operations Centre due to open in September

Another aim of the Istanbul Summit is fulfilled by the OSCE

By Eva Zieschank

With the arrival in Vienna during the first week of September of the selected seconded staff of the Operations Centre, the newly-created unit can commence its work within the Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), in accordance with the guidelines agreed at the OSCE's Istanbul Summit last November.

Timothy Isles, former Deputy Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, will head the "Opscen," as the new section is already referred to internally. The genesis of the new body was a report by a group of experts prepared in September 1998, which pointed to the need for a permanent planning establishment within the OSCE.

The recommendation could not, however, be implemented at that stage, because the Secretariat's attention was soon absorbed by the operational requirements of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), which was then being launched. Ironically, the KVM pointed up even more clearly the need for an institutionalized planning capacity.

"The KVM was the big turning point", says Marton Krasznai, Director of the CPC. "It was larger and more complex than any of the missions the OSCE had undertaken before and represented an unprecedented challenge for the Organization's crisis management capabilities. Between October and mid-December 1998, 35 experts in Vienna faced the immense task of recruiting 2,000 mission staff, organizing the acquisition of all necessary equipment, from vehicles to office stationery, and planning the logistics for the deployment."

The KVM taught some important lessons, one of which was the demand for a more coherent and co-ordinated form of planning. This was affirmed at the Istanbul Summit in November 1999, when the OSCE Heads of State or Government agreed, in the Charter for European Security, that: "Rapid deployment is important for the OSCE's effectiveness in contributing to our conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation efforts and

depends on effective preparation and planning."

It was decided in Istanbul: "to set up an Operation Centre within the Conflict Prevention Centre with a small core staff, having expertise relevant for all kinds of OSCE operations, which can be expanded rapidly when required".

Thus, the Operations Centre's primary function will be to serve as a planning cell for future missions and field operations and to identify potential crisis areas, as Secretary General Jan Kubis put it in a recent report. Through the Operations Centre, the OSCE wants to draw systematically on the substantial experience that exists within the Organization.

"Two missions will never be exactly the same, but at least we shall not be starting from scratch each time we put together a new mission," Mr. Krasznai stresses. "The operational planners, among others, will define objectives, timelines, best practices, and resource requirements."

A second key function of the Oper-

ations Centre will be to liaise with the OSCE's international partner organizations, non-military but also military ones (due to the OSCE's co-operation in the field with, for example, SFOR and KFOR).

"To ensure more effective networking with other organizations, there will be an experienced OSCE police adviser, and military liaison will be carried out by a full-time military officer", Mr. Krasznai explains. Another officer will be in charge of resource planning.

Within the Secretariat, the Operations Centre will work, according to Mr. Krasznai, "very closely with the Mission Programme and Mission Support sections, as well as with other sections of the Secretariat, and be supported and assisted by the duty officers in the Secretariat's Situation Room, which is staffed on a continuous basis."

There will be two modes of operation. In the "routine mode" the goal is to undertake as much preparation for future missions as possible. "The capacity that the Operations Centre brings is systematic planning", says Mr. Krasznai, "you need planning to be able to respond

rapidly". An important element of the preparatory work is to look at all the options for a possible response to a crisis. This requires a small, dedicated team.

The second mode is the "surge mode", which refers to the actual transition to an operation. "When the Permanent Council adopts a mandate the Operations Centre, which would already have studied and followed the development of the problem, can present the options evolved previously and provide background information. This will help the Chairperson-in-Office to make a choice", adds Mr. Krasznai.

The Operations Centre staff will also serve as a core team during mission build-up and may even accompany the new Head of Mis-

sion to the mission area in the initial stages of the deployment. It will be complemented by Secretariat staff, according to the actual operational needs.

Once a mission has been accomplished, a further important task for the Operations Centre will be to review systematically the work that was done and draw lessons learned from it which can then be taken into account for further planning.

Ms. Zieschank works in the OSCE Press and Public Information Section



Future OSCE missions, similar to Kosovo (above), will be planned in the new Operations Centre

ODIHR organizes visit to help open up Kazakh prisons to the media

By Jens-Hagen Eschenbaecher

Journalists were invited last month to visit several prisons in Kazakhstan in an effort by Kazakh prison authorities to improve their relationship with the media. The visit was organized as a part of the ongoing Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) assistance to the reform of the country's prison system, in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior and the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law.

As a result of discussions with the Director of the Kazakh prison system concerning the poor relationship the prison system had with the media, the press was invited to attend an ODIHR seminar with prison officials on penitentiary reform and human rights, held in Oskemen on 8 and 9 August. The journalists were also invited to accompany the ODIHR delegation on a tour of a prison in the Zhangistobe region.

"The press was allowed to enter a

Kazakh prison with cameras and to videotape inside", said Donald Bisson, ODIHR Rule-of-Law Adviser. "Both the ODIHR delegation and the press were allowed to speak alone with any prisoner and were free to examine all sections of the prison."

During the seminar there was vigorous open discussion between the members of the media and the prison officials. The main complaint of the prison officials was that the media allegedly are not



Ulrich Schoening, Head of the OSCE Centre in Almaty, opening the prison reform meeting on 8 and August

objective when reporting on conditions in the prisons. The journalists complained about lack of access to prisons and the seeming reluctance of prison officials to release information to the media.

A local Kazakh media expert, who was hired by the ODIHR, discussed ways for the two sides to lessen the tension between them and attempt to co-operate with each other. The expert conducted several mock interviews of prison officials and then critiqued both the interviewing styles of the reporter and the answers given by the official.

