



Information Documents

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Reports from the Council of Europe Field Offices
and Other Outposts*

September 2005

* For a more complete list of activities, see Council of Europe activities database (CEAD) – <http://dsp.coe.int/CEAD>

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Yerevan

1. Political and legislative developments

1. On 1 September the National Assembly (NA) adopted the **amendments to the Constitution** in the second reading and confirmed them - with comparatively minor changes - in the third reading on 28 September. The Venice Commission indicated that the proposed new constitution presents the essential features required for compliance with European standards.
2. On 28 September the NA adopted the **Law On Referendum** in the second and third reading.
3. The largest Opposition political groupings (Justice bloc and National Unity Party) ended their **18-month boycott** of NA sessions and took part in the debates on constitutional reform; however, they did not participate in the voting process during those sessions.
4. The Speaker of the NA announced in a press conference (28 September) that the **campaign on the constitutional reform** is not the monopoly of the ruling Coalition, and called upon all political forces to be involved.
5. On 29 September President Kocharyan stated that there would be wide public discussions of the draft constitutional amendments, and that the precise format of those discussions would be determined in due course.
6. The **Opposition Republic (Hanrapetutyun) Party**, led by Aram Z. Sargsyan, saw the departure of seven members of its Political Council. The party continued to boycott NA sessions, but remains associated with the Justice bloc.
7. The Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs of the NA decided not to examine the issue of **depriving Opposition MPs of their mandates** (cf. June report) during its meeting on 9 September.
8. President Kocharyan met on 8 September with representatives of the United Labour Party (ULP), an independent parliamentary faction. The leader of the party presented the activities of the ULP parliamentary faction and the party as a whole. The process of constitutional amendments was also discussed during the meeting.
9. Ruzanna Khachatryan, the Opposition (Justice Bloc) candidate for the post of Head of Kentron (Centre) Community of Yerevan, lost to the incumbent (Gagik Beglarian) in the 25 September **local elections**. Ms Khachatryan announced her intention to file a complaint of electoral fraud with the Office of the Prosecutor General. The local elections are being organised over a six-week period, from 18 September to 23 October.
10. **International Crisis Group** published its first report on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict on 14 September.

2. Council of Europe action

11. **The Venice Commission and the NA** organised a round table discussion on constitutional reform. The event was attended by Venice Commission experts, MPs, international organisations, local NGOs and the media.
12. The President of the European Court of Human Rights, representatives of the Venice Commission, and President Kocharyan took part in the 10-year jubilee conference organised by the Constitutional Court. The conference was also attended by chairmen of constitutional courts of CIS countries and Central and Eastern Europe.
13. At the invitation of the Armenian authorities, a delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe observed **local elections** in Yerevan on 25 September. The Congress will send another delegation to observe the local elections to be held in certain regions on 16 October.
14. The media continued to display a high level of interest in the activities of the Council of Europe, especially in the field of constitutional reform. The SRSG gave several interviews for television, radio and newspapers.

3. Other action/coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

15. From 3 to 18 September the celebration of **European Heritage Days** was organised with the support of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs, and the European Commission.
16. On 12 September, at the first substantive meeting of a special PACE ad hoc sub-committee on the conflict, representatives of Armenia and Azerbaijan, members of the OSCE Minsk Group and an EU special representative discussed in Paris the latest situation with regard to the **conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region**.
17. On 1 September the SRSG attended a meeting of heads of diplomatic missions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Minister Oskanyan discussed issues relating to the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Kazan (cf. July-August report), the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Constitutional reform process.

Baku

1. Political and legislative developments

18. The **Secretary General (SG) of the Council of Europe**, Mr Terry Davis, **visited Azerbaijan** from 4 to 6 September to assess the pre-election situation and, in the spirit of the Council of Europe Election Action Plan, assist Azerbaijan to remedy any remaining shortcomings in the preparation of the 6 November parliamentary elections.
19. On 19 September **seven media monitors**, identified by the Council of Europe, started monitoring compliance with the Code of Conduct for the Media by 49 newspapers and six national TV stations during election times. By the end of September all TV stations with nationwide coverage had signed the code. The first results of the monitoring were made public on Monday, 26 September, at a Council of Europe press conference in Baku. Weekly reports on the results will be published and presented during the two-month monitoring period.
20. The **registration** period for candidates contesting the 6 November Parliamentary Elections ended on 6 September. By then, 2062 candidates had registered, representing close to 50 political parties. About half of the candidates do not represent any political party. The registration process was smooth. The official campaigning started on 7 September. At the end of September the dissemination of new identity cards and voter cards, both required for voting, was still ongoing.
21. The **ODIHR long term observation mission** started its work in Azerbaijan on 8 September. It issued its first interim report at the end of the month, covering the period 5 to 23 September. Two more reports will follow before Election Day.
22. In early September it was announced that three foreign companies would conduct **exit polls** for the forthcoming Parliamentary Elections. They are PA Government, Mitofski International and the Estonian Centre for Social and Marketing Researches "Saar Poll". The first is contracted by USAID, whereas the two others are commissioned by two local NGOs called "Support to Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan" and "Monitoring Centre Fair Elections".
23. **Two rallies** authorised by the authorities were held in Azerbaijan in September, both organised by the Azadlig election bloc. The first was held in Baku on 10 September and the second in the region of Tovuz on 11 September. Both took place without incident. An attempt to hold a third, non-authorised rally, also organised by Azadlig, was made in Baku on 25 September, but police first prevented the rally from gathering momentum and then the organisers interrupted it as a meeting was called between organisers and authorities to try to find an agreement about venues for future rallies.
24. Two youth activists, Mr Ramin Tagiev and Mr Said Niriev of the **Yeni Fikir youth movement** were arrested in September in connection with the case of Mr Ruslan Bashirli, the Yeni Fikir leader who was charged in August with planning the overthrow of the Azerbaijani government and with co-operation with Armenian secret services. Mr Niriev who is suffering from a medical condition was released to get medical attention whereas Mr Tagiev was sentenced to three months in prison. A further incident occurred when Yeni Fikir members found explosives in the Yeni Fikir office on 15 September. Yeni Fikir called it a provocation and blamed the authorities.

