



Information Documents

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

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

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Baku

1. Political and legislative developments

1. The editor of the head editorial office for public and political broadcasts of the state-owned AzTV channel and MP Ismayil Omarov was elected **director general of the new Public TV** on 16 April. Mr Omarov resigned from his position as MP upon his new appointment. A movement accusing Mr Omarov of not being independent and demanding independent Public TV was created soon after the appointment. The movement, Ellik Televiziya movement, assembles representatives of mass media and some political parties.
2. The Azerbaijani authorities concluded in April that the **murder of journalist Elmar Husseinov** had been an act of terrorism and as a consequence responsibility for the investigation was moved to the Ministry of National Security. In the first days of May the authorities issued a statement identifying a Georgian man as the main suspect who is now wanted and who, it is believed, was only hired for the murder. The authorities in their statement stressed the role of the FBI and a Turkish expert team in the investigation of the murder.
3. On 19 April the Chairpersons of the Azerbaijani **Supreme Court and Appeal Courts** respectively were dismissed from their positions by Presidential decree. The Deputy prosecutor general, Mr Ramiz Rzayev, was appointed new Chair of the Supreme Court.
4. On 25 April the Azerbaijani authorities submitted a set of proposals for amendments to the **Azerbaijani Electoral Code** to Venice Commission and ODIHR experts for analysis. Any changes need to be adopted by the Azerbaijani parliament more than 120 days before the parliamentary elections, to be held in November 2005, to affect those elections.
5. **The sixth EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee** was held in Baku from 18 to 19 April 2005. The Committee in its final statement following the meeting underlined the importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the 2 March Country Report on Azerbaijan and the Action Plan to follow. It also stressed the importance of the continuation with Azerbaijan of the **Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe** on strengthening of democratic stability.

2. Council of Europe action

6. The **PACE Monitoring Committee rapporteurs** on Azerbaijan, Mr Andreas Gross (Switzerland) and Mr Andres Herkel (Estonia) visited Azerbaijan from 18 to 20 April. They held meetings with authorities, including the President of the Republic, the President of the Constitutional Court, the Central Election Commission as well as with representatives of the international community, political parties, NGOs etc. The two rapporteurs are expected to visit Azerbaijan again in July.
7. A staff member of the Directorate General of Human Rights participated together with two experts in a seminar held from 6 to 8 April on the application of European Human Rights standards by **national Human Rights protection institutions**. The seminar was organised in co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani Ombudsman institution.

8. A staff member of the Media Division participated together with two experts in a **roundtable discussion on relations between State authorities and the media as well as in a seminar on public and private broadcasting**. The seminars were held from 13 to 15 April and organised in co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration. The roundtable discussion between representatives of the Presidential administration and the media representatives, including journalists representing opposition newspapers, was vivid, and both sides agreed to meet for further discussions facilitated by the Council of Europe. The participants called in the conclusions of the roundtable for the earliest possible adoption of the draft Law on Freedom of Information and the draft Law on Defamation. The content of the laws should be in accordance with Council of Europe expert advice submitted earlier. Finally, the participants called for a review of the Law on Media in the light of the abovementioned Laws once they are adopted.
9. From 20 to 22 April a staff member of the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport visited Azerbaijan, carrying out a conference on higher education reform and a seminar on recognition of qualifications (i.e. the **Bologna Process**). Azerbaijan is aspiring to join the Bologna process in May 2005, together with *inter alia* Georgia and Armenia.

3. Other action

10. An expert working group meeting between Azerbaijani and OSCE/ODIHR representatives took place in Warsaw from 11 to 12 April to address the shortcomings identified in the trial process by the ODIHR/OSCE trial monitoring report on the trials held following the October 2003 events in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani authorities and OSCE/ODIHR issued a joint statement on the results of the meeting, in which recommendations adopted by the working group are listed. The expert group in its statement also recognised the role of the Council of Europe in preparing pertinent legislative reform. Further expert group meetings are likely to follow.

Sarajevo

1. Political and legislative developments

11. It was announced on 4 April that the three international members of the **BiH Election Commission** will withdraw at the end of June and be replaced by BiH nationals in time for the start of the preparation for the October 2006 general elections.
12. According to the final report submitted on 5 April to the RS Government by the Task Force for implementation of the conclusions of the final report of the **Srebrenica Commission**, the highest RS officials were involved in events in Srebrenica in 1995. The High Representative has asked the RS Prime Minister to provide the names of persons in specific military and police units.
13. On 8 April the PIC Steering Board concluded that BiH was at an historical crossroad, with the question of whether it is able to bring the reform processes to an end. It recognised the progress in cooperating with the Hague, but noted that **Karadzic and Mladic must be arrested** to achieve full cooperation with the ICTY. The necessity to reach consensus on police reform in line with the three defined principles of the EC was highlighted.
14. Former RS Army Col **Vujadin Popovic**, charged with crimes committed in Srebrenica in 1995, voluntarily surrendered to the Hague Tribunal on 14 April.
15. On 16 April the first generation of **RS Army recruits refused to swear loyalty to BiH** and booed the national anthem. The international community condemned the behaviour and recalled that, "the RS must realize that it is an entity and not a state and can only exist within BiH and as part of BiH". The incident is likely to hasten the demise of the Entity MoDs and the end of conscription, which neither Entity can afford.
16. The Prime Minister and leaders of 11 parliamentary parties in BiH met with senior representatives of the international community for three days of negotiations 25-28 April on **police reform** in BiH. Agreement was reached on exclusive police competence at BiH state level and on future police activities free from political control. The HR reiterated that the entities' Interior Ministries could remain, but without jurisdiction over the police, which will exist at state level. The sensitive issue of the maps of the police districts still have to be agreed upon before the 19 May meeting of EC Consultative Task Force.

