



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

**REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE OSCE PRESENCE IN ALBANIA  
TO THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL, 25 MAY 2006**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Since the last report of the OSCE Presence in Albania in June 2005, important parliamentary elections have taken place in July 2005. The electoral process was "protracted and at times uncertain" as the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission noted in their Final Report of 7 November 2005. However, the process was generally calm and the outcome has been respected. The final results confirmed the election victory of the right-wing coalition led by the Democratic Party of Professor Sali Berisha. The elections brought in a new Government with a more determined and dynamic approach to tackling domestic reforms and fighting organized crime and corruption, stimulating economic and social growth and also to steering Albania swiftly towards Euro-Atlantic integration. The up-coming signing of the EU Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) can be interpreted as acknowledgement of the substantive progress being made.

Yet the Government has had to deal with an uneasy legacy and challenges: after 8 years in opposition, it has had to start directing the administration that was running idle during the 2 months of post-election inter-regnum in summer 2005; it has launched an ambitious re-structuring of government ministries; it has had to overcome the electricity crisis due to the negligence of the state-run monopoly in the autumn of 2005; it has had to prepare the state budget looking for maintenance of growth, macroeconomic stability and avoidance of social tension. The Government has also made efforts to mobilise all three branches of power to act against the corruption and organized crime.

In the areas covered by the Presence's mandate, the new administration has displayed willingness to work more closely with the Presence. The activities undertaken by the Presence are outlined in more detail in this report and they have been conducted in close consultation and co-operation with the Government and other partners in the host country as well as in co-ordination with international donors. In conducting its activities in the reporting period and in planning its activities for 2007, the Presence has taken and will continue taking full account of the declared priorities of the Government and will look to avoid duplication with other international partners.

It is worth noting that since September 2005, the Government has begun to take greater ownership in the field of donor co-ordination and has taken the lead in operationalizing the related planning and budgeting processes. The fact that nearly the entire cabinet was present at the most recent Donor Roundtable held in Tirana on 6th May 2006 clearly shows the commitment with which this Government takes its relationship with the international donor community. One notable achievement in this area by the Government has been in the development of the Integrated Planning System, a policy-making mechanism designed to streamline government/donor interaction and related planning processes. In advance of the anticipated SAA signing in June 2006, the

Government has signalled its wish for their international partners to adjust programme activities according to Government priorities.

The review of the Presence's activities since June 2005 has to be preceded by a note on two official OSCE visits to Albania – both of which helped to raise the profile of the OSCE and, more importantly, cement relations with the host country. In April 2006, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht visited Albania, holding talks with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Minister De Gucht called for the electoral reform process to begin and commended the Government on its efforts in fighting organized crime and corruption. He also congratulated Albania on the imminent signing of the SAA. Prior to the CiO's visit, the Presence hosted the Rapporteur of the Political Committee of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Mr. Wolfgang Grossruck of Austria who met with the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Assembly.

## **2. POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

The crucial political event of the reporting period was the parliamentary elections of July 2005. According to the OSCE/ODIHR final report that was issued in November 2005, the elections were judged to be partially fulfilling international standards and that "the election complied, only in part, with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections". The irregularities of the polling and deformations due to strategic voting schemes as well as the protracted electoral process underscored the need for a continued electoral reform and reducing the interference of political parties with the electoral process. The new Government that took office in early September 2005 declared its intention to ensure that the next elections meet international standards and has repeatedly committed to follow OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in pursuing the electoral reform.

Upon coming into office, the Government stated that its main aims were to tackle the endemic levels of corruption as well as to wage an effective campaign against organized crime. In both areas, the Government has acted with vigour. In March 2006, the Government's supervisory group on pyramid-scheme companies filed a lawsuit against its former head and the state telecommunications company began legal proceedings against former employees – all on the grounds of corruption. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe presented their opinion on the Government draft law on the lifting of immunity of Deputies for the purposes of prosecution for corruption - a verdict that broadly was in line with Government thinking. In April 2006, the High State Audit criticized the last Government on procurement irregularities, with the Assembly then approving a law on the public's co-operation in the fight against corruption, where citizens can report directly on suspected cases of corruption.

