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# The European Union and the Western Balkans

## Forging the future

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A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

Information about the enlargement of the European Union can be found on the web site of the Directorate General for Enlargement (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/>).

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## Foreword



### The European Union supporting the Western Balkans for their mutual benefit

The partnership between the EU and the Western Balkans is in the interest of all partners: peace, stability, freedom, security and justice, prosperity and quality of life, for the European Union and the Western Balkan countries. This brochure gives just a few examples of EU-funded projects which have brightened the region's prospects, and the voices of the people quoted here underline the results of the Union's commitment to this partnership.

All the countries of the Western Balkans have the prospect of EU accession. This is a shared political vision and a common political goal of the Western Balkans and the European Union. The EU aims to integrate the countries of the region progressively through a series of steps called the 'Stabilisation and Association Process'. This is the EU's political pledge to the region. The EU's commitment to the region is long-term and it is coherent. It is concerned with nothing less than the future of the entire family of European nations. Ultimately, membership of the EU will be the result of the efforts of each Western Balkan country. The EU can only provide support.

The EU leads the international effort in the Western Balkans. Our support is strategic and political, technical and military, economic and financial. We have offered a strongly preferential trade regime to the countries of the region, by removing tariffs and other barriers to most of the goods entering the Union. We are supporting the countries to move towards the conclusion of formal Agreements governing our relations with the region. And we provide a massive package of assistance.

EU is supporting the region to acquire a new and justified optimism. Highways and bridges have been newly built or repaired; public works projects funded by the EC have provided jobs at a time when they are most needed; entrepreneurs are receiving affordable loans for their small businesses; cities have new schools and hospitals; rural communities have benefited from agricultural inputs, loans and new buildings; media and local NGOs have been given room to operate freely and professionally. Stability in the Western Balkans has become pervasive. The despair of the 1990s has given way to the hope of the start of the 21st century.

However the crux of the Union's work is in fact less visible and less quantifiable. It lies in support to good governance. At national and local levels, the citizens of the region need efficient, just and transparent administration, conducted within an established set of rules. It is the task of the countries to get it; it is our duty to help them get it. Adequate preparation for future accession, from the legislative, administrative and economic points of view, is the only option available to the countries and to the EU.

EU-funded projects transform the lives of people, and support economic and institutional reforms. The countries of the Western Balkans should use these projects to pursue reforms and stick firmly to their commitments – that is the best way to move closer to the EU.

**Fabrizio Barboso**  
Acting Director General  
Directorate General for Enlargement

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Since 1991 the European Union has committed, through various assistance programmes, 6.8 billion euro to the Western Balkans. In 2000, aid to the region was streamlined through a new programme called Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS).

The CARDS programme's wider objective is to support the participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo, in the Stabilisation and Association process.


Through the CARDS programme 4.6 billion euro is provided to the region in the period 2000 to 2006 with assistance focusing on reconstruction and infrastructure, promotion of democracy, economic and social development and regional co-operation in the following five priority sectors:

- Justice and home affairs: reform of the judiciary and police, migration and asylum, integrated border management, the fight against organised crime
- Administrative capacity building: public administration reform, taxation and customs
- Economic and social development: economic reform, social cohesion, local infrastructure development, education
- Democratic stabilisation: civil society development, refugee return, media reform
- Environment and natural resources: institution strengthening, monitoring and planning


This programme is managed in a number of ways : the Delegations of the European Commission in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia directly manage most national programmes and projects. In Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) is responsible for the delivery of most EU assistance. And, in Brussels, the European Commission Headquarters manage the TEMPUS programme for higher education, programmes for the modernisation of the customs and tax services (such as the Customs and Fiscal Assistance Office – CAFAO), and all regional programmes.

The assistance is provided by means of contracts to provide services, supplies or works to beneficiary countries and grants. Invitations to tender are open on equal terms to all natural and legal persons from the EU Member States, the beneficiary countries of the CARDS programme and the candidate countries.


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*A blueprint  
for a practical  
education*

Setting standards  
in professional schools

The classroom at the No 1. Professional Training Centre in Tirana is full. The windows are open and it is cool inside, but none of the students seems to mind. Most of them are young unemployed men who have moved to the capital looking for work. "If they complete the computer course," says the Centre's General Director Hasan Pema, "their chances of getting a job will double."

### *"Common vocational courses are forestry, mechanics and electrical engineering"*

Elsewhere in the building, courses are being held in air conditioner repairs, foreign languages and even, a few rooms down the corridor, hair-dressing. "We have a mock salon where they can try out techniques – we can't guarantee them a job afterwards," says Pema, "but our courses do help."



Students at the No 1 Professional Training Centre, Tirana, perfect their hairstyling techniques

The Centre has been chosen by an EU vocational education and training reform project as a pilot centre for planned changes to Albania's professional training system – because while this Centre is doing well, many are not. In a bid to reverse the trend, the EU project is focusing, during its two years of operation, on adapting vocational curricula and upgrading qualifications so that local professional training schools and centres can meet actual labour market requirements. The future of Albania's economy depends heavily on the existence of a skilled vocational workforce. Although the government is endeavouring to fulfil this requirement, lack of financial resources and trained trainers in the sector mean that it has called on foreign technical assistance to bring about some changes.

"Common vocational courses are forestry, mechanics or electrical engineering," says project leader Herman Sonneveld. "Many of them are good, but inevitably they have grown out of date and need tailoring." In 2002, the government pushed the agenda forward by passing



Students at the Karl Gega Construction School, Tirana

a law supporting reform of the vocational education sector. With such legislation in place, the project used part of its budget – approximately 1 million euro – to complete an analysis of the labour market to get a better idea of what today's employers might be seeking in "pre-university" students. The report suggests that some of the most sought-after skills are in services, domestic and commercial construction and tourism.

The prevailing student skills-labour market mismatch means that many secondary school professional training schemes and further adult education courses are being overlooked by the younger generation. Says project curriculum expert Enri Bajramaj: "Young Albanians tend to look first to universities for education as a route to a job because the recruitment record in vocational education hasn't been good." Bajramaj, a vocational trainer, is part of a working group set up by the project to train Albanian teachers in how to develop

a curriculum. "It'll take time as Albania doesn't really have a history of curriculum development - but we're getting there," he says. "Under the new law, the government is developing a national curriculum for vocational education and individual 'local' curricula that reflect the economic and social needs of a region. Developing these in the most-demanded vocational professions is what my group is working on." In tandem, the project is defining occupational standards and developing national vocational certificates that can be recognised by employers around the country as proof of a high standard of training.

With time, the EU project expects that its vocational curricula and teaching changes will be duplicated in other vocational educational establishments around the country, under the surveillance of a proposed National Vocational & Educational Training Agency. The Karl Gega School for Construction that lies on the



Getting practical: students get hands-on experience at vocational schools

outskirts of the capital is already cooperating with the project in the pilot work. Here, as school teacher Aneta Dollani explains, boys and girls from 16 to 19 can gain a grounding in plumbing, woodwork and building before moving, if they meet the standard, on to university. Together with the No 1 Centre, it will form one of four Regional Centres that will be set up by the project before it finishes. The Centres will be staffed with trained teachers in specific vocational educational skills and with knowledge of the new curricula. The Regional Centres will provide advice mostly to unemployed people, as well as help members of the public looking to upgrade their skills in vocational subjects.

Several organisations are involved in the development of the EU project's work. Ministerial labour and educational policy units, trade unions – a growing phenomenon in Albania – and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Albania. "Most of our 60,000 members are small- or medium-sized enterprises," says Bashkim Sala, the Chamber's senior adviser. "Our members can provide insight into the employment market to the European Union and, of course, our own ministries of Labour and Social Affairs

and of Education and Science. It creates a better cooperation between all of us. Discussions so far," Sala says, "have been lengthy on all sides. But just having us all together to talk ideas over is a major step forward."



Master craftsmen: construction class, Karl Gega school, Tirana

Project name: Support to Vocational Education and Training Reform

Duration: March 2004-2009

Total funding: € 6,000,000



## The shape of the judiciary to come

Masterplan recommends changes to country's courts

"The poor state of our courts makes it difficult for judges to work effectively," says Fatos Bundo, CARDS Coordinator for the Albanian Ministry of Justice. "It doesn't present a positive image of the judiciary in the public eye either." In Bundo's office, he points to a graph illustrating the present annual case

workload per judge at the 29 district courts and 6 appeal courts of Albania. It shows that the volume of cases being resolved is well below the equivalent European average: a judge in Albania deals with around 120 new cases per year, while a judge in the EU takes on around 280.



Fatos Bundo, CARDS coordinator for the Ministry of Justice, Tirana

## “So far, feedback has been positive”

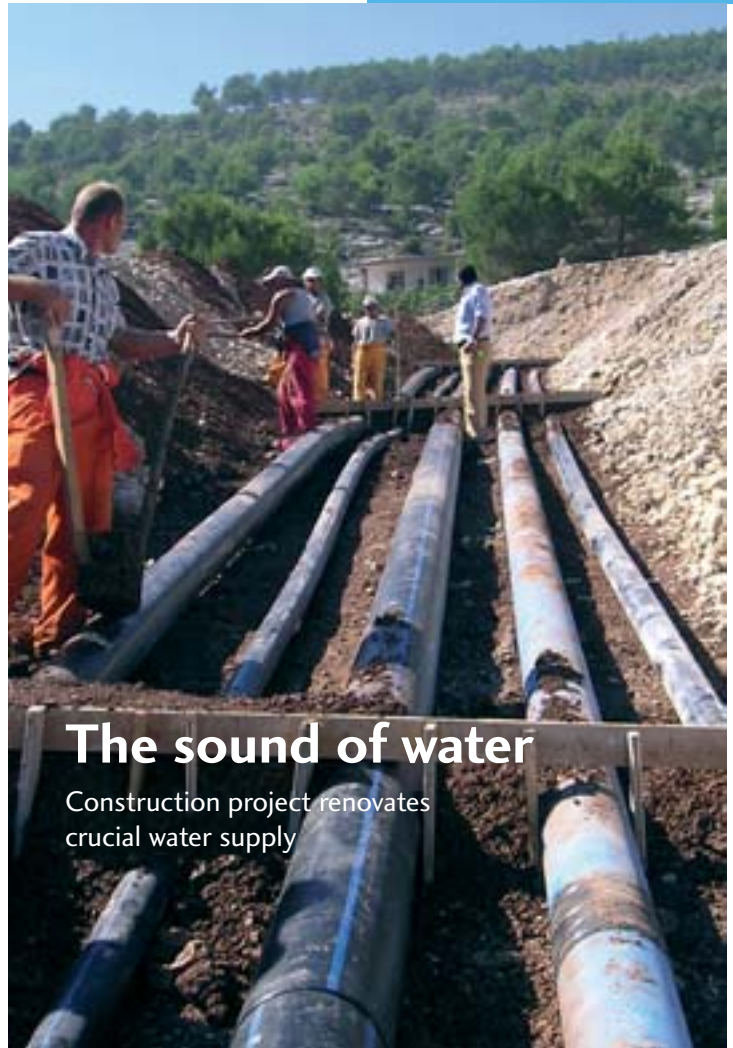
Along with several other Albanian judicial offices, Bundo is reviewing a so-called “Masterplan for Judicial Infrastructure” that was submitted to the Ministry of Justice early in 2005 by the European Union. The Masterplan is a result of a year’s work by EU experts in assessing all of Albania’s district courts and appeal courts from an architectural, financial and legal point of view. It runs to some 70 binders that line Bundo’s shelves. “It will take us some time to judge which parts of the plan – which uses the project’s findings to propose reforms to the legal system for the next 10 to 15 years – will be possible in view of our financial resources. But so far feedback on the Albanian side has been very positive.”

The Masterplan that cost 650,000 euro to complete is clear in its message: it strongly urges the rationalisation, renovation and, in some cases, rebuilding of Albania’s judicial buildings. Many district courts suffer from damp, lack fire safety measures and have no separate room for defendants. “The courts are often renting rooms in private houses that were never designed to be used as

courts,” says Bundo. The judge’s working conditions, however, are not the only reason for the low case/judge workload. Statistics gathered by the experts show that courts tend to resolve few small civil and penal cases, but a relatively high number of large civil and penal cases. “Albanians, as a trend, are less keen to go to court over small issues,” says Bundo. “This attitude, combined with the uneven density of courts around the country, means that some courts are dealing with a high volume of cases and some are almost redundant.”

If the EU plan is accepted a number of courts would be renovated, two new courts would be built and a more sophisticated IT system would be introduced into the court system. The Masterplan’s aim? To create a more coherent legal process. “Properly functioning courts,” says Bundo, “will help establish a clear set of legal procedures for Albanians to follow in court - something that, for the moment, is still lacking.”

Project name:	Masterplan for Judicial Infrastructure
Duration:	2004-2005
Total funding:	€ 650,000



## The sound of water

Construction project renovates crucial water supply



Popularly referred to as the 'town of the thousand stairs', Gjirokaster lies on the slopes of the Gjere mountain overlooking the Drino River. It is a historical town with a 4th – century citadel and clusters of early 19th century houses. But Gjirokaster's development is hampered by its lack of 21st century-style public

## “A town like this needs such investments”

services. The town's 33,000 inhabitants have long endured an erratic water supply from two natural springs a few kilometres out of town. Most residents fill their private water tanks once a day during the limited hours when the pipes are open. In 2003, a local drew on average 100 litres of water per day for their private use. This may not sound bad, until it emerges that 500 litres per day is the ideal quantity.

“We're dealing with an emergency situation,” says Gjergji Kaftani, an engineer working on an EU project to overhaul Gjirokaster's water supply. “While in theory

there is plenty of water, the pipes bringing the water to town have long been neglected and frequently leak,” he says. “As a result much valuable water gets lost en route.” At one of the springs, Tranoshisht, water levels can drop so low during the hot summer months that the town's water agency relies on an ageing pumping station half-way between the spring and the town to ensure water reaches the storage reservoirs. Repairing the pumping station is part of the project's work.

Says Kaftani: “The project's immediate concern was to renovate the supply network before it deteriorated any further. The distribution system to private houses will be looked at separately.” Bringing the transmission system up to a reliable and safe level is no small task: the construction of new pipes, water reservoirs and renovations to existing installations is costing nearly 5 million euro. “Since we began a year ago,” says Nikolin Mëhilli, a fellow engineer on the EU project, “we've laid twelve kilometres of pipes across the valley from Tranoshisht spring to Gjirokaster. This has already helped boost local water supply by 30 per cent and allows 50 per cent of the town to access water 24 hours a day.”



Work in progress: water storage construction site, Gjirokaster



Renovated water transmission system has helped boost local water supply by 30 per cent

Pipe-laying is not the only action to have been undertaken. The EU project is also building three new water storage reservoirs to complement the existing seven dotted around town, and several existing reservoirs will be renovated before the project finishes. This includes two that lay rusting in the town's citadel. “People can be alarmed by their appearance,” says engineer Mauric de Bachère, who is supervising the renovation works. “But in fact it won't take long to repair them.”

The speed with which the EU project has been progressing is thanks in part to the support it receives from the Mayor of Gjirokaster Flamur Bime. “At first I wasn't sure about the project's intentions. But then I saw what it was doing, how quickly and transparently they were doing it and was impressed,” says Bime. “A town like this needs such investments. I help them with problems relating to town administration and building permission whenever I can.”

Up in the empty valley where the Tranoshisht spring lies, it is hard to imagine that any construction works have been going on at all. The new pipes laid across the valley have already been covered over and there is only a thin brown trace marking an emergency route to the spring which the project built to enable builders to access the site. The only noise now is of water thundering out of the

mountain into the collection station. “Fresh water,” says de Bachère. “It's a great sound, isn't it?”

This spirit of optimism is echoed by the Mayor of Gjirokaster when he talks of a road reconstruction project that is currently being carried out in town too. Funded by the European Union's Local Community Development Programme (LCDP), the project has organised for local builders to widen, gutter and tarmac a short stretch of road serving 5,000 residents in Gjirokaster's Granice district. Says Bime: “Community works like road reconstruction make us hopeful. People are moving here daily from the countryside and putting our public services under tremendous pressure. Road works like those in Granice are invaluable.”

The LCDP, which has a unit office at the Albanian Development Fund in Tirana, funds small-scale community projects around the country. With over 10,000 km of rural roads in Albania, many of which are in very poor condition, road rehabilitation is one of its key development areas. A number are still only usable in the summer as they become impassable during the wetter months and with only limited budgets, local administrations often cannot afford to repair them.

However, progress is being made. Across the valley from Gjirokaster, for instance, two small villages used to