“The seminar was characterized by openness between the two parties that seemed to surprise even themselves”, said Mr. Bisson.

Both the journalists and the prison authorities have requested that the ODIHR continue to facilitate discussion between the media and the prison system. The prison authorities promised that they would grant the media greater access to prisons and prisoners. They assured the media that no legitimate request for access would be denied, an assurance the

media viewed with skepticism.

“The seminar was, nevertheless, very successful in establishing lines of communication between the prison system and the media”, concluded Mr. Bisson. “Both sides were encouraged by the discussion and are eager to continue the dialogue.”

The next phase of the project will be to send 15 Kazakh prison officials to the Prison Training Academy in Poland in late September. The officials will be the trainers at the new Kazakh Prison Training Facility in Pavlodar, which will begin classes in autumn. The goal is to help the Kazakh authorities develop a curriculum for the training facility that more directly addresses the needs of prison personnel and incorporates international human rights standards.

Mr. Eschenbaecher is Public Affairs Officer at the ODIHR

Preparing candidates for OSCE field activities

International meeting looks at how to improve pre-mission training

The first meeting to bring together training experts from participating States and international organizations to focus on improving mission-preparation training was organized on 17 July by the OSCE Training Section. The one-day meeting, which was opened by the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre, Marton Krasznai, was attended by 40 participants from 20 participating States and international organizations including the European Union, the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

The main focus of the meeting was the further development of co-operation in the field of training, with particular emphasis on mission-preparation training between the OSCE Secretariat, national mission-preparation pro-

grammes and international organizations. In this regard, the draft training standards for the preparation of OSCE field staff, developed in the framework of the Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT) were introduced and discussed.

Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Romania, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland presented their different initiatives to prepare future mission members for field activities. Most of these programmes provide a general preparation for candidates on peace missions. However, the representative from Austria's Burg Schlaining Peace Centre announced that a pilot mission-preparation course specifically for OSCE missions would be held in October, designed and developed

on the basis of the REACT draft standards.

Subsequent discussion revealed that participants held divergent views on the need for and the scope of pre-mission-training, as well as on the question of whether training should take place in participating States or be organized centrally in Vienna by the OSCE Secretariat. The majority of participants agreed that the primary responsibility for ensuring appropriate field readiness of their candidates should rest with the seconding participating State. They particularly welcomed the REACT standards as a useful tool to harmonize pre-mission training, which is being organized in a growing number of participating States.

However, some delegates voiced concern about the efficiency of creating

numerous national training programmes and therefore clearly favoured centralized training in Vienna instead, possibly in the form of an extended induction programme.

The Training and Capacity-Building Section presented the concept and content of the bi-weekly induction programme being held in Vienna for all new mission members. It was stressed that induction could not replace solid pre-mission training, but rather provided the necessary orientation and introduction of new mission members to the OSCE and to the respective mission of assignment.

The need for a constant exchange of information on training issues to enable participating States and the Training Section to design the pre-mission training

and the induction course in a complementary manner was highlighted.

The Co-ordinator for Training and Capacity-Building, Ms. Gudrun Steinacker, presented the planned project for the development of an OSCE training website with links to national, international and non-governmental training institutions. She said that the creation of a databank on training covering training institutions, material and trainers was also envisaged. This would be made available to OSCE missions and field activities, partners in participating States and other international organizations.

The representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe and the Training Section at the OSCE Secretariat reiterated their readiness to continue co-

operation, especially in the area of joint human rights training standards and manuals and their intention to consider extending joint projects to other areas of interest.

Apart from providing a useful exchange of information on training in the OSCE area, the meeting also provided a unique forum to establish networks of pre-mission training institutions to engage in a division of labour and to open their courses to participants from those participating States where pre-mission training was not being offered.

The new e-mail address of the OSCE Training Section, to which all requests regarding training issues can be sent, with immediate effect, is:

training@osce.org



News from the field

The OSCE currently has Missions or other field activities in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Latvia, Skopje (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The following brief reports reflect some of the recent work which these field operations have undertaken.

OSCE Centre in Almaty hosts seminar for gender trainers

From 26 to 30 June, the OSCE Centre in Almaty, Kazakhstan, together with the gender advisor section of the ODIHR, organized a 'training of trainers' event on women's rights awareness. The event covered a broad range of issues, such as the concept of gender, relevant international documents, specific shortcomings in the country's legislation (in the fields of social and economic rights and the trafficking of women) and domestic violence. Two trainers from Moscow presented contemporary training methods. This was complemented by the presentation of analytical reports by local experts. The group of trainees was composed of ten women from non-governmental orga-

nizations (NGOs) in Almaty and 15 from the regions. So-called "mini trainings" will be conducted with different target groups over the next few months. Target groups are primarily active rural women, but also students and people from government bodies. The aim of these training sessions is to increase the awareness of women's rights and help create a network of women's NGOs in Kazakhstan.

Young people demonstrate level of inter-ethnic co-operation in BiH

Building on the experience that young people are generally more likely than their elders to liaise across ethnic and political dividing lines, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) organized a four-day event on

political involvement of youth from 27 to 30 July in Kakanj. More than 2,000 participants gathered from all regions of the Federation and discussed cross-entity contacts. They drafted suggestions to municipal administrations in both entities on environmental issues, the future of young returnees, and drug awareness.

