



Information Documents

SG/Inf(2005)22

30 November 2005

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

October 2005

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

FIELD OFFICES	
YEREVAN Ms Bojana URUMOVA Special Representative of the SG Tel: +374 10 24 33 85 Fax: +374 10 24 38 75 E-mail: bojana.urumova@coe.int	CHISINAU Ambassador Vladimir PHILIPOV Special Representative of the SG Tel: +373 22 23 50 34 or 35 Fax: +373 22 23 30 18 E-mail: vladimir.philipov@coe.int
BAKU Mr Mats LINDBERG Special Representative of the SG Tel: +994 124 975 489 Fax: +994 124 975 475 E-mail: mats.lindberg@coe-baku.org	BELGRADE Mr Stefano VALENTI Special Representative of the SG Tel: +381 11 3 088 411 Fax: +381 11 3 086 494 E-mail: stefano.valenti@coe.int
SARAJEVO Mr Tim CARTWRIGHT Special Representative of the SG Tel: +387 33 264 360 or 361 Fax: +387 33 233 937 E-mail: tim.cartwright@coe.int	PODGORICA Mr Vladimir RISTOVSKI Head of Office Tel: +381 81 230 819 or +381 81 230 825 Fax: +381 81 230 176 E-mail: vladimir.ristovski@coe.int
TBILISI Mr Igor GAON Special Representative of the SG Tel: +995 32 98 54 40 Fax: +995 32 98 96 57 E-mail: igor.gaon@coe.ge	PRISTINA Mr Zurab KATCHKATCHISHVILI Head of Office Tel: +381 38 243 749 Fax: +381 38 243 752 E-mail: zurab.katchkatchishvili@coe.int

OTHER OUTPOSTS	
TIRANA Special Adviser Tel: +355 4 22 84 19 Fax: +355 4 24 89 40 E-mail:	SKOPJE Mr Michel RIVOLLIER Resident Expert Tel: +389 2 3290 232 Fax: +389 2 3123 617 E-mail: michel.rivollier@iocoe.org.mk

Yerevan

1. Political and legislative developments

1. On 5 October, the President issued a decree setting 27 November as the **date of the constitutional referendum**. This decree marked the official beginning of the campaign. It may be noted that Article 20 of the Law on Referendum prohibits campaigning by foreign citizens and organisations.
2. On 6 October the Coalition parties established a **Coordinating Council for the Organisation of the Campaign for the Constitutional Referendum**, which has become known informally as the Headquarters of the "Yes" Campaign. MP Mher Shahgeldyan of the Rule of Law (*Orinats Yerkir*) party was appointed as the Chairman of this Council, which held its first meeting on 18 October. In the course of the month, written materials explaining the constitutional amendments were prepared, and a special edition of the amendments was issued. Nevertheless, at the end of the month, the President and the Prime Minister stated that the campaign was not yet fully operational.
3. Twenty-two political parties signed a statement in support of a "yes" vote to the constitutional amendments. They included all the ruling Coalition parties; the United Labour Party is also supporting a "yes" vote.
4. The Opposition Justice bloc appointed its Secretary, Victor Dallakyan, as Chairman of the **Coordinating Council for the "No" Campaign**. The Opposition National Unity Party has also called upon its adherents to vote "no". However, Shavarsh Kocharyan, Chairman of the National Democratic Party (a Justice bloc member), has stopped short of calling for a "no" vote.
5. On 25 October **the Republic (*Hanrapetutyun*) Opposition party** led by Aram Z. Sargsyan, held an open-air meeting (attended by 500-600 people) after being refused a meeting room in the Government building. The Justice bloc leader Stepan Demirjyan (People's Party of Armenia) and other Opposition activists attended the meeting.
6. **Reporters without borders**, an international NGO, published the Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2005 on 21 October. Armenia was ranked 102nd out of 167 countries. This represented a significant drop as compared to 2004, when Armenia was ranked in 83rd position.
7. **International Crisis Group** issued another report (dated 11 October) on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in which it identified "the necessary elements for a workable and achievable peace plan".
8. The Yerevan Press Club (a local NGO) has announced that from 1 to 25 November it will **monitor media coverage** during the run-up to the constitutional referendum.

2. Council of Europe action

9. On 10 October, the **Chairman of the Committee of Ministers** made a Declaration in support of constitutional reforms in Armenia, and called upon the people to participate in the forthcoming referendum.
10. A number of activities specified in the **action plan in support of a public awareness-raising campaign** were completed in October. Highlights included: a conference on the human rights chapter of the constitutional reform, held on 15 October in Yerevan and organised jointly by the CoE Venice Commission and the Constitutional Right Centre of the Constitutional Court of Armenia; and a seminar on media professionalism and the coverage of the constitutional referendum held on 28 October.
11. The SRSG met with the chairman and representatives of the **Coordinating Council for the Organisation of the Campaign for the Constitutional Referendum** and discussed the state of play of the public awareness-raising with them, as well as with representatives from the President's office.
12. During its plenary meeting held on 21 and 22 October, the Council of Europe **Venice Commission** adopted the final opinion on constitutional reform in Armenia, which contained a positive assessment of the draft constitution.
13. At the invitation of the Armenian authorities, a delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe observed **local elections** in Armavir, Tavush, and Lori regions on 16 October. At their press conference (held on 17 October) summarizing the results of their September and October observation missions, the delegation declared the local elections to be "generally satisfactory and calm".
14. The President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe had visited Armenia from 4 to 6 October.
15. Experts conducted a second **needs assessment visit of Armenian prisons** from 3 to 8 October.
16. Parliamentarians from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia joined with women's groups from the three countries, as well as with UN experts, to discuss gender equality in the South Caucasus at a public hearing in Tbilisi (Georgia) on Friday 14 October 2005, organised by PACE – Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

17. A **high level EU delegation**, comprising the EU and UK Special Representatives to the Southern Caucasus, as well as a representative of the incoming Austrian Presidency, met with the SRSG in the Council of Europe Office on 25 October. The topics discussed included Armenia's post-accession commitments as well as the forthcoming constitutional referendum. The SRSG also held a meeting with the representatives of the Delegation of the European Commission Office to Armenia to discuss cooperation issues.

18. On 4 October representatives of the Council of Europe attended the meeting of OSCE **Regional Heads of Offices**, which was organised by the **OSCE Office in Yerevan**.
19. On 25 October the SRSG attended the meeting of the **Working Group on Election and Constitutional matters** headed by the **OSCE Office**. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the election section of OSCE/ODIHR.
20. The SRSG participated in Vanadzor (a city in northern Armenia) in a **British Council project** designed to promote discussion of European values and European integration among young people in the Armenian regions.