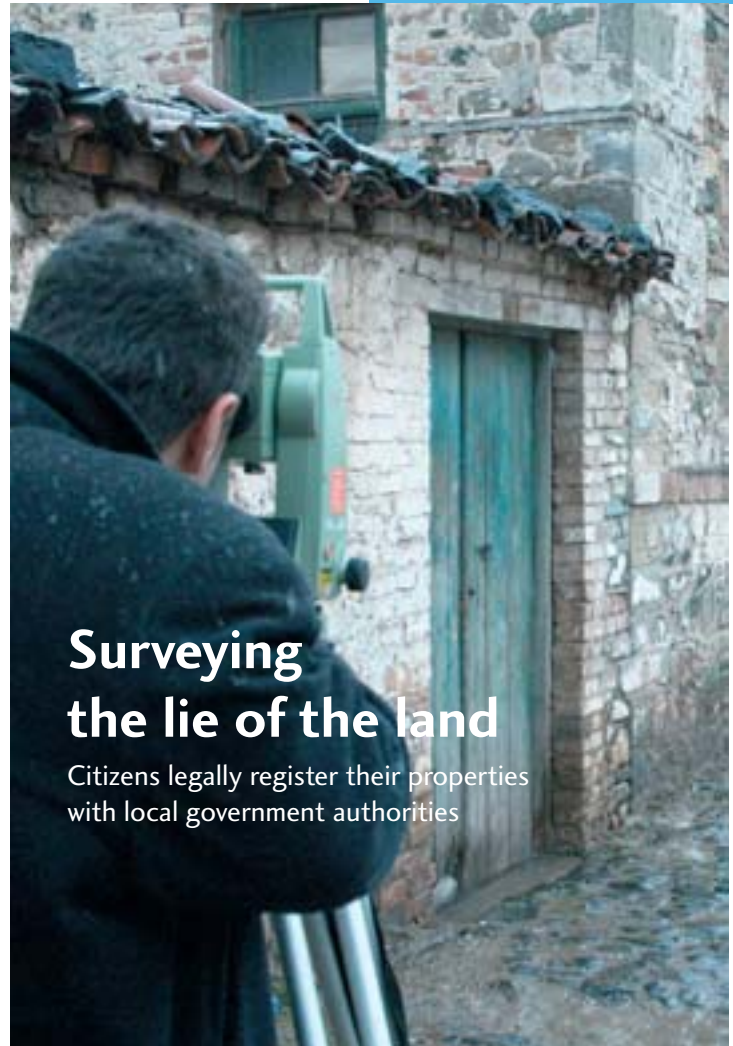


Engineers lay new pipes across the Gjirokastr valley from the Transalps spring

be cut off from the main road Teplena-Gjirokastr during the winter. Through the LCDP, the Antigone commune to which the villages belong designed and co-financed the re-surfacing of over 2,000 metres of link road. Setting up these "community-run" projects in Albania can be an uphill struggle, as for many years all decisions were taken by central government, but this road rebuilding took only a few months to complete. The link road now runs smoothly between the national road and the mountain foothills where the villages lie.

Project name:	Gjirokastr Water Supply Emergency Works
Duration:	January 2004 - July 2005
Total funding:	€ 4,992,000

Project name:	Road rehabilitation under Local Community Development Programme
Duration:	LCDP ongoing since 1996
Total funding:	€ 219,538 (Antigone and Granice)



## Surveying the lie of the land

Citizens legally register their properties  
with local government authorities



Property Registration Office, Korçë

## “We’re pretty well known in the neighbourhood now”

It is the beginning of another busy day at the property registration district office in the south-eastern town of Korçë. Local residents mill about the entrance hall, anxiously waiting for their turn at the counter. They are here to collect or hand over documents which prove that they own a piece of local property, be it a house, shop or piece of land. Some, whose documents are not yet in order, are here to complete the ‘first registration’ of their property; some who have already received property registration certificates are here to sell their immovable asset. They chatter noisily as they wait. Property, as anywhere else in the world, is a serious business. In 2002, of the 15,000 civil cases heard in Albanian courts, 3,000 related to disputes over property ownership.

Many land ownership claims stored in Korçë’s registration office date back thirty or forty years, even a hundred, in some cases. However, a survey carried out in 2003 revealed that out of Albania’s 3,064 land and property registration zones (or ‘cadastral zones’), some 801 remained unregistered and these mostly in towns and cities. Korçë was one of them: it has around 12,000

properties requiring formal registration with the national Immovable Property Registration System (IPRS), responsible for the systematic registration of property across the country.

With a complete land cadastre of Albania in place, the government can assess the tax value of individual properties, and regulate their sale and purchase more effectively. Property owners, with a property certificate, are also in a stronger position to negotiate their asset’s price. The Albanian government launched its first action plan for property registration in 1993. But uptake was impeded by the civil unrest in 1997 and the disintegration of land management that ensued. Consequently the EU and USAID together agreed to step in to assist in managing the first systematic registration of property in unregistered cadastral zones. Korçë and the nearby town of Maliq were selected as one of the starting points for EU funding.

“To raise awareness of the first registration project in our zone of Korçë,” says EU project expert Mevlan Lame, “we walked round town slipping flyers through doors, explaining that it is now Albanian law to record property at the registration office.” Korçë is divided into four cadastral zones: property registration in the first is complete, in zone two, where the project operates, it is ongoing and the remaining two will be carried out at a

later stage. As part of its work, the EU project organised a detailed land survey of the zone, so that every centimetre of property could be measured. “We went up every building and down every street,” says project surveyor Edmond Biba. “You can see the markings on the lampposts of where we’ve been. We’re pretty well known in the neighbourhood now.”

The information they gathered, together with the existing documents for property supplied by the owners or the registration office, have since been fed into the EU project’s computer database to produce a digital map of the area. “This new technology means that we no longer have to draft land surveys with a pen and ruler,” says Lame. Old property claims have been photographed and scanned into the database records too. Says Perparim Ndoi, first registration contractor for the EU: “Feeding in the information took time, but we now have a complete map of the zone. Next we’ll have to check with the registration office that there are no disputes over ownership.” In the main, disputes tend to be mediated by the district registration office and resolved as quickly as possible. “So far, we haven’t had too many complaints,” says Lame.

Once this stage is cleared, the EU project team will produce ‘kartelas’ or paper inventories of properties giving details of previous and present owners, property dimensions and related supporting legal documents. During a period of 90 days, it is obligatory for the kartelas to be made public in the zone. The project has located its notice board - a white-washed, one-room building with windows onto the street. “We’ll put the documents on the walls and people can come and take a look. It provides everyone with another chance to check that all the property data we have recorded is accurate and complete,” says Lame.

Once the 90 days is up, the kartelas for first registration become legal, and property registration certificates issued. With these certificates, owners can go to the registration office and start negotiating property deals. “The first registration process for our zone will take about a year,” says Lame. “But once it’s done, we’ll have a brand new cadastre in place for the zone that can be used by Korçë citizens and the government as a secure record of what property belongs to whom and how much its value could be.”

Project name:	Systematic, mass first registration of immovable property, Korçë and Maliq, Albania
Duration:	February 2004 – ongoing
Total funding:	€ 356,134



Albanians must now register their property legally



## Crime and the community

EU police mission assists in establishing a more effective police service

Four years ago, the conditions inside Albania's national training school for police men and women, Police Academy Arben Zylyftari, were not good: there was no heating, windows lay broken, and there were limited wash facilities. "Life has definitely changed since then," says Academy alumnus and Deputy Director Ilir Mandro. While conditions are far from luxurious, the dormitories in the academy are clean and orderly; there is a new shower room and a television for students to watch in their spare time. In a study room, a series of new computers stands, and nearby a refurbished canteen gleams. A 1.5 million euro grant from the EU has helped bring about most of the changes to the academy, which runs a three-year officer training course.

In 2004, 1,260 applied for a place at the Academy and only 50 were accepted. "In limited circumstances, we're trying to move ahead as best we can," says Mandro. Graduates from the Tirana-based Academy and its sister school, the Police Institute, which runs a one-year training course for future police sergeants, will be playing a key role in establishing a more positive image of the police in Albania in the future. Over the years, the police have suffered from a poor reputation, viewed as an extension of the State and mostly corrupt. Rooting out these

## "Fighting organised crime remains a priority issue"

perceptions and restoring public confidence in the police is increasingly the focus of the Police Assistance Mission of the European Community to Albania (PAMECA) which oversaw many of the changes at the Academy.

In the late 1990s, when the first international police assistance missions came to the country, the role of foreign police experts was targeted at introducing measures to restore law and order in a country suffering from acute civil unrest. Street demonstrations against the government in 1997 when a nationwide financial pyramid investment scheme collapsed prompted many Albanians to organise riots. Several police stations were destroyed and looted for arms. Although public outrage eventually died down, tensions resurfaced two years later when 1.5 million refugees from neighbouring Kosovo fled to the country, requiring food and shelter.

Today, the situation has considerably stabilised and consequently the role of the EU's police mission has



Renovation work being carried out at the Police Academy Arben Zylyftari, Tirana

changed too. Made up of a small team of experts from the EU and local nationals, many with a police background, PAMECA's chief aim now is to both establish a more effective police service and counter criminal activities in Albania. In more recent years, it has also taken on the responsibility of helping to promote public security. This includes running educational programmes for children on road safety. "If that sounds minor by comparison, it's not," says PAMECA Information and Communication Officer Lisen Gjebrea. "Public safety information that is taken for granted in the EU is only just beginning to be developed here."

Attitudes are changing and evolving, however. In the beginning, the State police, says deputy head of mission Doug Adams, looked mostly to PAMECA for equipment, today many come of their own accord for advice. "It's very heartening," he says. Typically, police officers might approach them with a problem on drug trafficking. PAMECA then provides them with a strategy or recommendations on how to tackle it. "We never go out with them on operations though – that's their domain," says Adams.

Just as the Albanian State Police are attempting to overhaul their system as fast as possible, so the amount of areas that PAMECA's small mission covers – especially drug trafficking in the country which flourished with the opening of Albania's borders – remains a priority issue. Through PAMECA, the EU has trained staff in and advised on the restructuring of the State Police's criminal investigative directorate and organised crime directorate. It has also assisted in providing recommendations on key criminal legislation – the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Money Laundering Law. "We always have to check that what we do on the ground is supported in law first," says Gjebrea.