2. Council of Europe action

17. The SRSB gave a number of television, radio and newspaper interviews during the month on education reform, constitutional developments and the 3rd Anniversary of BiH accession to CoE.
18. The **2nd Conference of Mayors and Civil Society**, opened by Prime Minister Terzic and the SRSB in Brcko, 17-18 April, brought together mayors and representatives of civil society and the international community. The Conference adopted an Action Plan to further cooperation among municipalities and strengthen local self-government, and

decided to pursue dialogue through a series of seminars over the next 12 months culminating in a 3rd Conference in Mostar in mid-2006.

19. The SRSG visited **Srebrenica** on 19 April for talks with the Mayor about developments in the municipality. The social and economic situation in Srebrenica is one of neglect and abandonment, with virtually no economic activity. The mayor has proposed that Srebrenica be granted a special status to encourage investment but the RS authorities have reacted negatively to the proposal. The Mayor also enquired about the progress in establishing a Local Democracy Agency, which was one of the recommendations of a CoE-sponsored conference in Srebrenica in May 2003.
20. On 22 April, the SRSG presented the **10th CM monitoring report** on Bosnia and Herzegovina to the BH Council of Ministers and later held a press conference with PM Terzic.
21. From 11 to 13 April, a study visit to Strasbourg was organised for the Secretariat of the **Conference of Education Ministers in BiH**. The visit enabled the Secretariat to produce internal rules of procedure for the Conference and hence strengthen its functionality.
22. From 16 to 23 April the CoE expert team held a further series of discussions with representatives of all **seven Faculties of Law** on progress in integrating the Bologna Process, and included: curriculum design, teaching and learning methods, admission system, examination and assessment system and quality assurance. (CEAD 10 827)
23. On 18 April, the CoE organised the bi-monthly **Higher Education Working Group/Bologna Committee for BiH** meeting, co-chaired with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (CEAD 11870). Agenda items included a presentation from the Bologna Follow-Up Group member on BiH's low ranking among the other members of the Bologna Process in regards to Higher Education reforms.
24. At a meeting between the Head of the Education Unit and the **new RS Minister of Education, Professor Milovan Pecelj** on 19 April, the Minister presented the newly-adopted RS Decision on 'Principles in Education', adopted by the RS National Assembly on 7 April. This policy document outlines the RS willingness for co-ordination at the level of the state in BiH, but decision making to be done by the Entities. It also suggests establishing one Education Agency with different components.
25. A signing ceremony of all 14 Ministers of Education was convened by the Minister of Civil Affairs in Sarajevo on 22 April to **endorse the Guidelines for History and Geography Textbook Writers and the new Curricula for Foreign Languages**; both of these materials were developed over a year and a half long process, led by the CoE with the OSCE. The new RS Minister of Education did not sign the Guidelines for technical reasons but said he would do so in early May.
26. From 21 to 22 April, the Office organised in Banja Luka the **Third Manager Training Workshop for BiH universities** (CEAD 7775). This workshop's focus was on tools and mechanisms to monitor, analyse and improve student progression at an integrated university.

27. In a Workshop on the **Introduction of the New Curriculum for Foreign Languages in BiH**, Neum, 25-28 April, CoE experts conducted initial training for a group of 20 multipliers from all of BiH. Representatives of Ministries of Education and other relevant education authorities were present and gave their support to the process.
28. A training workshop on the **ECHR** was organised for **lawyers** from 13 to 15 April in Fojnica (CEAD 11279) and 20-22 April a training workshop on the **ECHR and the European Social Charter** was organised for **civil servants** in Jahorina. (CEAD 5516)
29. On 13 and 27 April, meetings of the **ECHR Compatibility Study Working Group** were held in Sarajevo to discuss the third draft Report.
30. In cooperation with the Judicial Training Centres in BiH, the Office organised in Tuzla, 7-8 April, a **seminar on two CoE Conventions in the criminal field** (ETS 30 and ETS 24), which are BiH post-accession commitments (CEAD 10904).
31. From 15 to 27 April, the SRSG and Project Coordinator launched the **publication of the Commentaries on Criminal Legislation in BiH** (CEAD 11648) in four cities (Banja Luka, Mostar, Tuzla and Bijeljina). The Commentaries were distributed following a public debate organised on novel provisions in the codes. The demand for the commentaries by practitioners and academics is overwhelming.
32. On 7 April, the CoE hosted in Sarajevo a meeting with the Ministries of Justice and Health and international stakeholders on **prison reform**. It was agreed that a policy group under the State Ministry of Justice be established to examine the various facets of prison reform and make proposals for legislative and administrative action. The new two-year CoE prison reform project, funded by Canadian International Development Agency, was also presented (CEAD 5688).

3. Other action

33. 500 stakeholders in education attended the **OSCE Education Forum** in Sarajevo on 22 April, which was opened by the OSCE HoM, the EU Ambassador, the SRSG and the Minister of Civil Affairs. The SRSG stressed the need for the BiH citizens to decide upon what kind of education system they want in BiH and see if the structure supported such reforms, and raised the necessity of constitutional reform from the bottom up. One panel included all the 14 Education Ministers and the impression presented highlighted the dysfunctional nature of the education system in BiH.
34. On 25 April, the CoE hosted the meeting of the **Human Rights Coordination Group** (OSCE, UNHCR, OHCHR, UNDP, World Bank and NGOs Helsinki Cmte, Vasa Prava and ICHR) to analyse the **application of the ECHR in BiH** and to propose a strategy to deepen its knowledge and use, building upon the CM Recommendations (2004)4-6 and the constitutional status of the ECHR. Meetings were also held during April on **truth and reconciliation, pensions and social assistance**.