Particularly successful has been the governmental campaign against organized crime, with several well-known criminal gangs having been apprehended. Achievements have been welcomed by the public, and the security atmosphere has markedly improved. In March 2006, police arrested the leader and six other leading members of a criminal gang in Lushnje and in Tropoje, the last two members of a well-known gang that had been at large since 1997 were arrested. In fighting drugs, the Police has reported growing seizures of heroin and cannabis, arresting suspects implicated and sequestering the assets of the criminals. On anti-trafficking measures, in April 2006, the Assembly

passed a controversial, Government-proposed law for a three-year moratorium on all outboard motor boats, to prevent human and drug trafficking by sea.

Since coming into office, the Government has been publicly raising concerns over the ability of the General Prosecutor to undertake his role effectively given the current low-rate of criminal investigations, prosecutions and rulings to tackle corruption. In April 2006, the Assembly decided to act upon the request for a Parliamentary Inquiry Committee to investigate into the performance of the Prosecution Office. The Committee is expected to report to the Assembly by June 2006.

The Government has also started to tackle the wide-spread problem of extra-legality in immovable property. After several iterations of amendments and a President's veto, the Assembly adopted the Government-proposed law on legalization, urbanization and integration of unauthorized constructions" in April 2006. The law seems to offer the chance for the estimated more than 200,000 illegal owners to legalise their buildings and their use, including as capital-raising assets, as well as creating a new housing market within the suburbs of the main cities. Its implementation has partly deferred the restitution and compensation process and will require international assistance. The final draft of the law incorporated some of the comments made by the Presence.

The Government has also begun with changes to the regulatory bodies of the media with a stated view to suppressing piracy and other illegal practices. It has pursued the restructuring and modernizing of the National Council of Radio and Television (NCRT) and the Steering Council of the Public Radio and Television. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media provided comments to the draft law in March 2006, which both the Government and the opposition interpreted as bolstering their case. The amendments to the law were passed amidst another controversy with the opposition. The selection of members of the restructured regulatory bodies is likely to increase their diversity and representativeness, if properly managed.

The overall political situation began to get more polarised at the end of 2005, most visibly due to the unfolding controversy between the Government and the Municipality of Tirana over several public works pursued and financed by the latter. The Government considered these constructions illegal and ordered an enquiry, suspension and ultimately demolition of them.

Since early 2006, the situation has been affected by a political deadlock within the Assembly. The initial cause of the dispute was the opposition's request to vote for the removal of the Assembly Speaker by secret paper ballot. This was twice rejected by the ruling coalition in a vote of dubious procedural standards and as a result, the opposition launched a campaign of obstruction and disobedience within the Assembly. Although a consensus was finally reached<sup>1</sup>, the deadlock impeded efforts by the Assembly to tackle important issues such as electoral reform and lead to an unhelpful polarisation of the political scene.

On electoral reform, on December 7, 2006, the President of Albania, Alfred Moisiu, who has traditionally played an important consensus-building role in electoral affairs,

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<sup>1</sup> Secret paper ballot will be used in specific Assembly voting, until a new Electronic Voting System is installed. The Presence is planning to provide assistance in identifying and installing a system using extra-budgetary funds of its extra budgetary Assembly Project.

convened a round table of parliamentary political parties to point out the urgency of starting the process. At the end of the round table, a declaration was issued by all those present that expressed the willingness to begin electoral reform through the creation of a Parliamentary Commission with the participation of all parliamentary parties by December 2005. Although the Ad Hoc Parliamentary Committee was established in January 2006, disagreements over the right of veto for the two major parties and the composition of the Committee continued to block the proceedings of the Committee, whose mandate expired in April 2006. Political parties have continued to consult on the re-establishment of the Committee with some convergence of positions noted lately. However, by the deadline of this report no final agreement has been reached. The platform for the work on electoral reform is thus still lacking.