Perhaps the most noticeable security changes to the country for an outsider is at Rinas airport, just outside Tirana. Entering the country for the first time, visitors will immediately see a strong police presence. Following the September 11 disaster in the United States, the airport was commonly identified as "the Achilles heel of Europe". "It was a bit of a free for all,"



Police station, Tirana: PAMECA is funding training of officers in crime prevention



Female students at the Tirana Police Academy take a break

says Gjebrea. Now security has been tightened on all fronts and several training exercises for Albania's Rapid Reaction Force which operates at the airport were carried out by the EU via PAMECA.

At a less visible level, the mission is setting up links with police stations around the country and establishing a rapport with local officials. Conditions in many of Albania's police stations, in particular the holding cells, are notoriously bad. Up to 10 to 12 people can be held in a cell designed for four, and many buildings still need electricity connections and windows re-fitted. Corrupt practices, including the recruitment of staff through bribes, are still common. The EU plans over the next couple of years to conduct more training on human resource issues, in particular to encourage police to take a less harsh and more ethical approach to community policing. Most of all, however, PAMECA is encouraging the police force to believe that they can improve and plan for their own future by themselves. "Because one day," adds Adams, "our mission will walk away."

Project name:	Police Assistance Mission of the European Community in Albania
Duration:	PAMECA 2002–2007
Total funding:	€ 16,800,000



## *Promoting the spirit of small enterprise*

Local SMEs get support from European fund



“I am not afraid of competitors because I love what I do,” says 40-year-old Dragan Miličević, shop owner, brandy producer, farmer and wooden toys maker from his home near Kiseljak, central Bosnia. And it is difficult not to believe him, as he glows with good health and tucks into some of his home-made produce. Formerly a heavy goods driver and builder, Miličević started his entrepreneurial life with a shop that in his own words “sells a bit of everything”. Re-discovering old vats in which to brew brandy on his property, Miličević then invested in some new technology and began brewing traditional Bosnian plum brandy (rakija) and selling it locally. Today, he has added both pig and sheep farming and wooden children’s swings production to his list of business activities. He is currently contemplating taking on another: producing flower containers to be filled with flowers by a friend in Banja Luka for re-sale as ready-made flower boxes.

Even with his natural flair for business, Miličević clearly has his doubts. “You constantly need to juggle your work – it’s exhausting,” he says. “Sometimes when I’ve had cash flow problems, rather than sell my goods for profit, I’ve exchanged them for goods or equipment that my business needs. It was the only way.” It was during one of these times that Miličević decided to call in on his local bank in 2002 to ask for a loan. “Like my business, it was a loan for ‘everything,’” he explains.



Raising pigs and sheep are just one line of business for Dragan Miličević



Dragan Miličević's farm



Workshop of the aluminium products company, Neraki

His bank granted him a 20,000 KM (10,200 euro) loan which was in fact financed through a scheme developed by the European Fund for Bosnia and Herzegovina, or EFBH, for promoting small – and medium – sized enterprises (SMEs) in the country. “Although it has been tough paying back the interest, if you want to expand and keep your business ticking over you have to take such steps,” says Miličević. Small loans for small businesses are not readily offered by local banks and the EFBH scheme offered Miličević a way of keeping afloat without breaking his budget. He has since taken out more credits with his bank.

Based in Sarajevo, the EFBH loans, under its SME scheme, a portion of its funds to selected banks and micro-credit organisations – mostly NGOs – around the country which can then distribute the money as loans to new businesses requiring small credits. The banks are able to award the credit lines at their discretion and according to their own conditions. Repayments on the loans are eventually fed back to the Fund via the banks so that funds are constantly being re-invested in similar projects. The EFBH operates similar schemes for housing loans and rural development projects. The EU donates nearly 75 per cent of the EFBH’s total credit fund, and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau manages this unusual revolving fund on site.

“Dragan Miličević’s ‘jack-of-all-trades’ business is typical of the way SME development is going in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” says Aida Soko, head of the EFBH.

*“If you want to expand and keep your business ticking over you have to take such steps”*

“Since our war in the early 1990s, there has been no real industrial development to speak of, and many pre-war companies have not been able to run at capacity as their technology has grown out of date. So entrepreneurs have had to diversify to survive.” These are not the only changes the EFBH is seeing. “When the Fund started in 1998 with its housing loan programme, it was the only one undertaking such a scheme,” says Soko. “Now the banks are beginning to recognize that, especially in the SME sector, it makes good business sense for them to do likewise and more of them are getting involved.”

Many of the SMEs that are being set up in Bosnia and Herzegovina are in the agricultural sector. “It’s safer,” says Soko. But one man who is ‘going it alone’ in the



*Nehal Director Smajić Mithat, who took out an EFBH loan to cover cash flow and modernisation of his company*

manufacturing sector on an EFBH-financed loan scheme is 48-year-old Smajić Mithat. His company 'Nerkal' in the Hadžići municipality south of Sarajevo produces aluminium products, such as windows, frames and sliding doors for businesses around the country. "I started my business in 1996 and today I've got 5 employees who work on the manufacturing floor," says Mithat proudly.

To date Mithat has taken out two EFBH-funded loans that, he says, have "been essential to cover those moments when clients can't pay and for some modernisation to my machines." He runs his profit-making business from a smart office above his house and is constantly keeping a check on the market. "There are three other companies in the same line of business as me in this municipality and around 200 in the Sarajevo canton. Some of those aren't a serious threat. But you have to keep an eye out," he says. "We're not nasty to each other – we just don't help each other."

For Mithat, a mechanical engineer by training, this company is in fact the realisation of a long-cherished dream. "I wanted to set up on my own as soon as I graduated. But when I came out of university it was too difficult," says Mithat. "It's still a tough time for many. The youngsters are finding it hard to get a job. That's why I pack my son off to school saying – get the best grades you can, otherwise you aren't going to get anywhere in life."

Although there may be a few aluminium-product competitors in the municipality, small businesses are not yet widespread. "Many people here are not doing very much to change the situation," says Mithat. "It's a pity." So what do local people make of him? "People tend to think I'm quite strange for setting up on my own. But that's life – you have to expect it to be a bit of a fight."

Project name:	European Fund for Bosnia and Herzegovina
Duration:	in operation since 1996
Total funding:	€ 15,000,000 (SME Lending Programme)



## Step-by-step integration with the EU

Developing the processes for increased cooperation

"We position ourselves as advisers to our ministries not as their commanders," says Director of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Directorate for European Integration Osman Topčagić. He is speaking from his office at the Council of Ministers, the executive arm of the country's state government where his team of 45 forms the official point of contact with the European Commission in developing the country's European integration process. Topčagić and his staff

deal with many issues at once, from coordinating the adoption of EU law (*acquis communautaire*) by the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to raising awareness among the general public about European integration and its implications for the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina is presently bringing its public and legal administrations into line with the EU, as part of the EU's Stability and Association process (SAP) with the Western Balkans.





Sample European Integration Directorate publications

*“Many young people here have a positive attitude towards the Union”*

Set up just over two years ago, the Directorate is still in its early days. Consequently, an EU project staffed by a number of experts from the EU's "old" and "new" Member States is supporting it in its development. "Many of the team come fresh with their own experience of the accession process and are aware of the kinds of structures the country needs to put into place to manage the integration process," says project leader Anne Smith Petersen. The project supports the Directorate by co-developing several aspects of the European integration process: it drafts, for example, strategies for legal approximation, integration impact assessments and policies for decentralising EU assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the EU project will withdraw from the Council once it ends, the project has organised and provided training to Directorate and line ministry staff in relevant human resource and project management skills. When the

Directorate starts to run under its own steam, local staff will co-ordinate EU community assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina internally. Assistance from the European Union, however, will continue, particularly in the area of legal approximation, which is expected to take around 8 to 10 years to finalise, and the translation of legislation. At the moment, the EU project is organising a system to enable the translation of around 100,000 pages of European law into the three official languages (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has also created a template for the country's European Partnership with the Council of Ministers.

"We're in touch with the EU support team daily," says Topčagić. "There is a very positive working atmosphere here." The Directorate, he says, is increasingly understood and accepted by the ministries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are growing in favour of integration. "I think maybe people in the EU are a little afraid of our integrating with them," says Topčagić, "but many young people here have a positive attitude towards the Union." Several junior members of the Directorate's staff are being trained in Europe in business and political administration so that they can help stimulate the integration process on their return. "An integral part of the integration process," says Topčagić, "will be to ensure that our companies and society are ready to accept the changes the new harmonised legislation will bring about, and to understand the benefits of EU values."

Project name:	Support to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Government for the European Integration Process and Co-ordination of Community Assistance
Duration:	November 2003 – November 2005
Total funding:	€ 1,400,000



The Director of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Directorate for European Integration Osman Topčagić



## Better value for the public's money

Officials get training in new public procurement legislation

A government may spend public money in many different ways depending on its needs, from buying goods, for example, for public health centres or services to improving general water supplies. The purchasing process is called 'public procurement'. And the governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been making such purchases for years. But public procurement is considerably complicated in this country by its complex

political situation – a two-tiered government operating at State and Entity level (Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)\* – and, until recently, a lack of coherent legislation regulating the process. Gaps in the legislation and transparency between administrations had created a breeding ground for mismanagement of public funds and anti-competitive practices.