BiH Mission holds first advocacy training session for NGOs

From 19 to 21 August, the OSCE Mission to BiH held its first two-day NGO advocacy training session. The purpose of the training was to equip local NGOs with the practical tools needed to play an active role in the political decision-making process. In a field-partner analysis, the Mission identified 80 well-

developed NGOs with a strong record of citizens' representation from all regions of BiH and selected them for this training. The seminar revealed the existence of a highly motivated group of 30 NGOs, which have already started to develop joint strategies to take on a more political role. Good governance training for municipal officials, has increased the readiness of these authorities to co-operate with civil society actors such as NGOs. This has created a window of opportunity to which the OSCE Mission is now responding with its advocacy training programme to enable the people of BiH to assume ownership of the democratic processes in their country.

OMIK opens three more service centres for political parties

Between 1 August and 8 August, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMIK) opened a further three Political Party Service Centres (PPSCs), located in Prizren, Gnjilane and Mitrovica. This has brought the number of such centres to seven out of a projected ten. These PPSCs provide political parties with multi-party round tables and dialogue, training and logistical and other forms of support in order to build their capabilities for effective political campaigning and outreach to their members and the voting public at large. They also provide facilities such as conference rooms, offices, computers, photocopying machines, telephones and fax machines. The OSCE is working at a variety of levels to promote and support the development of mature, democratic political parties in Kosovo. Strengthening their organizational capacity is an important element of this programme.

Campaign training workshops organized across Kosovo

Political party training was also furthered by a series of one-day campaign training workshops that the OSCE orga-

nized in seven centres across Kosovo until 4 August. The objective of the training was to ensure that the participants would be able to run their own election campaigns in the municipalities concerned. Subjects covered included: maximizing voter participation; different voter groups; the role of members, supporters and voters; the different phases of on-site election campaigning; and voter contact in the municipalities. Approximately 200 candidates and campaign managers from all parties that were registered to take part in the elections received training.

Another ten one-day seminars for political parties took place between 21 August and 28 August in the OSCE's five Regional Centres, covering campaign organization and public relations (PR) awareness. The PR training specifically focused on interview techniques, communication of campaign messages, general PR techniques and the rules governing both political parties and journalists throughout the campaign period. The goal was to try to change political parties' relationships with the media and to promote transparency and the concept that both the media and political parties are engaged in public service.

Women's seminars in Tajikistan focus on family and political rights

Between 18 July and 13 August, the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan organized nine women's seminars in the Kurghon Teppa region on family rights and Islam for about 180 participants. Another three women's seminars on political rights were held in the Leninobod region for over 60 participants. In the Karategin Valley, a new pool of trainers attended a "training of trainers" course for seminars on basic family and political rights. In addition, in Leninobod, Karategin Valley and the Khatlon region, 18 women support groups have been formed, each by

some 20 women from remote rural areas. The OSCE Mission is developing a year-long programme to assist the women participating in the groups to establish closer relationships with local authorities and civil society actors. The groups' activities are also aimed at empowering women to become more active members of their communities and play a dynamic advocacy role in promoting human rights.

NGOs look for common approach to youth issues in Armenia

Following a series of visits to youth organizations, the OSCE Office in Yerevan hosted a meeting of 15 NGOs. Among them were representatives from the Youth Centre for Gender Studies, the Young Democrats Union, the Youth Academy, the Liberal Youth Union, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Youth Military Patriotic Union, the Association for Youth Achievement, the Youth Non-governmental Organization, and other youth associations, dealing with different issues. This was the first time they had met to exchange views, to look at the possibility for developing a national strategy regarding youth issues and to examine ways of acting together to build a democratic society. A follow-up meeting is planned to look at concrete ideas and proposals. The Office, which aims to develop a strategy to support the younger generation in obtaining information about democratic norms and values, promotes co-operation between different youth organizations.

Small entrepreneurs' workshop organized in Tajikistan

On 31 July, the OSCE Mission to Tajikistan organized a workshop for small entrepreneurs and NGOs active in the economic sphere. The participants discussed the existing legal framework and the main problems facing small entrepreneurs, as well as ways to address

them in order to engage governmental institutions in an action-oriented dialogue with small businesses. The lack of information on economic legislation and of contacts between governmental institutions and small businesses, and the insufficient dissemination of legislative texts on small business activities, corruption and bureaucracy were among the main topics discussed by the participants.

IN BRIEF



On 31 July, two members from the OSCE Mission in Kosovo were arrested by Yugoslav Army soldiers in the neighbouring

Republic of Montenegro. The two men had been on vacation there and were returning to their duty station in Kosovo when they were arrested close to the border with Kosovo. They and two Canadians travelling with them were subsequently transferred to a military jail in Belgrade. No charges have yet been announced against the detainees; however, a Yugoslav Army spokesman has accused them of a number of crimes and offences, including the training of terrorists, carrying of weapons and illegal entry into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Austrian Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, has repeatedly called for the immediate release of the four men, as has the **Secretary General, Jan Kubis**. The box (right) is one of the public statements by the CiO on this issue.

In a letter to the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, sent 1 August, **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Benita Ferrero-Waldner**, expressed concern regarding the preparations for the

The participants advanced a wide range of suggestions for gradually redressing the situation, from the creation of centres to provide legal assistance to small and medium businesses, the setting up of working groups for identifying the shortcomings in the existing commercial legislation and preparing proposals to remedy them, to conducting training activities for small entrepreneurs. Professional

training of entrepreneurs was recommended, with international support for NGO projects in this field. The participants also requested training seminars on tax legislation for small and medium businesses and suggested that an economic forum on small businesses be convened with the participation of government representatives, business people and NGOs from different regions.