Tbilisi

1. Political and legislative developments

35. Under the umbrella of the UN, a meeting was organised in Geneva **on 7 and 8 April to discuss the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Georgian and Abkhaz sides.**
36. The Georgian Defence Ministry announced on 19 April that it has **closed down a training camp** for the Georgian reserve forces in the village of Dzevera, which is located 12-13 kilometers away from the breakaway South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali.
37. Zaur Gurgenedze, an activist of the **Ruling party, moved into opposition** together with 50 other members.
38. Parliament approved **amendments to the election code**, in their second hearing, on 22 April, envisaging changes to the rule concerning composition of the Central Election Commission (CEC). According to the new rule, the President will propose all seven members of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to the Parliament for approval.
39. President Mikheil Saakashvili said on 29 April that **Georgia is ready to lift visa requirements for Russian citizens**, adding that this should become an issue for negotiation between the two countries.
40. Parliamentary Chairperson Nino Burjanadze said on 29 April that **Tbilisi “has changed its position over restoration of a railway link via Abkhazia** and is ready to discuss this issue if concrete progress is made in resolving the [Abkhaz] conflict.”
41. Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili said on 25 April that she agreed with her Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow that **Russia will close down its military bases** in Batumi and Akhalkalaki by 1 January 2008. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announced that Russia might start the withdrawal of its bases from Georgia as early as 2005.

2. Council of Europe Action

42. The **Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis, visited Georgia** on 14-16 April 2005. He was invited by President Mikheil Saakashvili to discuss the South Ossetia issue as well as the fulfillment of commitments, accepted by the Georgian authorities during accession of Georgia to the CoE. The Secretary General met with the President, Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, State Minister for Conflict Resolution, heads of International Organisations, Ambassadors of the CoE member states and non-governmental organisations. During the visit Celebration of 5th anniversaries of the Council of Europe Information Office in Georgia and Tbilisi School of Political Studies were organised and the Secretary General delivered the CoE medal to the Director of the School of Political Studies, Mr Armaz Akhvlediani. The Secretary General’s visit attracted great media attention. 8 press conferences and 3 interviews were organised.

43. On 1 April, a reception was organised in honour of the **adoption of the European Charter on Local Self-Governance**, the SRSG delivering an opening speech.
44. On 5 April SRSG held a **meeting with State Minister for Conflict Resolution** and Chair of the Commission on the Repatriation of Meskhetians, Mr Goga Khaindrava. The main topic of discussion was the operation of the newly established Commission and its possible future activities. The problems of the resettlement of Meskhetians were discussed and the Minister declared that the Government will support the repatriation of Meskhetians by all possible means, with support from the Council of Europe and other international organisations
45. The SRSG held a **meeting with Special Representative of the EU in South Caucasus, Mr Heikki Talvitie**, on 5 April. The topic of the discussion was the operation of the CoE in Georgia and future possibilities for cooperation.
46. On 8 April SRSG held a **meeting with the President of the Constitutional Court, Mr Joni Khetsuriani**. Strategy for future cooperation was discussed at the meeting. The plan was agreed to hold one conference and one study visit to Strasbourg for the staff of the Constitutional Court by August 2005.
47. SRSG held a **meeting with the Minister of Justice, Mr Konstantine Kemularia** on 21 April, where the question of torture in pre-trial detention facilities and prisons were discussed.
48. A **National Workshop on the Decentralisation Strategy for Georgia and the implementation of the European charter for local self-government** was organised by CoE and Georgian Parliament in Tbilisi on 20 April , the SRSG giving the opening speech.
49. On 24-25 April a **Consultation** meeting on the work of the Directorate of Youth and Sport **in the Caucasus Republics 2005-2007** was held in the CoE premises. The meeting was attended by representatives from the three South Caucasus states and representatives of DGIV.

3. Other Action

50. At a meeting organised by the OSCE Mission to Georgia on 12 April, international bodies and Georgian officials addressed the implementation of **Georgia's National Action Plan against torture**.
51. A delegation from France, supported by Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Greece, as well as Germany, **rejected the idea of replacing the OSCE Border Monitoring with an EU project**. This decision was taken in Luxembourg on 15-16 April, during a meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the European Union's 25 member countries.
52. The U.S. Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism issued a **[Country Report on Terrorism for 2004](#)**, which says that the Georgian government remained deeply committed to combating international and domestic terrorism during 2004. However, Georgia is still to a limited degree used as a terrorist transit state.

Chisinau

1. Political and legislative developments

53. **Post-Electoral Developments:** On 4 April, the Democratic Moldova Bloc faction renamed itself Aliance Moldova Noastra (AMN). The three deputies of the Social Liberal Party, headed by Mr Serebrian, had left the bloc the day before.
54. On 7 April, **Vladimir Voronin was inaugurated** as president. He has been elected with 75 votes out of 101 MPs. **The Democratic Party (DP) of Mr Diacov and PPCD factions as well as the three Social-Liberal Party deputies voted for Mr Voronin**, “for the sake of national interest”. The 23 AMN deputies did not participate in the election.
55. Prior to voting for Mr Voronin, PPCD Leader Y. Rosca had suggested to him 10 points concerning legislative reform, which should be implemented during this legislative period. Mr Voronin has accepted them.
56. On 8 April, Vasile Tarlev was appointed as Prime Minister and Yurie Rosca as deputy-speaker of the Parliament.
57. On 18 April Mr Urechean **renounced his post as Mayor of Chisinau** preferring to stay in Parliament. He appointed M. Furtuna (AMN) as Acting Mayor, who further relegated his duties to another deputy mayor, Vasile Ursu, on 26 April.
58. **The Government** was voted in by Parliament on 19 April. It will have 15 Ministries (previously 16). The ministers (7 of whom are new), the Governor of Gagauzia and the President of the Science Academy are part of the cabinet. The previous 14 departments have been turned into: 3 Services, 3 Bureau, 5 Agencies, 1 Chamber, and the Centre for Combating Economic Crime and Corruption. They are subordinate to ministers.
59. **Parliament:** On 15 April, Parliament adopted a decision providing for the national public TV and radio to broadcast the sessions of Parliament live, and for part of the records to be available on the parliamentary website. Thus point 5 of the PPCD agenda was implemented.
60. On **22 April, a GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova) summit** took place in Chisinau. Moldova took over its chairmanship. The respective Presidents (except the Uzbek President) were present, also the Presidents of Romania and Lithuania, as well as US-representative Steven Mann, OSCE SG Jan Kubis. President Yushchenko presented a first draft of a 7-point plan for the solution of the Transnistria problem.
61. On 25 April, the government sent a **draft law on state secret and service secret** to the Parliament. The draft had not passed CoE expertise. Media NGOs in a statement expressed serious concerns.
62. **Transnistrian** and Abkhazian “foreign ministers” Litskai and Shamba, together with South Ossetia's "permanent representative" to Russia, met in Moscow on 3-4 April. Mr Litskai met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Loshchinin.

