



Media Release

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Swiss-supported conference fosters consolidation of the territorial and administrative reform

Further consolidation of the territorial and administrative reform and strengthening of the new municipalities were the topics of a conference supported by the Swiss local development and decentralisation programme.

At a conference organised today at Sheraton Hotel representatives from central and local government, as well as international partners, exchanged experiences and discussed ways of consolidating the new territorial and administrative reform and empowering the newly-formed municipalities.

“Albania has just reorganised its territorial and administrative units. This is a big step that bears opportunities for a better administration of the country. But it also brings challenges and obstacles that we have to tackle together”, said Swiss Ambassador H.E. Christoph Graf during his speech. He further stressed that “it’s time to see this reform applied. It’s time to make it more than just a map and turn it into tangible benefits for Albanian citizens all over the country”.

The Minister of State for Local Affairs, Bledi Çuçi, said “The territorial reform is the basis for sustainable socio-economic development of our local government and communities. The 61 new municipalities will have maximum support from the government which has taken all measures for implementing the reform after the local elections of 21st of June, including the new decentralisation strategy, the new local government law, and financial support through the transition fund. I thank the international partners for supporting local government reforms and in particular the Swiss government which has shown a continuous engagement in decentralisation and local government”.

A major part of the conference focused on the Functional Area Programme, a new concept introduced by the Swiss programme, which proposes that territories maybe defined as ‘functional areas’ that do not strictly follow administrative mapping but rather demographic, economic and historical links. It creates greater synergies and development for certain regions along ‘functional’ lines. The functional area concept was adopted by the government in preparing the law on implementing the Territorial and Administrative Reform.

Independent experts presented advantages offered by the Functional Area Programme and proposed future organisational structures for the new municipalities. Good experience gained by one-stop shop centres in Shkodër and Lezhë was also presented as a possibility for replication with the new municipalities.

During the conference two 5,000 Euro awards were given to Kukës and Lezhë for their commitment and innovative projects during the pilot phase of the Functional Area Programme. In addition, three organisations that provide support services were also awarded with prizes of 2,5000 Euro – ALCDF and DEA Consulting – and 1,000 Euro for ANTARC. The prizes are part of a grant fund that rewards local government units and service providers participating in the Functional Area Programme set up by the Swiss programme.

The Functional Area Programme is active in 9 new local government units including Peshkopi, Burrel, Klos, Tropojë, Kukës, Lezhë, Durrës, Malësi e Madhe and Shijak.

The conference aimed at alerting national political representatives for further support to consolidate the territorial and administrative reform and to move forward with decentralisation. It provided a technical platform that serves to nourish the political discourse and encourage the government and political groups to clarify their policy positions regarding decentralised responsibilities and funding at local government level.

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