

**Interview with Head of Presence, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, Klan TV, 11 July 2011**

*Klan TV:* Mr. Ambassador, the developments in Albanian politics change very swiftly, but also in events related to the Albanian judiciary. Only a few days ago the Electoral College reached a decision and finally proclaimed a winner of the elections in Tirana. In fact what happened this time round was unprecedented. How do you see this decision of the College, do you think that it will influence the prevention of such cases in Albania in the future, so there will be no repetition of such precedents and contradictions, in the judiciary as well which should be impartial?

*Wollfarth:* Well the most important thing is that the counting is correct and the procedures are taken into consideration; that the quite lengthy process showed that it is very important to learn and draw conclusions from that long process. In some cases of course it is very important to have the time to have a precise picture what the electorate wanted to have on Election Day. And drawing conclusions from that then the Electoral Code can be reformed and can be adapted. On 8 May we had Local elections; in 2009 there were general elections, OSCE/ODIHR who had observed with a large election observation mission the two elections has already come up with a number of recommendations on the last general elections, we expect later this month in July more recommendations on the local elections and that might include also the speediness of the process, but besides time, precision and transparency are very important, so there will certainly be a couple of points revisited. Another very important point is also to create in the political parties the political will to do it in a speedy and precise way. This was the recommendation No.1 for the last elections and this of course is the key element in having a precise and correct process.

*Klan TV:* These last few days we have been hearing many statements from the highest of institutions such as the HCJ about inspections and how members of the judiciary may be implicated in cases of corruption and abuse of power. As one of the institutions which have invested a great deal in the in-depth reform of the Albanian judiciary do you think that the time is here to make some examples of corrupt judges and indict them?

*Wollfarth:* Well there is an inspection under way and about to be finished according to my information; there was a closer look into the cases from 2007 and 2008; there was a report being sent to the Ministry of Justice. Of course it is extremely important also to have there, the transparency; the public can also provide this, by the way, by going to these trials and following them; and its also about giving tools to the judges that the lawyers always show up in the needed numbers during the trials so that many of the postponements and adjournments can be avoided. The other very important issue is also the correctness of judges that of course needs a careful look like many other parts of public life of authorities in Albania. This is certainly a very important chapter in bringing the justice system, as a whole, forward. It is extremely important in this context that it is carefully analysed by the Ministry of Justice and then the according steps are being taken. Just like in the Parliament also for the Judges immunity is an important protection for the independence, but there might be also limits needed to have a transparent, correct, fully legal and a fair process, so all that needs to be put together on the findings of this report and of some input also coming from advisors and experts from outside.

*Klan TV:* You have just given us, [last question], a solution that it is precisely the Ministry of Justice which is responsible for the process of exposing this corruption, but in fact millions of Euros have been invested by your organization, and the European Commission for a deep-going reform of the justice system and further qualification of the Albanian judiciary, but in the meantime, it is the Albanian justice system and its judiciary that are accused of being the most corrupt system in the country. Do you have a brief comment on this?

*Wollfarth:* This is an extremely important investment; just like the political system, the judicial system is one of the pillars for peace and of social living together in a society. This is extremely well invested money, we have it as OSCE Presence in Albania in our mandate to strengthen the Rule of Law and of course it is supported by our partners starting with the European Union.