63. Throughout April, Transnistrian militia and "border guards" were periodically **preventing Dorotcaia village farmers** from cultivating their fields. Transnistrian authorities insist that farmers should "register" in Dubossari, which would mean accepting Transnistrian property rights. Attempts to solve the issue at the Joint Control Committee have failed. Farmers wrote a letter of protest to Chisinau-based diplomatic missions. They picketed the Russian Embassy, demanding help from Moscow.

64. The two judicial police inspectors of the Bender Police Department, detained since 29 March by the Transnistrian militia, were sentenced to a two-months jail term on 4 April.

2. Council of Europe Action

65. **On 4 April**, the Office of the SRSG sent out information about the Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Minorities, Co-operation and Development in South-Eastern Europe (ISCOMET having participatory status with the CoE) and its local member, ASER - Association for Regional and Ethnic Studies. An SRSG office representative attended the presentation of an ISCOMET /ASER publication, "Religion and Democracy in Moldova" within the CoE's CBM programme.

66. **On 7 April**, the SRSG attended the inauguration of Vladimir Voronin as President.

67. Four CoE experts conducted from 11 to 15 April within the framework of PACO-Moldova a *Workshop to review the competencies of the main enforcement institutions responsible for investigation and corruption offences*. The SRSG opened the workshop.

68. **On 15 April**, SRSG opened the International Seminar on *Electoral Democracy, Challenges of Transition and Perspectives for Democratic Stabilization in Moldova*, sponsored by CoE and carried out by the European Institute for Political Studies. He was also a key note speaker in the first panel "Elections, Parliamentarism and Democracy in New Eastern Europe".

69. A workshop on improving **legislation on organ transplantation and combating organ trafficking** was organised in Chisinau on 28 and 29 April, in the framework of the CoE/EC Joint Programme, and under the patronage of the Ministry of Health. The workshop was conducted by three CoE experts.

70. **On 29 April** the SRSG met with President Voronin and delivered to him a personal letter from the Secretary General. Mr Davis commended the President for his role in the emerging new political culture in Moldova and encouraged him to continue the reforms.

3. Other Action

71. **On 13 April**, the Institute for Public Policies presented the "European Strategy of the Republic of Moldova" co-sponsored by MFA. According to the authors, the strategy could serve as starting point to the setting up of the national plan of legislative adjustment and EU integration.

72. On 13 April, a UNDP-chaired working session aimed at contributing perspectives to the compilation of the second Environmental Performance Review for Moldova.
73. On 14 April, the SRSG's office participated in a working lunch with representative of the OSCE, US and UK Embassies aimed at working out a joint approach for further support to TRM transformation and media development in general.
74. On **26-27 April**, an SRSG representative attended the International Conference "Moldova and Europe: Bridging the Gap", organised by the Suedosteuropa-Gesellschaft in cooperation with the German Federal Foreign office, The Stability Pact and the IPP, Chisinau.

Belgrade

1. Political and legislative developments

75. Highest Officials of Serbia, Montenegro, the state union and EU representative Solana, signed an **Agreement on amendments on the constitutional charter**, on 8 April in Belgrade. The agreement aims at solving the problem of the functioning of the state union, focuses on prolonging the mandate of the State Union Parliament, fulfilling obligations under the Constitutional Charter and ensuring that future referenda meet European standards.
76. The **EU Council approved the Feasibility Study** on 25 April and asked the Commission to present a project for a mandate for starting negotiations for a stabilisation and association agreement. The EU considers Serbia and Montenegro is sufficiently prepared to negotiate an SAA, one of the steps towards EU membership, the next being candidate status. The feasibility study makes ample reference to the Council of Europe and there is a clear link between the positive feasibility study and compliance with main CoE commitments.
77. On 26 April 2006 **Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia and Montenegro**, addressing the CoE Parliamentary Assembly, emphasised the need for speeding up the process of European integration of the country. He reminded the Assembly of the most serious political problems burdening the state union. Regarding the future of Kosovo, he stressed: "Kosovo must be multiethnic, Kosovo must be European, Kosovo must be open and safe for all its citizens, with the minorities carefully protected."
78. **Members of the monitoring committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe visited Serbia and Montenegro** from 17 to 21 April 2005. Rapporteurs Mr Jonas Cekuolis and Mr Milan Budin held meetings with authorities in Belgrade and Podgorica and visited the Region of Sandzak. The report of this monitoring mission is due to be discussed during the Parliamentary Assembly session in June 2005.
79. The ICTY indictee, General Nebojsa Pavkovic, surrendered to **the Hague Tribunal on 25 April** to face allegations of war crimes in Kosovo. According to the Serbian government, other suspects will be extradited as well, by early autumn.
80. Representatives of the **Contact group** visited Belgrade early April to talk with Serbian authorities about standards for **Kosovo**. Belgrade authorities showed readiness for dialogue with Pristina, and supported participation of Kosovo Serbs in all working groups in Pristina.