25. The first phase of examinations in the current **selection process of judges** in Azerbaijan took place on 18 September. This phase consisted of multiple choice questions. The examination, which was monitored by the Council of Europe, was administered in a very transparent and professional manner. 223 candidates out of the 885 candidates who took part, passed to the next stage, i.e. a written examination, including an essay, which is scheduled for mid-October. The third and final stage consists of an interview. There will be around one hundred vacancies for the selected judges.

2. Council of Europe Action

26. September saw a **high interest among media representatives** in Council of Europe activities and views regarding the Parliamentary Elections, and the SRSG participated in **several live TV broadcasts**, including two for the recently established Public TV.

27. From 7 to 8 September the **Venice Commission** Secretariat in co-operation with the Azerbaijani Central Election Commission (CEC) organised a **training session** within the Council of Europe Election Action Plan about the role and responsibilities of constituency and precinct level election officials. The training session was held for trainers appointed by the CEC. These trainers will train constituency and precinct level election officials.

28. From 29 to 30 September Council of Europe experts provided advice for, and delivered, training in a **seminar for Azerbaijani judges on how to deal with election disputes**. The seminar was held as part of the Council of Europe Election Action Plan.

29. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the Norwegian Association of Local Authorities, held a launching seminar of a project in support of creating an **Azerbaijani national association of local authorities** from 15 to 16 September. The seminar was attended by all the key actors necessary for making the project successful, including local authorities, officials of the Presidential administration and the Ministry of Justice. The NGO "For the Sake of Civil Society" has been chosen by Congress and the Norwegian Local Authority Association as the implementing partner for the project in Azerbaijan.

30. The second meeting of the Commission of Experts on **Curricula for training of judges** was held in Baku from 26 to 28 September, advised by Council of Europe experts. The commission members, who among others include representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Judicial Legal Council, the Prosecutor General's office and the Council of Europe, decided to establish a school of magistrates in Azerbaijan to provide initial and continuous training for judges and prosecutors. The third meeting of the Curricula Commission will be held in Strasbourg in February 2006.

31. A seminar on "**Interethnic tolerance and youth**" was organised in Ganja from 8 to 11 September. The seminar was part of the project "School of Tolerance: Education of youth for interethnic respect, confidence and mutual understanding" supported by the Confidence Building Programme.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

32. From 28 to 29 September the Council of Europe and the **UNHCR** held a joint workshop on "Council of Europe Standards Concerning the Protection of Asylum-Seekers and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)".

Sarajevo

1. Political and legislative developments

33. The failure of the Republika Srpska National Assembly to support **Police Reform** hangs like a dark cloud over the political landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Police Reform had been the last requirement for the European Commission to recommend that the European Union begin negotiations with BiH on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). Hopes had been high that SAA negotiations - the 1st step towards joining the European Union – would mark the 10th Anniversary of Dayton with a celebration of progress, and that the SAA process itself would kick-start the stalled reform process in many fields.
34. September also saw **worrying developments in schooling**. Two municipal authorities in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton - Prozor-Rama and Čapljina - both communities with Croat majorities and smaller numbers of Bosniac returnees, met almost simultaneously and decided, in effect, to found new schools where none had existed (on paper) before. The result of this was the de jure ratification of the hitherto de facto division of the existing schools – termed ‘two schools under one roof’ – ostensibly on the basis of curricular differences, but effectively separating children according to which of the Constituent Peoples they belong to. The Council of Europe had written, through the SRSG, to both municipalities ahead of these decisions, warning that such moves violated BiH’s post-accession commitments. EU Ambassadors in BiH, the OSCE Mission, and OHR, acting in concert with the COE, subsequently also issued written and oral condemnations.
35. The next Secretariat monitoring report to be published in October 2005 will contained detailed information on the situation in schools.
36. Just ahead of the failure of Police Reform, a controversial set of **pardons** issued by the President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina attracted considerable public attention and prompted the High Representative, Lord Ashdown, to suspend the power of all executive authorities in BiH to grant any type of pardon for criminal sentences pronounced by any court anywhere in BiH. He justified his action by the fact that such pardons in BiH were ‘handed out with such frequency as to make a mockery of the law’. There is currently no Law on Pardons at the State level, the High Representative having annulled the previous State-level law on 26 November 2004. A new draft Law on Pardons is said to be about to enter parliamentary process shortly.
37. Partly for the reasons outlined above, there are **no positive legislative developments** to report. There are though some encouraging initiatives in the field of **constitutional reform**, one being the Dayton Project/US Institute for Peace cross-party talks appear to be making progress. The SRSG and the Deputy Secretary of the Venice Commission have taken part in these talks.

