



■ Photo: French Ambassador, Maryse Daviet and Minister of Public Works and Transport, Sokol Olldashi, signing the agreement to fund a study on upgrading Designing and Implementation Technical Standards and technical norms in relation to projects in the Water Supply and Sewage Sector

French Government supports updating the national standards in Water Supply and Sewage Sector in Albania

In 2010, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport asked the French Government to provide expertise in order to update national standards and to align them with EU standards. In the context of the development of economic relations between France and Albania, an agreement was concluded between the French Ministries of Economy and Finance and Albanian Ministry of Public Works and Transport on 2 February 2011. According to this Agreement, Albania is awarded a grant of 430,000 Euros to fund a study on upgrading *Designing and Implementation Technical Standards and technical norms in relation to projects in the Water Supply and Sewage Sector*. This Project includes all elements of a water supply scheme such as: drinking water sources, treatment, distribution; collection and treatment of contaminated water; small and large installments for the treatment

of contaminated sewage water, including equipment, materials, manner of completion of works and monitoring. The Agreement was signed in the presence of the French Ambassador, Maryse Daviet, the Minister of Public Works and Transport, Sokol Olldashi, and respective Ministry representatives from both sides. During the ceremony, Minister Olldashi said that: "This is a very important Agreement for us in two aspects: First, we have an investment of the French Government in the water sector, which is the first of its kind in this sector. Second, this Agreement shall improve the existing technical standards, which date back from 1974, and taking into account the fast increase in the funding for the water supply and sewage sector and what we have planned for the next four or five years, improvement of these already outdated standards becomes indispensable." He also thanked

the French Government for the assistance provided in this sector to the French Ambassador, Maryse Daviet, for her personal commitment towards the Agreement. In her speech, the French Ambassador, Maryse Daviet said "This is a very important Agreement, which includes all disciplines in the water sector. Thanks to this Project, Albania shall have the opportunity to build a modern system in the water sector, in line with all European standards, which will benefit all Albanian citizens." The study will be implemented by the International Water Company (www.oieau.fr) based in Sofia, in cooperation with the French group SAUR (www.saur.com/en). Both organizations are known in France and abroad for their extensive experience in water management. The project will benefit all Albanian citizens as it should improve and harmonize the quality of infrastructures in the water sector.

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Photo: Mr. Niklas Mattsson gets awarded "For the special contribution and significant support given to the Albanian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, in the framework of Swedish International Development Agency – Sida - financed projects in Albania".

Ministry of Environment Awards the Representative of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for his Special contribution in the Implementation of Common Projects

Mr. Niklas Mattsson, First Secretary at the Embassy of Sweden, Tirana and Programme Officer, working on Natural Resources and Environment ended his mission in Albania at the end of February. On this occasion, Minister of Environment, Forestry and Administration of Waters, Fatmir Mediu, organised an event with all active donors invited at the Ministry of Environment. During this ceremony Mr. Mattsson was awarded *For the special contribution and significant support given to the Albanian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, in the framework of Swedish International Development Agency – Sida - financed projects in Albania*. Minister Mediu thanked him for his commitment and co-operation in the compilation and the implementation of projects that the Ministry of Environment was carrying out with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Mr. Mattsson's contribution also included the donor focal point role for the Environment Sector Working Group and the assistance offered in drafting the operational plan that will be the basis for establishing a Sector Wide Approach in the Environment sector. Minister Mediu said that Mr. Mattsson was one of the most knowledgeable and engaged per-

sons working for the implementation of common objectives, wishing him the best of luck on his next posting in Rome.

Annual Review of Swedish Development Programme in Albania

The Annual Review of the Swedish Development Programme in Albania was held on 23 February 2011 at the Council of Ministers. The Swedish Embassy was represented by the Head of Development Co-operation and Deputy Head of the Embassy, Britta Olofsson, and Programme Officers Niklas Mattsson, Linda Gjermani and Rezarta Katuci, while the Government was represented by the Director of Department of Strategies and Donor Co-ordination (DSDC), Valbona Kuko, and Deputy Ministers and relevant line ministry officials and other government institutions. The aim was to discuss the implementation of on-going projects funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and to define future priorities based on the Swedish Strategy for Development Co-operation 2009-2012. Two revised sector papers were prepared by the donor to facilitate the dialogue. They summarized the on-going and planned support by the donor in two main priority areas: Natural resources and Environment and Democratic Governance and Human Rights. Discussions stressed the importance of the implementation of activities in the environment, democratic governance, and human rights sectors. During the meet-

ing, the need for further discussions of new areas of support such as transport, water supply, regionalisation and territorial management, aiming to assist the government mobilise funds and plans for investments, were identified. Discussions also focused on the preparation of the Environment Operational Plan that is due to be finalised and presented in April 2011 that will serve as the key planning instrument to prioritise investments in environment sector and as an important contribution toward linking the sector policies with the MTBP. Direct support is offered as part of the co-operation in employment services and statistics development. As a leading donor in statistics, Sweden will engage in dialogue with IN-STAT suggesting that future preparations of a statistical programme, closely linked to the statistical strategy and INSTAT's programme and budget in order to facilitate a Programme-Based Approach in statistics, co-ordinated with active donors in the sector. The design of support to community policing was mentioned as well as the Swedish intention to continue its engagement in the area of strengthening civil society. The meeting agreed that based on its priorities, the Government needed to orient Swedish support in line with the NSDI 2007-2013. The Swedish Government is expected to instruct the Embassy to engage in drafting a new strategy in the end of 2011.

KfW signs a Grant Agreement to support Water Supply and Sewage Sector

On 11 February 2011, a Grant Agreement was signed with KfW, on the Project "Development of Master Plan for Wa-



Photo: Annual Review of Swedish Development Programme in Albania, organised on 23 February 2011

ter Supply and Sewage in Albania." The 2 million Euros Agreement was signed by the Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode, Minister of Public Works and Transport, Sokol Olldash. On the German side, the Agreement was signed by the Director of the Regional Office for Albania and Kosovo, Ute Rodrian. The ceremony was also attended by the German Ambassador Carola Müller-Holtkemper. Minister Bode expressed appreciation for the grant and stressed that the main objective was to prepare the Master Plan document that will contribute in the achievement of a sustainable water supply and sewage system, and improvement of the living conditions of the population. Project activities consist of an analysis of the water supply and sewage current situation, and assessment of the needs for future investments in this sector. The project will also establish a system of priorities for future investments. The project is in line with the Sector Water Supply and Sewage Strategy that forms part of the Government's National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013. The drafting of the Master Plan will serve as a planning tool for future investments. The German Government, through KfW, is extending a grant of 2 million Euros for

this project that will be implemented by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport through the General Department of Water Supply and Sewage that will serve as the Project Implementing Agency. The fund will be used for consultancy services for the preparation of the water supply and sewage Master Plan. The project will be completed within a 14 month time frame.

Inauguration of the European Union Information Centre, Shkodra

On 22 February 2011, the EU Information Centre (EUIC) has officially opened its doors in Shkodra. Its establishment was made possible through EU funding in the framework of the project "Management of the EUIC in Shkodra and Vlora". Close to the main University and to four main high schools, the Centre is expected to become a primary source of information and meeting place for students to discuss on EU related issues. The Centre is easily accessible for students and young people, different professionals etc. The main aim is to build knowledge and raise public awareness on topics related to Albania's path towards EU integration. The inauguration ceremony was transformed into a popular event with the participation of over 1000 citizens. The Musical Band of the city welcomed the arrival of the highest state representatives, while the opening of the activity took place under the sound of the EU Anthem. The Ambassador of the EU Delegation to Albania Ettore Sequi welcomed the participation of the Prime Minister Sali Berisha, Assembly Speaker, Jozefina Topalli, Minister of European Integration, Majlinda Bregu, Hungarian Ambassador to Albania holding the EU Presidency, Sándor Molnári, the Mayor of Shkodra Municipality Lorenc Luka



Photo: KfW Director of the Regional Office for Albania and Kosovo, Ute Rodrian, Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode and the Minister of Public Works and transport, Sokol Olldash, signing the grant agreement, on the Project Development of Master Plan for Water Supply and Sewage in Albania.

and representatives of local government at this event. Ambassador Sequi stressed that the opening of the centre will serve not only to Shkodra but to all North Albania and will provide information over the EU, its policies and the process of Albania's integration toward EU. On behalf of the Council of Students of "Luigj Gurakuqi" University, the chairman Mr. Redan Bushati presented Ambassador Sequi with a thank you letter about the opening of EUIC in Shkodra. The invitees were greeted by a musical trio and with the song "Luleborë" by the singer Rosela Gjylbegu, acting as the Cultural Ambassador for the SEE countries. After the inauguration ceremony, the invitees visited the premises of EUIC, Shkodra.



Photo: Inauguration of the European Union Information Centre, Shkodra

Switzerland and IFC Support Integration of a New Master Degree in Corporate Governance

On the occasion of the launching ceremony of a new Master degree in corporate governance at the European University of Tirana, on 10 February 2011, the Swiss Ambassador in Tirana, Yvana Enzler commended the International Financial Corporation (IFC) for the long-standing partnership with Switzerland in supporting corporate governance reforms in Albania through the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) as part of the Swiss Ministry of Economy and Trade, since 2006. Switzerland has supported the corporate governance reforms and in different key areas achieved real results: An effective corporate gover-

nance framework was established due to the co-operation with the National Bank of Albania. The law on appointment of bank administrators is being applied successfully by 17 banks. Tangible corporate governance products are the comprehensive "Family Business Handbook" and the "Albanian Corporate Governance Manual" that are reaching out to a significant number of companies and individuals of different professions. As good corporate governance allows sustainable economic development by enhancing the performance of companies and increasing their access to outside sources of capital it makes them more profitable and favour their growth. So far, 9 Albanian companies were enabled to attract investments due to improved corporate governance practices. Various trainings on internal audit and control have been delivered for more than 50 companies. Also the establishment of an Albanian "Corporate Governance Institute" is a further remarkable achievement. It will certainly contribute to promote further corpo-

rate governance standards and practices in the future. The event was organized in the presence of many guests including the Rector and the President of this remarkable private university. Ambassador Enzler highlighted that Switzerland was pleased to support also this new Master degree in corporate governance which will equally contribute to make Albania an attractive location for investors.

OSCE Presence launches discussions on new Master's degree to improve social services in justice system

The development of a new interdisciplinary advanced programme of studies, with the aim of improving the standards of social services in general and in particular of those offered by the justice system, was discussed at a roundtable meeting organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania on 7 February 2011. The Master's degree in Administration of Social Institutions in the Justice System, which will be offered by Tirana University starting with the 2011-2012 academic year, responds to the need of Albanian institutions to educate and train current and future professionals and volunteers working with offenders in the criminal justice system. The need for such expertise was raised following the recent establishment of a National Probation Service. The programme of study is designed for probation officers, social workers, psychologists, teachers, sociologists, public administration employees, staff of civil society organizations, police, prosecutors, lawyers, judges and people working in custodial settings. Participants included representatives of ministries and other state institutions, ju-



Photo: Launching Ceremony of New Master Degree in Corporate Governance, at European University of Tirana

diary officials, international institutions and civil society organizations. The discussions were led by Senior Legal Officer at the OSCE Presence in Albania, Matthias Zander, Deputy Justice Minister Brikena Kasmi, Deputy Education Minister, Nora Malaj and General Director of Probation Service Arben Sefgjini.

Signature of an agreement between the Albanian and French Schools of Magistrates

An agreement between the Albanian School of Magistrates and the French School of Magistrates “Ecole Nationale de la Magistrature (ENM)” was signed on 9 February 2011. It was signed by the Director of the Albanian School of Magistrates, Mariana Semini, and the Head of ENM’s International Department M. Minnegheer. The agreement has been prepared in September 2010 during a study visit of Ms. Semini in Paris. It provides that regular exchanges will be maintained between students between trainers and exchanges of publications. Besides this, Albanian School of Magistrates asked French school to provide in 2011 expertise on recruitment procedures and organisation of the admission examination.

Sector Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Development

The third meeting of the Sector Working Group for Agriculture and Rural Development was held on 22 February 2011. Representatives from the DSDC, Ministry of European Integration, and donors contributing to the development of the sector participated in the meeting. Minister Genc Ruli highlighted the creation and further consolidation of the main new Agencies such as the National Food Authority and the Payment Agency that will be the future IPARD Agency. In the framework of aligning Albanian legislation with the *acquis* several laws are compiled and some of them are submitted for approval such as: the Veterinary Law, the review of the Food Law, and the Law of Cooperatives. Secondary legislation partially or fully harmonized with EU legislation regarding the Food Safety had been approved. A key activity is the



Photo: Director of the Albanian School of Magistrates, Mariana Semini, and the Head of ENM’s International Department M. Minnegheer sign a cooperation agreement.

creation of an administrative farm register in compliance with EU requirements, using the synergy among three EU funded projects which do have common interest on the use of the farm register. The Payment Agency will be the final beneficiary of this administrative register. He said that the short term priorities were: support to the agriculture sector and rural development and was reflected in IPA 2011 programming of an indicative value of 10 million Euros. A pilot IPARD is planned to be implemented including grants for the farmers and the capacity building of the MAFCP to implement IPA component V funds. In the framework of the Italian Government soft loan, part of the Italian-Albanian Protocol 2010-2012 three projects are being prepared and will complement the preparations of the MAFCP for EU accession and use of EU funds as programmed in IPA2011. He said that the technical staff of the Ministry is negotiating with the World Bank for a credit around 40 million USD to support the agriculture infrastructure related to water resources management and the flood protection. Medium term priorities were support to the strengthening of human resources and capacity building of the Ministry, further strengthening of the Payment Agency and Rural development programme for the period 2014-2020, improvement of standards in the food safety, such as: Strengthening the food control; strengthening of the Technical Capacities and Accreditation of the Food Safety laboratories as well as strengthening the Plant Protection Service. Deputy Minister Tokli Thomaj gave a presentation of the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) and the need for coordination among donors to create synergies from which the Agriculture and Ru-

ral development sector will benefit. The Director of the European Integration, Arjana Misha went through the situation of the implementation of the ongoing projects financed by different donors in support to the Sector of Agriculture and Rural Development. European Commission through IPA funds is supporting the sub-sector of Food safety for the establishment of the NFA and its further consolidation as well as the capacities to implement the food safety controls according to the EU standards. EU is supporting the consumer protection against the zoonotic diseases including the preparation of the respective legislation in line with *acquis*. The EU is also supporting the implementation of the Rural development Strategy and the consolidation of the Paying Agency. Agriculture is also an important actor of the Census in Agriculture, for which INSTAT is being supported by IPA funds. USAID is supporting the agriculture sector in encouraging the private sector to be more competitive in fruit and vegetable sector. FAO is supporting a feasibility study on land management. SNV is implementing a program aiming at the improvement of the livelihood of the rural area population living in mountains and increasing their incomes. The Italian Government and EU has funded projects in support to agriculture sector in very important issues such as the improvement of the livestock sector, interventions in the food safety and food control system, while Italian Cooperation is supporting the Rural Development in the north of Albania. Swiss Government is financing the fifth phase of the cooperation the field of organic production and the sustainable agriculture. The Spanish Co-operation helped with a project the development of Farmers’ Associations

and Cooperative Movement in Albania through capacity building activities as well as drafting the respective laws according to EU standards. World Bank is supporting the immediate intervention in Shkodra and Lezha areas with the final aim to prevent the area from flood risks. The continuation of the support to the sector was confirmed during the discussions of the representatives in the meeting.

Sector Working Group on Public Administration

On 10 February 2011, the Ministry of Interior organised the first meeting of the Sector Working Group on Public Administration. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Interior, Ferdinand Pone. It was attended by the Director of Department of Public Administration (DoPA), Blerta Selenica and Director of Training Institute of Public Administration (TIPA), Fatmir Demneri and representatives from the donor community. The meeting was opened by Deputy Minister Poni who stressed the role played by the donors in the development of public administration. He mentioned the importance of having a stable civil service and well qualified administrators. "We seek for quality from our collaborators." He referred to the importance of public administration reform process for the European Partnership. It is important to work closely with DoPA to ensure the functionality of the civil service and the full implementation of reforms during the pre-accession process. DoPA Director, Bleta Selenica gave an overview on the long-term vision of the strategy of public administration reform, as well as an update on the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS). The presentation of the DoPA Director included also an overview of two recent policy papers. "The policy paper on a new law of civil service", prepared by DoPA with support by SIGMA, that proposes choices to develop a future civil service system to better serve the EU integration ambitions of the country, with the aim to strengthen the unity of the civil service while being flexible enough as to allow the Government to adapt the system to the rapid changes the country is undergoing and the development in the area of human capacities. It is expected

to establish a coherent management system with clearly allocated responsibilities and to propose civil service policies and ensure homogeneous standards of implementation. While "The policy paper on functioning and organizing the public administration", has been prepared by DoPA with support of EU IPA 2008 and GIZ, aims at providing the basis for a draft law on the organization and functioning of the State administration in Albania that will strengthen the overall capacity of the central Government to direct the performance of State functions, to work out and implement national policies; will Reinforce the accountability of top civil servants through a clear structure that facilitates the assignment and identification of responsibilities; and will work out basic principles for the operation of public administration units, in order to direct all leaders, when performing their tasks, according principles of "good administration". Both papers were sent to all the participants for their further review and suggestions. The proposed draft laws will be developed during March and will be further discussed with the government, civil society and donors during April. The other important topic that was discussed during the SWG related to the training plan of TIPA for the period 2011-2014. The main objective of the new TIPA Training programme is to support a more professional, capable and merit based civil service; an ethical and transparent civil service; more responsible and accountable managers; and, a more capable and highly motivated civil service for implementation of national strategies for future developments. It is built around putting high emphases on the training of the civil servants at the central level on issues related to the EU integration process.