### **3. PRESENCE ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS**

The Presence's work in Albania throughout the reporting period has followed the principal lines of the mandate. The major activities entailed the electoral reform and support for the preparation and monitoring of the July 2005 general elections, assistance in judicial and property reform, capacity-building of the Albanian Assembly and support to the border police. It also continued to play its leading role within the donor co-ordination in Albania, together with the UNDP, the World Bank and the European Commission.

The Presence has restructured some of its main programmes and departments along its Programme Outline and the Budget Proposal for 2006. In 2006, it started its work with 2 new thematic programmes under the respective Departments, the Human Dimension and Good Governance in Economic and Environmental Issues. Both were created by restructuring the former programmes/departments of Democratization and the Rule of Law. The direction of the Presence's 4 field stations, which the Presence proposes to turn into project offices in 2007, has been concentrated under the HoMs office. The respective budgeting and recruitment work was done and a relocation of the Presence's HQ into less costly and lower maintenance premises has been prepared.

The core budget for 2006 was modestly increased by less than 4% compared to the previous year, to 3.8 Mill Euro with a view to having more resources for thematic work. However, this was partly offset by the increase of staff costs due to the raise in BLA for seconded staff. The planned total personnel strength of 120 in 2005 and of 110 in 2006 has never been fully reached, mostly due to personnel mobility, short-notice termination of several secondees' contracts and to often protracted vacancy and recruitment periods. The Presence managed relatively sizeable extra-budgetary resources, most of them under XB projects of a multi-year nature. The net disbursement under XB projects in 2005 amounted to nearly 2.3 M Euro.

### **4. SECURITY COOPERATION**

#### **4.1. Police assistance**

Working closely with the Government and the police assistance missions of the European Commission and the United States, the Presence has focused on police assistance – to both state and border police. The Presence completed the XB project of

provision of backup solar power generators to the key border crossings and handed over the equipment to the Border and Migration Police. The equipment will ensure uninterrupted communications flow between local and central police authorities, as well as providing continual supply of power at border crossing points that will assist in the computerized registering of vehicles.

The Presence completed training of 102 members of the Albanian Border and Migration Police from eleven cities on the use of border surveillance equipment. The training programme was implemented in partnership with the Training Assistance Programme (TAP) of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and completed in March 2006. The programme will be finalized with the transfer of the night vision equipment to the police. Given the need for stronger cross-border communications, the Government identified foreign language literacy training of border police officers as a priority. In co-operation with the British Council, in January 2006, the Presence began English Language training. This project will conclude in December 2006 by which time two hundred border police officers will have been trained.

Upon request of the Albanian Assembly, and in promoting the parliamentary oversight in fighting organized crime, the Presence co-organized, jointly with the Stability Pact for SEE and Austrian partners, a regional workshop on engaging SEE Parliamentarians in fighting organized crime. The workshop took place in Tirana in April 2006, and included addresses by the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Assembly of Albania. Upon the State Police request, the Presence is assisting in the Albanian authorities' campaign against cultivation of *cannabis sativa*, providing funding for and producing leaflets, posters and nationwide television commercials. The Presence also organized local debates in areas of the country where *cannabis sativa* is known to be grown.

The Presence continued to assist with bi-weekly joint cross-border meetings with Kosovo/Serbia and Montenegro (SaM) for representatives of Albanian Border Police, Kosovo/SaM Police Service, KFOR, UNMiK, and OMiK. The level of co-operation produced by these meetings has contributed in the fight against crime on both sides of the border. The Presence has also supported regular cross-border mayoral meetings between Kosovo/SaM and Serbia and Montenegro and Albania. In April 2006, these meetings were expanded to include mayors from bordering municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the first time.

The Presence, under its security co-operation programme, further assisted the Government in implementing the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy and the Action Plan to combat human trafficking and protect victims. A project jointly run by the UNHCR, IOM and the Presence on the Unified Pre-Screening of Irregular Foreigners was completed in March 2006. It entailed a series of training sessions and provision of technical assistance to increase the capacity of the border police regarding the implementation of the pre-screening system. The Albanian authorities have taken full ownership of the asylum-seekers screening process.