2. Council of Europe Action

38. On 14/15 September in Sarajevo a Regional Conference¹ on “Higher Education Governance and Reform in BiH” (CEAD 12584) took place to review the two-year joint **CoE/EC project “Modernising Governance and Management of Universities in BiH”** and to promote the objectives of a new joint project in Higher Education currently under preparation with the EC delegation in BiH. The conference was attended by government authorities, university and IC representatives, embassies and guests from neighbouring countries. The Conference provided the opportunity to launch two publications on university reform issues for BiH: “Priorities for Integrated University Management” (CEAD 12579) and “A Prototype Statute for Integrated Universities – commented version” (CEAD 12575). Both are practical guidebooks prepared in close cooperation with all BiH universities involved in the joint CoE/EC project.
39. Within the framework of the **Canadian-funded Prison Reform project**, on 22/23 September, a Conference was organised in Sarajevo on "Making our community safer: exploring new possibilities for criminal justice and prison system" (CEAD 11791). Gathering around 80 influential local actors, as well as a number of local, regional and international speakers, the Conference generated a series of recommendations pertaining to the fragmentation of legislation, inadequate political interest in the just execution of criminal sanctions and to reinforcement of implementation of alternative measures. It is now planned that the CoE office in Sarajevo convene a donor round-table to discuss how to re-establish effective alternative sanction surveillance. In parallel, the CoE prison reform expert paid another visit to BiH (19-29 September, CEAD 11715), holding a series of meetings with local and international partners in the reform process, including the first meeting of the Working Group on prison issues comprising State and Entity Ministries of Justice, as well as the Registry of the State Court. The Working Group started its work by reviewing possible locations for the future State prison and agreed to attempt to clarify its ToR before the next meeting. The expert and project development manager also met with the newly-created BIH Assistant Minister for execution of criminal sanctions.
40. In the framework of the joint **EC/CoE project “Support to the Centres for Judicial and Prosecutorial Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**, the CoE Office handled procurement of office equipment and furniture for the Centres (CEAD 12485).
41. On 14 September the Local Project Officer of the **CARDS Police and PACO Impact** projects met representatives of **USAID’s** Justice Sector Development Project to exchange information on ongoing activities and explore possibilities for cooperation and synergies. On 22/23 September, in Brijuni, Republic of Croatia, a **CARDS Police Regional Project** took place to finalize the text of the **Regional Strategy on Tools Against Organized and Economic Crime** and to adopt the regional **Ministerial Joint Declaration** endorsing the Strategy, which was signed in the case of BiH by the Minister of Security.

¹ <http://dsp.dctnet.coe.int/CEAD/JP/Objectives.asp/ID12584>

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

42. Following meetings of its Advisory Panel and Steering Group, the **BiH Beacon Scheme** was officially launched on 28 September. The launch was attended by around 300 representatives and mayors of 120 municipalities as well as members of international community and media. This **best practice scheme for local government** is a joint CoE/OSCE venture, with financial support from the Swiss government, and financial and expert input from the UK.(CEAD 12196)
43. As is detailed above, the SRSG was in regular contact with **all institutional partners** throughout the month regarding the crisis in **education**. He also met with representatives of the **EU Police Mission, Canadian International Development Agency**, and the **International Baccalaureat**, among others.
44. The Office participated in a Conference on “Roma in the trafficking in human beings - begging and child exploitation” organised by BiH Roma Council in co-operation with the Office of the State Co-ordinator for Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings, the conclusions of which will serve to inform the BiH Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Tbilisi

1. Political and legislative developments

45. The Georgian **Parliament approved Zurab Tchiaberashvili's nomination as Georgia's permanent representative to the Council of Europe** at its session on 16 September.
46. The **New Rights party won primary elections** in three out of four constituencies, the election commission, set up by the opposition parties to administer the current primaries, announced on 19 September. Primaries were held on 17 September by the New Rights, Conservative, Freedom and Labor parties in an attempt to nominate single candidates for the 1 October parliamentary by-elections.
47. Breakaway South Ossetia's Press and Information Committee reported that seven civilians, including a two-year-old child, were injured as a result of **mortar shelling of South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali** on 20 September. According to this report, mortar fire was opened at 7 am local time from the Georgian village of Ergneti.
48. South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity said the **South Ossetian side will not participate in the Joint Control Commission (JCC), until official Tbilisi apologises for the shelling.**
49. In a statement issued on 21 September, President **Mikheil Saakashvili urged the OSCE to conduct "a thorough and detailed investigation" of the incident involving the mortar attack on the South Ossetian capital.** The President also instructed the local Georgian military and Interior Ministry officials to cooperate fully with the OSCE.