Sector Working Group on Statistics

The first meeting for 2011 of the SWG on statistics was conducted at INSTAT offices on 14 February 2011 with the participation of Sida as the lead donor for the sector and other donors working in the sector. The meeting focused on the ongoing and up-coming censuses, including the presentation of the progress on development of the Population and Household Census and housing, Census of Economic Enterprises and the Labor Force Survey. The status of the Population and

Household Census was presented by the Census Manager, Elda Kapllani. The Population Census will have a total cost of 17 million Euros and will be funded mainly with the state budget funds and with support from the EU through IPA 2009. The meeting stressed the need for an increased co-ordination in performing the Census, agreeing that a SWG focused only on census can be hold and all the stakeholders and implementing agencies be invited. The Census of Economic Enterprises and the Labour Force Survey were presented by INSTAT staff. Census of Economic Enterprises is an initiative funded by the state budget, with funding support by the EU through IPA 2007 and from Sida. This census was completed in late last year and included an economic sphere of 120,000 units across Albania. In the near future, INSTAT aims to develop the Agriculture Census, for the support of which the donor community was also ready to help. While the Labour Force Survey which is developed annually since 2007, will be held quarterly in accordance with the recommendations of the EU, Eurostat and the ILO. It will be funded from the state budget and will be supported by UNDP. Field work for the development of this survey has started at the start of the year. During this meeting, INSTAT also informed the participants that a new five-year plan will be published this year.

EU funds a new project to bring Albania's public procurement in line with the EU

A 1 million Euro project funded by the EU will enable the improvement of Albania's public procurement, concession and auction system over the next years. The project will bring EU expertise and know-how from Member States to assist Albania in completing its public procurement legislation and improving its practices in line with those applied by EU Member States. The project ultimately contributes to Albania's EU integration endeavours. The EU has long assisted Albania in improving its public procurement system. Building on improvements achieved in the past, this twinning project will further support the Albanian Public Procurement Agency through activities and trainings that are tailor-made to its needs. The twinning between the Albanian Public Procurement Agency,

the Polish Public Procurement Office and the Romanian National Authority for Regulation and Monitoring Public Procurement, will bring to Albania experts from EU Member States to assist on a wide range of subjects, including approximation of the Albanian legislation with EU standards; preparation of an Action Plan for the implementation of the procurement system reform; strengthening of the capacity of the Albanian Public Procurement Agency, Contracting Authorities and other relevant actors dealing with public procurement processes; and drafting a Communication Strategy on public procurement for the Public Procurement Agency. During the launch ceremony of the twinning project “*Support for the Strengthening of the Albanian Public Procurement, Concessions and Public Auctions Systems*”, on 10 February 2011, the Director of Public Procurement Agency, Klodiana Cankja said “What I would like to point out, would be the increased transparency in public procurement, not only through approximation of the legislation, unification of procedures, and publications, but what is most important and represents its culmination, is the application of electronic procurement. 2011 is the third year that we are implementing 100% electronic procurement...In this long and difficult journey, the staff of the Public Procurement Agency has been very crucial, but certainly these achievements would not have been made possible without the support of other institutions at all levels and without the political will to deeply reform the system...The twinning project that is presented today is the first of this kind for the Public Procurement Agency and I strongly believe that we will profit a lot from the experience of our partners in this project and as a result we will improve our public procurement, concessions and auctions in their entirety, by entirely approximating our legislation with the EU directives and by establishing for the first time a strategy on public procurement.” While the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Ettore Sequi emphasised the importance of public procurement reform for EU integration. Albania is required to harmonise its public procurement system to that of the EU, a harmonisation that has made business in the EU market predictable and reliable. He pointed out that “the vast EU market that Albania seeks to join operates and relies upon rules that



Photo: The launch ceremony of the twinning project “*Support for the Strengthening of the Albanian Public Procurement, Concessions and Public Auctions Systems*”

are known, rules that are non-discriminatory, respected, and business-friendly”. Ambassador Sequi also pointed out the need to work for an efficient, transparent and accountable public procurement system as an important step in the fight against corruption, a key priority for Albania in its integration process. “Spending public resources”, he noted, “implies the mandatory use of public procurement rules enforced on the widest possible range of procurement processes. A proliferation of ad hoc procurement processes must be avoided as it undermines the consistency, general applicability, and credibility of the procurement system as a whole”. The 1 million Euro project will continue until 2012.

