

government **donor** dialogue

ISSUE No. 27, Monthly Newsletter - March 2009

A Joint Effort of the Donor Technical Secretariat
and the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination

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Photo: Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, and the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Europe and the CIS, Kori Udovički giving certificates of gratitude to members of the Albanian diaspora educated and trained abroad

Albania Gains Brains

On 27 March 2009 seventy members of the Albanian diaspora educated and trained abroad, received certificates of gratitude from the Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, and the UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director for Europe and the CIS, Kori Udovički, for coming back to contribute to Albania's development. Designed to reverse the outflow trends of Albanian brains of the 1990s, the Brain Gain programme, a Government-led initiative supported by UNDP, has provided incentives for emigrants to return to work in Albania. In 2009, the initiative placed more than 60 persons in the national university system. Twenty of the professors have expertise generally unavailable in Albania, including computer science and IT network security, molecular biology, music theory and applied arts,

and data analysis for environmental and agricultural sciences. Nine other professionals secured jobs in public administration positions. The Brain Gain activities have also included establishing an informational website to help with recruiting, holding conferences and workshops, and amending legal policies so that overseas graduates can get jobs in the public administration. This is part of a broader goal of using intellectual resources to help with the long-term development of Albania, as it works toward greater integration with the European Union. "Development is really only about human development and the only capital that really works is human capital," Kori Udovički said in his speech "Together you will be proud of the Albania you are creating."

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MILLENNIUM
CHALLENGE CORPORATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Millennium Challenge Corporation Albania Threshold Program II Begins

On 18 March 2009 the Millennium Challenge Corporation Albania Threshold Programme II, held a workshop in co-operation with the Government, the parliament and the judiciary, to share information on the programme's second stage goals, scope and expected results. Deputy Prime Minister, Genc Pollo and the USAID Mission Director in Albania, Roberta Mahoney, delivered the opening remarks. The Deputy Prime Minister expressed confidence that Albania would make visible and tangible improvements in its business and legal environment under the programme. In her address, Director Mahoney underscored the role the programme will play in testing Albania's resolve in continuing reforms to deliver efficient, transparent governance backed up by a rule of law that did not allow corruption to go unpunished.

Albania's bilateral agreement with the United States under this programme, funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), commits Albania to undertake specific reforms with U.S. assistance to strengthen the rule of law, reduce corruption and increase public oversight, thereby improving the business environment, through IT solutions and technical assistance. Over a two-year period the Threshold Programme, administered by USAID, will streamline licensing procedures in a one-stop-shop National Licensing Centre; establish Administrative Courts; create a National Planning Register to make building permit procedures more transparent; as well as expand and consolidate tax administration reforms begun under the first Threshold Programme. In addition, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, the programme will work with the Prosecutor General's Office to establish six more Joint Investigative Units outside of Tirana to strengthen efforts in combating corruption and economic crimes.



Photo: Launching event of three projects in the Energy sector: Secretary General of Economy, Trade and Energy, Durim Kraja, Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy, Genc Ruli, Deputy Prime Minister, Genc Pollo, Italian Minister for Economic Development, Claudio Scajola, Italian Ambassador to Tirana, Saba D'Elia, the Head of Development Cooperation Office of the Italian Embassy, Flavio Lovisolo.

Italian Minister for Economic Development Claudio Scajola Visits Tirana

On 10 March 2009, the Italian Minister for Economic Development visited Albania and launched three energy projects financed by the Italian Development Co-operation aimed at developing the electrical infrastructures, enhancing the transmission grid's reliability and allowing the integration of Albania into the European energy market. Deputy Prime Minister, Genc Pollo, and the Minister of Economy, Genc Ruli, attended the launching ceremony held by the Ministry, OST Transmission System Operator and the Italian Embassy in co-operation ABB/Falcione, Sae/Terna and Ansaldo T&D/Gavazzi. The signed agreements are worth 60 Million Euros. The first project on the construction of the new energy line from Elbasan to Tirana, aims at improving electric security levels through the development of the electrical infrastructure. The second project, the construction of the Dispatch and Control Centre, looks to make it easier to preserve the balance between generation and consumption. The third project, the building of a 400/220 kilowatt substation in Tirana, will align Albanian's network with EU standards and facilitating power trading with neighbouring countries. "Italy is Albanian main partner concerning the implementation of energy projects" Ruli said.