2. Council of Europe Action

50. The **SRSB met the President of Georgia, Mr Mikheil Saakashvili**, on 22 September. They discussed the issues of commitments and obligations of Georgia towards the CoE, problems in the conflict zones and closer cooperation in the future between Georgia and CoE.
51. During the month a representative from the **Venice Commission** and one expert on election issues visited Georgia. The representative held several meetings and the expert will spend one month in Georgia for the purpose of technical assistance to the Central Election Commission.
52. On 13 September the SRSB met with **Mr Konstantine Kemularia, Minister of Justice of Georgia.** They discussed the forthcoming visit of the minister to the CoE to discuss the reassessment report about the situation in the penitentiary system of Georgia.
53. On 14 September the SRSB held a meeting with **Mr Gia Kavtaradze, Chairman of the Central Election Commission**, where they discussed the upcoming repeat and by-elections and created plans for future cooperation.

54. On 15 September a **donor's meeting was held at the Supreme Court** concerning the future training of judges. The SRSG attended the meeting and took active part in the discussion process.
55. The SRSG met on 21 September with the newly appointed **Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Levan Bodzashvili**, who is in charge of cooperation with the CoE among other issues.
56. On 21 September SRSG met with the **Prosecutor General of Georgia, Mr Zurab Adeishvili**, to discuss possible joint actions in the future.
57. The SRSG conducted the meeting with **Mr Goga Khaindrava, State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues** on 21 September. The main topic of discussion was the recent developments in South Ossetia and the problem of the displaced persons in 1944.
58. On 22 September the SRSG held a meeting with **Chair of the Supreme Court, Mr Kote Kublashvili**. They discussed the future training for judges and how can CoE assist in this respect.
59. The **SRSG met with MP Giga Bokeria** on 23 September where they discussed the obligations and commitments of Georgia towards CoE and plans how to fulfil them.
60. On 28-30 September representatives of DGI visited Tbilisi concerning the **Anti-corruption project formulation** and held several meetings with high government officials and other parties concerned.

3. Other Action/Coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

61. The SRSG held **a number of meetings with representatives of the OSCE** concerning the elections, local self-governance and human rights. They discussed plans for future cooperation.
62. On 2 and 22 September the SRSG took part in a **meeting organised by the British Embassy concerning the freedom of media** issues in Georgia.
63. From 15 to 19 September, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) organised a series of events in Georgia on the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**: a two-day training workshop for representatives of national minority organisations; a seminar in Gudauri, 17-18 September, for members of the Georgian Parliament on preparations for ratification of the Framework Convention by Georgia and an international conference on the Framework Convention. The SRSG took an active part in these events.
64. On 20 September the SRSG contributed to a **roundtable discussion** organised by the **National Democratic Institute on the Georgian Government Anti-Corruption Strategy Action Plan (2005-2006)**. State Minister for Reform Coordination Kakha Bendukidze was present to answer questions about the Plan.

Chisinau

1. Political and legislative developments

65. During a meeting of the **PACE monitoring committee** in Antalya, the Report of the Co-Rapporteurs for Moldova on the functioning of democratic institutions was presented. A draft resolution was elaborated for the PACE session on 3-4 October. Ms Postoico (PCRM) and Mr Cubreacov (PPCD) attended the meeting. At a press conference in Chisinau, they presented the report as positive for Moldova. Several opposition politicians claimed that it was not good for Moldova's image.
66. During the consultations of the **Mediators to the Transnistrian settlement** held in Odessa on 27-28 September, it was agreed to include the EU and USA in the negotiation format as observers. Negotiations will be resumed in the "5+2" format, on 28-29 October in Chisinau and Tiraspol.
67. On 15-16 September, representatives from Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Karabakh held a conference in Moscow on "A Parallel CIS".
68. On 27 September, the Central Electoral Commission set the date for new Chisinau municipality elections for 27 November.
69. Over the summer, a **draft law on the government agent** was approved by the Government, stipulating that officials and judges shall bear responsibility for any of their actions which lead to violation of citizen's basic rights and to sanctions against Moldova by the ECHR.
70. After a summer break (due to the absence of the judge), on 9 September the **Pasat trial** was postponed to 12 September because absence of a certificate on Mr Pasat's health condition. Mr Pasat had been hospitalised in the "intensive therapy" unit. On 16 September, the trial was postponed till 7 October.

2. Council of Europe action

71. On 1-2 September, a working meeting to implement the existing experts' recommendations for the **enforcement of court decisions** in civil and administrative matters was held in Strasbourg (JP, CEAD 12076).
72. From 12 to 13 September, a working meeting on the **organisation of the bar association**, the CoE expertise and amendments to the law on the Bar took place in Strasbourg (JP, CEAD 7710).
73. From 12 to 15 September, judges and prosecutors (trainers) were trained in the **fight against corruption**; a training curriculum was developed for the training of 100 judges and 100 prosecutors (JP, CEAD 7791). Cascade training is scheduled for October-November 2005.
74. From 12 to 16 September, a training of trainers was held on **anti-corruption investigative techniques** for police officers and collaborators of the Centre for

Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCCEC). This will be followed by four regional seminars (PACO, CEAD 12292).