A Modern Civil Registry and Address System in Albania

The concrete results of the four-year

project “*Modernisation of Administrative Address and Civil Registration Systems*” were presented on 17 February 2011. Made possible through a 2.5 million Euros EU-funded project with additional funding from the OSCE and the US and with the technical support of Austria, Norway and the Council of Europe, the project was implemented from 2007 to 2010. The main aims were to assist Albania in establishing electronic systems for both addresses and civil registration, to establish a personal data protection framework and establish public trust by a public awareness campaign. The electronic Civil Registry provides data for a new generation of digital passports, the biometric passports that now enable Albanian citizens to travel more freely especially within European Schengen Area. The civil registry provides the data on new ID cards that help to greatly improve the citizen’s access to public and private services, while helping to make transactions and relations more



Photo: The concrete results of the four-year project “*Modernisation of Administrative Address and Civil Registration Systems*” were presented on 17 February 2011

secure and trustful. The modernization of these systems is an important step to improve the delivery of public services in sectors such as health, taxation, property, social security, education, the postal services, but also to facilitate court proceedings, enforcement of rulings, or response to emergency situations.

The street signs installed enable local residents and visiting tourists to orientate themselves in the city. The quality of the state services is highly dependent on a sound system that can be referred to and learned by all. “Combined together, the modern civil registry and the modern address system will raise the quality and efficiency of health, tax, social security, education, postal, court services and many more...I look forward to Albanians becoming familiar with the better services that rely on proper civil registry and address systems...

Further success and sustainability of this undertaking depends on government will, on cooperation between all institutions, on the capacities and human resources of relevant authorities, such as the General Directorate of the Civil Status, Civil Status Offices and Urban Planning Offices”, declared Ambassador Etторе Sequi, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania.

The Ambassador of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Eugen Wollfarth said “When completed, this will bring even further improvements to the lives of all citizens of Albania. Voters’ lists and election administration will continue to improve through the use of addresses. At this point, I would like to thank the Government and especially the Ministry of Interior for three years of good co-operation. I am looking forward to more of this good co-operation”.



Photo: National Conference on The Role of Civil Society and Donors in Empowering Local Government in Albania

The role of civil society and donors in empowering local government

Albanian Association of Municipalities in co-operation and with the support of the Hanns Seidel Foundation organized on 3 February 2011, a national Conference on *The Role of Civil Society and Donors in Empowering Local Government in Albania*. The aim was to introduce local government units with the role of civil society expertise and the contribution of donor organizations in the decentralization process aiming the coordination of their activities. In this Conference Albanian Association of Municipalities promoted its latest edition, of the manual “*Dear Mayor, I think ...*”. Representatives from main NGO-s operating and representatives from central government and donor community, mayors and other local actors participated in this event.

US Assistance for Monitoring the 2011 Albanian Local Elections

In February, U.S. Ambassador Alexander A. Arvizu announced that the U.S. Embassy in Tirana will be allocating nearly \$360,000 in election related assistance to civil society. The funds will be dedicated to the monitoring of Albanian local elections, which are scheduled for 8 May 2011. At the ceremony held on 23 February 2011, attended by civil society and media representatives, the Ambassador noted the importance of exercising the right to vote “...The point is everyone has a vote and everyone’s vote counts just as much as everyone else’s and, for Albania to move forward, it is important to exercise your right to vote. It’s also important for those...who represent different political points of view to give the Albanian voters a choice so that they can make a choice. These elections are about Albania’s future.” The funding is coming from the Embassy’s Public Affairs Section and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which have earmarked funds to assist a “domestic observer coalition.” The coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be monitoring the entire elections process. The coalition will also provide voter education to the public. Appealing to the domestic election observation coalition of NGOs, the Ambassador said, “...I want to wish you the very best in your work and I ask that you take your duties as election observers seriously and with integrity. Your work will be very important in helping



Photo: U.S. Ambassador Alexander A. Arvizu at a ceremony held on 23 February 2011, attended by civil society and media representatives

to ensure that these elections are successful and that they represent the will of the Albanian people.” The Democracy Small Grants Program, administered by the Embassy’s Public Affairs Section, will cover approximately \$160,000 of the total amount. These funds will cover the cost of monitoring and voter education, as well as additional activities. USAID will cover \$200,000 to provide training for the elections observers as well as an international training advisor to work with local groups.