## **5. GOVERNANCE IN ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

This newly created programme merged elements of the former Democratization and Rule of Law programmes into a more coherent set of activities relating to governance in economic and environmental issues, property reform and aspects of anti-trafficking.

### **5.1. Property reform**

Since the end of 2004, the Presence, in co-operation with the Central Immovable Property Registration Office (IPRO) of Albania has been assisting with IPRO capacity-building and the first registration process in selected priority areas, drawing upon sizeable XB funding, from Norway and Finland. The first registration of property is the process of mapping and registering all legal rights to immovable property. Until registration is completed, it is not possible to determine the legal rights over, and boundaries of, state and private property which is a hindrance to investment. Using standard tendering and quality assurance procedures, the Presence has executed contracts to register about 30,000 properties in three districts. Future planning of the registration process is ongoing and involves consultation with the World Bank and other partners.

The Presence, with the funding from the United States, has continued to work with the State Committee for Restitution and Compensation of Property to further build its capacity in implementing the restitution and compensation law. The State Committee has been developing a methodology to calculate the value of property to be compensated by the law and the project has provided for international expertise in the process. It has assisted in producing a property valuation map for urban Tirana which is required to calculate the value of property claims to be compensated and has assisted the State Committee to implement a pilot project to test the methodology that will determine the value of agricultural and tourism land. The provision of valuation maps will be needed to go ahead with the settlement of long outstanding restitution and compensation claims and will also be of relevance in the up-coming process of legalization of more than 200.000 illegal dwellings.

### **5.2. Environment**

In co-operation with the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Affairs (OCEEA), the Presence has pursued the sub-regional programme of environmental security and is preparing a programme that will promote the aims of the Aarhus Convention in partnership with the Ministry of Environment (MoE). The Presence has been involved in a series of environment awareness-raising activities co-organized with the Government and civil society. With MoE support, the Presence helped organize a Clean Cities Day in September 2005 in six large municipalities, to raise awareness about environmental protection. With co-operation from the Ministry of Education, the Presence implemented a waste-recycling system project in several schools in Tirana and supported this project with tree planting and distribution of public information literature.

### **5.3. Economy**

In co-operation with the Ministry of the Economy, a German Development Agency and OCEEA, the Presence has run a programme on enhancing business competition and employment policies to young women and vulnerable groups. The first 44 awards for business start-up proposals from the Shkodra region have been assigned. The Presence assisted the Municipality of Shkodra in mobilising donor support in its efforts to prepare a strategic economic development plan for the region. In December 2005, through the local CSDC, the Presence concluded a series of twelve awareness-raising seminars on Albania's commitments within the World Trade Organization. The Presence supported

the publication of a guide to assist businesses in increasing international competitiveness.

#### **5.4. Good governance**

The Presence entered a series of consultations with the Government on the ways of supporting the latter's fight against corruption. The contacts are yet to produce a concrete understanding on whether and how the Government will want to use the OSCE assistance in this domain. The Presence pursued anti-corruption elements in its property registration activities which are designed to suppress the potential for corruption by adhering to standard service procurement and registration procedures and also within its work on promoting higher professional and ethical standards of the judiciary.

Within its remit on good governance, the Presence supported the Leadership Benchmark programme devised and led by the Council of Europe, with the participation of the Association of Albanian Mayors. The project aims at helping locally-elected officials to assess their own effectiveness in leadership, service delivery and community participation. From now on, local government units will be able to compare their performance against the criteria of an *ideal* local authority.

In co-operation with Municipality of Kruja, the Presence finalized the project to design a website to improve its communication with citizens by enabling the latter to receive information about the Municipality. The website will enable Kruja to promote its tourism potential, and to this end, the website will also contain a section on current cultural events, hotels and restaurants.

#### **5.5. Anti-trafficking**

Within an OCEEA-driven project and with support from the Ministry of Tourism, a Code of Conduct for tour operators was drafted by the Presence and presented to the main tour operators for comments in October 2005. The Code was part of the project on promoting self-regulation in the tourism sector in Albania to reduce use of trafficked labour force, including children. The second phase will focus on organizing a signing of the Code of Ethics for all key stakeholders with its publication for the general public.