75. From 19 to 21 September, two workshops on specific topics related to corruption: investigative journalism and conflict of interests and code of ethics, were held in partnership with the CCCEC and the Centre for Investigative Journalism. On 20 September, a live broadcast talk-show on the above mentioned issues took place at the national public TV - TVM (PACO, CEAD 12401).
76. From 12 to 15 September, a CoE seminar on “Management: **Communication and ethics in the police**” took place in Co-operation with the Ministry of Interior. Participating were heads of departments and directorates, police officers as well as communication and human resource specialists.
77. From 21 to 23 September, the third in the series of training workshops for **managers of social services** took place in Chisinau (JP, CEAD 8413).
78. From 27 to 28 September, a CoE Seminar, jointly organised with the Association of Electronic Press of Moldova (APEL), on Balance and impartiality in news and political programmes of public service broadcasters took place (CEAD 12571). The SRSG addressed the seminar.
79. From 27 to 30 September, a Council of Europe delegation led by the Director of Strategic Planning came to Chisinau for a stock-taking visit. Mr Laurens met all partners in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches and offered interviews to several TV and radio stations.
80. On 30 September, the first Steering Committee Meeting for the EC/CoE Joint Programme of Co-operation (2004-2006) was held.

3. Other Action/ Coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

81. On 6 September, a SRSG office representative, OSCE and the British embassy convened for a “Media Lunch” to discuss media developments.
82. On 23 September, SRSG gave an opening speech at an IPP organised Seminar “EU Enlargement Perspectives and their Impact on the Democratisation Process in Moldova”.
83. On 16 September, the SRSG met with OSCE/ODIHR experts for a briefing on the political and party landscape in Moldova. In addition, throughout the month, the SRSG and the JP manager had regular coordination meetings with OSCE officers.
84. During several meetings between the resident legal expert, the Ministry of Justice and the SOROS foundation, a joint strategy on access to justice/legal aid delivery was agreed upon.
85. The SRSG took part in two meetings of the Small Donors group.

Belgrade

1. Political and legislative developments

86. The resignation of the **State Union** Minister of Defence, Prvoslav Davinic, in early September caused an additional turmoil in the relations between Serbia and Montenegro.
87. In early September, the Council of Ministers of the State Union appointed Mrs. Sanda Raskovic-Ivic as the new Head of the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Mr. Rasim Ljajic as the new Head of the Coordination Body for South Serbia. A few weeks after her appointment, Ms Raskovic-Ivic announced to the media that the formula “more than autonomy less than independence” would imply Serbia retaining sovereignty, including borders’ control, fiscal and customs policy over the province, with PISG Kosovo’s Institutions getting the executive, legislative and judicial powers.
88. PISG Kosovo’s Minister for Culture, Media and Sport, Mr Astrit Haraqija visited on 23 September his counterpart in Belgrade, the Minister of Culture Mr Dragan Kojadinovic. This was the **first visit by a Kosovo official** since 1999. The Ministers agreed on appointing co-ordinators for issues related to the disappeared archives, artefacts, issues related to archaeology and cultural exchanges.
89. The **Parliamentary sub-committee of Serbia** for constitutional issues resumed its work on the new constitution, after several months of standstill. During the same period, the Parliament adopted the law on Ombudsman, the law on public administration, law on public officials, Law on the execution of criminal sanctions and amended the criminal procedure code the criminal code. In the latter, libel and defamation are now punished only by fine.
90. The Deputy Prosecutor for Organised Crime and a Supreme Court judge were arrested on 14 September on suspicion of having accepted bribes in exchange of lenient sentences towards members of an **organised crime** group. At the end of September, also the former Minister of Justice, Mr Vladan Batic, and two other public officials were arrested. The former Minister apparently is accused to have intervened while Minister for the release from detention of one of the members of the same criminal syndicate. This later arrest provoked divided reactions among political parties with a few politicians demanding the immediate release of Mr Batic.

2. Council of Europe action

91. The Belgrade Office hosted a meeting of the **Heads of CoE Offices** in Serbia and Montenegro. The event also included meetings with the State Union Authorities. The Heads exchanged perspectives on political issues, covered administrative questions, identified common problems and solutions and reported them to Strasbourg.
92. A workshop on training needs, under the **CARDS Police Project** (CEAD 12549) was held on 7 September with the aim to review past activities in the area of training and to assess needs for additional training, preparation of manuals and other training materials

93. Within CARDS Police Project a High level meeting was held in Brijuni (Croatia) 22-23 September (CEAD 12622). At the meeting Ministers of Internal affairs and Minister of Security signed a Joint Declaration committing their Governments actions in the fight against organized and economic crime.
94. A three-day training seminar on freedom of expression, the right to respect for private life and the right to a fair trial under the **European Convention on Human Rights** was held in Belgrade (CEAD 9776). The seminar aimed to train judges, prosecutors and public officials on relevant domestic and international law, in particular the ECHR.
95. The CoE office hosted a two-day meeting of Directors of Schools of Political Studies, with the participation of the Director General of Political Affairs.
96. The Office facilitated the visit to Belgrade of the consultancy firm PARTICIP on 26-29 September in the framework of the evaluation of the EC/CoE Joint Programme with Serbia and Montenegro (CEAD No 12348).