Italian Cooperation for Development’s workshops on Environment Management System

The Italian Cooperation for Development in Albania organised a series of two-day workshops aiming at fostering an efficient system of environmental management and informing companies on the existing international standards, in particular ISO 14001. The workshops were held in Tirana, Shkodra and Vlora. The three events were organised in the framework of the Italia-Albanian Small and Medium Enterprises Development Programme, which aims at supporting businesses in access to credit. The Programme is funded by the Italian Government and implemented by the Albanian Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy through private banks.

The System of Environment Management is increasingly used among businesses in order to ensure an effective environmental policy, which identifies and controls the environmental impact of activities, processes and products. In this way, companies are encouraged to improve such impact and to achieve a sustainable development of their activities. The implementation of the System of Environmental Management makes it possible to progressively transform environmental limitations into a commercial asset for businesses. Therefore, it is advisable for companies to possess the ISO 14001 certificate. “In accordance with its role as main European donor for the development of the private sector in Albania, the Italian Cooperation for Development actively promotes these workshops, aimed at improving the SMEs business environment and thus strengthening the development of local companies and increasing their competitiveness in the Eu-



Photo: Aldo Sicignano, Director of the Italian Development Cooperation in Albania, and Raffaella Valentini, First Secretary and Head of the Commercial Office at the Italian Embassy, at the opening speech of the ISO 14001 workshops in Tirana.

ropean market”, said Aldo Sicignano, the Director of the Italian Cooperation, during the opening speech at the workshop in Tirana.

Albanian Youth: Help Europe to Come Here!

Fulfilling our commitments to adolescents – as required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments – is not only the right thing to do; it is also the smart thing to do. We must sustain the achievements made in the first decade of life of our children, by assisting adolescents with specific programs that help them to complete their education, learn life skills, and protect themselves from harm. Detlef Palm, UNICEF representative, made these re-

marks in Shkodra when launching this year’s UNICEF global flagship report “The State of the World’s Children”, together with the chair of the regional council and members of the Youth Parliament. The 2011 UNICEF report focuses on “Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity”. Its main message is that most global challenges including poverty, peace, climate change, unemployment, inequity, and human rights can only be resolved if we involve young people. Right now. Mr. Palm also referred to surveys that showed that half of all young Albanians prefer to go abroad for studying or work. “In Albania, you have the support of your family, your friends, and your networks. Before taking big decisions, inform yourself. Take control over your life. You can plan of going to Europe, but you can help Europe to come here”.



Photo: Launching event of “The State of the World’s Children 2011” report in Shkodra on 25 February 2011

Inauguration of Child Rights Observatory in Gjirokastra

The Child Rights Observatory in Gjirokastra was launched on 18 February 2011, during a ceremony with the head of the regional council, heads of all communes, UNICEF, and young people. The Gjirokastra observatory is the 9th of its kind to be established across the country, with the three remaining offices to be set up in 2011. Their mission is to monitor the realization of the rights of the child, and to analyze and elaborate information from the civil society point of view.

Child observatories work closely with the regional councils, to ensure attention to the rights of children in regional plans. They also help in monitoring national or regional plans related to children. Child observatories pay special attention to the most vulnerable children, and recommend what needs to be done for these children to have the same opportunity to learn, grow, and become productive and responsible citizens.

Support of Minors in Albania by International Legislation

SMILE (*Support of Minors in Albania by International Legislation*) is a three-year decentralized cooperation program supported by the Italian Cooperation and Italian regions, Emilia Romagna, Puglia and Marche, aimed at fostering adminis-



Photo: Inaugural session of the Local Conference in Vlora, the Conference panel.

trative decentralization of social services in order to protect vulnerable minors in the Municipalities of Vlora, Elbasan and Shkodra. Activities will be completed in June 2011 and the main results have been presented in February-March 2011 in occasion of a series of conferences. Municipalities presented their updated Social Area Plans and all the pilot projects which have been financed within the program and achieved by social workers in special structures such as protected houses and centres for social activities. Through these activities, SMILE is supporting different groups of minors at risk. Conferences took place on 28 February 2011 in Vlora, 2 March 2011 in Elbasan and 4 March 2011 in Shkodra and were attended by representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, local authorities, Italian consular representatives and donors.

