

governmentdonordialogue

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

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Photo: Annual review of Swedish Development Programme in Albania

Annual review of Swedish Development Programme in Albania

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) met on 10 February 2010 with the Department of Strategies and Donor Coordination (DSDC) and relevant line ministries to evaluate the results of Sida supported programmes and to identify potential areas for further assistance. The Swedish country strategy for Albania 2009-2012 is focused on natural resources, environment and democratic governance and human rights. Programmes supporting these sectors are carried out in line with the NSDI and foster a stronger democratic state by also improving the country's prospects for EU membership. DSDC Director, Valbona Kuko emphasized that Sweden annually gives 8 million Euro to Albania, and because the country is in a transitional phase from

low to middle- income, it is particularly important for Albania to absorb and make best use of the existing bilateral grant programmes. She said that a more focused support was needed to have better results and drew attention on line ministries to be more efficient in proposing projects. The Head of Sida, Britta Olofsson said that co-operation could grow stronger and that Sweden is ready to be a partner in the implementation of the Harmonisation Action Plan. Programme Officer, Niklas Mattson, presented Sida's current and planned projects related to environment and explained the link between Sida's activities and the EU Water Framework Directive, saying that Sida could provide further support in this area, where the Government had made many efforts to streamline its work. In addition to this,

Sida's work on democratic governance, gender equality and human rights and its support and engagement with a number of Government institutions and civil society were also presented and discussed. Line ministries and institutions welcomed Sida support, spoke about relevant sector plans and discussed potential areas of support. It was agreed that DSDC should co-ordinate a shortlist of areas for support as the joint objective remains to strive towards EU accession and stronger democratic governance. Future co-operation shall prioritize programmes based on the sector strategies and be designed through a programme-based approach. A follow-up process will be established with relevant partner institutions. Sida and DSDC are preparing a joint training on PBA and Aid Effectiveness.

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A message from the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat

Dear readers,

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to welcome you to the February edition of Government-Donor Dialogue Newsletter, jointly produced by the Department for Strategy and Co-ordination and the Donor Technical Secretariat. I hope you will agree with me that this publication offers a great opportunity for information sharing between Government and donors. I know that I find something interesting to read inside every issue!

As I believe Valbona Kuko, the DSDC Director, mentioned in the January edition, Government-Donor Dialogue is now being produced in Albanian and English. As you will have noticed, we have now started to include so called 'editorials' in order to develop the publication further. From the feedback we've received so far, we know that you want us to make it a little bit more than just a news update service. We are also planning to introduce a profile section in future issues featuring a key development partners. So please let us know if you would be interested in being featured.

However, any edition of Government-Donor Newsletter will only ever be as good as you want it to be and that is why we hope you will continue to let us know how we can do this. So tell us what you think! On a wider front, there seems to be a lot going on as always in the area of aid harmonisation and donor co-ordination. In the implementation of the Harmonization Action Plan (HAP), the DSDC has already been hard at work to show how they will fulfil the requirements of the HAP. The DTS has already received a number of donor responses. However, we look forward to receiving further responses from donors on this crucial topic very shortly. Similarly, the recent procurement assessment and preliminary findings continue to play a key issue for Government and donors alike. I think the assessment should be seen as an analysis that will result in recommendations to strengthen the public procurement system. Such



recommendations could focus on developing capacity, establishing an Internal Control Framework and in further modernizing auditing systems. We hear that the final report will be ready by mid-May and I think we are readily anticipating the final recommendations. The bottom line to all of this has to be that the donor community assists the Government to fulfil its commitment to bring its public procurement systems in line with EU standards.

The DSDC has already indicated that a Government-Donor roundtable is being planned for sometime in May. I know all donors will be waiting expectantly for this key episode in the donor co-ordination calendar. The DTS stands ready to assist the DSDC so that this year's event the most successful ever!

So a lot is clearly going on. That is why the DTS structures remain ready to provide the necessary support in order to consolidate and further strengthen the Governments continued leadership in the aid harmonization and donor co-ordination issues.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support to over the last six months and looking forward to continued co-operation in the months ahead. I hope you enjoy this edition!

Robert

Ambassador Robert Bosch
Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat
and Head of OSCE Presence in Albania



Photo: Sida-supported Development of Albanian Association of Communes phase-out project

Development of the Albanian Association of Communes Phase-Out Project

The Sida-supported Development of Albanian Association of Communes (DAAC) project has been in operation since 2004, when a partnership was formed with the international unit of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SKL International. Through the first DAAC project, sustainable structures and systems were put in place to ensure that the Albanian Association of Communes (AAC) would become an effective representative organization. The rationale of the phase-out (2009 – 2012) was to create improved conditions for citizens. The aim is to strengthen the AAC to become financially and operationally self-sufficient, whilst also helping the Association to support its members with new services related to EU integration. The DAAC Phase-Out has a group of new components to position the AAC as a 'spearhead' in EU-accession preparations for communes. The project is paying careful attention to sensitive issues such as good governance, transparency and public participation, environment policies and gender mainstreaming. The project is making use of existing relations and is working to establish new ones with partners in Albania.

For more information contact acc@abcom.al

IPS Co-ordination Group Meeting

IPS Co-ordination group held a meeting on 26 February 2010 chaired by Minister of State, Genc Pollo and attended by Ministry of European Integration, Finance and DSDC officials. The aim was to discuss the project-fiches prepared by line ministries

in co-operation with Infrastructure Project Facility (IPF), to be submitted in the fourth round of IPF for the Western Balkans. The IPF aim is to support the development of infrastructure in areas of transport, environment, energy and the social sectors, and to help create the conditions for sustainable economic development in the region. There were nine project-fiches that Albania will submit for this round in March 2010 in the areas of Energy, Health and Environment. Project-fiches will be assessed and decision will be taken by a panel comprising of European Commission officials and representatives of the main European financial institutions.

Inter-Ministerial Committee held a meeting on visa liberalization

Prime Minister Sali Berisha chaired the latest meeting of Inter-ministerial Committee on visa liberalization, held on 16 February 2010. In his opening speech, he emphasized that visa liberalization is turned into a key factor of change in the positive direction of the country. The production of biometric passport, the full modernization of the integrated border control, the approval of important new laws for fight against organized crime were some of the steps towards the fulfilment of its obligations. The meeting discussed the findings of an EU mission on 8-12 February 2010 with the aim of assessing the progress made in fulfilling the requirements related to security and public order. The mission reported progress compared to 2009 in terms of approximation of EU legislation. EU experts will draft the reports and send for comments to national institutions.

Strategic Planning Committee reviews MTBP 2011-2013

On 17 February 2010, the Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Sali Berisha held its 34th meeting to review the Medium Term Budget Programme for 2011-2013 and the Policy Priority Notes.

He said that Albania should adopt an aggressive policy for cutting the public debt and paying back the credit of 2009 within 2010. Prime Minister underlined that such a policy would improve country's assessment in international financial markets and influences the Eurobond, issued for the first time in the country. Ministry of Finance introduced the new ceilings for the MTBP 2011-2013, stressing that some national roads like Arber Road, Tirana-Elbasan, and Qukës-Qafë Plloçë will continue to be a priority. Some sectors will have an increase, such as education, health and transport, as well as defence since Albania remains fully committed to its NATO obligations.

The meeting recommended that a full privatisation of assets was seen as a tool for cutting unnecessary expenditure and opening up space for further foreign investments and public-private partnerships.

SWG on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence

The Sector Working Group on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence held its 5th meeting on 26 February 2010 with the participation of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, DSDC and donor representatives.

It was chaired by the Deputy Minister Filloreta Kodra. The meeting discussed revisions to the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, the Ministry's 2010 work plan on gender, donor commitments in 2010, lessons learnt in relation to women's participation in June's parliamentary elections.

The meeting noted that women participation in parliamentary elections was still low. UNIFEM and OSCE presented their findings on the women awareness on their representation and voters education. The Ministry presented its priorities for 2010, focusing on increasing women employment and strengthening their position in society.

Revision of the strategy and legislation, supporting the initiatives that influence the increasing of women participation in decision-making process, organizing a Regional Conference on Women Stereotypes and increasing the role of media in promoting gender issues were some of the recommendations made.

Serious Crimes Court constructed through assistance from the European Commission

With a 6.5 million Euros grant from the European Commission, on 3 February 2010 it was inaugurated the construction of the Serious Crimes Court in Tirana. Almost three years after the start of the work, the Court provides conditions to carry out work in a efficient and professional manner. The construction was only one of the assistance initiatives of the European Commission targeting the functioning of the justice system in Albania. During the inauguration ceremony, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan said that infrastructure works were necessary to improve the efficiency and transparency of the justice system. He said that "an adequate court infrastructure alone is not enough to overcome the weaknesses in the Albanian judiciary and to help it serve Albania's citizens well. Judicial institutions should be depoliticised, independent and accountable, and individuals working in the justice system – law enforcement officers, prosecutors, lawyers, judges – should be guided by the "rule of law" irrespective of their political convictions or of any economic or other personal interest." he said.

Annual conference of Albanian Tourism Association

The 2nd Annual Conference of the Albanian Tourism Association (ATA) was organized on 18 February 2010 in co-

operation with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports and GTZ. The meeting was attended by businesses, donors and government representatives. Minister Ferdinand Xhaferaj stressed the infrastructure improvement especially in the tourist areas has highly influenced the growth of tourism and focus will now shift to improving its quality. GTZ Albania has funded the project on Institutional Strengthening of Tourism Private Sector in Albania during 2007-2008 and the establishing of ATA through including all actors and is helping to strengthen its role. The Conference focused on tourism industry developments in 2009 and presented the 2010 action plan for the Albanian tourism private sector. Participants also shared success stories of tourism businesses in Albania, steps for strengthening the Public-Private Partnership and the initiatives on service quality improvements through USAID-funded projects. For the first time, the "Business of the Year in Tourism" prize was issued by ATA and MTYCS, aiming to recognize the business contribution to the quality of Albanian tourism. The Tirana International Airport won the prize as a business that is clearly influencing the increase of number of visitors to Albania through offering a quality service and improving the image of the country. The other winner was the community of Theth village guest houses for creating a unique tourist destination.



Photo: Annual conference of Albanian Tourism Association

Photo: Joseph C. Williams, USAID/Albania Mission Director, delivers remarks at a reception hosted by U.S. Ambassador John L. Withers, II (Photo credit: US Embassy/Robert Manga)



U.S. Embassy Tirana Welcomes New USAID Mission Director

On 17 February 2010, U.S. Ambassador John L. Withers, II hosted a reception to introduce the new Mission Director for the U.S. Agency for International Development programme in Albania, Joseph C. Williams. The reception was attended by Minister of State and Parliamentary Affairs, Genc Pollo, and several Government officials. Mr. Williams is responsible for the overall management and accountability of all USAID programmes in Albania. USAID/Albania programmes strengthen governmental accountability and transparency, reduce corruption, increase private sector competitiveness, and improve the delivery of quality healthcare. USAID/Albania also implements the 15.7 million USD Stage II Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Threshold programme. Since joining USAID 23 years ago, he has been assigned in Lesotho, Egypt, Nicaragua, Uganda, the Hungary Regional Mission, Nepal, Indonesia, Pakistan and Washington.

JICA gives a 5.5 Million Euro grant for emergency centres

Minister of Health, Petrit Vasili and representative from the Balkan Office for Japanese Agency for International Cooperation, Saturo Kurosava signed on 3 February 2010 a Grant Agreement for the project entitled: Improving medical equipments and supplies of regional emergency centres. The Japanese Government grant amounts to 5.5 million Euros and aims to rehabilitate 14

emergency centres 14 regional emergency centres include those in Lezha, Kukës, Dibra, Durres, Elbasan, Fier, Berat, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Korca, Lushnja and Saranda as well as emergency centres at the Pediatric Service in University Hospital of Tirana and emergency centres in Tirana. The centres will be provided with almost 47 pieces of new equipment, including ambulances, diagnostics sets, scanners and other medical tools needed in emergency situation. Japanese Government has continuously supported health sector in Albania aiming to improve the quality the health service and reduce mortality rate. The signing of such grant comes at the right moment when the health care in the country is undergoing reforms and improving its quality and performance is a high priority.

TIKA supports renovation of the Muslim Community's administration building

The administration building of the Muslim community was renovated with TIKa assistance. A new look is now given to Muslim Community's administration building in Tirana. In the four-storey building, roof, floor, interior and exterior with heating, electricity and communications systems were renovated, while as in the interior and exterior parts of the building examples of traditional Turkish arts were performed. The high wall in front of the glass pane placed in the interior is now stained with glass tiles made by Turkish artists. The work was met with appreciation by Muslim Community

Introducing a new ICT project

On 26 February 2010, the Local Project Appraisal Committee held a meeting with representatives from UNDP, NAIS, Microsoft Albania and DSDC to present the project Introducing ICT Applications at Local Level and Enhancing Citizens' Participation.

Implemented by UNDP, the project aims at building local government capacities in two municipalities through E-municipality. The cost of the project is 200,000 USD from which 150,000 USD are ensured from UN core funds and the gap of 50,000 will be filled with the support of other partners.

At the start of the project an assessment will be made to identify two pilot municipalities that meet the criteria. The project will be suitable to municipalities of average size that are equipped with computers and located near UNDP offices. The Project's Terms of Reference and the number of the services to be automated will be developed during the assessment phase.

The need to repeat the project in other areas and connect all in a network at a later stage is foreseen in the assessment phase which is important as it gives the municipalities the chance to compete for the project.



officials and the public.

President Bamir Topi, Prime Minister Berisha, ambassadors welcomed the work. Muslim Community's President Selim Muça, thanked TIKA's Programme Co-ordinator in Tirana Dr. Ali Ozgun Ozturk and expressed satisfaction for the co-operation between the two countries.

OSCE-organized forums across Albania create networking opportunities for women

On 5 February 2010, the final in a first series of regional forums for female leaders in political and public life, organized by the OSCE Presence in Albania, concluded in Shkodra.

The Shkodra forum and earlier meetings held in Tirana, Korca, Vlora and Gjirokastra gathered women who are active in government, public institutions and civil society. Female MPs and senior central and local government officials discussed how to achieve a broader participation of women in all spheres of political and public life, and how to strengthen women's skills. The forums also facilitated co-operation and information exchange among women in line with the objectives of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence.

"These forums strive to encourage the active participation of women in the electoral process and to increase the capacities of female candidates and politicians. This way, elected women and female candidates will become a lobbying power and make public authorities more responsive to women's needs and requests," Filloreta Kodra, the Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, told participants.

The forums are part of a three-year Presence project, financed by the Swedish and Dutch governments, that aims to enhance women's role in governance.



Photo: USAID Officer, Stephen Herbaly, and the Mayor of Fier, Baftjar Zaqaq, officially opened the new electronic tax administration office in Fier. The software will make tax services more efficient and effective (Photo credit: LGPA Programme).

New Tax System in Fier Improves Public Services

On 23 February 2010, USAID and the Mayor of Fier, Baftjar Zaqaq, launched a new computerized tax system for the municipality of Fier. The system developed through USAID's Local Governance Programme in Albania (LGPA) programme, will provide more efficient and effective administration of tax collections and services that will lead to greater tax revenue for the city and improved services for citizens of Fier. With the new computerized system, the tax department will more accurately be able to calculate tax bills and track tax payments, and even develop the necessary revenue projections and analyses so important for city planners and officials.

Establishment of the modern blood centre in Vlora Hospital

With TIKA medical assistance, the regional blood centre at Vlora Hospital, will be opened to serve the cities of Vlora, Berat, Lushnja, Fier, Tepelena, Saranda and Gjirokastra. The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013 stresses the improvement of health care and ensuring safe blood transfusions. The Centre was a main priority, for which the

Ministry of Health has requested support from TIKA. During expert guided investigations, equipment parts needed for the establishment of the Centre, laboratory, the room where blood is collected and extracted, blood processing, quality inspection are retained. All necessary medical equipments to be used in medical rooms were obtained and delivered to the Centre. The establishment of Vlora Hospital Blood Centre is the first health project carried out by TIKA. Hospital officials, by stating that the new established Blood Centre is now the most modern Blood Bank in Albania expressed their gratitude to TIKA for their support.



Photo: Establishment of the modern blood centre in Vlora Hospital with assistance from TIKA

In-country Missions

Italy

General Directorate for Co-operation to Development/ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In February 2010, five experts from the Italian-Albanian Technical Steering Committee visited Albania in the framework of the Italy-funded project Water supply/demand assessment in Southern Albania. The initiative aims to assess the water resources in relation to the development processes. The initiative provides a trust fund to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for water supply/demand assessment and other related feasibility studies.

World Bank

New Project in Agriculture Sector and Support for Integrated Water Resources Management, Identification Mission took place from 22 February to 5 March 2010 - In response to a request from the Government, a mission visited Albania for the identification of a new project in the agriculture sector, and to follow up on the Government's request for support on integrated water resources management. The aim was to gather information needed to identify the new operation.

Social Service Delivery Project (SSDP) Supervision Mission took place from 25 February to 5 March 2010 - The mission was focused on: discussions on the project implementation progress; discussions on the status of the archive building for the Social Insurance Institute (SII) as well as initiating the rehabilitation of SII regional offices; following up with Ministry of Labour senior staff on the sustainability of daily care centres, established under the social part of the SSDP.

Proposed Albania Development Policy Operation on Social Sectors from 28 February to 5 March 2010. The aim was: to further discuss with the Government about the short and medium term

programme policies in health and social protection; and to proceed with the preparation of the proposed operation to support reforms in the social sectors, and exploring ways how these policies would be supported by the World Bank.

Business Environment Reform & Institutional Strengthening Project, Technical Mission, from 21 to 28 February 2010: The aim was to follow up with the Department of Market Policies in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy on the progress of the regulatory reform component of BERIS. Meetings with various partners were held in order to: deepen the analysis of the inspection capacities; provide support to Inspection's task force and METE for inspection reform and research of inspection reforms in the ECA region; and discuss options for inspection reform and assist the Government in drafting an Action Plan inspection reform.

Mining Sector and Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), from 15 to 17 February 2010: The aims were: i) participate at the EITI Working group Meeting on 15 February, to present the findings of the Transfer pricing Study; ii) meet representatives of various NGOs to share global EITI experiences and

issues; iii) meet with key government representatives that work in the fields that are relevant to EITI, like the Tax Authority and Custom Office.

Privatization of the Power Distribution System Operators (OSSH), Partial Risk Guarantee (PRG); Energy Community for South east Europe (ECSEE APL 2); and Albania Power Sector Generation and Restructuring Project, Supervision Mission, from 10 to 26 February 2010. The aims were: (i) to supervise the PRG and follow up on pending issues; (ii) to supervise the ECSEE APL 2 to streamline implementations arrangements between KESH and OST; (iii) to assess Vloras commissioning status and (iv) to follow up with KESH's management on the results of the last Audit and Management Letter.

Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, Project Identification Mission, from 1 to 6 February 2010. The aim was to start the dialog with the Government on identifying potential areas of the Bank support for Water Supply and Sanitation Sector. Discussion with the Government sector specific issues, as well as government priorities, including the finalization of Water Supply and Sanitation National Strategy and preparation of the Master Investment Plan, were organized.

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As of 15 November 2009 until 15 May 2010, the OSCE Presence in Albania will be the Chair of the Donor Technical Secretariat.

Any comments regarding Government-Donor Dialogue (both positive and negative) are strongly encouraged

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.

Frequency

Each edition will be sent to you on the 15th of every month.

Who are the donors in Albania?

There are over 40 donors operating in Albania. To find out who they are please click [here](#).

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