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

97. Staff of the Belgrade Office and the Directorate of Cooperation for Local and Regional Democracy met with the **EAR** and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-government to discuss future assistance in the field of local self-government, including an EC/CoE Joint Programme. The Head and Deputy Head of the Belgrade office met with the new EAR Head of Centre in Belgrade, Mr Daniel Giuglaris, to discuss new proposals of EC/COE Joint programmes.
98. Meetings between the CoE Belgrade Office and the **OSCE** Media and Rule of Law Departments were held during the reporting period to exchange views on common actions regarding media legislation and support to Ombudsmen Institutions. CoE and OSCE issued a joint press release welcoming the adoption of the law on the Protector of Citizens in Serbia (Ombudsman). The Head of the CoE Office contributed to an OSCE training seminar on “combating torture” which was organised with the financial support of the United Kingdom.
99. The Office participated in the conference “Promoting Incorporation of International Anti-Corruption Standards into Serbian Legislation”. The event was organized by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia, in co-operation with the **Stability Pact Anti-Corruption Initiative**. Anti-corruption instruments and initiatives of GRECO were presented to the audience.
100. A coordination meeting with the **EC Delegation** took place to exchange views on the current political events in Serbia and legislative developments in the context of the future negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement which are expected to start on 10 October.
101. The Office attended a regular thematic gathering of international organisations, embassies and international NGOs, which was this time dedicated to the gender issue. It was proposed that the CoE office should host the next meeting.

102. On the occasion of the second anniversary of the establishment of the **Ombudsman Office of Vojvodina**, the Head of the Belgrade Office travelled to Novi Sad to meet the Ombudsman, Mr Petar Teofilovic, and one of its five Deputies, Ms Danica Todorov.

Podgorica

1. Political and legislative developments

103. The **Liberal Party decided to return to Parliamentary life** on 19 September. It supports the referendum campaign activities to be conducted by the Movement for Independent Montenegro as from 15 October.
104. A September public opinion poll of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights indicates that **the independent state status is supported by 41.6%** of those questioned, which represents an increase of 2.6% in comparison to May, while the idea of independence is opposed by 34.5% of the examinees. The electoral capacity at the moment is distributed as follows: Democratic Party of Socialists 38.7%, Group For Changes 13.4%, Serbian People's Party 12.5%, Socialist People's Party 10.8%, Serbian Radical Party 6.6%, Socialist Democratic Party 5.2% and Liberal Party 3.1%.
105. **A series of early local elections** could continue in the municipality of Mojkovac following the resignation on 29 September of the Vice-President of the Municipal Assembly, Mr Vlastimir Strunjas and several other elected representatives - members of the People's Party. The municipality of Cetinje could face the same situation soon. The initiators pointed out the **lack of confidence in the United opposition**, which is in power in both municipalities, as the main reason for their decisions.
106. **The work of the High Judicial Council was sharply criticized** on 28 September because it failed to propose to Parliament a candidate for President of the Basic Court of Herceg Novi although the competition proceedings have lasted for already 15 months. The murder of Judge Milorija Pejovic in the premises of the Basic Court of Bar on 19 September **seriously threatened the security of the judiciary**.
107. **The Supreme State Prosecutor requested the Parliament suspend the immunity of three judges** from the Basic Court in Ulcinj in order to initiate pre-trial proceedings for acts of corruption. **The Office of the Special Prosecutor for combating organised crime** announced the possibility of its involvement in the court proceedings following the completion of investigation procedure into **the murder of the Criminal Police Chief, Mr Slavoljub Scekic**.

2. Council of Europe action

108. Under the CARPO programme on "**Strengthening the Capacities for Cooperation in Criminal Matters Among the Countries of South-Eastern Europe**" an assessment mission concerning training needs and possible publishing of manuals was conducted on 9 September. (CEAD 12550)
109. The members of the CARPO working groups, assisted by the CoE Project Management Team, finalised the text of **a Regional Strategy on Tools Against Organised and Economic Crime as well as the text of a Joint Declaration**. The Ministers signed the Declaration, approving the respective Regional Strategy. (CEAD 12622)

110. Implementation of the second component of the Pilot Project Activity “Strengthening operational capacities and increasing effectiveness of the Department for Combating Organised Crime/Special Prosecutor” **provided sophisticated equipment to the Office of the Special Prosecutor for combating organized crime and corruption.** The first component includes drafting of **Recommendations to the authorities for successful facing the corruption** which should be completed in October. (PACO Impact)
111. A Roundtable to review the **New Draft Law on Conflict of Interest** was carried out in cooperation with OECD/SIGMA on 30 September. The second expert’s reading, including further support for the public debate, should follow by the end of October. (PACO Impact)
112. An Expert meeting on "Decentralisation of local self-government in Montenegro" took place on 14 September to elaborate a Draft Government Decision on Establishing a **Coordination Board for Monitoring the Reforms of Local Self-Government.** It should be finalised soon following further Expert advice. Its adoption by the Government is expected by the end of the year. (CEAD 11319)
113. The second expert’s comments on the draft Non-Litigation Procedure Code was submitted to the Ministry of Justice. It will contribute to **completion of the reform of the procedural civil laws** in compliance with Council of Europe standards.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