International Conference on investment opportunities in Small Hydropower Plants

On 18 March 2009, over 140 small hydropower plant owners/concessionaires, government officials, project funders and equipment suppliers participated at the first "International Stakeholder Conference on Investment Opportunities in Small Hydropower Plants". The Conference was held by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy and KfW in Tirana as part of the Albanian-German Financial Cooperation programme "Promotion of Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency". MVV decon assisted the inviting institutions in implementing the event. For several years, the Government has been working on the improvement of electricity provision by encouraging a better exploitation

Photo: From left to right: Pekhan Isipek (BKT Bank), Durim Kraja (METE), Minister Genc Ruli, Ambassador Bernd Borchardt, Jens Drillisch (KfW Entwicklungsbank), Robert Wright (Raiffeisen Bank)



of the country's hydropower potential. In this context, the Conference offered opportunities for senior Governmental officials and other stakeholders to provide information on the institutional and legal framework implemented for private investments in small hydropower plants, and for the banks that are involved as partner banks in the programme as well as for Albanian and international investors. The Conference was opened by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy, Genc Ruli and German Ambassador Bernd Borchardt. The event brought together different state, business, civil society and donor stakeholders. Potentials and challenges in developing the country's renewable energies sources, especially hydropower, as well as the positive results from the last 20 years of German-Albanian co-operation were addressed in the opening session. Participants highlighted that the Government and the Albanian Energy Regulatory Entity have already begun with the implementation of important prerequisites in favour of small hydropower plant developments and underlined the further need for a strengthening of the regulatory framework especially the necessity of a long-term PPA and "Step-in rights" for the banks in concession contracts in case of default of the investor.

Regional Conference on Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security

From 30 to 31 March 2009 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held the Regional High Level Conference on Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in South

Photo: Bilateral meeting of the UNODC Executive Director with the Albanian delegation headed by Deputy Minister of Interior, Gent Strazimir.



Photos: Regional High Level Conference on Promoting the Rule of Law and Human Security in South Eastern Europe organized by UNODC on 30 and 31 March 2009 in Belgrade.

Eastern Europe in Belgrade. The event was attended by senior officials from the region. The Conference was opened by the Prime Minister of Serbia, Mirko Cvetkovic and the UNODC Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa. The Conference signed a Joint Statement that endorsed the new UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe. The Joint Statement, signed by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, Minister of Justice of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Deputy Ministers of Montenegro, Albania and Croatia, and UNODC, endorsed the Regional Programme as a platform for future work in: serious crime and illicit trafficking; integrity and criminal justice; drug prevention and treatment, and HIV. Participants confirmed their commitment to strengthen partnership and mutual co-operation with the aim of contributing to stability, justice and security in the areas of organized crime, drug and human trafficking, smuggling of migrants and firearms, money-laundering, financing of terrorism, corruption, drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS, and to strengthen the effectiveness of the criminal justice systems. The Conference also focussed on ensuring that the joint statement was translated into the national ownership of the technical assistance modalities. As such an implementation and monitoring mechanism is to be set up to encompass operationalization and effective management of the

Programme; materialize partnership with identified international/regional institutions and undertake fund raising initiatives - the latter focusing on the EC in Brussels and the Regional Co-operation Council in Sarajevo. To this aim a project document is to be formulated by Regional Programme Office for SEE to secure funding. The development of the technical assistance is planned in the form of programme documents in line with the Program's pillars that will articulate regional vectors of work and possible national areas of intervention.

New Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2010 – 2013 for Albania

Switzerland has now begun the process of establishing a new Cooperation four year Strategy in line with national priorities. The Swiss Cooperation Office in Tirana, which coordinates and monitors jointly all programmes on behalf of the Swiss

Photo: View from the Strategic Planning Workshop on the New Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2010-2013 for Albania, held in Tirana, from 30 March to 2 April 2009.



National Council for People with Disabilities

The meeting of National Council for People with Disabilities, held on 10 March 2009 was attended by officials from the Ministries of Labour, Interior, Justice, Education and Health representatives of associations for People with Disabilities. It was opened by Deputy Prime Minister Genc Pollo who pointed out that the Government's commitment towards solving issues of disabled persons in order to fulfil their requirements were stronger than ever. He thanked the NCPD associations for drafting, promoting and monitoring the National Strategy for People with Disabilities. Participants agreed on the need for drafting and approving an integral draft law for People with Disabilities after consultation with civil society; the participation of the Ministry of Finance at the National Council that will also help dealing with the costs involved on law preparation, the further participation of local power representatives; the drafting of a regulation for the functioning of Technical Secretariat and the ratification of UN Convention for People with Disabilities.

Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), is reviewing the achievements in three domains: democratisation and decentralisation; private sector development; and Basic infrastructure and social services, paying close attention to social inclusion and other marginalized groups. The overall success of the current strategy in Albania for 2006 – 2009, was recently confirmed during an external review undertaken by OECD's Development Assistance Committee. The Swiss Cooperation in Albania is now in the process of organising meetings with the authorities, business sector, civil society, partners organisations and donors to define its future strategic aims. The process for elaborating the new Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2010 – 2013 for Albania, was launched on 30 March 2009 in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and other senior national and international actors. It is expected that towards the end of 2009 the new final strategic document will be presented to a broader audience, including government and donor representatives.

The Netherlands and OSCE Presence provide assistance to the Assembly's Library and Research Service

In co-operation with the Assembly, The Netherlands and OSCE are providing assistance to the Assembly's Library and

Photo: The Assembly Speaker, Jozefina Topalli receives a donation of books from the Dutch Ambassador, Henk Van den Dool and the Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Robert Bosch and on 23 March 2009 (Photo: Albanian Assembly)

Research Service to further increase and modernize its capacities. On 23 March 2009, a ceremony for the donation of newly purchased books was held with the participation of the Assembly Speaker, Jozefina Topalli, the Head of the OSCE Presence, Ambassador Robert Bosch and the Ambassador of the Netherlands in Albania, Henk Van den Dool. A total of 129 titles of books on issues such as EU Integration process, EU law, parliamentary procedures and practices, and political science were donated. The project is funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and will assist the Assembly's Library and Research service in 2009 to further improve and modernize working practices, extend the titles of publications, books and articles as well as modernize the infrastructure of its premises.

European Commission continues its support for the Albanian State Police

The start of work for the building and renovation of the State Police Academy, enabled through a 1.5 million Euro EC funded project, were inaugurated on 11 March 2009. The works aims at improving the operational conditions of the State Police. The work will continue until January 2010. The project includes the construction of new shooting range that will be the largest in the western Balkans, a new guard house, a dormitory, an infirmary and chancellery, as well as renovations of the beginners' school, the administrative buildings, the refectory and the facility blocks. The project is being





Photo: Minister of Interior Bujar Nishani, the Head of EC Delegation, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan and the EC Project Manager Giulia Agrosi inaugurating on 11 March 2009 the start of the works for the building and renovation of the State Police Academy.

implemented under the supervision of the EC Project Manager, Giulia Agrosi. The final result will be an Albanian State Police complex in line with European and international standards that will contribute to the effectiveness of other assistance. During the event, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan said that “an improvement in physical working conditions is expected to raise the effectiveness of the other areas of intervention, of the trainings for instance, and thus positively affect the overall, qualitative performance of the Albanian State Police”.

Dutch Embassy delegation visits Fier and Vlora

A delegation from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands visited Fier on 24 March 2009 to participate in the first meeting of the advisory board for the Empowering Environmental Local Governance Performance project. The Deputy Minister for the Environment, Taulant Bino, underlined the importance of establishing a clear link between this pilot project and similar local interventions elsewhere in the country as Albania is in the process of developing a national strategy for solid waste management. The two year project builds upon the positive experience that was gained during the implementation of the Enabling Good Urban Governance project by Co-Plan. The Dutch contribution to EELGP amounts to some 500,000 Euros.

On 25 March 2009, the delegation paid a visit to Vlora to monitor progress in the implementation of two other projects that the Dutch Government had financially supported. One project is implemented by Damen Shipyards and consists of the building of four coast guard vessels. The first vessel was built in The Netherlands. Preparations are under way for the construction of the other three vessels in Pashaliman. The total amount granted by the Dutch Government for this project is around 11 million Euros. The last project visited concerned the Vlora drinking water supply infrastructure rehabilitation project. The total amount granted was around 13 million Euros. The grant will contribute to the rehabilitation of the drinking water supply infrastructure and distribution system. Only a limited number of citizens have access to a reliable supply of drinking water. .

Photo: Empowering Environmental Local Governance Performance, using Municipal Waste Management in Fier



OSCE Presence organizes seminars on judicial ethics

On 10-11 March 2009, the School of Magistrates and the OSCE Presence, in co-operation with the High Council of Justice and the High Court, held two seminars on judicial ethics in Tirana for judges from Tirana and southern Albania. The event focused on the importance of ethical behaviour in maintaining judicial independence and the role of judges in ensuring fair and impartial decision-making through effective courtroom management, clear and complete reasoning and an appropriate judicial demeanour. The seminars also aimed to foster discussion on more effective enforcement of the judicial ethics code. The Deputy Chair of the High Council of Justice, Kreshnik Spahiu, and the Head of the OSCE Presence, Ambassador Robert Bosch addressed the event. The training was conducted by Adèle Kent, a judge from Calgary, Canada, who has served as a member of the Conduct Committee of the Canadian Judicial Institute and was responsible for ethics instruction programmes for the Canadian judiciary. On 9 and 10 March a similar seminar was held in Shkodra for the judges of the courts in northern Albania.



Photo: The European Commission and national authorities discuss the future of the Transport Community Treaty for the Western Balkans

European Commission and Albanian authorities discuss the Transport Community Treaty

The European Commission and national authorities discussed the future of the Transport Community Treaty for the Western Balkans. The European Commission team was led by Director in the European Commission Directorate General for Transport and Energy, Jonathan Scheele, on 25 March 2009. The team held senior meetings with the national transport authorities to collect their comments on the first draft of the Treaty as well as to present the final schedule of negotiations and to prepare for multi-lateral meetings in May and June. The Treaty aims to establish an integrated market for infrastructure and land transport, maritime transport and inland waterways and to align relevant legislation in the Western Balkans region with EU legislation. The treaty will help to accelerate the integration of the transport systems and to harmonize rules on safety, environmental protection and services.



Albania and Switzerland in June, the project is ready to begin in July. During its first phase, the AlbVET project improved the existing portfolio of short/medium term courses; provided school management advice, teacher training, equipment and materials and school development related advice to training institutions.

Support to the Implementation of EU-compliant Law

On 26 March 2009, Minister of European Integration, Majlinda Bregu, and the GTZ Country Director, Ulrike Gantzer-Sommer signed the Implementation Agreement on the German Development Cooperation Project Support to the Implementation of EU-compliant Law. With a budget of 620,000 Euros the project supports the information and training of legal staff of national authorities, state attorneys and courts as well as the public in the application, interpretation and implementation of the new EU-compliant laws, as a follow-up to the previous support on economic legal reform.

Gjirokastra Court of Appeal improves access to information

On 30 March 2009 the Public Information Office in the Gjirokastra Appeals Court was officially opened with a public ceremony at the Court. U.S. Ambassador John L. Withers II, OSCE Deputy Head of Presence Renate Herrmanns, Deputy Chair of High Council of Justice, Kreshnik Spahiu and Minister of Justice, Enkelejd Alibeaj, participated in the ceremony. In his remarks U.S. Ambassador Withers, referring to the establishment of the Public Information Office said, "[i]nterventions like this, although relatively small, make a real change in both the public's actual experience, but also perception of the judiciary. Interventions like this improve the delivery of justice in ways that citizens can see and feel." The

Photo: Minister of European Integration, Majlinda Bregu, and the GTZ Country Director Ulrike Gantzer-Sommer signing on 26 March 2009 the Implementation Agreement on the German Development Cooperation Project Support to the Implementation of EU-compliant Law.

Planning the Second Phase of Albanian VET Delivery Support Program 2009-2011

The second phase of AlbVET, a Swiss Government funded project, implemented by Swisscontact, is looking to contribute to increasing the employability of young people and those with special needs. This new phase will start in July 2009 for two years and a financial commitment of CHF 2.6 Million. The planning for this second phase took place on 24-27 March 2009 in the form of a workshop with representation from the Ministries of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and Education and Science, the National VET Agency, relevant NGOs and the donor community. The Swiss Cooperation Office presented the framework for the next phase and this was followed with a planning discussion for the four corresponding operational components. In this phase, AlbVET is looking to support the Government on formal system reform, the decentralisation of VET system, on the inclusion of specific courses and related services towards special needs groups, as well to encourage greater 'partnership for learning'. A system component in the form of support to capacity building and quality initiatives of regional and central stakeholders is backed up by an advisor in VET policy, systems, organizational and institutional development. Upon approval by Swiss Cooperation Head Office in Berne, and with the signing of MoU between the Governments of



Photo: U.S. Ambassador John L. Withers II met with the staff of the Appellate Court in Gjirokastra where he participated in the opening of Albania's first public information office for courts. The joint USAID-OSCE project encourages Albanian courts to focus on delivery of open and transparent services like the ones that will be delivered through this new office.

remodeling was a cooperative effort by the OSCE Presence in Albania, USAID and the Gjirokastra Appeals Court.