Marjan Lemke, team leader, in a meeting to make the public procurement process transparent

*“Most officials in the end were eager to see the legislation implemented”*

There was an urgent need for reform. As a way of helping to re-establish a more systematic approach to the procurement process, an EU reform project was launched. Running with the slogan, “Better value for money”, the first phase of the project saw through the adoption of a new public procurement law that took EU laws on public procurement as their model. Country-wide in its application, the legislation integrates the Entity markets and helps to create an even platform from which companies can bid for government business. The legislation establishes clear guidelines for the ethical and transparent handling of public funds, as well as a formal public tendering process for the awarding of procurement contracts that must be followed by both government and tenderer alike. Now that it is in place, the second phase of the project will work on training public procurement officials on how to put the legislative proposals into practice.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has around 2,000 contracting authorities, and the EU project has already held three training workshops on the new law that were attended by 200 representatives from various authorities. “We feared resistance but found that most officials in the end were eager to see the legislation implemented,” says Marjan Lemke, former chief of public procurement in Warsaw and

the project’s leader. The EU project has also drafted in cooperation with the State Ministry of Finance all the documentation necessary to create two bodies that will centralise, oversee and review the new public procurement framework. The first, the Public Procurement Agency (PPA), will propose amendments to the law and provide technical assistance to contracting authorities and suppliers, the second, the Public Review Body (PRB), will issue suspension orders for procedural breaches and instruct contracting authorities to correct them.

Moreover, the PRB will review complaints from contractors. In the past, if a contractor was unhappy with an outcome or suspected corruption, there was no way to contest the decision. The PRB will be there to help them to lodge a complaint and see the matter is considered. Previously, much government public procurement business was kept hidden from the public eye. Part of the project’s work will also be to ensure that tenders for contracts are publicised systematically, as in the EU, on official public websites and in other easily accessible media. “By the time we finish,” says Lemke, “we should like the public procurement process to be transparent from beginning to end. It’s one way of helping to ensure that public money is honestly spent.”

\* The district of Brčko has a separate administration, which comes directly under the jurisdiction of the State government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Project name:	EU Support to the Public Procurement System of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Duration:	2003 – 2006
Total funding:	€ 3,400,000



## Shake-up of Prosecutors offices takes effect

EU helps in restructuring of prosecutorial service



In 2002, new Criminal Procedures Codes entered into force. The laws, which make criminal investigations the sole responsibility of the country's prosecutors were adopted by the parliaments. In the same year, the Prosecutors offices have been re-structured from a 4-level structure into a 3-level structure, by scrapping municipal-level offices and merging them with the offices at canton/district level. Such a radical overhaul of the criminal justice system is helping to cut down on bureaucracy within the judicial system and reduce the potential exposure of prosecutors to local mafia interests and corruption within the service.

But the changes have also put the Prosecutors offices under new pressures. So as to fulfil their new roles, the offices are rapidly re-organising, with limited resources, their internal management and learning how to manage investigation procedures of criminal cases – a procedure that used to be undertaken by investigative judges. Helping them in this restructuring process is an EU project based in Sarajevo that is staffed jointly by EU and local national experts. Since its start-up in 2003, the project has been assisting the offices around the country in developing a more streamlined approach to case handling and office management.



Meeting of Prosecutors Office project, Sarajevo

Before the EU project conducts training or introduces system changes, they are agreed on first with the Chief Prosecutors of the country's four administrations. A seniority system for prosecutors within the offices was one of the first changes to be introduced by the project. "It may sound simple," says project director Stefanos Ioakimidis, "but, as in any public system, it was imperative for the offices to establish a staff hierarchy. That way their employees would be motivated to develop their careers." Detailing job descriptions for a number of posts to support the new structures was also carried out by the EU project. It has since gone on to give training sessions to the Chief Prosecutors and heads of administration with offices on how to distribute cases among the prosecutors fairly.



Streamlining the country's Prosecutors offices will help make the criminal justice system run more efficiently

## “A more streamlined approach to case handling and office management”

Prosecutors offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina report to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and manage their own budgets. Whilst this gives them a degree of independence, it is often difficult for the offices to estimate a reasonable budget for criminal cases. A single important and costly case can swiftly take an office over their financial forecast. The EU project has consequently produced a financial management manual and developed a financial software application to assist the offices in their budget handling.

Spread out over the EU project office's wall is a long flow chart detailing all the stages a prosecutor must follow to officially register a case. This was drafted by the project staff to harmonize the case registry process across the country and has been included in a training manual for all prosecutorial staff for future reference. It now forms part of a prototype software application to register cases electronically as well. Says IT expert Ezudin Kurtović: “Recreating all the stages of case registration in an

electronic database has taken a long time. We still have some way to go before all Prosecutors offices will be able to make use of the application. Our progress is limited by the fact that many offices still lack the staff and funds to install and manage new systems.”

Arguably the most important part of the EU project's work has been to draft a law regulating the establishment and functioning of the Prosecutors offices. If adopted, it would supersede the dozen existing pieces of related legislation in place in the country and give off, says the project, a good political signal to prosecutors offices to harmonize their work.

“At the start of the EU project”, says Ioakimidis, “the team's group discussions with the Prosecutors were strained, as the tensions that linger on from the regional conflicts of the early 1990s were tangible”. “But now,” he says, “they speak increasingly freely, talk to each other by their first names and are beginning to trust each other. For me, that is one of the best outputs of this project so far.”

Project name:	Support to the Prosecutors Offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Duration:	21 months – started August 2003
Total funding:	€ 940,000



Creating an electronic database of court case registration is part of the Prosecutors Office project's work



## Kids get lessons in green behaviour

Schools benefit from ecology activities organised by EU

*“Projects like these help us to educate our children to think about the world around them”*

“It’s fun working with children,” says Ljubo Grković, “I find they are so much more willing to learn than adults.” Grković is the director of an EU recycling project in Sarajevo which is helping to run a civil initiative of local ecology-oriented NGOs that are promoting waste recycling and environmental awareness just outside the capital in a small section of the Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project’s work regularly takes them on trips to primary and secondary schools in the area where they organise ecology competitions and waste management lectures for the children.

“Our kids love what they are doing,” says Aleksa Šantić, headmaster of Vojkovići primary school – one of 6 primary and 2 secondary schools participating in the EU project’s work. “Besides the talks, the project has organised rubbish picking jaunts for the children as well as taken them on expeditions to clean river beds – they enjoy being outside,” says Šantić. “While I know that many of my pupils have a basic knowledge of environmentalism already, they would all love to learn more,” he adds. The rubbish that is picked by the children on their trips is burnt later by the EU project.

Near to the Vojkovići School main entrance, where some 500 pupils aged between 6 and 15 are running around, there’s also a large waste disposal bin. This was donated to the school by the EU project out of its funds for buying containers for glass, aluminium and other metal waste for its selected participating schools. The pupils are encouraged to throw their waste in. “The containers sow the idea of waste recycling and waste segregation in their minds,” says Grković. “You have to bear in mind that this area has high unemployment and it will take time before cleaning up the environment becomes a priority concern for adults.”

Nevertheless the EU project’s work is supported by the residents of the area, including the deputy mayor of nearby Kasindo, Darko Babalj: “You only have to look around to see that waste collection is an issue in this area. We hope such cooperation will continue. It all helps to influence future generations to take care of their surroundings.” Šantić agrees: “Industry – because we have so little of it – is not the source of pollution in our towns and countryside. It is people not being responsible. Projects like these help us to educate our children to think about the world around them.”

So far in its first year of operation the EU project has conducted ecology classes for around 3,500 pupils in its region and two clean-up actions in public parks and schoolyards, which involved both children and adults. Driving along the local roads, the notice boards bought



Classes on environmentalism to local school children were held by the EU project’s staff



Cleaning up: waste disposal bin provided by the EU project to Vojkovići primary school

by the EU project are dotted visibly around the countryside encouraging residents to protect the environment and dispose of waste properly. And along one riverbank, the first leaves of a row of 1,000 trees planted to stop ground erosion by the Ecology Civil Initiative are just beginning to come through.

The EU project became aware of where the environmental hotspots were, after it carried out an extensive ecological survey of the area shortly after it started. Pictures of illegal dumping sites and assessments of pollution levels and erosion points were gathered by the team, before being forwarded to local schools and councils to show the extent of waste problems in their region. A communal public company, Rad, which clears the roads of snow in winter and collects household waste, has also become involved. Its 45-strong team is responsible for rubbish collection in 3 municipalities near Sarajevo. The EU project has supplied them with several waste containers and bins for household waste, as controlling the rubbish

problems around the rapidly expanding capital is difficult for them to manage unaided.

To meet the challenge of waste disposal of non-biodegradable items, the project has set about creating an area for glass recycling and pressing of metal waste. The equipment has been bought and it is expected that recycling will begin in the summer of 2005. It will be one of the first sites for the disposal of heavy waste to be set up in the country. Says Babalj: “Right now it’s tough for us to meet ecological standards. But we’re doing the best we can. Sites like this show the world we would like to follow global trends in environmental issues, even if we still do need support.”