Chairperson-in-Office calls upon the Federal Government of Yugoslavia to respect its international commitments

Vienna, 9 August - The Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, reiterates her great concern about the legal proceedings against two British members of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and two Canadian citizens who have been arrested by the Federal Yugoslav Army. It has been reported that the four men today were brought to a military court in Belgrade for a hearing, which should determine whether or not they will be officially charged.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office notes with dismay that the diplomatic representatives of the United Kingdom and Canada still have not been granted consular access to the detained in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. She asks the Yugoslav federal authorities to fulfil their international obligations and honour their commitments under international law. Moreover, the Chairperson-in-Office requests the Federal Government of Yugoslavia to accelerate the proceedings leading to the rapid release of the four detained men.

upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Belarus. She announced that, in response to the invitation from the Belarusian authorities to dispatch international observers to the election, the framework conditions for the participation of international observers would be assessed. Regarding this matter the CiO was in close consultation with the Council of Europe, the European Union and other institutions of the OSCE, such as the Parliamentary Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). She emphasized that the assessment would not be based solely on the text of the law, but also on the transparency of the election process, the composition of the Central Election Commission, regular access of the opposition to the state-controlled electronic media, the functions of the parliament to be elected, and on the observance of the so-called "Peace Period" prior to the elections. (See also the Update from the ODIHR in this issue).

On 9 August, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** welcomed the acquittal by the Military Court in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, of Felix Kulov. She recognized this latest development as a positive sign for the pre-electoral atmosphere in the lead-up to the presidential elections scheduled for 29 October. On 7 August, Mr. Kulov, leader of the opposition

Ar-Namys party in Kyrgyzstan, was acquitted of all charges and released. Mr. Kulov had been tried before the Military Court in camera on three charges relating to acts allegedly committed while he held the post of Head of the Ministry of National Security, from 1997 to 1998. Mr. Kulov had been in detention since 22 March, when he was arrested at a Bishkek hospital where he was undergoing medical treatment. The CiO, as well as the Secretary General, had earlier stated their dismay and alarm at his detention.

On 16 August, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** articulated her deep concern about the recurrence of terrorist activities in Central Asia. She cited reports according to which groups using terror and intimidation have been active since early August in some countries of Central Asia. Militants, allegedly linked with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were reported to have intruded into the southern provinces of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Ms. Ferrero-Waldner strongly condemned all manifestations of international terrorism and extremism and supported all appropriate actions to counter such activities. She reiterated that the OSCE welcomed and encouraged the exchange of information by the affected States and other

forms of co-operation to counter the current threat, such as the creation of a joint headquarters in Khujand/Tajikistan by the authorities of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Chairperson-in-Office expressed her hope that the States of the region would also take determined action to implement democratic political and economic reforms as key factors for long-term stability. The **Permanent Council** has also been discussing the situation in Central Asia regularly.

From 7 to 12 August, a delegation from the **Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, which included Constantin Ene, Personal Representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Liviu Bota, Head of the Permanent Mission of Romania to the OSCE, paid a visit to Georgia – the first in a number of trips envisaged to areas of OSCE activities to gather first-hand information and help prepare for the Romanian OSCE Chairmanship in 2001. The Romanian delegation was extensively briefed on the various activities of the Mission. In Tbilisi, the delegation conducted talks with high-ranking Georgian officials in a series of intensive meetings and familiarized itself with major policy positions. The delegation also met with the Speaker of Parliament,

the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Special Tasks and the Personal Representative of the President of Georgia on Political, Security and Conflict-settlement Issues and discussed, inter alia, the status of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and prospects for its settlement.

On 23 August, the **OSCE Chairperson-in-Office** issued a statement condemning the bomb attack on 18 August on the building in Pristina, Kosovo, which houses the OSCE Political Party Service Centre, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Office for Cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Independent Trade Union of Kosovo. The CiO also condemned a violent attack, which occurred on the same day and injured several Kosovo Serbian children. She called on all Kosovo leaders to support the efforts of the international community to end violence in Kosovo and to create a peaceful and stable environment in which all ethnic groups could live safely. Regarding the forthcoming local elections, the CiO called on all political leaders in Kosovo to refrain from inciting hatred and violence and to promote calm conditions for the conduct of the elections.

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PRESS PROFILE



25th
ANNIVERSARY

On 31 July 1975, 35 Heads of States and Governments convened in Helsinki, Finland, to sign the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The 25th Anniversary of this event has been widely reported.

El Pais, 31 July

‘25 years after its adoption, the Final Act has decisively contributed to overcoming the division of Europe and to the flowering of freedom and democracy, allowing us to continue to look towards the future with hope.’

BBC, 1 August

‘It was only with Mikhail Gorbachev’s arrival on the political stage in Moscow in the mid-1980s and then with the collapse of communism in Europe that the CSCE really came into its element. It provided the framework for reducing conventional armed forces at the end of the Cold War. And for the past decade it has been one of the key organisations spearheading democratisation, protecting human rights and trying to resolve regional conflicts across Europe... The OSCE, as the only pan-European organisation, has been focussing its attention on conflict prevention and crisis management. As a relatively small organization, based in Vienna, it is more flexible than the United Nations – and is more focussed on Europe.’

The Washington Post, 2 August

‘The Helsinki Accords inspired dis-

sidents within the Soviet bloc to challenge their governments openly, to champion the causes of free speech, free association and other basic human rights. That challenge and those values are what brought down the Berlin Wall. Nearly 10 years after the breakup of the Soviet empire, most citizens of former East Bloc countries enjoy the freedoms inscribed in the Helsinki Final Act.’