State Publication Centre renovated and furnished

The State Publication Centre, finally operational owing to an EC-funded project of some 400,000 Euros, was inaugurated on 27 March 2009. The Centre has been fully renovated and furnished in line with EU standards, facilitating public access to legal publications and research, as well as enhancing transparency and awareness of legislation. Before the implementation of this project, there was limited space for a professional operation of the Centre and the air was constantly polluted by the chemicals used for the printing equipment. The Centre

also needed additional, equipment to enhance its inadequate capacity to deal with the increased requests for publications. The refurbished Centre will serve the needs for publication and proper dissemination to the public of all legal acts of Albanian institutions. The public can easily visit the Centre, situated in a central area, and ask for specific decrees, laws or decisions from the Council of Ministers. The project started in May 2008 and finished in January 2009.

National Conference on Vocational Education and Training

Together with other donors in the VET sector and senior government officials, the European Commission Delegation participated in a National

Photo: Minister of Justice Enkelejd Alibeaj and EC Delegation Deputy Head of Mission, Luigi Brusa inaugurating of the renovated and furnished State Publication Centre on 27 March 2009



Seminar on Social Inclusion and Social Protection Process

European Commission DG Enlargement and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, held on 4 March 2009 a seminar on social protection and the social inclusion process. The aim was to inform participants on issues related to social inclusion and EU Social Protection and Social Inclusion Process experience. It was attended by, DG Enlargement/TAIEX members, central and local government officials, social security institutions and providers, MPs, NGOs and trade Union representatives. The seminar was opened by Luigi Brusa, Deputy Head of Mission from EC Delegation to Albania and Minister, Anastas Duro. Representatives of DG Employment shared their experience on Economic, employment and social policies as set in the EU context and the lessons learnt in the EU-enlargement process. The discussions focused on: poverty, targeting challenges, regional disparities, cultural diversities, pension system and health reforms.



Photo: National Conference on Vocational Education and Training, held in Tirana on 31 March 2009

Conference on Vocational Education and Training, held in Tirana on 31 March 2009. The Conference sought to go beyond the identification and analysis of needs and gaps in the education system vis-à-vis labour market demands, and instead develop practical solutions to assist further reform efforts. Addressing the participants, the Head of Delegation to Tirana, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan, said that they will continue its support as “we regard education a matter of utmost importance and a primary source of sustainability for a country’s development. However, the European Commission cannot in itself reform Albania’s education system, nor can the donor community alone. Albania needs to take the lead in the creation of a practice oriented vocational education and training system that relates directly to the

skills needed on the labour market”. The EC has long assisted in closing the gaps between labour market demand and supply that emerged in the 1990s and has dedicated up to 9 million Euros so far for the construction and reconstruction of vocational schools, for the provision of didactical materials, for the drafting of new curricula and the enhancement of human resources. In the framework of the SAA process, the EC will continue its support in this area with a further 7 million Euros in the coming years.

Italy supports Tirana’s Centre for substance abuse prevention

The inauguration ceremony of the drug treatment centre, held on 5 March 2009, was attended by the Deputy Mayor

of Tirana, Eduard Shalsi, the Italian Ambassador Saba D’Elia, the Director of Rome’s Municipal Agency for Drug Addicts, Guglielmo Masci and the Head of Development Co-operation Office of the Italian Embassy, Flavio Lovisololo. The project is a joint initiative, financed by the Italian Co-operation through a 800,000 Euros grant, and implemented by the Municipalities of Rome and Tirana. The initiative includes the assessment of existing services for drug users and the creation of Tirana’s Centre for substance abuse prevention that will operate in the field of prevention, offering psychosocial support and information on risks connected with substance abuse. Two new social centres, a day care and a reception one, will be also set up by the Italian NGO Emmanuel Community. The project, also financed by the Italian Development Co-operation, aims at promoting Health care system in Lezha and Shkodra, through the prevention of alcoholism and drug addiction among youth.

Visit of the WHO Director General

WHO Director General, Dr. Margaret Chan, and all 6 WHO Regional Directors visited Albania from 23-25 March. Dr. Chan met with President Bamir Topi, Prime Minister Sali Berisha and the Minister of Health Anila Godo to discuss the health reforms in the country, underlining the role of WHO in supporting the Government’s efforts in this direction. The discussions covered areas such as the need for a multi-sectoral approach to address the key challenges facing the country, and the importance of safe guarding the social sector during the current global financial and economic crisis, to protect the poor and vulnerable. She also met with the United Nations Country Team to discuss the latest developments and trends affecting the country and the Delivering as One UN efforts of Albania. Dr. Chan met also with Ms. Kori Udovicki, Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS and UNDP Representatives from the region during their annual meeting in Tirana. “The big challenges facing all of us –

Photo: The new centre inaugurated by the Deputy Mayor, Eduard. Shalsi, the Italian Ambassador, Saba. D’Elia, and the Head of Development Co-operation Office of the Italian Embassy, Flavio. Lovisololo.





Photo: WHO Director General, Dr. Margaret Chan and WHO Regional Directors during their meeting with Prime Minister Berisha

climate change, the financial crisis and its impact on vulnerable communities among others - require further collaboration and there is no choice for the UN system but to do more with fewer resources.” said Dr. Chan.

OSCE Presence in Albania to launch project to enhance role of women in governance

On 9 March 2009, the OSCE Presence launched a three-year project to enhance the role of women in governance. Project activities will focus on promoting women leaders with the aim of increasing the number of women elected to the Albanian Assembly and in local government. The initiative follows the Albanian Assembly’s approval of the Gender Equality Law and the Electoral Code, and builds on the aims of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Eradication of Domestic Violence. The project launch featured addresses by Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Anastas Duro, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Henk van den Dool, the Head of the OSCE Presence, Ambassador Robert Bosch, and by the Head of Development Co-operation from Swedish SIDA in Tirana, Peter Troste. The three-year project is funded by the Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Sweden.

Minister of Health, Anila Godo, visits the Italian Social and Educational Centre Primavera

On 13 March 2009, the Albanian Minister of Health, Anila Godo, visited the NGO CICa Social Centre Primavera, financed by the Italian Co-operation through a 500,000 Euros grant. The project aims to promote the social integration and independence of young people with mental and development disabilities. The initiative foresees the strengthening of the social-sanitary Centre “Primavera”, and the building of the first specialized rehabilitation service for disabled minors in Tirana, also through the training of local staff and the strengthening of the activities of the local association Endrra pa Faj.



Photo: The woman centre Passi Leggeri

Photo: Monsignor Viniçio Albanesi, Minister of Health Anila Godo, Italian Ambassador to Tirana Saba D'Elia, and CICa Head of project, Riccardo Sollini



Swedish Deputy Minister for Development Cooperation Visit to Albania

Deputy Minister for Development Cooperation of Sweden, Joakim Stymne, visited Tirana from 25 to 27 March 2009. The aim was to meet with a number of Albanian development cooperation partners and other donors agencies present in the country. The representatives of the Government met included: Deputy Prime Minister Genc Pollo, the Minister of Finance Ridvan Bode, the Minister of European Integration, Majlinda Bregu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lulzim Basha. Mr. Stymne paid also visit on the site to the local NGOs operating in Durres and receiving financial support from Swedish cooperation funds. One of the highlights of the mission was the signing of an Agreement between Sweden and Albania on Development Cooperation that will pave the way to the implementation of the new Country Strategy for cooperation until 2012.



Photo: The consultative meeting organized on 20 March 2009 with participation of representatives from ADA, SDC, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy, and DSDC to assist with the design of the Regional Development and decentralization programme in the Northern Albania Programme.

Decentralization and regional development consultative meeting

Austrian and Swiss Development Cooperation are supporting the decentralization reform and the regional development in Northern Albania by preparing a common Regional Development Program for Lezha and Shkodra. On 20 March 2009, a consultation meeting was held with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy, and DSDC participated. The aim was to assist with the design of the Regional Development and decentralization programme in the Northern Albania. Participants were invited to suggest activities that would help bring change at the regional and local level. One of the recommendations was to define the role and competencies of the regions as well as develop the cooperation among regions and local government units.

Women as a resource in Local Development: Italy Promotes the Woman Centre of Shkodra

On 20 March 2009, the Italian Consul to Shkodra, the Deputy Mayor of Shkodra, Ahmet Omi and various representatives from civil society inaugurated the woman centre Passi Leggeri financed through a 700,000 Euros grant from the Italian Development Co-operation, and

implemented by the Italian NGO COSPE. The project intends to help the social and economic strengthening of women, promoting the realization of local gender policies in the Shkodra district. More specifically, the initiative wants to promote economic activities related to social community values, rehabilitate three centres and train 150 women on how to start up a company.