State police to train colleagues in Afghanistan following course supported by ICITAP and OSCE Presence

On 25 February 2011, Albanian police instructors completed an OSCE Presence supported course that will enable them to travel to Afghanistan in the summer to train Afghan police in basic policing techniques. The US ICITAP Programme, the Presence and the Police Development Centre organized the one-week course for 17 police instructors, held in Tirana.

“The deployment of Albanian State Police instructors to a challenging assignment like Afghanistan clearly marks a milestone for the Albanian State Police and indicates its professionalism and capacity,” the Head of Presence, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, said at this event that was also attended by Interior Minister Lulzim Basha. US Consul Lyra Carr said: “Five of today’s graduates will be selected to continue further training with NATO and the American military. Afterwards, they will train Afghan police in an eight-week basic course.

I anticipate these trainers will proudly represent their nation and their profession.” Also on the same day, 23 members of the Interior Ministry’s Internal Control Service completed a one-month training course on investigation. That course was the third of its kind. A fourth course in April 2011 will train the last of the 80 Internal Control Service officers.



Photo: The US ICITAP Programme, the OSCE Presence and the Police Development Centre organized the one-week course for 17 police instructors

Launching mission of the Regional Development Programme Northern Albania

The first mission of the implementing partners for the newly established programme took place between 31 January and 4 February 2011. The Programme is an over 4 million Euro 4-year joint initiative funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Development Cooperation. The overall objective of the programme is to significantly contribute to an equitable social and economic development of the regions of Shkodra and Lezha. The RDP will work with both Qark Councils to strengthen their capacities for regional development planning and delegated functions. It will assist in developing and institutionalizing a comprehensive regional development planning and budgeting in both regions. It will accelerate regional development through project initiatives and effective implementation of projects financed by its own Regional Development Fund of 2 million Euros. In close cooperation with key central government institutions, including the Ministry of Interior and the Department for Strategy and Donor Coordination at the PM Office, the programme will support an effective institutional framework for decentralization, which aims at equitable development outcomes. During the mission a series of meetings were held with the main RDP partners and stakeholders. The implementing partners were positively surprised about the level of knowledge of the partners on the main RDP elements, which confirms their involvement during the preparation of the project.

Mission from the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank

A delegation from the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB) headed by Andrey Kondakov, President and including Vice President Banking, Mustafa Boran, Secretary General, George Kottas and representatives of relevant departments completed a two-day country mission to Tirana on 7 to 8 February 2011 with a view to getting an update on the na-

In-country Missions

tional economic and development priorities in the context of the development of a new BSTDB strategy for the country following the recently adopted BSTDB Medium-Term Strategy and Business Plan for 2011-2014. The delegation held senior-level meetings at the Ministries of Finance, Economy, Energy and Trade, Foreign Affairs and Albanian National Bank. The Bank made a presentation of its business plans, activities and products to the banking and business community and media.

World Bank

A World Bank Mission for the Albania Natural Resources Development Project, Notification of Mission for Implementation Completion and Results Report, Appraisal of Additional Financing from Swedish Government and Review of Current Status of Implementation, took place from 14 to 24 February 2011. The aim was to assess the project implementation progress to

date since the last implementation support mission. The specific objectives were (i) launching of the preparation of the draft Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR) of the Natural Resources Development Project given the closing date of IDA credit in June 1, 2011; and (ii) pre-appraisal of the additional financing project to be funded by SIDA.

A World Bank Appraisal Mission for the Proposed Albania Development Policy Operation on Social Sectors, took place from 15 to 18 February. The main aims were to: (i) finalize all the technical details related to the policy actions included in the DPL; (ii) agree on a timetable for finishing the processing of the DPL, including negotiations date and presentation of supporting evidence on the policies included in the DPL; and (iii) agree on the assessment of the medium-term macroeconomic framework, including the instruments that the Government could use to respond to unexpected shocks to maintain a sustainable framework.

governmentdonor*dialogue*

As of 15 December 2010 the World Bank took over as the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat from the Swiss Cooperation Office.

All comments regarding Government-Donor Dialogue are warmly welcomed!

Want to contribute?

If you would like to contribute, send your text to the Donor Technical Secretariat (DTS) Office (nevila.como@aidharmonisation.org.al) or the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC) (arselma.kabashi@km.gov.al) by the 5th of every month. An ideal word count for submissions is around 100 words.

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