*
* *

Activities of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (IOCE)

Publications and translations:

Publication of an English-Armenian Glossary of CoE Related Terms and Expressions. After presentation of the Glossary in the IOCE premises, 1,500 copies are being distributed to Government bodies, educational institutions, libraries, media, international organisations and other interested parties. 500 copies will be kept for use as prizes for student competitions.

Creation of a **separate section on Constitutional Amendments on the IOCE website** within the framework of the Action Plan in support of the constitutional referendum in Armenia on 27 November 2005.

Seminars, conferences and other activities:

Organisation of an **EDC (Education for Democratic Citizenship) fair**, 14 October.

Open days for distribution of EDC materials, 17 October (folders, brochures and other promotional materials).

Organisation of a seminar on "**Media professionalism and the coverage of the constitutional referendum**", 28 October, in cooperation with DG II and the SRSG's office, with the participation of around 100 media professionals and relevant press officers from state agencies and international organisations.

Baku

1. Political developments

21. A **pre-election mission** from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), headed by Dutch parliamentarian Mr Leo Platvoet, visited Azerbaijan 11-14 October to assess the pre-election situation. The delegation held meetings with the Central Election Commission, political parties, media representatives, NGOs, ODIHR and OSCE representatives, Council of Europe Member State Ambassadors as well as State authorities, including President Ilham Aliyev. At the end of its mission, the delegation issued a statement in which it welcomed several positive developments in comparison to previous elections in Azerbaijan, while it at the same time expressed great concern regarding a number of remaining shortcomings.
22. On 25 October President Ilham Aliyev issued a **Presidential decree** aimed at improving the conduct of the parliamentary elections. Among other points, the decree introduced the use of invisible ink to mark voters' fingers on Election Day 6 November. Other significant proposal in the decree was to remove the provision on the law prohibiting NGOs who get more than 30% of their funding from abroad to monitor elections in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the decree instructs the Central Election Commission to prepare and adopt rules of procedure for addressing election complaints. With the help of a Council of Europe expert, such rules of procedure were drafted and then adopted on 1 November. Secretary General Terry Davis welcomed the Presidential decree.
23. At the end of October there were approximately **1,500 candidates remaining in the race**, as more than 500 of those originally registered had withdrawn their candidacies. Many of these are members of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP) who were not the official YAP candidates. There will be more than 1,000 international observers monitoring the elections.
24. The leader in exile of the Azerbaijani Democratic Party, **Mr Rasul Guliyev**, a registered candidate for the elections, attempted to return to Azerbaijan on 17 October on a charter flight from London. Mr Guliyev, a former speaker of Parliament, is facing embezzlement charges in Azerbaijan and the authorities have vowed to arrest him on arrival in Azerbaijan. In preparation of Mr Guliyev's possible return and any reactions by his supporters, the Azerbaijani authorities had sealed off the airport area and heavy restrictions were introduced on traffic going towards the airport. At the same time hundreds of arrests were made. Most of the arrested were released soon after, but some 25 were given a few days prison sentences.
25. In the aftermath of Mr. Guliyev's failed attempt to return, President Ilham Aliyev ordered a **reshuffle of the Government**. The Minister of Economic Development, Mr Fahrhad Aliyev, was replaced by the Head of the State Committee on Securities, Mr Heydar Babayev, while the Minister of Health, Mr Ali Insanov, was replaced by the Director of the Diagnostic Centre of the Ministry of Health, Mr Oktay Shiraliyev. The dismissed ministers were not only removed from their posts but also arrested, charged with planning a coup d'etat in conspiracy with Mr Rasul Guliyev. A number of other high ranking officials were also dismissed and arrested on the same charges. Mr Insanov and some other of the arrested high level officials were seen and heard

confessing to be guilty as accused on the state TV station AzTV on the second of November.

26. Three attempts at unauthorised **rallies** were made in Baku by the opposition Azadlig election block in early October. The attempts were stopped by the police, which dispersed the demonstrators, using what would appear, as regards the two first rallies, to be disproportionate use of force in the process. In connection with each rally, a large number of people were arrested.
27. On 25 October the Constitutional Court of Azerbaijan decided that the right to **freedom of assembly** envisaged in Article 49 of the Constitution of Azerbaijan Republic can be subjected to restrictions provided by law and which are necessary in a democratic society.
28. The monitoring of compliance with the **Code of Conduct for the Media during Election Times** continued in October, facilitated by the Council of Europe. Compliance with the code increased significantly during the month of October. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of balance, in favour of one political side or the other, in the way the Azerbaijani media reports on the election campaign. Outside the scope of the monitoring of the Code, it can be observed that TV stations fulfil their legal obligations regarding equal free minimum airtime for different candidates, but outside strict legal compliance with air time for candidates, coverage remains unbalanced.

2. Council of Europe action

29. The Council of Europe Media Division organised a seminar in Baku from 8 to 9 October on **Media Professionalism** and the Code of Conduct for Azerbaijani Media During Elections. The purpose was to train journalists in how to further improve reporting standards and compliance with the Code.
30. As of 20 October a Council of Europe expert was deployed, within the framework of the Council of Europe Election Action Plan, to advise the **Central Election Commission (CEC)** on draft rules of procedure on how to deal with complaints related to the elections.
31. The Directorate General of Legal Affairs organised a conference, within the Council of Europe Election Action Plan, held 13 October, **on Corruption in the Political Process**. The conference brought together ten political parties for discussions which focused mostly on party financing.
32. As part of the Council of Europe Election Action plan for Azerbaijan, a **workshop for police officers** on freedom of assembly was held from 24 to 25 October.
33. A seminar on **Citizenship and the Prevention of Statelessness** was held from 26 to 27 October, organised in co-operation between the CoE (Directorate General of Legal Affairs) and the UNHCR.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

34. During October SRSG was working in close contact with the head of the ODIHR Long Term Observation mission and his staff. He briefed them in particular about

Council of Europe Election Action Plan activities with a relevance to the ODIHR mission.

35. In co-operation with the International Foundation of Elections Systems and the CEC, the SRSG's Office and Council of Europe Information Office **produced and disseminated posters**, explaining the procedure of using invisible ink to mark voters' fingers to the Azerbaijani electorate.

*
* *

Activities of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (IOCE)

Publications and translations:

Under the Election Action Plan Public Awareness Activities:

The IOCE Baku finished production and organised the broadcasting of video clips on voter education on TV and radio

The IOCE arranged further production of the book "Code of Good Electoral Practice" It arranged the publication and dissemination of voter education posters and dissemination of all publications related to the CoE Election Action Plan in Azerbaijan among all interested bodies both in the capital and the regions.