USAID Launches New Initiative to Support Young Agribusiness Entrepreneurs

In March, USAID launched its latest initiative aimed at helping young men and women living in rural areas to engage in the agribusiness sector. The RASTI program (the network of Agro-Entrepreneurial Youth for Markets and Innovation) was launched at a ceremony held at the Lushnja branch of the Faculty of Agribusiness and Economics, at the Agricultural Technology Transfer Centre. "Sadly, more and more young people are leaving rural Albania and looking for jobs in Tirana and in neighbouring countries due to the erroneous notion that agriculture is a profession for the poor," said USAID's Programme Officer, John Brannaman, at the event. "This programme helps prepare young people in rural communities to engage in agriculture as a business, and to do it in a professional way." RASTI is a joint effort of USAID, the



Photo: Students from the Agriculture University in Lushnje participated in the first RASTI training session supported by USAID. The program helps young people in rural communities understand how to utilize the latest market intelligence tools and concepts of successful agriculture entrepreneurship, as well as create effective business plans to support their family businesses.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection, the Faculty of Economics and Agribusiness of the Agriculture University of Tirana. The programme will also partner with leading financial institutions like Opportunity Albania, Raiffeisen Bank, and ProCredit Bank that will help train young people, evaluate business plans developed by students, and assist young entrepreneurs in their business ventures. This spring, RASTI will begin working in the Shkodra and Korca regions. Photos from the event are available at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/jmestrada/ENTREPRENEURSHIPANIDEAWHOS/ETIMEHASCOME?authkey=Gv1sRgCMaKl7P69fakxwE&feat=email#>

Photo: Opening of Tourism Office in Tirana in the presence of the German Ambassador, Bernd Borchardt and the Mayor of Tirana, Edi Rama

The first Tourism Office opens in Tirana

On 27 March 2009, the German Ambassador, Bernd Borchardt, and the Mayor of Tirana, Edi Rama inaugurated the first Tourism Office in Tirana. Its aim is to promote the capital city to local and international tourists. The premises also accommodate the City Marketing Office. The opening was the result of 2 years work by the Municipality of Tirana and GTZ. The Office is now in a central location (behind the National History Museum), easily accessible to tourists.

OSCE regional conference addresses migration management, linkages with economic, social and environmental policies

On 16 and 17 March 2009, government representatives, international organizations, civil society and business met to discuss migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies at the Second Preparatory Conference for the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum held in Tirana. Some 150 participants, including the Special Secretary for

the Development of International Programmes at the Greek Foreign Ministry Alexandros Tsiatsiamis, who is representing the Greek OSCE Chairmanship, and the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Goran Svilanovic. The theme of the event addressed the security implications of ineffective migration management - a priority of the 2009 OSCE Greek Chairmanship. The event will prepare for the second part of the 17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum that will be held in Athens from 18 to 20 May.

OSCE holds seminars on self-regulation

The OSCE Presence held four Expert Seminars on self-regulation in Tirana, Shkodra, Vlora and Gjirokastra between March 23 and March 27 2009. The Expert giving the seminars was Adeline Hulin, from the Office of the OSCE Representative for the Freedom of Media in Vienna. The aim was to promote the concept of media self-regulation through concrete examples of how self-regulatory associations work in different European countries, as well as examples of media ethics complaints and how they had been solved by



self-regulatory bodies of different European media. The seminars are part of a project financed by the EC Delegation in Albania to raise the awareness of Albanian media regarding self-regulation and facilitate the creation of a media self-regulatory body. The OSCE Presence and the Tirana office of the Friedrich Ebert are implementing partners for this project.

OSCE Presence inaugurates rehabilitation centre in Gerdec

On 25 March 2009, the OSCE Presence organized the inauguration event of the centre for rehabilitation, education and consultation for children and women in need in Gerdec. The project was a joint effort by the OSCE Presence and the NGO Vision. The Centre was opened by the Head of Presence, Ambassador Robert Bosch. The project entailed the construction, equipment and staffing of a Centre. The building will serve as a kindergarten, a women centre, and a doctor's room for both the kindergarten and the women centre. The project aimed at helping the children of Gerdec to recover and prepare them psychologically for a normal school cycle. Women will be provided with vocational training, thus increasing their opportunities for employment. Both women and children, will also receive health care consultation by an experienced physician who will regularly visit the centre and offer medical assistance.