### **6. HUMAN DIMENSION**

The Presence's work has focused on legislative and judicial reform, electoral reform and related activities, parliamentary capacity-building, support for the civil society and the development of the media

#### **6.1 Judicial reform**

The Presence continued its thematic programmes of fair trial development and juvenile justice that entailed a series of specific activities. In co-operation with the Albanian School of Magistrates and its French counterpart, in October 2005, the Presence organized a series of seminars on juvenile justice, addressed by senior French judges, with the participation of representatives from the Albanian juvenile justice system. The seminars aimed to raise the awareness of officials dealing with juvenile justice regarding their responsibilities towards minors.

Upon the request of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), in October 2005 the Presence presented a study on reducing delays in criminal trials. In November 2005, the Presence funded a training seminar for court clerks working in the First Instance Serious Crimes Court (SCC) in Tirana, to give the clerks a better understanding of their role and of the concepts of fair trial, witness protection and security issues. As part of the capacity building project at the SCC, the Presence published a handbook to increase information about how fair trials are conducted and the rules regarding witnesses.

Aiming to increase effectiveness through regional co-operation and exchange of best practices, in October 2006 the Presence organized a study visit for Albanian justice officials to the Italian Ministry of Justice. Financed by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the visit aimed at presenting the Italian practices of involving the public in the process of reviewing legislation. In November, the Presence provided the SCC with computers and software to use in courtrooms, equipment that will enable SCC staff to produce more efficient decision-drafting during court sessions. A witness room was also provided to increase the safety of witnesses. Finally the SCC has recently launched a website which gives details of ongoing and forthcoming trials and judicial decisions. This has been funded from the Presence's core budget.

The Presence assisted the Civil Service Commission (CSC), to publish its legislative framework, the decisions for the year 2004, and information about its activities on its website by the end of June 2005. The Presence funded the publication of the Bulletin of the CSC, which included their report analysing the cases presented to it, the respective decisions and their recommendations related to the civil service, recommendations that were distributed to ministries and other state institutions. The Presence organized a study visit for CSC officials to the National Administration School in France to observe French procedures for addressing complaints of civil servants.

In providing legislative assistance, the Presence followed the legislative initiatives of the Government, pro-actively consulted on them, reviewed and commented on several draft laws. The Presence assisted in preparing the law on enacting the legal drinking age and has reviewed the gender equality law. The comments on the amendments to the restitution and compensation law and on the draft law on legalization of illegal dwellings were delivered to the Assembly.

## **6.2 Human rights**

The Presence has constantly paid due consideration to developments relating to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, bringing them to the attention of the Government when appropriate. As part of the Presence's Juvenile Justice Training Project, in June 2005, students from the Albanian School of Magistrates went on a study visit to the French School of Magistrates in Paris and Bordeaux. In November 2005, the Presence and the Office of the Peoples Advocate led a roundtable to discuss the recent amendments to the Law on the People's Advocate that were to be presented to the Assembly for approval. In November 2005, USAID and the Presence co-sponsored a South-Eastern Europe Interfaith Conference in Tirana to provide a forum for regional religious leaders to share experiences for fostering religious harmony. In March 2005, the Presence chaired Government/Donor co-ordination meetings regarding the implementation of the Government's Strategy for Improving Roma Living Conditions and has agreed to distribute the Strategy within local government units.



### **6.3 Electoral reform**

Fulfilment of internationally-respected standards in general and local elections is a clear priority for Albania and its Euro-Atlantic aspiration. The past has shown that external brokering of political agreements on electoral issues tends to produce short-lived results as such deals are likely to be disputed as ‘imposed’ or ‘unfair’ and ultimately fail to be honoured. Genuine political will of the Albanian parties is a prerequisite for durable and respected solutions that must come from within the domestic political scene. With this in mind, the Presence has continued to provide support to improve standards and structures to bring elections in line with international standards, focusing on technical and legal expertise.