Onasa (Sarajevo), 2 August

‘The Helsinki Final Act was considered a breakthrough in East-West relations, lessening tensions and building co-operation. The process involved military talks, leading to a greater trust between the two adversarial blocs; and was matched by efforts at co-operation on economic, environmental and scientific matters. Probably the most significant provision of the Final Act was outlined in “Basket III” on human rights, which provided inspiration and encouragement to human rights movements in their struggle for fundamental freedoms.’

Business and Politics (Dushanbe), 4 August

‘The OSCE has become a leading power in establishing new relations between states, in the development of the democratic processes in the member countries... The OSCE, while realizing its crucial mission in the development of the modern world community, is a guarantor of the peace process in Tajikistan. By developing the strategic co-operation with the UN and other international organizations, it contributes to the process of national reconciliation and peace building.’

On the night of 1 August, two British members of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo were arrested by the Yugoslav Army as they were on their way from a short vacation in Montenegro back to their duty

station in Kosovo. They were accused of being “spies” or “trainers of terrorists”. Two Canadians travelling with them were also arrested.

KOSOVO

The Guardian, 4 August

‘The allegations were dismissed as “absolutely absurd” by the OSCE, which said the two Britons had been seconded to a police training school in Kosovo, to act as instructors.’

Süddeutsche Zeitung, 5 August

‘The Austrian foreign minister and current OSCE Chairperson Ferrero-Waldner demanded that Belgrade grant “immediate access” to the detainees for British and Canadian consular representatives, as well as for the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, in accordance with the Vienna Convention.’

Die Presse, 5 August

‘Great Britain, Canada and the Chairperson of the OSCE, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, reacted with concern, but also with anger at the arrest of two Britons and two Canadians by the Yugoslav Army.’

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 August

‘Because of the latest incident, the OSCE has for the time being banned its mission members from travelling to neighbouring Montenegro. A statement by the OSCE said that the Yugoslav Army must not be given more propaganda opportunities through the possible arrest of more foreigners.’

Financial Times, 8 August

‘The two Britons are police instructors working in Kosovo for the OSCE. Yesterday the OSCE rejected any sug-

gestion that the two men were involved in espionage or terrorism, but stopped all staff travel to Montenegro.'

The Guardian, 8 August

'Given that Belgrade knows very well that the two Britons, seconded to the OSCE to help with police training in Kosovo, are victims, not villains, who or what are the real targets of the indicted Yugoslav dictator's latest machinations?'

**FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Financial Times, 1 August

'The "Max van der Stoel College" is still only a gleam in the eyes of ethnic

Albanian academics in Tetovo, a western Macedonian town that was a focus of inter-ethnic tension over the Macedonian Government's (sic) refusal to recognize an Albanian-language university founded there six years ago. But earlier this week the professors' hope of teaching at a brand-new university sponsored by European and US institutions came a step closer to being realised, when the Macedonian Parliament approved legislation to allow the establishment of private universities...

The law also marked a successful outcome to five years of energetic lobbying of Macedonia's ethnic Slav and Albanian political leadership by Max van der Stoel, the former Dutch Foreign Minister, now High Commissioner on National Minorities with the OSCE.'

BELARUS

On 15 August, six opposition parties in Belarus agreed on a unified boycott of the October parliamentary elections, in protest against the repressive rule of the Belarus President.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 17 August

'The OSCE has already stated that it will not recognize the election results, if the Opposition in Belarus is subjected to repression.'

Der Standard, 25 August

'Neither the OSCE nor the Council of Europe will send election observers to Belarus, since this would give the fictitious elections a certain legitimacy.'

New on the OSCE Website

More field activities online

- OSCE Mission to Moldova: www.osce.org/moldova
- OSCE Mission to Tajikistan: www.osce.org/tajikistan
- OSCE Centre in Almaty: www.osce.org/almaty
- OSCE Centre in Ashgabad: www.osce.org/ashgabad
- OSCE Centre in Bishkek: www.osce.org/bishkek
- OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje: www.osce.org/skopje
- OSCE Liaison Office in Central Asia: www.osce.org/calocalo

Access all OSCE field activities at:

www.osce.org/field_activities/field_activities.htm

For further information on this or other aspects of the website, contact the Press and Public Information Section of the OSCE Secretariat, tel.: (+43-1) 514 36 180 or e-mail: info@osce.org.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is located at Aleje Ujazdowskie 19, PL-00 557 Warsaw, Poland, tel.: (+48-22) 520 06 00, fax: (+48-22) 520 06 05, e-mail: office@odih.osce.waw.pl

ELECTIONS



Belgrade denies entry visas to ODIHR election experts

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has denied entry visas to the ODIHR experts planning to assess in-country conditions, prior to the 24 September federal and municipal elections. Without such an assessment, the ODIHR cannot consider the deployment of an international observation mission. The Belgrade authorities' selective invitation of only certain institutions to observe the upcoming elections gives the ODIHR cause for serious concern about the intentions of the ruling coalition in these elections.

ODIHR delegation visits Belarus

In advance of a decision on the observation of the 15 October parliamentary elections, an ODIHR delegation visited Belarus from 9 to 11 August to hold discussions with the authorities, opposition parties, representatives of civil society and the diplomatic community. On 25 July, the ODIHR had released its assessment of the amended (June 30) Electoral Code of the Republic of Belarus, concluding that the law failed to ensure democratic elections.