The IOCE Baku translated the Venice Commission OSCE/ODIHR final opinion on the Election Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The IOCE Baku translated into English the weekly reports of the Media Monitoring group initiated by the Council of Europe

The IOCE Baku translated the content of the voter education stickers from English into Azeri and did vice-versa after the Central Election Commission revision

The IOCE Baku translated and disseminated **20** Press Releases from the HQ in Strasbourg.

Seminars, conferences and other activities:

The IOCE Baku organised the press conference of the PACE pre-election mission on **13 October**. More than **35** representatives of different media structures attended. It organised exclusive interviews of pre-election mission for ANS TV, Public TV and ATV.

The IOCE Baku provided full support to the SRSG to conduct the media monitoring process and on a weekly basis organised press conferences for the Media Monitoring Group and disseminated the weekly reports.

The IOCE Baku organised the production and dissemination of the explanations of and case studies on the Code of Conduct of Azerbaijani Journalists during election campaigns prepared by the team leader of the Media Monitoring Group under recommendation and regulation of DGII Media Division.

The Acting Director participated in the DGII Media Division and Yeni Nesil Journalist Union joint seminar on the Media and Elections. The IOCE provided the seminar with full promotional materials and CoE books on Media and Elections in Azeri.

Sarajevo

1. Political and legislative developments

36. Whereas September had been marked by setback, stasis and brinkmanship (cf in particular the 11th Monitoring Report SG/Inf(2005)21), October somewhat surprisingly saw major political developments unfolding, one after the other, often in rapid succession. Such were the magnitude and impact of some of these developments that they attracted media coverage so widespread that it is probably necessary only to list them briefly here.
37. First, on 5 October, a volte-face by the Republika Srpska National Assembly – albeit following intense international pressures – finally allowed agreement on **police reform** and restructuring to be reached at all levels of government in BiH. This major breakthrough effectively lifted the last barrier to negotiation of the **Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)** with the European Union, and by 21 October, the European Commission (EC) recommended to the EU Council of Ministers the opening of these negotiations. It is important though to note that the EU simultaneously warned that lack of progress in key areas – cooperation with the ICTY, broadcasting legislation and implementation of police and broadcasting reform – might delay SAA negotiation and lead to their suspension.
38. On 6 October the **Law on the Public Broadcasting System** was adopted by the BiH House of Peoples, thus meeting another requirement of the EC Feasibility Study, though only after the outvoting of the Croat caucus. On the last day of the month, the BiH House of Peoples adopted the consequent Law on the public broadcasting Service, though again only after rejecting amendments proposed by the Croat caucus and designed to provide for these separate Channels, each broadcasting in a language of the Constituent Peoples.
39. Another welcome development concerned the Final Report of the Task Force for the **Implementation of the Conclusions of the Srebrenica Commission**, which was adopted by the RSNA on 30 September, and which was confirmed as satisfactory by the OHR. The Report lists over 17,000 individuals implicated in the Srebrenica Massacre, although these will not be made public pending treatment of the data by the BiH Prosecutor's Office.
40. Less welcome, however, were continuing difficulties in a number of **primary schools**, notably in Prozor/Rama, and a boycott of classes by Croat children in Zepce municipality which lasted almost a month before ending on 24 October. In this last instance, the return to school was only achieved after the government of Zenica-Doboj Canton agreed to offer (Croat) parents an option of an 8-year primary education, similar to that in neighbouring Croatia, but in contradiction of State Framework and Cantonal Laws on Primary and Secondary Education (specifying a 9-year cycle).

41. The government of the RS continued for much of the month to support the maintenance in post of the Dean of East Sarajevo University's Law Faculty. On 28 October, the High Representative's patience ran out, and he removed the **RS Minister of Education**. This same Minister had been a difficult and sometimes unwilling partner of the CoE: his dismissal may therefore give new impetus to the CoE's work, notably as concerns adoption and implementation of the history teaching guidelines.
42. The disappearance of former BiH Presidency member **Ante Jelavic**, on the run since 6 October having been sentenced to ten years in prison by the BiH State Court for embezzlement offences, constituted another undermining of the Rule of Law this month.
43. The second anniversary of the death of Alija Izetbegovic and some initiatives taken on this occasion, including a decision to rename Sarajevo International Airport in his honour, raised concerns of the PIC Steering Board and the High Representative was impelled to annul this decision. The OHR ultimately issued a decision laying out a formal legal process for the re-naming of public facilities having an international and inter-entity character.
44. Still no progress was registered on legislation to establish a single **Ombudsman institution** at State level, despite CoE insistence on this post-accession commitment, and strong support from other international partners, especially the OSCE. After 18 months of discussions amongst the principal political parties, and despite a draft Law prepared by the State Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees which meets international requirements, personal interests and wrangles over the equality of the three Constituent Peoples continue to dog this key piece of legislation.
45. The **HDZ** (Croatian Democratic Union) began disciplinary proceedings against three of the senior members, including the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of BiH and member of PACE delegation.

2. Council of Europe action

46. From 16 to 20 October the Rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE paid an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The rapporteurs, Mr Kimmo Sasi and Ms Neira Shakhtakhtinskaya, held talks with the entity and state level officials, focusing on post accession commitments and present political situation in BiH.
47. On 30 September and 1 October in the Brcko In-Service Teacher Training Centre, **6th seminar for the Children's Rights multipliers** took place. Participants received their assignment for final certification due in April 2006. (CEAD 13076). This core group of multipliers will be used in the future CoE EDC projects in the region. On 19 October, at the **2nd Meeting of the Foreign Languages Working Group**, representatives of the Goethe Institute and the French Embassy agreed to pool resources and train teachers together, under the umbrella of the CoE. The British Council and Russian Embassy are expected to join the initiative. This joint effort is expected to be launched on 24 January 2006 in Mostar, possibly at the Mostar Gymnasium. On 24 and 25 October, at a seminar opened by the Deputy Federation Minister of Education and Science, 15 secondary school history teachers met to

discuss **“The use of interactive methods in teaching history in secondary and upper-secondary schools as part of intercultural dialogue”**. (CEAD 13141).

48. On 20 October, the **prison** staff training team and project manager met with stakeholder prison governors to finalise the text of the first ever training manual for the front line prison officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CEAD 12399). The manual will be distributed in November. On 26 and 27 October with a view to strengthening cooperation with the recently-created department Sector for execution of criminal sanctions within the State Ministry of Justice, the SRSG, Assistant Minister and project development manager visited Zenica and Foca prisons, being the largest and only closed-type prisons in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
49. On 18 October, in Banja Luka, the CIDA-financed Judicial Training Centre project team met with JTC directors to define the future project activities (CEAD 9659).
50. On 21 and 22 Oct, the third meeting with the three consultants within the PACO Impact Pilot Activity for Bosnia and Herzegovina advising on the development of the Manual on the Practical Tools and Guidelines on Criminal Proceedings against Corruption Related Offences was held. (CEAD 9378). On 26 October the Local Project Officer organised a meeting with the representatives of the Working Group on Financial Investigations within CARDS POLICE Regional Project at which the Guidelines for preparing the Training manual and Program of training on financial investigations were handed over to the Working Group members. Future project activities were also discussed. The Legal Department of OHR was represented in order to discuss the possibilities for drafting the amendments / separate law on confiscation from proceeds from crime.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

51. The SRSG opened a meeting with the Constitutional Affairs Commission of the FBiH parliament and CoE experts concerning local government reform, attended a conference organised by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, opened a regional Crime Colloquium organised by DGI and attended events connected with the 10th anniversary of Dayton organised by the USA in Neum on 15 and 16 October. He also met with representatives of UNICEF and OSCE and made the opening speech at a regional seminar of the Helsinki Committee.

Tbilisi

1. Political and Legislative Developments

52. Prime Minister Zurab Nogaideli announced late on 19 October that he **dismissed Foreign Minister** Salome Zourabichvili. Gela Bezhuashvili, the Secretary of the National Security Council, was appointed as Georgia's new Foreign Minister on 20 October. On 20 October ex-Foreign Minister **Salome Zourabichvili** said that she does not intend to join any political party, however confirmed her intentions **to run in parliamentary elections planned for 2008**.
53. The **Georgian Parliament ratified, with a 125-5 vote, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** on 13 October. Ratification of this document was part of Georgia's commitment undertaken while joining the Council of Europe in 1999. The Georgian authorities made a reservation according to which they will not be responsible for implementing provisions of the Convention on the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.
54. On 11 October the Georgian Parliament approved unanimously, with a 143-0 vote, a **resolution** which instructs the Georgian government to take measures to prepare for the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from the South Ossetia before 2006 and Abkhazia before July 2006 if the performance of the peacekeeping forces does not improve before February 2006 and July 2006 in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, respectively.
55. On 1 October **by-elections** were organised in five constituencies to fill five majoritarian single-mandate seats in the Parliament. Several days later the CEC confirmed the victory of the National Movement's candidates.
56. A new 17-member **opposition parliamentary faction – the Democratic Front - was set up** on 24 October. The new faction unites 8 parliamentarians from the Conservative Party and 6 lawmakers from the Republican Party, three non-partisan MPs.
57. The **Parliament of breakaway Abkhazia adopted a law on citizenship** on 24 October with its third and final reading, the Abkhaz news agency Apsnipress reported. According to the draft law, the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia are: ethnic Abkhaz and persons who have been permanently living in Abkhazia for no less than five years. Citizens of Abkhazia can simultaneously be citizens of the Russian Federation alone. These provisions serve to discriminate against almost all ethnic Georgians and persons of other nationalities who left Abkhazia during or after the end of the conflict in Abkhazia.

2. Council of Europe action

58. **The Director General of Political Affairs** of the Council of Europe paid a visit to Georgia from 21 to 22 October. The Director General of Political Affairs met President Mikhail Saakashvili, Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili, Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament Mikheil Machavariani and the Georgian delegation to

the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, as well as Permanent Representative of Georgia to the Council of Europe Zurab Tchiaberashvili. The programme also included meetings with the Head of the OSCE Mission Roy Reeve and the Deputy Head of the European Delegation to Georgia and Armenia Jacques Vantomme and UN. He also took part in a Seminar organised by the Tbilisi School of Political Studies in Bakhuriani.

59. On 27 October meeting was held with **Mr Mikheil Machavariani, Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and Mr Vano Khukhunaishvili MP**. The topic of discussion mainly touched the issues of elections of local Sakrebulo and Mayors.
60. SRSG and head of European Centre for Minority Issues held a **meeting with MP Giga Bokeria**. The main topics of discussion were law on repatriation and law on restitution.
61. On 12 October SRSG held a **meeting with Mr Kote Korkelia, Deputy Minister of Justice** where they discussed issues related to the penitentiary reform.
62. An **information seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** was held in Tbilisi on 19 October. The seminar was organised by the Council of Europe (DGI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. The aim of this event was to meet the local authorities in charge and to provide information on the Charter. SRSG gave the opening speech.
63. A **national workshop on the decentralisation strategy** of Georgia was held in Tbilisi on 19-20 October. The workshop was organised by the Council of Europe (DGI) in cooperation with the Parliament of Georgia. SRSG attended the meeting and made comments regarding ongoing decentralisation.
64. SRSG met the head of **NGO Public Movement – Multinational Georgia**, Mr Arnold Stepanian, on 24 October; they discussed possible future cooperation in the field of awareness raising concerning the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
65. On 26 October SRSG held a meeting with the director of **European Centre for Minority Issues**, Mr Tom Trier. Plans of future cooperation in the field of minorities were discussed.

3. Other action/coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

66. On 26 October SRSG held a meeting with **EU Troika delegation members**, who were on a two-day mission in Georgia. SRSG briefed the delegation about the CoE activities in Georgia, in particular about the fulfilment of commitments and obligations, ratification of conventions, ongoing territorial and administrative reform, judicial and penitentiary reform, and cooperation with Georgian authorities in the fight against corruption.
67. On 19 October SRSG met with **Ambassador Roy Reeve, Head of OSCE Mission to Georgia**, where they discussed the problems concerning South Ossetian conflict zone.

68. On 25 October SRSB met with the **representative of the European Commission Delegation** to discuss possible future cooperation in the field of local self-government.
69. On 28 October SRSB met with **Ms Marie-Carin von Gumpenberg, OSCE** concerning elections and organisational aspects.

*
* *

Activities of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (IOCE)

Seminars, conferences and other activities:

The IOCE presented CoE materials at a Presentation of the **Public Awareness Campaign on Judicial Reform** organised by the American Bar Association on 3 October.

Beginning 3 October, the IO is providing support to the Long-term training course on “Human Rights and Civil Society in Schools”, organised by the Centre of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law “Themides”, including provision of CoE materials.

An art exhibition “A Little Bit about Georgia”, was organised by the IOCE and National Museum of Georgia from 6 to 9 October, within the EHD 2005. The exhibition presents a collection of photo and fine art works of three young artists dedicated to different aspects of Georgia’s cultural heritage.

On 13 and 14 October, a Regional Parliamentary **Seminar on Gender Equality** in the South Caucasus, was organised by PACE and the Parliament of Georgia in co-operation with the IOCE.