114. A meeting with **EAR** representative Ms Regina De Domenicis concerning an initiative for co-operation in the field of local self-government was organised on 14 September. Agreement was reached on a Joint Project-CoE/EAR to be conducted to support the implementation of the National Work Programme for Better Local Self-Government in the period of 2006/2007.
115. A periodical information exchange was held on 26 September with Mr David Hudson, First Secretary at the **EC Delegation** in Belgrade on the progress of legislative reform and the quality of its implementation.
116. A coordination meeting with the **UNDP** representative Mr Garret Tankosic Kelly took place on 30 September to discuss the joint Conference on Anticorruption Measures to be held on 19 October. Among other things, the contributions of both organisations were determined, the conference work programme redefined, and the list of participants established.

Pristina

1. Political and legislative developments

117. **President Ibrahim Rugova**, on his return from Germany, where he has undergone medical tests at an American military base, declared on local TV that he has lung cancer. After a few weeks of home regime he is now back to political life.
118. Two meetings on ministerial level were held between PISG (Provisional Institutions of Self Government) of Kosovo and the authorities of Serbia. Ministers of Local Government met in Vienna on the initiative of Ambassador Kai Eide to discuss issues of decentralisation. Ministers of Culture held their meeting in Belgrade to examine questions of reconstruction of destroyed Orthodox churches, return of artefacts from Belgrade to Pristina. Both meetings seem to have gone in a constructive manner, paving the way for further contacts.
119. The decentralisation process has finally started – three **Pilot Municipal Units** (PMU): Heni I Elezit, Junik and Mamusha (with Turkish majority) have been officially inaugurated and provisional Municipal Councils formed. The fate of the remaining two PMUs with Serb majority is still unclear, although local authorities say that the door is still open.
120. The newly appointed **Head of Serbian Coordination Centre for Kosovo**, Ms Raskovic-Ivic visited Kosovo, but had to shorten her stay because of illness.
121. **Protest movements** against negotiating on Kosovo's independence increased throughout the region. At the last meeting of the Kosovo Assembly some members also expressed their discontent for the same reasons.
122. President Rugova named the composition of the Kosovo team he will be leading in talks on Kosovo's future Status. The team will also include the Assembly Speaker, the Prime Minister and the leaders of the two opposition parties, PDK and ORA. The press also says that the President has appointed **Zëri** editor Blerim Shala as coordinator of the working groups for preparation of eventual talks on Kosovo's status.

2. Council of Europe action

123. The CoE Secretariat Office staff joined – Ms Orsolya Szekely to coordinate the programme of support for the Ombudsperson's institution, which is financed by the Swedish SIDA.
124. The Advisory Group on the **Law on courts**, to which the Council of Europe is an observer, held its third meeting. An expert of the CoE submitted preliminary comments on the draft law under discussion and took an active part in the meeting. The work of the group is to a large extent based on the report elaborated by CoE and US experts assessing the Kosovo Judicial System.

125. The CoE Local Project Officer provided technical and professional assistance to the UNMIK delegation to the Regional Seminar and Regional meeting of Ministers of Interior and senior officials from the Western Balkans taking place on Brijuni Island, 22-23 September.
126. The LPO / CARPO in cooperation with the US Department of Justice (DoJ) officials successfully organised an in-house seminar on 29 September 2005 (CEAD 12553) on the assessment of training needs and the development of training curricula under the CARPO Project.
127. The Head of Office participated in the three PMU inauguration ceremonies in the respective municipalities, along with the Prime Minister, the SRSG and the Deputy SRSG.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

128. An interim report on **Youth Policy in Kosovo - Asking for a future in a challenging presence** was presented by a CoE expert and the Head of the CoE Youth Department at a workshop organised by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports together with the German organisation GTZ. A final report will be elaborated taking into account the results of the workshop. The Head and Deputy Head of Office were in attendance.
129. In preparation for the upcoming visit of the **Advisory Committee of the FCNM** to Kosovo, the CoE office has had extensive cooperation with OSCE which is coordinating the visit from the UNMIK side.
130. The OSCE is currently carrying out research in **the Rule of Law** field, particularly as pertains to legal clarity and foreseeability; the CoE office has provided information on CoE developments in this respect.

4. General Security Situation

131. The overall security situation has somehow worsened throughout September. The latest serious crime was shooting of the highest-ranking Serbian Kosovo Police Service regional commander in Gjilan, Dejan Jankovic, who was wounded when his vehicle came under attack in the evening of 28 September in the place called Kaçanik i Vjetër. An organisation called The Guard of Serbian Volunteers-Tigers took responsibility for this attack in an e-mail message to the local TV Company RTK.
132. A Monument of KLA Martyrs has been blasted, it is presumed by Serb radicals.
133. Quite recently two UN cars were found in Pristina city with sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IED) attached. The devices were removed successfully.

Skopje

1. Political and legislative developments

134. The second round of the **local elections in the Roma municipality of Suto Orizari** took place on 4 September. Erduan Iseni, candidate of the United Party for Emancipation of Roma was elected mayor against the representative of the Association of Roma who is one of the lawyers of the imprisoned mayor elected last March. The main characteristic of the polling remains the low turn-out, which is commonplace for a by-election, but once again outlines the broad context of election fatigue in the country.
135. On 11 September, Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski publicly announced that **reshuffle government** will take place in December. Over the past months there has been speculation on the purposes and scope of such political gesture.
136. On 19 September, the Parliament adopted the Law on Referendum without the presence of the opposition, but with the support of 17 MPs from the ethnic communities. The law regulates the use of referenda at the national and local level.
137. On 22 September, the Parliament **rejected a vote of no-confidence** against the Government upon the initiative of the VMRO-People's parliamentary group, based on the social, economic and political situation. Only 23 MPs from the opposition supported the move, whereas 61 members of the ruling coalition voted against.
138. The **Islamic Community of Macedonia (ICM)** held an extraordinary Assembly in Struga on 24 September to elect Bahri Aliu as Vice Reis of the Community. He will act as interim leader of the Community pending the election of the new ICM reis due in November after the designation of the new Mufti of Skopje. The Islamic Community of Macedonia has been subject to tension and long-standing infighting.
139. On 27 September, the Vice President of the ruling Albanian party DUI, Rafiz Aliti, proposed a constitutional change to create a Vice-President, regardless of whether the President is elected at direct elections or by the Parliament. Over the past two months, the debate on the draft constitutional amendments triggered several proposals from the political parties such as a proposal by the ruling party SDSM to lower the threshold of 50% of voters for the election of the President. More recently, the representatives of the Turk minority came up with an amendment to the election legislation that minor ethnic communities should be granted reserved seats in the Parliament.
140. On the same day, upon completion of a series of meetings with the **European Union** in Brussels, the Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Sekerinska stated that "EU sends us a message that the elections are not only a matter for the law" and "that each political party that will participate at the elections must demonstrate zero tolerance to such electoral irregularities and problems we faced in the past".

2. Council of Europe action

141. The Resident Expert attended the First General Assembly of the **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS)**, which took place on 6-7 September in Skopje. Mr Di Stasi, President of the Congress of the Council of Europe was present. Besides the National Association (ZELS), NALAS consists of the member Associations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia Montenegro. Mr Tarzan Milosevic, President of the Serbia Montenegro Association was elected President of NALAS.
142. From 11 to 18 September, a **Democratic Leadership Programme (DLP)** Negotiation skills training course took place in Ohrid. The objective of the session was to increase negotiation skills of new DLP members (young politicians, NGOs and media representatives).
143. The PACO and CARPO Local Project Officer took part in the organisation of the **Conference of the Ministers of Interior from South-East Europe** in Brioni (Croatia) on 22-23 September.
144. On 23 September, the Resident Expert took part in Florina (Greece) in the Conference on “The Development of **Cultural Routes in South-East Europe**” with the participation of the President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of the Council of Europe and Mr Goran Svilanovic of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe. The event was aimed at developing a follow-up to the concept of Cultural Corridors, launched by Secretary General Terry Davis, together with UNESCO and the President of Bulgaria at the Varna Conference in May 2005.
145. On 24 September, the Resident Expert took part in the **Fair of Local Youth Associations from Kumanovo** (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”), **Giljane** (Kosovo) and **Vrajne** (Serbia), which was held in **Giljane** (Kosovo) under the aegis of the Local Democracy Agency.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

146. On 12 September, the Resident Expert took part in the workshop on “Appointment of Judges and prosecutors”, jointly organised by the Centre for Continuing Education of judges and prosecutors, the National Association of Judges and OSCE in co-operation with the Council of Europe.
147. On 14 September, the Resident Expert attended a Conference on freedom of religion and belief, organised within a Project implemented by the national Helsinki Committee and the Inter-Church Peace Council of Netherlands. The main goal of the conference was to open discussion on the draft Law on Religious Communities and Religious Groups, as well as to assess the level of compliance of domestic legislation and practice with European standards and mechanism for protection of freedom of religion.
148. On 22 September, the Resident Expert had a meeting with the ODIHR Expert on the **Working Group on Election legislation** due to be amended by the end of the year.

The Resident Expert delivered some suggestions related to the composition of the election commissions as well as the financing of the electoral campaigns.

149. From 23 to 25 September, a training for lawyers on the European Convention on Human Rights, organised by the Council of Europe, OSCE and the Young Lawyers Association took place in Ohrid.
150. On 26 September, the Resident expert met with the UNICEF Resident Representative to discuss further cooperation in the fields of protection of Children, education and Juvenile draft legislation.
151. On 27 September, the Resident Expert held meetings with the European Commission Delegation representative regarding the preparation of the CARDS programme 2006 in matters of Judiciary and Education and with the European Agency for Reconstruction Advisor in charge of the Public Administration part of CARDS Programme for 2006, to set priorities regarding follow-up of the decentralisation process.
152. On 30 September, the Assessment of training needs in the field of international cooperation in criminal matters was held in the premises of the Council of Europe Information Office, under the CARDS Police Joint Programme (JP). The aim was to produce a text for a manual for practitioners (judges and Ministry of Interior representatives).