Workshop held on implementing the Lund recommendations

On 3 and 4 July, the ODIHR convened a workshop in Warsaw to discuss the implementation of the Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life ('Lund recommendations'). The main objective of the

workshop was to formulate a first set of concrete guidelines for experts when addressing national minorities' concerns during ODIHR election-related activities, and to provide guidance to national minorities on public participation in elections. A group of leading experts from Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States participated in the workshop, together with ODIHR election experts, and reviewed a draft paper. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

DEMOCRATIZATION



ODIHR gets good marks from project implementation assessors

An external evaluation of ODIHR projects in Central Asia concluded in August that in key project areas the ODIHR "has been performing remarkably well and most of the time with much higher rapidity than other international organizations it can be compared to". The study, conducted by the independent Belgian consulting firm, ADE, evaluated a total of 20 ODIHR democratization projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The authors of the study interviewed the originators of the projects at the ODIHR, as well as recipients and staff of OSCE field presences in the three countries and other international organizations active in the region. The

evaluation represents the first independent assessment of ODIHR technical assistance project implementation ever undertaken. Although limited to three countries in Central Asia, it provides a basis for an assessment of the strengths of the ODIHR's performance in general.

The study was sponsored by the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, which have also supported many of the ODIHR activities in Central Asia through voluntary contributions. The final report will be carefully studied and discussed by the ODIHR staff with a view to incorporating its recommendations into future ODIHR technical assistance projects. The report also provides a useful insight into the Office's operations and their quality, and hopefully will create an incentive for the OSCE participating States to continue or increase their valuable support for the ODIHR.

ODIHR holds round table in Russia on combating trafficking

Russian government officials and key Russian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met in Moscow on 14 July to discuss trafficking in human beings and possible ways to collaborate in the future to address this growing problem. The round table meeting was organized by the ODIHR in co-operation with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among the participants were the Director of the Department of International Humanitarian Collaboration and Human Rights of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Teymuraz Ramishvili, and the Director of the ODIHR, Gerard Stoudmann.

During the round table discussions, it was stressed that anti-trafficking initiatives could not be successful without the support of NGOs and local governments, and that all the actors involved needed to find common ground and to set priorities for their future co-operative efforts. The role of international organizations in facilitating dialogue between different national actors and providing support for future activities was highlighted.

“We need a co-ordinated response to urgent cases of trafficking”, Mr. Stoudmann said. He also stressed the need for legislative reform in order to prosecute traffickers more effectively and to protect victims and their families.

Several key areas of activity were mentioned as priorities for the near future including research, prevention and public awareness work and legislative reform efforts. NGO and government representatives proposed ways to improve information sharing and to better respond to the needs of victims. The NGOs presented a written statement to the Government that, in addition to other recommendations, proposed the creation of an inter-agency commission financed by the state budget to develop a strategic national plan to combat trafficking and to continue work on the issue. Such a national plan would determine priorities for co-ordinated action in the fields of prevention, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims. Projects developed would be supported and implemented by NGO, governmental and international actors.

ODIHR helps develop database on human rights violations in Chechnya

In August, the ODIHR successfully concluded the first of its co-operation projects with the office of Vladimir Kalamanov, the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Upholding Human and Civil Rights and Freedoms in the Chechen Republic of the

Russian Federation. The project involved design and programming for a computer database to manage individual complaints of human rights violations, to be used by his staff in Moscow and Chechnya. The database is intended to equip his staff to process complaints quickly, and to track their progress once complaints are referred to the state bodies responsible for their investigation and follow-up.

Mr. Kalamanov addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in July, immediately after discussions in Moscow with an ODIHR delegation led by its Director. At a bilateral meeting between Mr. Kalamanov and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Austria’s Foreign Minister, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Chairmanship pledged financial support to a new project by the ODIHR, now in development, to provide human rights training to Mr. Kalamanov’s staff.

During its July visit to Moscow, the ODIHR delegation held additional discussions on human rights in Chechnya, including with Pavel Krashennikov, the head of a public national commission for investigating human rights violations in the North Caucasus, an NGO known as Memorial, and leading Chechen diaspora representatives.

ODIHR organizes workshop on prison monitoring in Moldova

An expert workshop on the monitoring of places of detention by national NGOs was held in Chisinau, Moldova, in July. The workshop was organized by the ODIHR in co-operation with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) as part of a joint project to encourage local NGOs to visit places of detention. The goal of the workshop was to gather information from NGOs that have been successful in gaining access to places of detention for use in a guide being developed by the APT. The guide will then be used to train local NGOs in how to gain

access to places of detention and what to look for once access is achieved. The ODIHR plans to hold workshops in Central Asia for local NGOs in 2001 as part of this project.

Human rights workshops for judicial system members in Uzbekistan

Three regional workshops on international human rights law and how to apply it domestically were organized by the ODIHR in Uzbekistan in August. Judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers attended the workshops, which were facilitated by two barristers from the United Kingdom. The workshops engendered lively discussions between the three groups and many suggestions about how Uzbek law needs to be changed to comply with the country’s international commitments.

Leadership training held for Kyrgyz women in the Talas region

In late July, the ODIHR organized a three-day training seminar on women’s leadership and active participation in society in the Talas region of Kyrgyzstan. The goal of the seminar was to develop networks of women activists, improve the knowledge of gender equality, increase the involvement of young women in public life and strengthen the capacity of women leaders to lobby on empowerment and equality of opportunity.

The interactive training, which was organized in co-operation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, included sessions on women’s rights, gender equality, women’s leadership and women’s participation in society. The seminar was received with great interest, as it was the first opportunity for women from the region to learn about women’s rights and gender equality. At the end of the training, representatives of the local authorities were invited for a roundtable discussion with the participants to discuss the problems of women in the region.