Project name:	Strengthening of the civil initiative through the implementation of the recycling project
Duration:	2004 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 149,700

A close-up photograph of a person's hands working on a map. The person is using a dark pen to draw a yellow line on a map that is held flat by a ruler. The map shows various land parcels and boundaries. The person's hands are visible, with rings on their fingers. The background is a dark surface with some circular cutouts.

## *A modern way to map the land*

EU-funded digital technology speeds up land surveying process

If you see men in orange suits painting white markers by the side of the road in Croatia, do not be surprised. More often than not these markers are being laid to indicate the perimeters of a piece of property to overhead aircraft. Digital aerial shots of the plots of land are passed on to local land cadastre offices, where

*“This means we will also have less disputes about planning and registration”*

they are superimposed onto existing printed maps of the land. The differences between the photographed land and the coordinates of the printed map are used to update existing land surveys. The digitalisation of the land surveying process will not kill off “standard” manual procedures, but it will provide Croatia’s State Geodetic Administration with a faster and cheaper way of updating its land “cadastre” – an official register of property and land size.

The European Union is channelling millions of euro into the modernisation of this process, in particular in an ongoing project to improve land registration (or registration of land ownership) and land cadastres. It is not simply to aid the Administration in an otherwise

painstaking process, it is also to help stimulate the country’s property markets. Currently, there is a huge demand for real estate in Croatia, particularly along its coast. But internal and foreign investors are often frustrated in their attempts to sell and exchange property as the ownership of property is not clear. Until the problem is resolved, the property cannot be sold. Owners who also have no formal property registration certificate cannot use their collateral to get credit or loans either.

Raising the efficiency of the land registration and cadastral system also form important ways of helping the government to establish the precise taxation value of an individual’s property. As recently as the late 1990s, a land survey of the Dalmatian coastal island, Vir, showed that, contrary to the land register’s claim, there were 5,400 properties on the island not 1,500. Once they have been formally registered, this will mean a substantial raise in taxation revenue for the local administration.

Land surveying is a time-consuming process and it will not be possible to reform and update all the country’s land registration and cadastral maps in a couple of years. For the time being, the State Geodetic Administration is focusing on working in two areas – the coast, with its increasingly expensive real estate prices and pressures for development, and the cities with their higher volumes of property transactions. Croatia’s land registration and cadastral system has

been in place for many years, but during the socialist era of Yugoslavia, when private property ownership was discouraged, land registration documents were not properly updated. Says Professor Željko Bačić of the State Geodetic Administration: “Our national land register became woefully inadequate – it no longer reflected reality.” The state of the land cadastre fared little better. “It was better maintained because of its taxation purpose,” says Bačić, “but the last extensive mapping exercise was actually carried out some 50 years ago. Many of the country’s 56,000 cadastral maps date back to the 19th century and are no longer sufficiently accurate.”

The Croatian government started to tackle this out-of-date system in the late 1990s. It pushed through a number of laws in 1996-1999 on ownership, land registry and state survey that have set the framework for a large-scale modernisation of the present systems. The EU project is not alone in the field. The Croatian government is funding operations to resurvey and map land, while the World Bank is funding the development and equipping of a Joint Information System (JIS) to link the land registration and land cadastral systems together. At present, the EU project is focusing its efforts on modernising the land cadastral systems. By reforming this aspect of the process first, it will be easier to reform the land registration process more effectively later.



Zadar County's land cadastre office



Marking parcels of land prior to aerial digital photography, Zadar county



Hinge Bašić, land surveying, Zadar county

In Croatia's Zadar County, where the last land survey was carried out in the 19th century, the updating of the cadastral maps couldn't come too soon. Says the head of the County's land cadastre office Nenad Javoran: "I am very positive about what is being done by the EU. The digitalised photo system helps us plot maps that are accurate down to 20 centimetres. This means we will also have less disputes about planning and registration." There are around 10,000 complaints filed each year over land registration in Croatia, many of them prompted by inheritance disputes. If land is passed onto relatives without proper registration documents, there may be hundreds of claims to the land.

The EU project has reinforced its survey digitalisation processes by providing technical and administrative training to the 2,500 workers of the country cadastral offices and land registration departments of municipal courts. And a separate EU project is also assisting the State Administration in registering the nation's coastline – or maritime domain. Technically, since 1992, the maritime domain constitutes all land lying at minimum within 6 metres of the coast. In addition, since 2004, there also exists a 1km coastal zone which cannot be built on unless regional and local physical plans are adopted by relevant regional and local authorities and confirmed by the ministry responsible for physical planning. Hundreds of buildings have already been

demolished along the coast because they were built without a permit or were larger than their original building permit stated.

In Zadar County, the EU is building on a pilot project set up and funded by Norway to work out a methodology for registering the maritime domain in a manual. Although the maritime domain belongs to the State, people wishing to use the coastal strip can be granted concessions to use it for commercial interests. The project is working on registering around 200 km of coastline and so far has registered the island of Vir. It will take many years before Croatia's land and cadastral system is completely updated, but when it is, its property business will boom.

**Project name:** Support to Land Cadastre and Land Registry Reform in Croatia (phase 1)

**Duration:** November 2003 – December 2006

**Total funding:** € 5,000,000

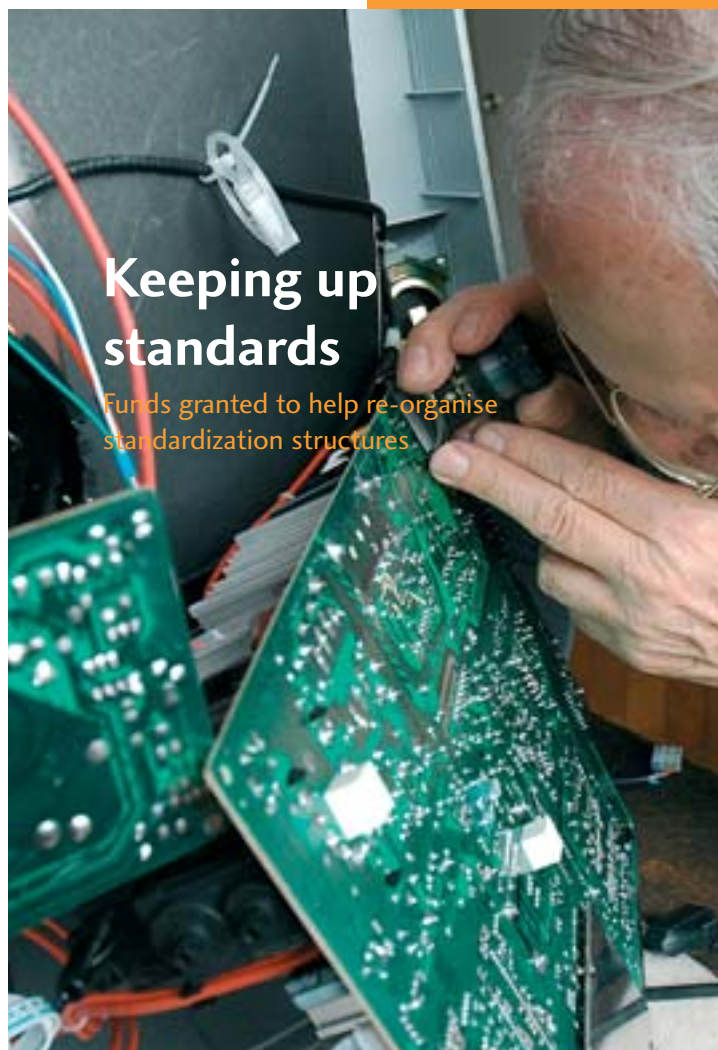
**Project name:** Registration of Maritime Domain

**Duration:** September 2004 – December 2007

**Total funding:** € 2,000,000



*Daria Šarić, a geodesic engineer marking boundaries by hand*



## Keeping up standards

Funds granted to help re-organise standardization structures



## “Products certified in Croatia will, in future, be accepted internationally”

How do you know that a domestic appliance really is ‘safe’? Because the label says so? In the EU, most product quality guarantees are issued by nationally accredited agencies and conform to high EU standards – so you can be confident that the claim is true. Croatia, as part of its application to become a member of the EU, is now bringing its laws on product safety and quality into line with EU legislation too. Not only will these changes ensure greater safety for the consumer, they will also help the country to increase its trading possibilities with the EU and other international markets. Already in 2003, Croatia adopted new laws on technical requirements for products and conformity assessment, product safety, standardization, accreditation and metrology that comply with EU standards. By introducing such changes, products certified in Croatia will, in future, be accepted internationally.

Until recently, the Croatian State Office for Standardization and Metrology (DZNM) has been the main operator within the Republic of Croatia in implementing its standardization and metrology policy. Its task was to serve Croatian citizens, by protecting consumers, certifying reliable products, controlling the accuracy of measuring instruments, or assuring the quality of imported goods. It furthermore assisted Croatian companies by allowing them to accurately and reliably measure the most important technical variables of their industrial processes and to get internationally accepted accreditations that help boost exports.