2. Council of Europe action

81. The CoE Belgrade office organised a number of **introductory trainings for judges on the ECHR** (CEAD 9369) in different district courts. Participants were district and municipal court judges. A seminar was also organised in Belgrade, 14-16 April, on the ECHR and new Serbian **Law on civil procedure** (CEAD 11611).

82. The Directorate of Cooperation for Local and Regional Democracy and the Belgrade office, held several meetings with relevant Serbian authorities between 4 and 7 April, regarding future cooperation in **local self-government reform**. Work on amendments to the law on local self-government, in force since last October, its implementation, further legislative reforms, fiscal decentralisation, training and cross-border cooperation, are some of the possible steps for enhanced local self-government in Serbia.
83. The Office organised a meeting on the **Revised European Social Charter (RESC)** in Belgrade, on 12 and 13 April, dedicated to the second part of the compatibility report. This **Report** gives useful suggestions on how to improve pertinent legislation or/and its implementation. A wide distribution of this document among social partners and officials is therefore strongly recommended
84. Within the **CARDS Police Project**, meetings with local working groups dealing with financial investigation were held on 4, 18 and 22 April in order to assist the groups to prepare an Implementing Strategy.
85. The SRSB and a colleague from the Media Division, had a **meeting with Serbian Minister of Culture** on 21 April, in order to discuss further cooperation in the field of media.

3. Other action

86. The Belgrade Fund for political excellence, member of the CoE network of Schools of Political Studies, organised a seminar on **Serbia and Montenegro in the European integration process**, from 1 to 5 April, in Fruska Gora.
87. At the meeting on **denationalisation** in Serbia, organised by the US Embassy on 15 April, participants agreed to establish a working group to bring together representatives of international organisations and embassies interested in this issue.
88. At a seminar on EU neighbourhood programme, organised by PALGO centre on 18-19 April in Voivodina, the CoE Belgrade office gave a presentation on the **Outline Convention on transfrontier cooperation** and Euroregions.
89. Within the training programme for journalists on European issues, organised by the French Embassy and **Media** Centre in Belgrade, the CoE Office made a presentation of the Organisation's activities in the field of media, on 20 April.

Podgorica

1. Political and legislative developments

90. The political agreement for Changing the Constitutional Charter signed on 8 April, the positive assessment of **the Feasibility Study for Serbia and Montenegro to negotiate Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU** of 12 April and the Agreement of the EU Council of Ministers with the EC estimate of 25 April, mobilised the debate on the **compliance of the Law on Referendum with European standards** and on **consensus among the parties** about the referendum rules.
91. At its session of 2 April the Main Board of the Socialist Peoples' Party adopted a decision to **dismiss its Vice President Mr Zoran Zizic**, and two other high-ranking officials from party duties (all members of the Movement for preserving of the State Union) due to unauthorised public action contrary to the Party's Statute. According to Mr Predrag Bulatovic, President of the Party, although the regular Parliamentary elections to be held in October 2006 are the immediate priority, **independent Montenegro would not be a problem** if the referendum is organised in compliance with European standards.
92. The results of **telephone interviews** conducted by the Daily "VIJESTI" and the Centre for Monitoring **about reaching political consensus on the Referendum Rules** indicate that 42.72% of citizens consider that it is possible, 27.15% are convinced that it will never happen and 30.13% are undecided.
93. Having in mind the fact that the regular local elections should be held in May 2006 and that the regular Parliamentary elections should also be organised in October 2006, according to the Speaker, Mr Ranko Krivokapic, resolution of the future state status would match these dates, i.e. **the referendum on independence will be organised by April 2006 at the latest.**
94. The **Law on Police and the Law on National Security Agency** were adopted by the Parliament at its session of 26 April.
95. **The Law on Mediation** was adopted during the continuation of the same session, on 27 April.
96. To be followed next month: **Early local elections in the Municipality of Budva to be held on 22 May.**

2. Council of Europe action

97. A High Level International Meeting "**Integration Minority Policy and Practice**" was co-organised by the CoE Office with the Friederich Naumann Foundation and the Ministry for Protection of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups from 23 to 25 April. The event elaborated minority protection in practice, encouraged further conclusion of bilateral agreements in the region of SEE for the protection of national minorities and enhanced co-operation with civil society actors in the creation and implementation of appropriate policies. Mr Klaus Schumann, Director General of Political Affairs, made an introductory presentation about the CoE policy for the protection of national minorities.

During his stay he further met the Speaker of the Parliament, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Protection of Minorities and the President of the Socialist Peoples' Party, the main opposition party.