ODIHR trains Azeri women on leadership and political participation

As a follow-up to the training across party lines on gender issues in April, the second phase of the ODIHR training project focusing on women's leadership and political participation brought together women party members, NGO representatives and journalists in Baku, Azerbaijan from 10 to 12 July. The aim of the training was to create a cross-party strategy for increasing the number of women candidates within political parties, to develop mechanisms for supporting women candidates and to train NGO and party representatives on lobbying and women's coalition-building, in view of the forthcoming elections.

The participants developed common strategies for campaigning and pre-election lobbying and adopted a joint appeal to the President, the political parties and the public of Azerbaijan, calling for increased involvement of women in decision-making and active participation of women in elections. The participants also agreed on a common goal for the future: to increase to 30 the number of women among the 125 Members of Parliament.

ODIHR develops legislative website for SE Europe under Stability Pact

In August, the ODIHR completed initial preparations for the development of a legislative website for South-Eastern

Europe. The website will contain a collection of national laws and other legal documents in the field of the OSCE human dimension, with a list of direct links to international human rights treaties. The objective of the project, which is being implemented under the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, is to develop a reference tool for legal decision-makers of the region and to enable legislators to obtain specific information on how the same issue has been addressed in different legal systems. The development of the legislative website reflects one of the priorities of the Stability Pact, namely to support the countries of the region in their efforts to reform their legal systems with a view to bringing them in line with international standards.

ROMA AND SINTI ISSUES

Contact Point continues to stimulate discussion on Roma asylum seekers

In July and August, the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues continued its efforts to stimulate a discussion among national and international experts and activists on ways to address the issue of Roma refugees and asylum seekers. In preparation for an international consultation meeting on this issue, which will take place on the margins of the OSCE Human Dimension Meeting in Warsaw on 23

October, the Contact Point supported a workshop organized by the Roma National Congress in Tarnow, Poland, from 22 to 24 July, and a Congress of the International Romani Union held in Prague from 24 to 28 July.

The meetings brought together experts from the home countries of Roma refugees, from countries of transit as well as from destination countries. Both events focused on the situation of Roma in East-Central and South-Eastern Europe, the regions that produce the highest number of Roma asylum seekers within the OSCE area.

Discrimination against Roma, as well as high unemployment rates induced by economic transition processes in the region and by the lack of competitive skills of Roma on the narrower labour markets, were identified as the main root causes of the recent waves of migration.

A large-scale "stabilization" programme, including steps towards recognition of a Roma political nation and a massive programme of economic support to the countries with large Roma populations, were among the possible solutions discussed by the participants.

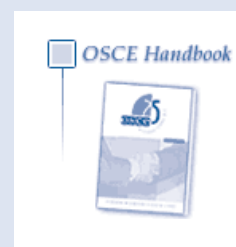
While Roma activists generally agree that the main difficulties confronting Roma and Sinti are rooted in enduring patterns of prejudice and discrimination throughout Europe, there is no consensus on how to redress these problems.

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REPORT from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Secretariat of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is located at Rådhusstræde 1, DK-1466 Copenhagen K, Denmark, tel.: (+45-33) 37 80 40, fax: (+45-33) 37 80 30, e-mail: osce@oscepa.dk



OSCE PA Vice-President Rita Suessmuth MP (Germany) and Mrs. Elisabeth Meijer MP during the visit to Kosovo

OSCE PA Vice-President Rita Suessmuth visits Kosovo

From 13 to 17 August, a recently established OSCE Parliamentary Democracy Team visited Kosovo and held meetings with local political party leaders, media representatives and key staff from the OSCE Mission. The team, headed by the former President of the German Bundestag, Rita Suessmuth, assessed the situation, particularly with regard to the upcoming local elections on 28 October and the possibility of sending an independent election observation team from the OSCE PA.

During its trip, the Team had the opportunity to meet Ibrahim Rugova of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and Ramush Haradinaj of the Alliance for the future of Kosovo (AAK), as well as the editors of the newspapers, Koha Ditore and Zeri. They were also able to visit the Political Party Service Centre set up by the OSCE in Pristina. The OSCE parliamentary delegation to Kosovo also

included team member Elisabeth Meijer, MP (Netherlands) and International Secretariat staff member, Alexander Staun-Rechnitzer, who met with the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Ambassador Daan Everts, before departing to discuss their observations.

PA Team on Moldova meets Yevgeny Primakov

On 26 July, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Team on Moldova met with Yevgeny Primakov, MP, Chairman of the Russian State Commission on Moldova. Mr. Primakov informed the team about Russian policies concerning the developments in Moldova, in particular in the Transdnistrian region.

The OSCE PA delegation, which included the chair of the Parliamentary Team, Kimmo Kiljunen, MP (Finland) and Roberto Battelli, MP (Slovenia), informed Mr. Primakov of the Parliamentary Assembly's resolutions on Moldova and on the team's future plans.

The team was accompanied by OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General, Pentti Vaananen.

PA President Severin pays working visit to International Secretariat

President Adrian Severin worked at the International Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly in Copenhagen from 31 July to 6 August, to familiarize himself with the Secretariat and to plan the work of the Assembly during the coming year. Mr. Severin consulted PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver and members of the senior staff about planned activities and projects. While in Copenhagen, Mr. Severin held talks with the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Ivar Hansen, and PA President Emeritus, Helle Degn.