The IOCE gave **logistical, technical and information support** to the Information Seminar on “The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” organised by DG I in Tbilisi on 19 October with participants from the respective ministries, NGOs and international organisations, and to an evaluation meeting organised on 21 and 22 October by DG IV (Youth Directorate) on the June 2005 long term training course for the Caucasus held in Ankara.

For the National Workshop on the Decentralisation Strategy of Georgia with Specific Focus on Status and Training of Local Government Officials, Administrative Territorial Reform and Revision of Tbilisi Law and Election Code, organised by the Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy (DG I) in cooperation with the Parliament of Georgia, 19-20 October, the IOCE provided **assistance on technical issues and information coverage**.

Chisinau

1. Political and Legislative Developments

70. The **Moldovan delegation at the October PACE session** was headed by Speaker of the Parliament Mr Lupu. Ms Postoico, vice-speaker of Moldovan Parliament, was elected vice-chairman of PACE. No representative from the "Our Moldova Alliance" (AMN) faction took part in the session.
71. On 3 October, the EU Council approved the decision to send an **EU mission to monitor the Moldovan-Ukrainian frontier**, including the Transnistrian segment, starting on 1 December.
72. On 27-28 October, the **Transnistrian settlement negotiations**, which were interrupted in August 2004, were re-started. They were held in Chisinau and Tiraspol, for the first time in the enlarged 5+2 Format (with EU and US as attending as observers).
73. On 15 October in Moscow, officials from the presidential administration and others hosted a "**Forum on Democracy and Multiculturalism in the Euro-East.**" The participants included representatives of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, and Karabakh, activists of pro-Russia parties and associations from several post-Soviet countries.
74. On 13 October, 54 PCRM deputies voted for the lifting of the immunity of **Mr Urechean** and two other AMN MPs.
75. On 4 October, ECHR decisions in the cases of *Sarban vs. Moldova* and *Becciev vs. Moldova* were made public. Moldova lost both cases. On 12 October, after repeated requests from his lawyer, Mr Sarban was released from solitary confinement and put under house arrest. On 11 October, ECHR made public its decision in the case *Julia Savitchi vs Moldova*, and on 18 October, the judgment in the case of *Daniliuc vs. Moldova*. Moldova also lost these cases.
76. On 7 October, T. Klimenko, daughter of the leader of the *Ravnopravie* political party, V. Klimenko, was detained by the **Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption** (CCCEC). She is accused of very large embezzlement in her business. She was released on 17 October. On 12 October, the head of Victoriabank, Mr Victor Turcanu, was arrested by CCCEC. Turcanu is accused of being involved in a bribe-taking attempt. He was released on 22 October. On 19 October, Mr Formuzal, Mayor of Ciadir-Lunga, was arrested. The same evening, upon a decision of the Court of Appeals, he was released.
77. On 18 October, the **Coordinating Council of the Audiovisual (CCA)** decided to cancel the license of the Analytic Media Group (AMG) to re-broadcast the Russian 1st TV channel and granted it to the newly created Media Satelit SRL. The chairman of the "1st Channel in Moldova" considers the CCA decision illegal, claiming that he holds the exclusive rebroadcast right until 2010. Media Satelit started re-broadcasting ORT on 20 October, without the locally produced news programme.

78. On 27 October, Mr Braghis and 6 other deputies from “Alliance Our Moldova” left the faction. 30 members of the AMN National Political Board left the party.
79. On 21 October, Parliament adopted the Law on preventing and combating **trafficking in human beings**.
80. On 27 October, state distinctions were awarded to a group of employees of **Teleradio-Moldova** (TRM). Mr Telescu, head of TRM, was awarded the *Labour Glory Order* for special merits in developing the national radio broadcasting, substantial contribution to propagating spiritual and moral values as well as for high professionalism.

2. Council of Europe action

81. On 3-7 October, a study visit to the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau of Latvia was conducted for a group of 14 policemen and staff of the Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption as well as Moldovan judges and prosecutors (PACO, CEAD 13066).
82. On 17-21 October, a training workshop was held for Lawyers-trainers acting as human rights resource persons for the Bar Association, on the European Convention on Human Rights. The local trainers will later train Moldovan lawyers on how to lodge an application with the European Court of Human Rights (JP, CEAD 6690).
83. On 19-20 October, an expert meeting took place on the strategy and draft law on Legal Aid, (2nd meeting of the working group on the Bar Association) with Council of Europe experts, the Ministry of Justice and SOROS (JP, CEAD 12097).
84. On 24 October, the series of cascade trainings for 100 Judges and 100 Prosecutors in the fight against corruption has commenced. Two 2-day seminars are held per week until 25 November. The national Trainers had been trained in September. (JP, CEAD 7791)
85. On 26-27 October, the 1st Steering Group Meeting on the development of a National Training Strategy and a Best Practice programme for local government in Moldova took place in Chisinau (JP, CEAD 7816).
86. On 27-28 October, a working meeting to discuss the amended draft law on the National Institute of Justice, its budget and curriculum was held with Council of Europe Experts and representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Judiciary and other stakeholders (JP, CEAD 11760).

3. Other action/ coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

87. On 4 October, Representatives of the British and US Embassies as well as OSCE and CoE met with the two (US-financed) Trainers who are currently training staff in the newsroom at the national TV channel **Moldova-1** for a 4-month period.

88. On 11 October, a SRSG representative attended the International Conference "**Alternatives to Institutionalisation**", organised by "HUMANITAS" and Motivation Association.
89. On 14 October, SRSG addressed the International Conference "**Human Rights and Democracy**" organised by the Union of Journalists, Greece Public Law Center, State University of RM, TI.

*
* *

Activities of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (IOCE)

Publications and Translations:

IOCE Bulletin 2/2005

- Brochure "Fundamental principles on the status of nongovernmental organisations in Europe and explanatory report"
- Brochure "Urban crime prevention: a guide for local authorities"
- Leaflet "Young people building Europe: Participation, peace and human dignity"
- European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and Explanatory Memorandum

The IOCE translated into Moldovan and put at the disposal of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova *PACE Resolution 1465 (2005) and PACE Recommendation 1721 (2005) on functioning of democratic institutions in Moldova.*

Seminars, conferences and other activities:

At the request of the Directorate of Youth and Sport, the IOCE provided **detailed information on the up-coming Training Course for young leaders**, to be organised by the Council of Europe in the framework of the Democratic Leadership Programme (5-10 December 2005) to Youth NGOs, associations and other organisations/structures working in the youth domain, including Transnistrian ones.

The IOCE Director participated in the National Conference "**Alternatives to Institutionalisation**" organised by the Association Motivation and the Association for People with Disabilities, HUMANITAS.

On 14 October, the IOCE Director participated in the International Conference "Human Rights and Democracy", organised by the Jurists Union in Moldova, Moldovan State University and Transparency International-Moldova.

On 28 October, the IOCE organised an informative lesson for 18 high school children from Stefan Voda town on the **European Year of Citizenship through Education**, providing them with CoE documents on the subject.

The IOCE Director met with the Counsellor of the Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova **to discuss plans for a seminar on "Principles of Co-operation**

between Social Society and Public Administration in Moldova” to be held in Chisinau on 10-11 November.

Belgrade

1. Political and legislative developments

90. On 10 October the **EU decided to begin negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement**. On the side of Serbia and Montenegro, negotiations will be conducted by three teams, a factor which is already *per se* an indicator of the complexity of the process. Serbian officials indicated that negotiations could be finished in a year's time, with the first meeting being held in Belgrade on 7 November.
91. As the **start of the talks on the status of Kosovo** approaches, public debates on the issue gain momentum: the decision by the Hague Tribunal to allow Haradinaj to take part in politics provoked fierce reactions in Serbia; the statement by the President of Slovenia on the possibility for the independence of Kosovo caused a diplomatic incident ending with cancellation of his visit to Serbia and Montenegro; finally, questions on the existence of a common position on Kosovo by the Serbian Authorities and about the composition of the negotiation team representing Serbia are debated by the public and media almost daily.
92. Nine persons suspected of having committed **war crimes in Kosovo** were taken into custody on 26 October, including, apparently, six employees of the Ministry of Interior. The investigation in this case started when a mass grave site was discovered near Belgrade with the remains of murdered civilians from the Kosovo village of Suva Reka.
93. Following **the European Parliament's resolution on inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina**, a group of state officials and NGO activists discussed the minorities' situation at a hearing in Brussels. On that occasion Minister Ljajic denied accusations of significant violation of minority rights. The Hungarian minority council called for the territorial autonomy of nine municipalities in the northern part of Vojvodina.
94. After a three-year long drafting process, **the law on police** is likely to be adopted at the beginning of November. Prior to this, the Belgrade Office attended a meeting with the Minister of Interior and his associates to discuss the CoE comments on the draft law on Police. The Minister showed readiness to take into consideration the CoE comments. The CoE Office, OSCE and EU representatives took part also in a meeting organised by the European Integration Committee of the Assembly of Serbia on the same subject.
95. **The new State Union Minister of Defence** is Zoran Stankovic, the former Director of the Military Medical Academy.

2. Council of Europe action

96. On 5 October, the CoE (DGI) in cooperation with the Ministry of International Economic Relations of Serbia, organised a working Seminar on the **Madrid Outline Convention** on Transfrontier Cooperation in Belgrade. The aim was to introduce the

convention to the state authorities and institutions, before its ratification (CEAD 11248).

97. On 10 October, the SRSG opened the follow-up Seminar on the implementation of the **Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities**, in Serbia. The event was co-organised by the CoE, Secretariat of the FCNM, and the State Union Ministry of Human and Minority rights, and was attended by a number of NGOs and the Minority Council (CEAD 13012).
98. The Belgrade Office participated in the “**Conference on Safeguarding free speech and the right to information: media in times of crisis, South Eastern Europe**” in Strasbourg (CEAD 12499).
99. A meeting with the Government Agent of Serbia and Montenegro before the European Court of Human Rights was held on 19 October to discuss possible CoE assistance to the Government Agent’s office.
100. The European conference on **Palliative Care**, co-organised by Council of Europe (DGIII) and the Ministry of Health of Serbia, took place in Belgrade on 20-21 October.
101. The Deputy Minister of Justice discussed with the CoE (DG I) the National Strategy for the Reform of Judiciary, the model law on training of judges and prosecutors as well as the so-called “judicial package”.
102. On 20 October, the SRSG participated in the opening session of a two-day conference focusing on the role of the institution of the Ombudsperson in multi-ethnic societies, which was held in Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro with the support of the CoE and OSCE.
103. The official presentation of **the CoE book "European Court of Human Rights - Selected Judgements"** was held in the Belgrade Office, with the participation of representatives of the judiciary, Ministry of Justice, Judicial Training Centre, international organisations and NGOs.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

104. The Director of Political Advice and Co-operation, DGPA, contributed to the conference “Serbia – Five years after” which was organised by the **Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence** and Balkan Trust for Democracy on 4-5 October. The event marked the fifth anniversary of the start of the democratic changes in Serbia.
105. On 20 October, CoE office took a part in a Conference on the Draft Law on the Civil Service organised by the European Bureau of Conscientious Objection.
106. The CoE Office attended a meeting with the **European Integration Committee** of the National Assembly of Serbia, held in the OSCE premises. The Committee is raising funds in order to recruit national experts to support the European integration work of the Assembly.

107. To contribute to the **UN Day**, the SRSG attended, as a keynote speaker, a roundtable organised by UNDP at the Faculty of Political Science to promote the concept of multiculturalism in Serbia. The SRSG met also with Mr Anders Pedersen of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

108. The CoE Office participated in a round table on “Voivodina as a European Region” which was organised by the Assembly of the Province on 25 October in Novi Sad.

Podgorica

1. Political and legal developments

109. Within the final preparations for the forthcoming negotiation for the **Association and Stabilisation Agreement** with the EU, the Government at its session on 6 October adopted the document “Basic positions for Negotiation” entrusting concrete tasks to the Negotiation Team.
110. The issue of qualified majority for validation of results of the **possible Referendum** concerning the future status mobilised political debate, moving from denying the consensual legitimacy for adoption of the existing Law on Referendum to expressing preparedness to accept the highest standards and experiences of the European referendum democracy.
111. The Serbian People’s Party on 30 October proposed to the other opposition actors in favour of preserving the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro that they sign a Binding Act for prevention of direct or indirect negotiation with the ruling coalition about the rules for holding of the announced Referendum. The initiative was welcomed by the People’s Party and the Democratic Serbian Party.
112. The **malfunctioning of democratic institutions** at local level continues to cause early local elections: this time to be held in the municipality of Cetinje on 10 December. Following the proposal of the Ministry of Justice, the Government also took the decision for termination of the mandates of locally elected representatives of the Municipal Assembly of Mojkovac on 27 October.
113. Law on Territorial Organisation was approved by the Government at its session held on 20 October. The Parliament adopted the Law on the Capital on 27 October.
114. The Parliament elected Mr Jusuf Kalamperovic as the new Minister of Interior on 25 October, Mr Ratko Vukotic President of the Supreme Court on 12 October and Mr Veselin Veljovic Head of Police on 13 October.
115. The State Public Prosecutor on 18 October initiated **investigation procedure for war crimes** against six former high police officers. The case concerns violation of the rules of international law during armed conflict - the deportation of 166 persons to the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, of which 86 citizens of Bosniak origin were later murdered.
116. To be followed next month: the continuation of the Autumn Session of the Parliament-presentation of the Yearly Report of the Supreme State Prosecutor and adoption of the Law on Free Access to Information.