98. Representatives of the **Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member States of the Council of Europe** paid an official visit to Montenegro on 19 April, discussing the functioning of the State Union institutions and fulfillment of commitments. Its Report will be made public on 19 May. Within the Programme of the visit there was also an **exchange of information with Ambassador Parschiva Badescu, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro.**
99. The Office assisted in the preparation of the Montenegrin delegation, composed of the members of the Working Group on Financial Investigations, to take part in the Regional seminar on financial investigations in Sarajevo (6-7 April). During the seminar the draft **Strategy on Financial Investigation for confiscation of proceeds from crime**, as well as its supplementary Action Plan were presented. The training needs in the financial investigations field for each CARPO Project area were also discussed. CEAD 11408.
100. Following the Study Visit on witness protection conducted in Mackenheim, Germany, from 14 to 16 March, the participation of the members of the CARPO Working Group in the regional seminar held from 6 to 7 April in Zagreb was facilitated. The draft **Strategies on the basic procedural and non-procedural measures for witness protection** were elaborated. The respective Working Groups were given a task to make assessment for further training needs as well as human and financial resources. CEAD 11403.
101. A working meeting on Local Selfgovernment reform was held on 6 April. It elaborated the **National Action Plan for local self-government reform** including amendments to the Law on Local Financing. The Ministry of Finance would soon request expert assistance in drafting the **criteria for financial equalization of municipalities**. Final comments on the Draft Law on Territorial Organisation were submitted to the Ministry of Justice on 19 April. CEAD 11319.
102. The **Report of the Prison Project Management Meeting** held in Strasbourg on 23 February, including Action Plan for co-operation, was provided to the relevant counterparts on 20 April. A round table on **community sanctions and measures** will be held in June. CEAD 5627.
103. The CoE expert appraisal on the Draft **Law on Asylum** was handed to the Ministry of Interior on 5 April. This should contribute to bringing the draft text into compliance with European and other international standards and positive practice. CEAD 11307.
104. A meeting of expert groups from both constituents, in charge of drafting the report on **compatibility of respective legislations and practice with the RESC** was carried out in Belgrade on 12-13 April. The experts agreed on a number of amendments and undertook to submit the revised report by mid-May. A Conference to promote the final version of the Study is to be organised in mid-June. CEAD 9131.
105. Within the framework of the Second Joint Initiative of the CoE and the EAR in the media field, a Seminar on Article 10 of the ECHR for defence lawyers was conducted on 18-19 April. This acquainted participants with the essence of the ECHR's **procedural**

guarantees for freedom of expression and the respective case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. CEAD 11627.

106. A Seminar on the ECHR and criminal legislation for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and representatives of the Ministry of Interior was organised from 21 to 23 May. It should **improve the relationship between all participants in pre-trial and criminal proceedings**. CEAD 11612.

Pristina

1. Political and legislative developments

107. Ambassador Werner Wnendt from Germany has been appointed **the new Head of the OSCE Mission** which is in charge of UNMIK's institution-building pillar. He has served as the Senior Deputy High Representative in the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2003.
108. Towards the end of the month SRSB Søren Jessen-Petersen proposed an informal **Forum for consultation**, that would bring together the President of Kosovo and the leaders of the four main parties in the Assembly on a regular basis for informal discussions. Opposition leaders would only agree to join the Forum if it were a decision-taking body and not an advisory one, as it is designed now.
109. The **European Commission** presented a Communication on "A European Future for Kosovo", signalling the commitment of the EU to "helping Kosovo to make progress towards its European aspirations".
110. The **International Commission on the Balkans**, in its report "The Balkans in Europe's Future", foresees the possibility of independence for Kosovo in four stages in the context of future membership of the EU.
111. Minister of Local Government Lutfi Haziri and Minister of Returns of Communities Slavisa Petkovic visited the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Montenegro to encourage **returns of refugees and displaced persons** to Kosovo.
112. Oliver Ivanovic, head of the Serb List for Kosovo, signaled the **readiness of Serbs to join Kosovo institutions**; there were no conditions for the return of Serbs to Kosovo institutions, he stated: "We have decided to return to the working groups for decentralisation, standards and we will participate in the dialogue between Prishtina and Belgrade."
113. **President Tadic of Serbia has proposed a meeting with Kosovo's President Rugova**, who has rejected the idea, saying Belgrade could play no role in determining the final status of Kosovo. Rugova has however said that he would meet with Tadic in the context of an international conference. Various international actors have encouraged dialogue not only on technical matters but also at a political level.
114. UNMIK's expert team discovered the **mortal remains** of more than 20 people of non-Albanian origin in a cave near Klina. Some of the bodies have been identified and members of their families visited the cave accompanied by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
115. A Serbian woman gave birth to **triplets** in Pristina's Maternity Hospital. Shortly before, COMKFOR Lieutenant-General Yves de Kermabon had visited the clinic and called for the return of Serbian doctors and patients.

2. Council of Europe action

116. The Head and Deputy Head of Office met **Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi**. The meeting focused on democratic processes in the context of standards and decentralisation, as well as drafting, harmonising and implementing legislation.

117. The Office is closely **monitoring developments on the standards implementation** process carried out by UNMIK and the PISG, inter alia by attending meetings regarding fulfillment of standards in the field of Rule of Law, Freedom of Movement and Returns.

118. In cooperation with the OSCE and the Kosovo Judicial Institute (KJI), the CoE held a training on the application of the ECHR in domestic law, on 20 April 2005. The training fits in the frame of the "**training of trainers on human rights**" programme, for the benefit of local judges and prosecutors (CEAD 6834).

119. At an **Anti-Corruption Seminar** held in Skopje, 31 March – 1 April, within the PACO Impact framework, six recommendations for Anti Corruption Services of the Kosovo Project Area were adopted.

120. A draft **Anti Corruption Action Plan** has been prepared by Kosovo expert/s which will be submitted to the CoE for comment. It is expected that by the end of May 2005 a Round Table would be held for the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Anti-Corruption to finalise an action plan.

121. In cooperation with the CoE Office, the **CARPO** Working Group on Financial Investigation prepared a first draft on the implementation strategies of financial investigations concerning the Kosovo Project Area. The Working Group on Crime Analysis successfully finalised the Organized Crime situation report and the Questionnaire concerning Kosovo, which have been submitted to Strasbourg.

122. In preparation of their upcoming visit to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg the Deputy Head of Office met with a group of students from **Pristina University** and introduced them to general CoE principles and the work of the CoE in Kosovo.

3. Other action

123. When the Heads of the CoE and of the **Italian Office** discussed on 15 April progress in the standards implementation and CoE's cooperation activities in the human rights field, the latter underlined the invaluable contribution given by the CoE in training local judges and prosecutors.