Photo: Adeline Hulin of the Office of OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, gives a seminar on aspects of self-regulation to journalists in Tirana, 23 March 2009. (OSCE/ Fabiola Haxhillari)



Photo: Children of Gerdec village, near Tirana, which was hit by a deadly ammunition blast on 15 March 2008, celebrate the opening of a centre for themselves and women in need, co-financed by the OSCE Presence in Albania. Photo taken on 25 March 2009 (OSCE/ Fabiola Haxhillari)

European Commission dedicates more than 3 million Euros to the ruined village of Gërdec

A Financing Agreement for a 3.1 million Euros project was signed on 9 March 2009 by the European Commission and the Ministry of European Integration. The main areas of intervention will be infrastructure, education, water supply and environment. First interventions will be made in infrastructure. Specifically, the main road as well as the internal roads of the Marqinet 1 Village and the Llanaj neighbourhood will be rebuilt. Second, a new school that will include a sport yard and a gymnastic training building will be built to replace the old existing one. Third, the water supply in the village will be greatly improved. Measures will be taken for safe and affordable drinking water for the inhabitants. Furthermore, adequate sanitation infrastructure will be put in place by reconstructing the water supply system and sewerage system of the Marqinet 1 village and the Llanaj neighbourhood. Issues such as pollution control, water supply protection as well as environmental monitoring in the areas affected by the explosion will be major parts of the project. These activities were designed on the basis of the 'road-map' drawn by the Council of Ministers for the reconstruction of Gërdec.

OECD DAC Peer Review by Belgium and Netherlands on Switzerland in Albania

Switzerland is being reviewed by the OECD/DAC. At the start of March 2009, the Dutch and Belgian delegation (plus an observer from Poland), together with two representatives from the DAC Secretariat in Paris, visited Tirana. The five member delegation of 5 persons met with senior Ministry officials, the Department for Strategy and Donor Coordination, regional and local authorities, civil society and the wider donor community. Their preliminary results stated that overall "across the board the Swiss co-operation (in Albania) is seen as a reliable, serious, flexible, considerate and open partner, actively engaged in donor-government coordination, responsive to needs, and with specific know-how". The delegation will publish their final report in autumn 2009.

Photo: The OECD/DAC Peer Review Team at the Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania, on 10 March 2009.



In-country Missions

Italy

From 16 March to 29 May, a mission from an Italian expert for the Rehabilitation and equipment of five Polyclinics in Tirana, Korca, Peshkopi and Gjirokastra is taking place in order to provide technical assistance. The programme's aim is to improve the functioning of these Polyclinics through restructuring the infrastructures and by providing the biomedical equipment. The mission will provide support to the Ministry of Health, monitoring and supervising the quality of works.

World Bank

A World Bank Mission for the Land Administration & Management Project (LAMP) and Tirana Regulatory Plan Project visited Albania from 30 March to 8 April 2009. The aim was to conduct the Mid-Term Review of LAMP, as well as to discuss the draft completion report of Tirana Regulatory Plan project with the Ministry of Public Works and Tirana Municipality.

A World Bank Mid-Term Review mission for the Business Environment & Institutional Strengthening Project (BERIS) and Investment Climate Assessment (ICA) Dissemination took place from 24 to 28 March 2009. The aim was to supervise the progress of BERIS project. Meetings with officials from the Ministry of Economy discussed the progress of the project and to carry out the mid-term review. A workshop was held to discuss the findings of ICA report.

A World Bank Programmatic Poverty Assessment Mission took place from 16 to 30 March 2009. The aim was to make progress on the joint work with INSTAT on updating the evolution of living conditions in Albania. On this framework, the mission will work with INSTAT to analyze recently completed Living Standard Survey data.

A Mid-Term Review Mission for the Health System Modernization Project took place from 9 to 15 March 2009. The aim was to conduct a detailed supervision of all activities under the project. The mission was focused on the following areas: progress towards the development objectives and key performance indicators; overall implementation progress; and detailed

review of the agreed implementation schedule, focusing on the completion of previously agreed benchmarks.

A World Bank Mission for the Accountability for Better Governance Analytical Advisory Activities took place from 9 to 13 March 2009. The team conducted the preparations for the analytical work under the analytical work for Accountability for Better Governance. The aim was to meet with officials at the Ministry of Education to be updated with the plans to implement governance reforms in the education sector; to finalize the school sampling strategy; and to identify a suitable survey firm/data collection agency to collect the baseline and follow-up surveys.

governmentdonor*dialogue*

As of October 2008, the UNDP is the current Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat.

Any comments regarding Government-Donor Dialogue (both positive and negative) are strongly encouraged – and we promise to print all such comments received!

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) (agerxhani@km.gov.al) by the 5th of every month. An ideal word count for submissions is around 100 words.

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The design of Government-Donor Dialogue Newsletter is financially supported by the OSCE Presence in Albania

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