During the transposition of EU law into Croatian law and the country’s subsequent implementation of the so-called ‘New Approach’ European Directives, DZNM received legal assistance from experts working for an EU project on industrial standards. The legal framework that the project, DZNM and the government built has resulted in the splitting of DZNM into three separate public institutions: a national standards body, a national accreditation body, and a national metrology (or science of measurements) institute. An additional government body – the State Office for



Testing safety standards for plastics and metals. CEI lab, Zagreb



Metrology laboratory at CEI for testing measuring equipment

Metrology – which will amend laws and set standards in metrology, will also be established. The four organisations will cover and build on the work previously undertaken by the DZNM.

“It’s been a challenge,” says the DZNM’s Director General Dr Marijan Andrašec. “Effectively the DZNM has been dissolved and introducing new ways of working is difficult. But hardest of all is introducing cultural change.” The process is almost complete, however. The new institutions should be equipped and fully operational by summer 2005. “Our new accreditation body,” says Andrašec, “will be of particular importance to the country. It will allow us, for the first time, to promote ourselves through a fair and transparent body.” The EU project

team has also provided extensive training to former DZNM staff now employed in the three public institutions on how to interpret and put new laws into practice.

The legal changes have brought about several important changes, including for example the checking of machines used in factories to see that they meet EU safety standards. The country has only had a relatively short history of implementing such checks on its own, as previously activities were centralised in the Yugoslav capital, Belgrade. With only limited human resources and funding, it had been increasingly difficult for the DZNM to manage the entire process alone. Now that the new organisations will soon be up and running, the country will have the institutional capacity to take on

the additional work that the new EU procedures imply. The next step that the authorities hope to take is to ensure that laboratories charged with carrying out certification are trained in the application of new procedures.

One such laboratory, CEI, based just outside Zagreb has been running since 1950 and is now checking goods for compliance with EU directives on safety and emissions. As products are imported into the country, technicians test them in the laboratories before distributing them. Tests can take many forms, from heating and dropping a spark on plastic to check for fire resistance to dropping appliances on the floor to check the strength of their casing and contents.

The metrology laboratory in DZNM uses equipment that is increasingly out of date. As a result, new equipment will now be bought with EU funds so that the organisation can carry out more elaborate measurements in future. Although further modernisation needs to take place, Croatia's methods and procedures are rapidly improving and its citizens can have increasing confidence in the quality that manufacturers claim to reach.



Zvonimir Kovačić, lab technician at CEI, Zagreb

Project name: **European Union Industrial Standards**

Duration: April 2003 – April 2005

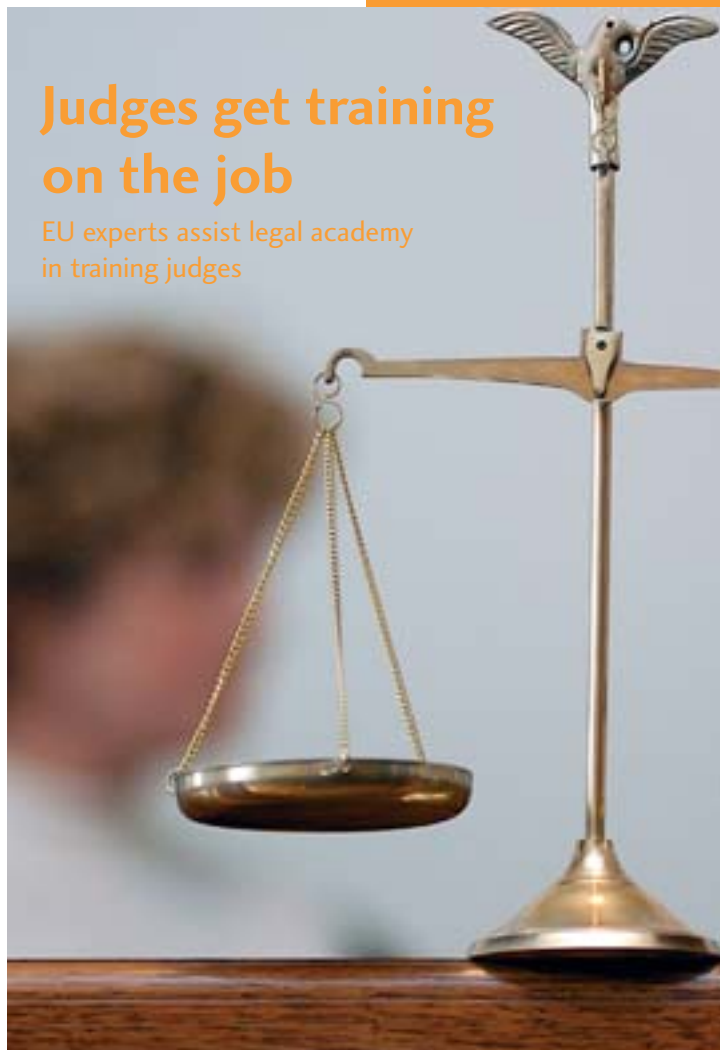
Total funding: € 763,000



Equipment used for testing safety standards in the lab

## Judges get training on the job

EU experts assist legal academy in training judges



Over 1,000 amendments to Croatian laws have been made since 1995. And, as the country heads towards membership of the EU, the situation is set to change yet further – and quickly. It is difficult for many judges to cope with the volume of change, as many

**“Around 3,000 judges and prosecutors are expected to have completed the training scheme”**

lack the experience and training needed. In 2000, around 50 per cent of the country's judges were replaced by new ones, following a change in government and the death of President Franjo Tudjman. The country has, however, one institute that is aiming to rectify the situation by delivering permanent professional training to the judiciary: the Judicial Academy. Set up in 1999 with only 2 staff and a secretary, it was integrated officially into the Ministry of Justice in 2004 and has expanded to a team of seven. The Academy is now the official training institution for Croatia's judiciary.

As standard practice, the Academy provides continuous training to the whole group of judges and prosecutors on topics of general relevance, with focus on changes to Croatian laws, which EU accession brings. Furthermore, it has also taken on the role of training specialised target groups on specific topics, for example, bankruptcy and competition law. A Zagreb-based EU project is supporting the Academy for two years to help develop its training schemes. The project team, made up of Croatian and EU experts, has already established two Regional Training Offices in the capital and Rijeka, north-west Croatia, where judges and prosecutors, who were trained in both teaching methodology and legal subjects, act as trainers of their colleagues. By the end of 2005, it is expected that a further three regional training offices will have opened.

“The offices were opened so that no one has to travel more than one and a half hours to the training,” says project leader Wolfgang Rusch. “The court-integrated training system is not only cost effective, as there are no accommodation costs. It also makes it possible for continuous training to be part of judges' and prosecutors' regular and obligatory work programme.” An assessment of judges and prosecutors' training needs carried out by the EU project found that not

only were many looking for interactive training, they were also looking to be trained in their workplaces. Decentralising training in this way is a relatively new concept in Croatia, but most welcomed not only in the more remote areas of the country.

At the outset of the EU project, experts assisted the Academy in developing its internal organisation. Today, they are focusing on rolling out, together with Academy members, a pilot training programme of workshops for judges and prosecutors in the regional offices. Several have already been run, covering topics such as “Protection of Witnesses” and “Preparation of Main Hearings in Civil Procedure”. By the time the project finishes, around 3,000 judges and prosecutors are expected to have completed its training scheme, which will ensure that, statistically, all judges in the country receive training more than once.

The Academy training courses are devised by the EU project team and Croatian legal and educational experts. They are then delivered in the form of a ‘Tutor's briefcase’ to volunteer judges and prosecutors to train groups of around 20 of their colleagues at a time. So far, the project has been impressed by the enthusiasm of the judges to participate actively in training workshops. Says Stephanie Staznik, Director of the Judicial Academy: “We tend to train the young and middle-aged judges as they are more open to change.”

The EU project has found it harder to recruit volunteer judges to deliver training, as it must be given in addition to a normal day's workload. However, the Ministry of Justice recently confirmed that this is to change, with volunteer judges being granted extra payment as compensation in future. Judge Renata Šantek is one of



The average judge has about 200 cases a year



Renata Šantek and Gordina Filipović, two judges working in the project as tutors

20-odd trainers in the Zagreb regional centre who will be giving a workshop every 3 to 4 months. “I used to teach in university and enjoyed it so much that I wanted to do it again,” she says. “I think the judges like the training. I've taught on changes to the procedural law in 2004 for civil courts, and some of the participants had simply never heard of it.”

Says Staznik: “Our EU funding has given the Academy a big push. Since it started, we've moved from being an ad hoc training institution to a real training centre and academy.” The pilot training scheme will, the project plans, carry on once it ends to ensure that knowledge is passed on to the judiciary to make it ever more efficient. There are already plans for the Academy to work bilaterally with US and Dutch experts on training judges on war crimes, and with the UK on a project to follow up training of tutors and consolidate Academy's internal organisation. The CARDS 2003 Twinning project for the training of prosecutors (1 MEUR) will continue the support to the Judicial Academy. This project will be implemented by the French Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Spanish Ministry of Justice.

All these collaborative projects will help to raise the profile of the Academy and ensure that it continues to be viewed as the training academy for the judiciary in Croatia in future.