4. General Security Situation

124. Enver Haradinaj, brother of **former PM Ramush Haradinaj**, was killed on Friday, 15 April by unknown attackers in an ambush. Ramush Haradinaj was released from prison in the Hague to attend his brother's funeral.

125. The building housing the ORA and Christian Democratic Political parties' HQs was the target of a **bomb attack** late on 17 April. Three children were slightly injured.

Tirana

1. Political and legislative developments

126. **Electoral issues** in Albania were still high on the agenda and on 25 April President Moisiu set the date for Parliamentary elections on 3 July 2005.
127. On 27 April, representatives of 16 political parties signed a **Code of Conduct** for the forthcoming electoral campaign in front of President Moisiu. The Code was drafted at the initiative of the President, with the strong political support of the OSCE, Council of Europe and European Union. Signatory parties pledge themselves to behave in such a way as to contribute to free, fair and democratic elections.
128. The Democratic Party of Mr Sali Berisha (who has been re-elected in the Chair as the only candidate) and the New Democratic Party of Mr Genc Pollo have concluded an **agreement for the parliamentary elections**.
129. A meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Western Balkans was held on 5 April in Durrës, with Albania, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia-Montenegro and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and the participation of Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany. **NATO integration** was at the centre of the discussions.
130. On 7 April, after long debates and the opposition leaving the Chamber, the law on **Conflicts of Interest** was adopted by 60 votes for, with 7 against and 7 abstentions. The law will only come into effect in 2006.
131. The Parliament unanimously adopted a new law on **Social Insurance**, improving the level of pensions. Its implementation will have an annual cost of 170 million lek (1,360,000 euros).
132. The law defining the method of **Evaluation for compensation of property** was adopted by 57 votes against 6 with 7 abstentions, in the absence of Democrat MPs.
133. The draft law on **Digital Broadcasting**, which was prepared with assistance of the CoE and the OSCE, has been discussed and heavily amended in the Media Committee of the Parliament. The present draft has raised worries in the international community who calls for a return to the initial principles before it is submitted to Parliament.
134. The Parliamentary Economy Committee approved amendments to the **Procurement Law**, allowing concessions of public services to private companies to be extended from one to five years. Amendments also clear the way for privatization of state public services.
135. The High Council of Justice, chaired by President Moisiu, **dismissed the Vice-Chairman of the Tirana Court of Appeal**, Mr Dali Bushi, on grounds of violations in eight civil and penal cases. Mr Bushi threatened the Minister of Justice with revenge.
136. An assembly of 5,000 men from the North mountains adopted **amendments to the centuries-old Kanun**, whereby in future only the killer in blood revenge is responsible

for his deed, and not his family. This stance was taken in consequence of the alleged inability of the State to implement the rule of law in Albania. According to the amended Kanun, no longer can anyone be put in isolation for having a murderer in his family, nor can anyone help the killer. Wide support was to be found in public opinion and even in official circles.

2. Council of Europe action

137. In the framework of the Year of Citizenship and the awareness-raising campaign for the elections, the Special Adviser chaired an Information Office **event with 300 first-time voters** from secondary schools of the region of Shkodra, with the participation of the British Ambassador and the Deputy to the Ambassador of Poland.

138. From 8 to 9 April, the 3rd training session for **teachers of the Law Faculties** on “Fundamental Rights in Europe” took place. This was a joint activity organised in the framework of the Project for Law Faculties in Albania in close collaboration with the Open Society Foundation for Albania.

139. Under the project for Law Faculties in Albania also a training seminar for administrative and academic staff of the three Albanian Law Faculties was organised on 21 April on the SWOT techniques.

140. The **Law on Conflicts of Interest** (see above), which has been the subject of Council of Europe and OECD/SIGMA expert review in the framework of PACO Impact, is now awaiting presidential decree. A roundtable is scheduled to take place in June to address the implementation issues as well as identification of necessary secondary legislation.

141. Two regional seminars were organised simultaneously on 6 and 7 April in two of the regional capitals, respectively Sarajevo and Zagreb, in order to present national strategies prepared within the frame of CARPO Outputs respectively “**Improving Financial Investigations, aimed at the Confiscation of the Proceeds of Crime**” and “**Establishing Effective Mechanisms for the Protection of Witnesses**”.

142. The Albanian Situation Report on **Organised and Economic Crime** was also finalised in April, following the suggestions and comments of CoE experts, presented in the Strasbourg meeting of 15-16 March 2005,

4. General Security Situation

143. An important **explosive charge detonated** on 15 April in Tirana in front of a bar belonging to the family of the businessman who was blown up in a lift on 28 February last. No casualties.

Skopje

1. Political and legislative developments

144. The **last round of the local elections** took place on 10 April in 17 municipalities to complete the overall process. The turn out was 22.31%, due mainly to election fatigue and the lack of stake in some cases where the opposition Albanian party DPA decided a polling out strategy (call for boycott while keeping their candidates and members of the board in some areas). The main striking example of citizens' disenchantment was in Skopje mayoral race, since the incoming mayor decided to withdraw from the race between the two rounds while keeping his ballot papers available in the polling stations. The results show that the ruling Macedonian party SDSM won 40 municipalities; its ally in the coalition, the Albanian party DUI, will have 15 mayors. However, the most important outcome is the overwhelming victory of Mr Kostovski, independent candidate in Skopje.
145. On 8 April, the United Nations Mediator, Mr Matthew Niemetz, proposed "Republika Makedonija – Skopje" as the compromise solution for the **name of the country** in an effort to put an end to the name dispute between Athens and Skopje. On 11 April, the Prime Minister Buckovski confirmed that the official position is "the double formula": the constitutional name of "Republic of Macedonia" for international use, but the Government expressed readiness to consider the UN Mediator's proposal as a basis for a solution within the bilateral relations between its country and Greece.
146. On 17 April, the **new Mayor of Skopje** Mr Kostovski announced that he will start the process for appointing **directors of the public enterprises** in the city upon proposals of the political parties. However, he stated that the appointment will be based on professionalism and the directors will be responsible to him and "not to the parties". He also promised to inform the population regularly and to further develop an action plan for the city.
147. On 20 April, Amdi Bajram, the newly elected **Roma mayor of the Suto Orizari municipality** with predominant Roma community, was arrested and sent to prison to serve a four-year prison sentence. According to the Law on Local Elections, the Supreme Court will have to declare the elections invalid and to call for new elections within seventy days.
148. Some political events dominated the **aftermath of the local elections**: Mr Gruevski, leader of the opposition party VRMO-DPMNE, dismissed the whole Executive Committee of the party, including the vice-president. Three new vice-presidents are expected to take over the position. On 20 April, the opposition Albanian party DPA, which advocated boycott during the second round of the local election, decided to walk out of the Parliament "for ever". The reason behind such a move is that its proposal for annulment of the elections in 16 predominantly Albanian municipalities was rejected by the majority of the Parliament.
149. On 21 April, the Prime Minister started the first consultation meeting with the opposition VMRO-People's Party acting president on **constitutional changes related to reform of**

