

Results in Europe and Central Asia



Innovation Promotes Good Governance in Albania

Ana Gjokutaj, Sr Communications Officer in the World Bank Office in Albania, offers this story.

As Albania prepares to celebrate 100 years of independence in 2012 with an eye towards becoming a member of the European Union; it must make crucial improvements in a sensitive area: good governance.

For better governance, citizens need more access to information; budgets and local taxes need to be transparent. Women and youth need equal opportunities in business, and agriculture policies need to be developed openly.

To address these, the government is drafting and implementing new policies for central and local government, with support from the World Bank Project for Good Governance in Albania. The World Bank is further supporting the government's agenda through support for civil society projects. The British Council is overseeing their implementation.



Elisabeth Evans

"With the aim of strengthening the direct role of Civil Society Organizations in policy making, we want to see this sector shift increasingly from service delivery to advocacy, working with politicians and public administrations to deliver for all Albanians, not just the chosen few," said Elisabeth Evans, Deputy Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

More than 140 civil society organizations (CSOs) responded to an open call for innovative, sustainable and replicable ideas on how to improve governance. Ten projects targeting youth, women, and local and central governments were selected and funded, for a total of \$100,000. Ideas range from creating arts programs and documentaries to making tax stamps.

What story does a small stamp in a shop window tell? According to the Regional Development Agency in Korca, stamps show the public who is doing business legally and who is not. They pressure illegal businesses to pay taxes. As a result of the project, says the agency's Aurel Grabocka, 450 unregistered business became legal, adding half a million USD to the state budget. These impressive results led the Minister of Finance to say the ministry will explore

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Gledis Gjipali

including a security stamp in tax procedures.

European Movement Albania, EMA, is helping Vlora's citizens get what they need from their civil servants. "We will assist the municipality to give fast response to citizens who ask for information and create a procedure that these results remain even after the project is over," says Gledis Gjipali, Executive Director of EMA. They will also assist the municipality to build capacity for better internal and external communications.

Another CSO project is studying how fast the government answers public information requests from citizens and media, and whether any ministries or agencies try to prevent the government from releasing public information that may be damaging to them.



Aida Bani

Yet another is evaluating how efficiently and fairly agricultural subsidies are being spent in one region. "Some farmers that we have interviewed did not know how to profit from such funds. We prepared an information package to be distributed to them," says Aida Bani of the Environment Center for Protection, Education and Rehabilitation.

Two CSOs asked how art makes citizens play an active role in governing cities and fighting corruption. One project takes real stories from youngsters to create a graphic novel that will be given to high school students to teach them to resist corruption. The other is producing a documentary with interviews from community representatives, local authorities, journalists and historians to show thousands of years of local governance in the ancient city of Durres. The film, which will be broadcast on national television, explains how citizens create and own city budgets by paying taxes.

All ten projects will be implemented by early 2012 and are expected to result in more citizen participation in better governance, and to serve as examples in other parts of Albania. The World Bank continues to work towards good results of previous projects and studies, such as governance in the water sector, the education system and Protection of Immoveable and Property Rights.