After the July 2005 elections, the Presence, in co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR, started to follow up on the key issues which determine the reliability of Albanian voter lists. Upon the request of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), in November 2005, the OSCE/ODIHR sent its comments on ministerial plans for modernising the civil registry and address system. Further consultations involving the Government, the ODIHR and the Presence have continued focussing on outstanding issues, including a realistic timeline for the work to be done and for the forms of the Presence’s support in this process. Given its urgency, the work on the voter lists for the next local government elections, was launched without a direct link to the process of modernizing the civil status service.

The Presence continued to provide technical assistance and expertise to the MoI, in the preparation of voter lists for the next local government elections. The Presence assisted in the preparation of draft instructions on temporary registers, the unidentified voters with no references on address and physical location and on the removal of multiple records from fundamental registers. From January 2006, the MoI has organized three workshops on voter list preparation with Presence support. These brought together stakeholders from central and local government, election administration, political parties and civil society. The workshops dealt with procedures for the removal of multiple records from the fundamental registers and in preparing the Government instructions to regulate the completion of the process of electoral addresses that were incomplete in 2005. Both aspects were part of an EU/USAID-funded project.

### **6.4 Parliamentary capacity-building**

The Albanian Assembly has developed into a central platform for political debate and discussion of alternatives and proposals. Assisting these functions has been a priority of the Presence’s work. Given that the new rules obligate the Assembly to publish transcripts of plenary sittings in a timely manner, in September 2005, the Presence provided recording equipment necessary for transcriptions, and installed a computer-room in the Assembly. In September 2005, the Presence supported the Assembly's orientation programme for the newly elected MPs to familiarise them with services and facilities. The Presence also helped organized training for thirty MPs’ constituency secretaries to help MPs perform their tasks more efficiently. A report on support for the MP Constituency Offices offered recommendations for their future functioning. In October 2005, in co-operation with the Assembly, the Presence held seminars for members of the Assembly Committee on Economy and Finance regarding the budgetary procedures. In November 2005, the Presence prepared a visit to the Swedish Parliament for the same MPs, to learn more about budgetary issues prior to the submission of the state budget. The Presence organized a working table for committee leaders to

modernize the committee structure system and launched a six-week legislative drafting course for committee staff to increase their drafting capacities. To increase greater transparency with citizens, in March 2005, the Presence prepared a communications work plan for the Assembly that included the redesigning and updating of the Assembly's website, to facilitate greater public access to Assembly activities.

In April 2006, the Presence supported the organization of the workshop on best practices for the oversight of intelligence agencies based on a handbook that was produced by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. The workshop's aim was also to introduce the handbook, translated by the Presence, to Albanian parliamentarians and officials.

Upon request from the Assembly, the Presence provided support for the joint NATO Parliamentary Assembly "Rose-Roth" seminar and Albanian North Atlantic Association conference that took place in Tirana in April 2006.

## **6.5 Media**

The Presence's work focussed on legislation and promotion of higher professional and ethical standards of the media. The Presence followed the regulatory and legislative developments and worked closely with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media who commented on the Government-proposed law on the national electronic media regulatory bodies. The Presence completed a training project, funded by a Dutch NGO, for twelve local TV stations. The project, a component of a wider project aimed to build professional capacities. In November 2005, the Albanian Media Institute, through Presence's and USAID support, co-organized an inaugural roundtable to begin the process of creating a Council on Media Ethics.

With support from the Office of the Albanian People's Advocate (Ombudsman) and the Swiss Government, the Presence has organized since January 2006 six regional roundtables on the access to information, bringing together local officials and media representatives to discuss the Law on the Right to Information on Official Documents. To assist with journalistic standards, the Presence ran a project on the development of the Journalism School in Tirana and the creation of curricula consistent with the Bologna Declaration. The strategy proposed by a contracted foreign expert will now serve as a basis for a future work-plan.

## **6.6 Civil society**

The Presence co-operated with a wide-range of national NGOs, primarily on issues of good governance and transparency and ran several elections-related projects with them. The network of Civil Society Development Centres (CSDC) continued to emancipate itself from the Presence and after acquiring legal status in 2005, they will become independent from the Presence by the end of 2006. The management and sustainability of the CSDCs beyond that timeframe is the focus of an ongoing XB project. The CSDCs provided logistics support to national elections observers in July 2005 and served as a platform for a variety of activities involving national NGOs and civic groups.