the judiciary. Both leaders agreed on the necessity for constitutional amendments in order to strengthen the independence of judiciary. The Government has already adopted the draft constitutional amendments at its 4 April session. The main area for changes refers to the Republic Judicial Council and the appointment of judges and prosecutors.

150. On 25 April, the former Minister of Justice and current **Ombudsman** Ixhet Memeti presented his **Annual Report for 2004**. In his introductory address, he lashed out at the state administration for its lack of transparency, lack of professionalism and arrogance. He expressed overall dissatisfaction with the work and unprofessional conduct of the judges. Among the petitions submitted to the Ombudsman's office, 19.65% are related to the judiciary and as the Ombudsman has stated, more than 70% of the cases had been solved.

151. On 26 April, Mr Sulejmani, Minister of Local Self-Government, officially presented the Detailed Plan for Transfer of Competencies and Resources within the **decentralisation process**. This document was previously adopted by the Government at its 7 April session. In his welcoming address, the Prime Minister recalled decentralisation as the key priority for his government and committed to speed up the process, seen as a milestone in the European Union accession. The Minister of Local Self-Government stressed that decentralisation is not only a technical mechanism, but first and foremost will be pivotal for bringing prosperity and stability in the country. The EUSR Michael Sahlin informed that local elections were on the agenda of the European Council meeting on 25 April, which sees decentralisation as a fundamental step for closer relations with the European Union. He expressed hope that the Inter-ethnic Commission will finally be operative.

152. On 28 April, the Government announced that it will propose to the Parliament the establishment of a national **Euro-Integration Council**. This body will comprise members of the President and Prime Minister's cabinets, representatives of the opposition and the ruling coalition, along with delegates from the civil society. The institution will play a key role in preparations for European Union membership.

2. Council of Europe Action

153. On 12-13 April, the Resident Expert attended the Conference on the "Establishment of an **Independent Judiciary**", held in Skopje under the aegis of the CARDS regional project 2003 in the presence of the Minister of Justice. On this occasion, the draft proposal for constitutional amendments related to reform of the judiciary was officially presented for the first review by international experts working within the CARDS Project.

154. On 19 April, a workshop on the drafting of the **Law on Free Access to Information** was organised by Pro media NGO with the participation of experts from the Council of Europe, as well as from Article 19 and Open Society Institute. The major suggestions by the experts were that the Commission, which should be established and in charge of overseeing implementation of the law, has to be regulated in such a way that it would disable political influence of its members.

155. On 21 April, the Resident Expert attended an official ceremony for the Tenth anniversary of the membership of the country in the Council of Europe and the opening of the third session of the **School of Politics**. The Prime Minister and the Ambassador of Netherlands opened the session. On 23 April, the Director General of Political Affairs addressed the

participants in the School of Politics on “Stability and Security through Effective Multilateralism: the Council of Europe Example”.

156. From 22 to 24 April, the Resident Expert spoke at a training **seminar for lawyers on the European Convention on Human Rights**. This event is a joint Council of Europe/OSCE and Young Lawyers Association focusing on how to take a case under Articles 3, 5 and 6 of the Convention. A Representative of DG II (Human Rights) was one of the moderators of the session.

157. On 25 and 26 April, a two-day Regional Round Table on ‘**Roma access to employment in South East Europe**’, was organised jointly by the Council of Europe (DG III) and OSCE in cooperation with the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs. The stock-taking of the 2003-2005 experience shows that there is ”general consensus in the country that Roma are in a difficult employment situation, but the authorities failed to formulate any coherent policy in this area”.

158. On 25 April started a one-week training course on **conflict-resolution** within the Council of Europe Democratic Leadership Programme for young participants from the northern part of the country and its transfrontier regions in Kosovo and South Serbia.

3. Other action

159. On 27 April, the Resident Expert and the Information Office were invited to take part in the open consultation meeting on the technical assistance to support the creation of the **Training Institute for Judiciary**. The event is jointly organised by the National Association of judges, the National Association of public prosecutors and the Center for continuing education with the support of the European Agency for Reconstruction and the technical assistance of the Council of Europe.

160. On 28 April, the Resident Expert was invited to the official presentation of the Detailed Plan for **transfer of competencies and resources within the decentralisation process** in the presence of Prime Minister V. Buckovski, the Minister of Local Self-Government and a large participation of newly elected mayors and councilors.

161. Upon the request of the **Coordination Group on Gender Issues** under the direction of UNDP Office in Skopje, Ms Sandra Prilepcanska, Assistant to the Council of Europe Information Office, has been proposed as the Focal Person to follow up the Gender issues over the forthcoming sessions.