



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
Presence in Albania**

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**AMBASSADOR EUGEN WOLLFARTH'S REMARKS AT CLOSING EVENTS OF  
PROJECT ON MODERNIZING ADDRESS AND CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEM**

*17 February 2011*

Prime Minister,  
Minister Basha,  
Deputy Minister Poni,  
Ambassador Sequi,  
Excellencies,  
Honoured guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, good morning.

Today's event is to mark the formal closing of an OSCE Presence in Albania project on modernizing the Albanian address and civil registration system, one that has provided clear and positive outcomes for Albanian citizens.

Made possible through a 2.5 million Euros EU-funded project with additional funding from the OSCE and the United States 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 provided the 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 secure and trustful.

Let me recall that the Civil Registry provided also data for the voters' lists in past elections, like the last Parliamentary Elections, which, according to the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report had significantly improved from previous elections.

Now local government elections are going to take place on 8 May 2011. The more modern Civil registry together with the new address system provided the basis for more accurate voters' lists.

Just like administration at all levels, all political parties now need to take part in assuming their duties in the preparations leading up to Election Day.

The citizens of this country deserve absolutely nothing less.

Let me also recall that a Civil Registry is by nature a work in progress, it must be constantly updated and maintained and cleaned from duplicates and errors.

That was why special attention was given to the capacity building of the General Directorate of Civil Status, with tailored IT trainings, the introduction of a service management system and the installation of the server room.

Local civil status offices were also supported through trainings and printing of easy-to-handle manuals.

While computerized data can greatly improve and accelerate services to the Albanian public, digitalization in the age of the worldwide web also poses dangers.

Personal data is by definition intimate and private and the knowledge on individuals it contains can be abused.

Accordingly, the collection of this data must be regulated by law.

This is why the project provided expertise on the drafting of a new Civil Status Law. This was done with the support of experts from the Council of Europe.

The collection of private data by state and private institutions must also be supervised by an independent institution.

That again is why the project contributed to the creation and capacity building of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

Another achievement is that 90% of local government units now have electronic address system established. The remaining 10% are in their final stages.

As a result, this now makes it possible to connect about 75% of the population to an address. Much work has been done, but more work lies ahead.

The data and technical possibilities to give every citizen an individualised address are now there. The work to bring civil registry data and address data together, so that every citizen can say where he or she lives, has now to be done.

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.

I would like to thank the members of the Steering Board, for their support and commitment to the project, in particular, Deputy Minister Poni, for driving this project throughout this period and even before.

I would also like to thank the Delegation of the European Union for providing the financial support to this project and for also being such excellent project partners.

Can we finally wish the Ministry of Interior every success in these next phases.

Thank you.

ENDS  
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY