



PRESENCE IN ALBANIA

**Regional Seminar on Promoting Good Governance and
Sound Financial Management at Local Level – 06/07
December 2011, Kiev**



ALBANIA

Located in South East Europe, in the Balkans region. Borders Montenegro to the northwest, Kosovo/UNMIK to the northeast, the FYR of Macedonia to the east and Greece to the south and southeast. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the west, and on the Ionian Sea to the southwest.

Capital: Tirana
Population: 3,069,275 (2001 census)
Surface: 28,748 km²
Density: 111.1/km²
GDP
Total \$13.292 billion
Per capita \$4,131



Albanian context for Good Governance activities

- EC 2011 Progress Report on Albania *"...however, overall implementation of anti-corruption measures remains insufficient. Corruption is prevalent in many areas and remains a particularly serious problem."*
- Large turn over of public officials based upon political affiliation, a lack of respect for Civil Service status that would otherwise protect certain categories of staff – *undermines institutional memory, training efforts wasted;*
- Very high levels of investment in public works – roads, waste water plants, power plants, tourism development, cement factories – that naturally raise concerns for local communities;
- Policy of Decentralisation of government functions – creates opportunity for greater local citizen engagement, greater transparency and accountability;

Context (*continued*)

- Strategic direction of country is geared towards eventual EU accession which shapes government planning and provides opportunities for influencing government centrally/locally;
- Civil Society in general is weak especially outside of the capital and generally has little influence on central and local decision making;
- Most prominent NGOs tend to be politicized and act as a tool to promote the interests of the government or used as a means to criticize it;

Context *(continued)*

- Often a lack of respect, understanding and therefore compliance by key ministries and other important institutions with Good Governance related conventions to which Albania has signed up to and transposed into local legislation;
- A weak law enforcement and judicial system means that legal pressure that could otherwise be brought to bear on government and private sector operators, etc, often not an available option for citizens;

Focus of the OSCE Mandate

- Promotion of “Good governance” and targeted projects for the strengthening of civil society;
- Anti-trafficking and anti-corruption, including supporting the implementation of relevant national strategies.

Good Governance projects

- CoE “Leadership bench mark” (2007-2009) Programme: Five Albanian LGUs were supported to apply CoE “Leadership Benchmarks” *including strategic planning and performance management as means for improving efficiency/accountability in local government planning;*
- EU follow up project 2010/11 “Strengthening the role of Civil Society in promoting Good Governance principles in the fight against corruption in local government structures and systems.”
- Ongoing support to government and civil society for implementation of the “Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environment Matters”

Overall objective

To support local state structures to more effectively engage with a broad range of stakeholders to develop local plans for sustainable and equitable service delivery, which exhibit improved levels of citizen participation, and enhanced transparency in the fight against corruption.

Outline of main activities

- Support to LGUs with short and long term strategic planning with an emphasis upon mechanisms for involving civic stakeholders;
- Training for government officials on EU-based policies, strategies and legislation emphasizing their obligations (ignorance of duties) - *European Charter of Local Self Government; National Strategy on Decentralisation; Aarhus Convention*;
- Support to mandated anti corruption institutions with training to public officials on what constitutes "Conflict of Interest", and related legislation/obligations;
- Strengthening of facilities within LGUs for public information e.g. Public Info Offices, display boards of public meetings/developments, periodic bulletins, websites;

Activities *(continued)*

- Support for mayors to attend regional (in Albania) and international events to promote “best practice’ on Good Governance approaches (NALAS);
- Capacity building support to local civil society organizations on lobbying and advocacy techniques;
- Workshops involving officials and civic representatives on analyzing specific public services and associated budget lines to identify means of making related information more understandable and transparent;
- Supporting NGO to work together through networks and the supply of technical equipment to facilitate their subsequent functioning;

Observations

- For Good Governance to have a real impact at the LGU level a prerequisite is the genuine political will and commitment of the Mayor to give it the potential to work; *(not always welcomed in some locations; sometimes local pressure on citizens who demand too much information)*.
- Needs to be continuity with public officials being retained in key positions within LGUs otherwise progress is significantly disrupted by local elections especially where change of political allegiance takes place;
- Donors need to understand that civil society organizations need to be financially supported. Notion that CSOs can somehow operate on a purely voluntary basis - not realistic especially in remoter areas.
- CSO picture often very politicized: often difficult in smaller locations to distinguish between the LGU administration and civil society because CSO reps are citizens close to the mayor, of same political party, etc.

Observations *(continued)*

- Some LGUs also very controlling of NGOs – especially where providing a municipal funded service as “can’t bite the hand that feeds you”;
- Awareness needed that most vocal voices among CSO are unlikely to be representative of the most vulnerable groups (who represents ethnic minorities, vulnerable women, disabled people or the elderly?);
- Should not forget the Private sector in the picture – often view lack of Good Governance as an opportunity to take short cuts in planning processes and avoid costly consultation processes;
- Companies committed to Corporate Social Responsibility can be a valuable partner in setting benchmarks for GG approaches and standards;
- Good Governance is the best and only option available but its a long hard road..!