2. Council of Europe action

117. Under the Pilot Activity Strengthening of the institutional, legal and technical capacity of the Department of Organised Crime at the Office of the Special Prosecutor, **the Report: Assessment and Recommendation Regarding the**

Strengthening of the Prosecutorial Services was delivered to the competent authorities on 20 October.

118. Written analyses and recommendations on **the Government Decision on Establishing the Coordination Board for Monitoring the reforms of local self government** were handed to the Coordinator of the Ministry of Justice Working Group on 26 October. An expert meeting on «**Criteria for fiscal equalisation**» will be organised on 24 November .

119. Two expert appraisals on the **Draft Law on Access to Secret Files** were delivered to the Working Group of the Ministry of Interior on 18 October. These aim to facilitate the process of finalisation and adoption of this piece of legislation and should further enhance the democratisation of society and effectuate the process of facing the past. A **joint CoE/OSCE Expert meeting** for finalisation of the Draft could be organised in early December. (CEAD 10384)

120. An expert opinion on the **Draft Law on Solicitors** was provided to the Ministry of Justice on 21 October, aiming to introduce **the European standards to legal professionals**. Public debate will be supported by the organisation of a Round Table on 23 November to exchange views and ensure final recommendations to complete the drafting phase. (CEAD 12741)

121. The Expert's comments on the **Family Law** were sent to the Ministry of Justice on 27 October. The Office may also support the organisation of an Expert Meeting in cooperation with the Save the Children Office in mid-November.

3. Other action / coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

122. Under the framework of the PACO Impact Project and in cooperation with the **UNDP Office in Podgorica**, a Conference on Anti-Corruption (19 October) reviewed the progress reached in the institutional and operational efforts in combating corruption. It also accelerated the establishment of **the Inter-ministerial working group to draft Anti-corruption Matrix Action Plan**. The PACO Impact Work Plan will encompass Expert assistance and public debate on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Financing of Political Parties, Law on Criminal Liability of Legal Entities and the Rules of Procedure of Public Prosecutor. (CEAD 9362, PACO Impact.)

123. Presentation and Round Table Discussion on **Media Monitoring of Violations of the Code of Conduct in the Printed Media** was organised **in cooperation with the OSCE Office in Podgorica** on 26 October. The Steering Monitoring Mechanism to follow implementation of the Code of Conduct should be established within the Self-regulatory Body. A Conference on Standards for Media Professionals could also be conducted in cooperation with the OSCE and the Union of Independent Electronic Media from 1 to 2 December.

124. A **joint CoE/OSCE meeting with the Minister for Protection of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups**, Mr Gzim Hajdinaga, took place on 27 October to discuss further co-operation with both organisations to facilitate the adoption of the **Law for Protection of National Minorities**. The completed draft should be sent to

the CoE/OSCE Offices for final Expert review by mid-November, which would be followed by an Expert meeting in early December or in January 2006.

125. A meeting took place with Ms Regina De Domenicis, representative of the EAR, on 26 October to complete **the new Joint CoE/EAR Programme on Foundation of Probation Service**. This aims to assist the Montenegrin authorities in aligning the normative framework with European standards in the field of execution of criminal sanctions and setting up adequate institutions for implementation of **alternative imprisonment measures**.

Pristina

1. Political and legislative developments

126. The UN Security Council has examined the **comprehensive report on Kosovo**, presented by K. Eide, Special Envoy of the UN SG. The Report gives an objective vision of the situation, putting emphasis on shortcomings: freedom of movement, returns and minority rights. At the same time it recommends starting negotiations without delay, but stressing that Implementation of Standards should be tightly linked with the process.
127. Kofi Annan recommended the start of the negotiation process on Kosovo's future status. Former President of Finland, Mr Martti Ahtisaari, was appointed UN Special Envoy to lead these talks. His first visit to the region is expected by mid-November.
128. In the light of forthcoming talks, diplomatic activity in Kosovo has significantly increased: Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Finland, Slovenia, Minister of Justice of Sweden, US Under-Secretary of State N. Burns, as well as 24 Permanent Representatives of member States of the OSCE have visited Pristina.
129. One of Kosovo's widest political parties - PDK - submitted to the Assembly a Draft Resolution which would reiterate Kosovo people's strong will for independence. The Resolution was not adopted and this creates a lively tension between the forces in power and opposition. No negotiation platform has been elaborated. All political forces agree on one point - total independence should not be negotiated. This position utterly opposes official Belgrade's stand concerning Kosovo – more than autonomy, less than independence.
130. Two new Laws were adopted by the Assembly and approved by the SRSG –Law on Wine and Law on Social and Family Services.
131. **UNMIK** is preparing post-talks downsizing: one of four Pillars of UN Administration - Pillar II Civil Administration - has been transformed into a Department. Moreover, despite K. Eide's recommendation not to hurry with transfer of competencies in the field of Security and Justice, establishment of the two Ministries is planned before the end of the year.
132. **Opposition to any negotiation on independence** has significantly increased in the approach of the talks. The movement "Vetevendosje" (self-determination) has carried out an action, adding to the letters UN on official cars F and D, forming thus FUND ("the END" in Albanian). The National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKCK) has warned local authorities not to negotiate independence, otherwise they threaten to combat traitors.

2. Council of Europe action

133. A delegation of the **Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** carried out a 5-day mission in Kosovo, in order to evaluate the situation concerning national minorities.

134. A training of trainers on human rights was held in Pristina, as well as a seminar on human rights for media representatives.

135. The Co-ordinator of the project for support of **Ombudsperson's Institution** of Kosovo held a number of meetings, visited field offices and gave the first monthly lecture for the Kosovo Protection Corps in the Human Rights Centre of Pristina University.

3. Other action/Coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

136. The Head of Office and the Deputy attended UNMIK-organised meetings of **Working Groups** on Rule of Law, on Good Governance and on Democratisation, Human Rights and Minority Issues. At the last meeting it was decided that the CoE should chair the sub-group on Cultural Heritage. The purpose of these Working Groups is to coordinate work of the international community in the post-talks period.

137. The Head of Office attended a meeting of **Friends of the Office of the Prime Minister** held under the auspices of OSCE.

138. The Office organised a meeting between representatives of Liaison Offices and a delegation of Europa Nostra, on visit in Kosovo.

139. The **Reconstruction Implementation Commission** has launched two tenders for protection and rehabilitation works of Orthodox sites destroyed in March 2004. Work on 11 sites has already started, 19 others will follow beginning of November.

4. General Security Situation

140. During the past few weeks there were several incidents aimed mainly against UNMIK: one UN car was planted with an explosive device, but discovered and defused in time. Another UN car was blown up in the region of Kacanik, no casualties being reported.

141. Illegal armed groups made an appearance in different regions of Kosovo, trying to control traffic on roads and causing major concern among population.

142. Three members of MUP, Serbian Police, were arrested in Kosovo for illegal crossing of border and detention of arms.

Skopje

1. Political and legislative developments

143. At the start of the month, the President Branko Crvenkovski, Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski and Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Sekerinska jointly assessed as a positive signal the European decision to start talks with Turkey and Croatia: and considered that the **enlargement process** can continue.

144. Speaking about **Kosovo**, on 25 October, President Crvenkovski stated “for us as a country more important than the status are the guarantees that the rule of law will prevail in Kosovo and that the institutions of the system will really function“. The Prime Minister has requested border demarcation to be settled before the talks on status end. Recently, during an official visit to Skopje, the Albanian Prime Minister Berisha stated that “Status talks should be based on the principle of respecting the existing borders in the Balkans, including the Kosovo ones”.

145. On 26 October, the Ministers of Education and of Finances reached an agreement with the President of the National Association of Municipalities (**ZELS**) to transfer long-awaited funds to all 84 municipalities. This transfer amounts to the local taxes collected by the municipalities in 2004 and would allow municipalities to meet the concerns expressed by mayors on the maintenance and heating of schools.

146. On 15 October, Trifun Kostovski, **Mayor of Skopje**, publicly did not rule out the creation of a new political party. The new mayor has been elected as an independent candidate although with the support of opposition parties.

147. On 24 October, **Mr Tito Petkovski**, prominent member of the ruling party SDSM, former Speaker of the Parliament and presidential candidate in 2004, confirmed he would leave the party and create a new party. Tito Petkovski has already distanced himself from the mainstream line of SDSM over the past three years.

148. Four days later, Mrs Ljilana Popovska, a leading MP of the Liberal-Democratic Party, one of the members of the ruling coalition, decided to leave the party and become an independent. There are expectations that Mrs Ljilana Popovska could join the new party soon to be created by Tito Petkovski.

149. Justice Minister Mrs Mladenovska-Gjorgievska attended the 64th plenary session of the **Venice Commission** on 19 October, where the Opinion on the draft constitutional amendments on judiciary was adopted. The Minister of Justice has publicly announced that the most controversial amendment on a probationary period for a new judge has been finally scrapped from the version, to be sent to the parliamentary procedure.

2. Council of Europe action

150. A workshop on the **follow-up on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** was organised in Skopje on 3 October. The objective was to take stock of the progress in the implementation of the

Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers, adopted on 15 June 2005 in the main areas of inter-ethnic dialogue, the use of minority languages and their participation in public affairs.

151. On 26 October, the Resident Expert met Justice Renate Winter, the European team leader for the draft legislation on the **Academy for Judges and Prosecutors** at the completion of her mandate to outline priorities and pending issues, such as the funding and implementation of the law, due to be adopted before the end of the year. The Academy is planned to be opened by January 2006.
152. From 3 to 5 October, the Head of the **Money Laundering Prevention Directorate** (MLPD), the Head of the International Co-operation Department and the representative of the MOLI-MK project visited the Bulgarian Financial Intelligence Unit, to learn about its working procedures and organisation.
153. On 28 October, the Steering Group of the MOLI-MK project met with experts from EUROJUST and agreed that they will work together with the Public Prosecutor and legal specialists on the drafting of a Law on Asset Confiscation.
154. On 6-7 October, a preparatory meeting for the “First Speaking Day” on the issue of **Social Security** between Serbia and Montenegro and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” took place in Belgrade.
155. At the Second Briefing meeting on the Social Security Support Programme, held in Strasbourg on 26 October, a progress report was delivered on the first year of operation, as well as on the involvement of the national authorities.
156. The Resident Expert of the Council of Europe and a representative of the Information Office met with the **Minister of Justice** to discuss the vote on Constitutional amendments on the judiciary, the current review of the election legislation and issues related to the use of languages, religious communities and reform of the penitentiary system. At the meeting, the Minister stated that the draft text of the Constitutional Amendments should be submitted to the Parliament at the beginning of November after the session of the Venice Commission; the High Judicial Council will be composed of 15 members chaired by the President of the Supreme Court.

3. Other action/coordination and cooperation with partner organisations

157. A seminar was organised by the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population in cooperation with the MARRI Centre in Skopje on 17 October on the **situation of refugees and displaced persons** in the region of the Stability Pact for the South-East Europe. Parliamentarians from the region, representatives of UNHCR, ICRC, as well as delegates of NGOs took part in the event.
158. On 25 October, the Resident Expert participated in an evaluation session related to the training seminars for lawyers on Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights held in close cooperation with OSCE. The session is part of a series of decentralised seminars in the wrapping-up phase of the **joint programme the Council of Europe and OSCE initiated in 2004**.

159. Between 18 and 26 October, the Resident Expert held several meetings with the **European Commission Delegation** experts on public administration, as well as the respective **European Agency for Reconstruction** programme managers for Public Administration Reform, Justice, Civil Society and Education. The objective was to explore further co-operation within joint programmes for 2006-2007. The penitentiary reform appears to be a substantial part for common action.

*
* *

Activities of the Information Office of the Council of Europe (IOCE)

Publications and translations:

For two **Evaluation Meetings on trainings for lawyers** on selected articles of the ECHR organised by the Council of Europe, OSCE and the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, held in Skopje on 25 and 28 October, the Information Office in Skopje distributed copies of the ECHR, Human Rights Handbooks on articles 3, 5 and 6, copies of extracts from a leading book on the case-law of the ECHR, application forms for launching complaints, Human Rights bulletins and other materials in the local language.

The IOCE organised the translation and distribution of copies of the Recommendations contained in the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**, adopted on 27 May 2004, and the corresponding Resolution of the Committee of Ministers Res(CMN) 2005 in the official language of the country and in six other minority languages.

Seminars, conferences and other activities:

The IOCE Skopje provided support for the organisation of a **follow-up meeting on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**, which took place on 3 October as part of the dialogue between the Government and CoE Advisory Committee and as a forum for dialogue between the Government and the civil sector. The Office also provided translation of the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention and the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers in six local languages.