Helsinki Final Act Anniversary reception held in Copenhagen

On 1 August, PA Secretary General Spencer Oliver held a reception to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and to introduce the new President of the Assembly, Adrian Severin. The reception was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps in Copenhagen and high-level political figures, including the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Ivar Hansen, and the former Danish Prime Minister, Anker Jorgensen.

PA President Emeritus Helle Degn represented the Assembly at the Anniversary Commemoration held in Tampere, Finland. Mrs. Degn was accompanied by Deputy Secretary General Pentti Vaananen.

VP Gennady Seleznev represents OSCE PA at IPU/UN Conference

From 30 August to 1 September, OSCE PA Vice-President and Speaker of the Russian Duma, Gennady Seleznev, represented the OSCE PA at a Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments, organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations in New York. Mr. Seleznev was accompanied by OSCE PA

Deputy Secretary General, Vitaly Evseyev.

President establishes Working Group on rules of procedure

PA President Severin has appointed Vice-President Bruce George to chair a Bureau Working Group which will examine the rules of procedure in the light of recent experience. Heads of Delegations have been asked to forward their

ideas and proposals on this issue to the International Secretariat. The Bureau will meet in Limassol, Cyprus, in conjunction with the Expanded Bureau Meeting and Seminar which will be held from 2 to 5 October. At that time, the Bureau will consider proposals which have been submitted by members of the Assembly. It will consider the proposed changes to the rules of procedure at its November meeting in Vienna.

NEWS from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

The Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is located at Prinsessegracht 22, NL-2514 AP The Hague, The Netherlands, tel.: (+31-70) 312 55 00, fax: (+31-70) 363 59 10, e-mail: hcnm@hcnm.org

Language implementation decrees adopted in Latvia

In a follow-up to his work with the Latvian Government, resulting in the December 1999 amendments to the Latvian State Language Law, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, has encouraged the Government to elaborate implementing regulations which respect the limits of the law and Latvia's international obligations. Such regulations are of considerable importance, insofar as they specify in detail various requirements in relation to the language law, including language proficiency in employment, the use of language in the public sphere (such as on signs), and language use in public administration.

The Latvian Cabinet adopted the implementing regulations on 22 August. This decision came after lengthy consultations between the Latvian Government and international experts, including those from the High Commissioner's office, the Council of Europe and independent experts.

In a statement issued on 31 August, Mr. van der Stoel expressed his appre-

ciation for the co-operation that he had received from the Latvian Government during this process: "I view the regulations implementing the State Language Law as being essentially in conformity with both the law and Latvia's international obligations." He added, "Virtually all of my recommendations were accepted by the Government in the drafting process."

The High Commissioner took special note of a protocol to the Cabinet meeting of 22 August, by which the Government committed itself to amend, before 1 November 2000, the 'regulations on proficiency degree in the state language required for performance of professional and positional duties and the procedure of language proficiency tests'. Other small amendments were also suggested.

In terms of the implementation of the regulations and the Language Law as a whole, Mr. van der Stoel expressed the hope that the relevant bodies of the Latvian public administration would respect "the spirit of an open and liberal democracy and, thus, will fully respect the limited scope of the Law. . . and the

requirements of Latvia's international obligations."

He also remarked that, "with reference to Latvia's commitment to respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, it is to be noted that certain specific matters will have to be reviewed upon Latvia's anticipated ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities." His full statement is available on the OSCE website:

www.osce.org/press_rel/2000/08/982-hcnm.html.

Language issues discussed by HCNM in Estonia

From 22 to 24 August, the High Commissioner on National Minorities visited Estonia, where he opened a seminar on teacher training and education, which the OSCE Mission to Estonia organized in Narva, in the north-east of the country. During his visit, Mr. van der Stoel also met with a number of high-level officials, including the Prime Minister, Mart Laar, and the Foreign Minister, Toomas Ilves. Their discussions *(continued on page 20)*

REPORT from the OSCE Secretary General and the Secretariat

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On 21 August, the OSCE Secretary General, Jan Kubis, attended a meeting on Central Asia in Berne, Switzerland, at the invitation of the Swiss Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Gerard Stoudmann, and the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Tom Price, also participated. The meeting focused on the present situation and the risks that currently exist in Central Asia, as well as on evaluating OSCE and Swiss activities and capacities in the region. The participants also looked at possible areas of cooperation and support for Central Asia through the activities of international organizations, international financial institutions and individual countries.

On 27 and 28 July, the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre, Marton Krasznai, visited the OSCE Mission to Estonia, where he had discussions with the Head of Mission, Doris Hertrampf, and Mission members. In addition, he met with Katrin Saks, Minister for Population Issues, the Ambassadors and Chargés of European Union countries, the Russian Ambassador, the Canadian Ambassador and a representative of the United States Embassy in Tallin. During a trip to Johvi, he met with Rein Aidma, Governor of Ida-Virumaa. He also visited Narva, where he had talks with Mayor Efendiyev, members of the City Council and representatives of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation.

On 1 August, Mr. Krasznai attended a 25th Anniversary commemoration of

the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, organized by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The meeting was addressed by Erkki Tuomioja, the Foreign Minister of Finland, as well as by Mr. Krasznai himself.

(News from HCNM continued)

focused mainly on language issues: the elaboration of language regulations based on the language law and amendments to language requirements for members of municipal councils and the Parliament. Mr. van der Stoel also familiarized himself with the latest naturalization figures. He remains concerned that the naturalization process is moving slowly, leaving a large number of stateless persons in Estonia.



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