In April 2006, the Presence launched a public information capacity-building project for civil society organisations and community based organizations. These activities looked to build the capacities of civil society representatives in playing a larger role in the

democratic process. The Presence has continued to support *the implementation of the National Strategy on People with Disabilities*, and co-operated with Government representatives to identify priorities in the implementation of the Strategy.

## **6.7 Gender**

The Presence provided technical support to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO) for redrafting the Gender Equality Law. The Presence and UNDP agreed with the MoLSAEO on conducting a review to amend the Gender Equality Law. The work has been co-ordinated with the current drafting of an Anti-Discrimination law to harmonize the efforts to promote equal opportunities. In June 2005, the Presence opened a Women's Counselling Centre in Kukes through German Government funding. This has so far provided counselling services to over 300 women – mostly from rural areas of northern Albania. The Presence has also played a leading role in donor co-ordination in the field of gender equality.

## **7. THE WAY AHEAD**

The year 2007 will be important for Albania to consolidate the progress towards better governance and delivering on the declared public reforms in support of the continuation of the EU integration progress. The orderly preparations and conduct of municipal elections, now anticipated in early 2007, will be a crucial test of the ability of political actors to reach consensus on issues of national interest. The Presence and all other OSCE institutions will continue to work in partnership with the Government in strengthening areas marked within the current Mandate.

Within its security co-operation programme, the Presence will focus exclusively on Police assistance. Such support for the border police will be through training and technical assistance in cross-border management and in enforcement aspects of anti-trafficking. These activities will continue to be closely co-ordinated with other international partners.

In its programme on good governance in economy and environmental issues, the Presence will assist the Government in pursuing a property reform programme. The Presence will continue to support the implementation of the national anti-trafficking Action Plan and to work, in that context, with OCEEA and ODIHR on a two-year programme combating human trafficking through economic empowerment and victim-protection measures.

Within the human dimension programme, the Presence will be providing expertise to the Government in legislative drafting, in further improving the voter lists and towards a sustainable solution of voter registration problems, through the creation of a functioning Civil Registration system and connecting it with a reliable address system. The Presence has proposed to continue working with the Assembly on furthering effective and professional parliamentary practices under a new multi-year XB support project. The Presence will focus on furthering co-operation between civil society and government structures, including the development of a national gender equality strategy. The Presence will assist the Council on Media Ethics to develop self-regulatory ethical and professional standards.

On judicial and legislative reform, the Presence will work on trial observation, monitoring pre-trial investigation, criminal appeals and trials in civil cases. The Presence will also work to improve standards of judicial ethics and transparency within the judiciary. The Presence will continue to work with Albanian institutions on legislative development in the framework of EU integration when related to the Presence's mandate. The Presence will also focus on the rights of the Roma community.

The Presence will continue to operate in its principal mandated areas, strengthening further its consultation with the Government and other state institutions to maximise its support for domestic reforms and progress in Euro-Atlantic integration. The Presence's work will be further enhanced through utilizing the capacities that all the OSCE's institutions can provide, as well as building closer co-operation with other OSCE missions in the region. The Presence will maintain in 2007 the existing structure of principal programmes established in 2006. The 4 field stations will become project offices and will perform national and regional projects under direction from the Presence. The proposed budget framework for 2007 will be approximately 2% lower than in 2006. The Presence will work to attract sizeable extra-budgetary funds and will look for maximising the use of UB funds for thematic purposes.

The last year has seen the arrival of a new Government that has the clear ambition of accelerating the pace of the domestic reforms. To further cement the co-operative relationship already established with the Government, and to pay specific regard to the strategic priorities of the Government, the Presence will continue consulting closely with the Government and other relevant Albanian partners. It will also rely on the transparency and openness from the Government whose timely sharing of the relevant information is one of the prerequisites for maximising the effect of the assistance provided by the Presence. The Presence is also eager to further consult with the Government on the key planning and project documents guiding the Presence's work and also on the medium and longer-term vision for the OSCE Presence.