Project name:	Reform of Judiciary Support to the Judicial Academy of Croatia
Duration:	February 2004 – October 2005
Total funding:	€ 1,200,000



## No time to waste on cleaning up

Coastal counties receive help  
in reorganisation of waste management

“This hill we’re standing on is actually 40 metres of rubbish,” says Vlado Janjić, manager of the Bikarac landfill site in Šibenik-Knin county, southwest Croatia. “Every day around 50 trucks come to this site and tip in more.” Bikarac, which lies 12 km from the area’s main town Šibenik, has been the recipient of thousands of tonnes of waste since 1971. The site covers 20 hectares and is divided into cells. When a cell is deemed full, it is covered with clay and landscaped. Chimneys are put into a “hill” to allow gas to escape and grass is allowed to grow over the area. This site is well maintained and looks almost scenic. An unmanned, smaller landfill site in the Šibenik-Knin village of Skradin, however, is more typical in appearance: there, towers of waste loom up on the horizon and rubbish floats overhead.

“Waste management is the single biggest problem in the environment sector in Croatia,” states a European Commission Opinion on Croatia’s Application for Membership of the European Union in April 2004. Recovery, recycling and disposal facilities are in short supply, and there is a stark lack of return and collection systems. In order to meet EU standards in the field, clean-up work and waste management re-organisation

is underway. And, an EU-financed project – Municipal Environmental Management Capacity and Infrastructure

*“Changes will result in a cleaner and safer land that is both better for local residents, and for investors”*

Project (MEMCI) – is contributing to this process by instituting environmental change in Šibenik-Knin County and neighbouring Zadar County.

Although MEMCI is funded by the EU, it is implemented on the ground by the UNDP\* through UNOPS\*\*. The project focuses on developing, together with local authorities, plans for restructuring waste management and securing financial investment in further long-term improvements to the environment. At a later stage in the MEMCI project, activities will also be developed to encourage the local population, especially children, to carry out rubbish sorting and recycling as part of their everyday lives. While there is a minimum level of awareness of environmental issues



Vlado Janjić, manager of the Bikarac landfill site, set to become a regional waste centre for the region

in the two counties, waste recycling is not yet part of the culture and is not enforced.

The key change that the MEMCI project will undertake is to turn Bikarac landfill site into Šibenik-Knin County's regional waste centre. It will oversee the building of a new reception area to the site during 2005, as well as the installation of a weigh bridge, a bulky waste disposal area and bins for separate collection of metals, glass and plastic. A special dumping zone on site will also be created for hazardous waste, such as batteries. Hazardous waste is an area of national concern, so it is important that its disposal becomes integrated into municipal waste management systems now whenever possible.

A MEMCI project study reveals that the dumping of waste is a commonplace occurrence in this area. Although 8 landfills currently serve the 19 towns and municipalities of Šibenik-Knin County, four of the smaller municipalities have no waste collection system in place and in the town of Knin collection coverage only stands at 50 percent. Here, individuals must dispose of waste as best they can

and, more often than not, will resort to illegal dumping. In the medium-term, the EU project expects to facilitate the closure of around 20 of the 30 landfills in the two counties. "There are simply too many at the moment and they don't meet EU standards. There are no sanitary conditions on site, and the way in which they are lined isn't sufficient to prevent pollution leaking into the ground," says Stipe Tomičić, director of Gradska Čistoća, Šibenik's waste collection company.

But closure and de-polluting of landfill sites entail costs. While Croatia's Ecofund can provide around 40 per cent of necessary funds, the MEMCI project is supporting the two County authorities in their application for donor funds from the EU's Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA) assistance programme, which grants aid to large-scale infrastructure projects in EU candidate countries. As part of the project's investment preparation plans, the MEMCI team have drafted the terms of a proposal to select a new sanitary landfill site among three potential locations (i.e. Jasenice, Obrovac and Benkovac), in Zadar County that should start to act as the County's regional waste management centre in the near future.

The rationalisation of the two counties waste management systems will bring a new set of financial considerations. The EU project is taking care to discuss and inform the authorities involved in waste management in the area of the implications of a reduced number of landfills. Its calculations show that waste is currently transported, for example, on average 10 km from the collection district centres to landfills. Once the landfill site Bikarac becomes the regional waste centre and other landfills are closed, this distance will increase to 22.5 km and transport costs will rise accordingly.

Plans are therefore being drawn up by the MEMCI project which would allow for the creation of two transfer stations to act as collection points for municipality waste. The waste would then be driven by station employees to the regional centres independently. Working through proposed changes to the waste management systems in these two counties requires substantial input from the local authorities and patience. Nevertheless, changes will result in a cleaner and safer land that is both better for local residents, and for investors.

\*United Nations Development Programme  
\*\*United Nations Office for Project Services



Bulky waste disposal, Bikarac

Project name: Municipal Environmental Management Capacity and Infrastructure Project (MEMCI)  
Duration: March 2004 – December 2005  
Total funding: € 1,800,000



All kinds of waste are disposed of at the Bikarac site



Trucks bringing waste from across the county



## *A performance to remember*

Children's puppet theatre  
breaks down ethnic stereotypes

“Children are a highly critical audience and either reward or punish you,” says a puppeteer from the Children’s Theatre Centre in Skopje, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, “with this show, they rewarded us every time.” The play she is referring to is the Giant Wheel, an educational puppet performance funded by the EU which raises children’s understanding of ethno-cultural diversity so as to view it in a positive way. During the course of a month, the Giant Wheel was performed at primary schools in 12 cities around the country. The puppeteers’ schedule was intensive with anything up to six performances in one day to different audiences. Over the last two years, two other plays the Magic Horse and The Old House, which also address ethnic relations issues, have been put on by the Children’s Theatre too. Each one is the result of a joint effort between the Children’s Theatre and the NGO, Search for Common Ground, a field office of the European Centre for Common Ground.

Their joint initiative is funded by the EU and once the project finishes in 2005, the team fully expects to carry on staging more educational plays independently for

children around the country. Launching a puppet theatre was a novel and ambitious concept in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as there has been no real tradition of puppet theatre in the country until then. But the EU project’s reception has been positive. Says Search for Common Ground project manager Kornelia Cipuseva: “In some schools we had kids from remote villages who’d never been to a play before, let alone a puppet show. They loved it.”

The sets and puppets used in the three plays were produced as part of the project’s work. The puppets’ colourful costumes and child-like faces have been popular with the plays’ main audience, 7, 8 and 9 year olds. The NGO drew on its work with a children’s interethnic television programme, *Nashe Maalo*, as a source of ideas, as well as its broader work in promoting multicultural understanding in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: the country’s population is around 67 per cent Macedonian, 25 per cent Albanian and there are also significant Turkish and Roma groups. Tensions between these ethnic groups intensified in 1999 when war erupted in neighbouring Kosovo and



A puppet performance addresses ethnic relations



The puppeteers reflect the ethnic mix of the country



One of the main puppet 'actors'

“Making sure that the future generations learn to respect ethnic differences and not to be afraid of them”

400,000 refugees poured across the border into the country, whose economy was not sufficiently robust to cope with the additional demands.

Six years later, and the situation has improved. But there is still a strong need to promote cooperative solutions and conflict resolution between the ethnic communities. Approaching the problem through educational puppet plays was felt to be an original way of making sure that future generations learn to respect ethnic differences and not to be afraid of them. Says Cipuseva: “We can’t say the EU project has changed the children’s behaviour through the plays, but it has contributed to the process and made them think about differences in new ways.”

The latest play, the Giant Wheel, revolves around a story which helps the kids recognise their own problems through watching and solving somebody else’s. The play presents three children of Macedonian, Albanian and Roma origin, who do not mix with each other out of prejudice and social stereotyping. One day their lives are changed when two arguing giants come to live with them from another planet. By solving the disputes of the giants, the children become friends and learn how to act on their similarities as well as to learn from their differences.

In *Magic Horse* and *The Old House*, there are similar social messages as the stories guide the children towards the idea of learning from their differences and not to jump to conclusions about people without getting to know them first. In *The Old House*, for example, a girl refuses to befriend a new boy who moves to the area to work in a market, as local stereotypes suggest that only thieves do this kind of work. In the end, they become friends as she realises that the stereotype is not true.

The contents of the plays, which are multi-lingual (Macedonian, Albanian, Roma and Turkish), were scripted by the EU project after they had carried out research with the children to see what kind of problems and stereotypes they already had, and what kind of music and sets would appeal to the children’s



The puppets are very popular with the young audience

imagination. In all three of them, they used repetition, as a way of introducing children to new words and phrases in different local languages; for example, if one puppet says a sentence in Albanian, another repeats it in Macedonian, so that all the children can understand what is being said. "This worked particularly well," says Cipuseva, "in the eastern part of the country – an area which is not ethnically mixed – as the plays were able to expose the children to the Albanian language and culture for the first time and in a positive light."

The broad social messages conveyed in the plays were reinforced during focus groups held after each performance with around 20 children from the audience. In the groups, the children were allowed to discuss their impressions of the plays as well as what they had learnt with psychologists, teachers and experts from the NGO.

Around 12,600 children will have watched the plays, performed by a multi-ethnic actors group (actors are Roma, Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish), by the time the project ends. DVDs of the three plays with English subtitles and an accompanying teacher's brochure are currently being prepared for distribution to around 200 of the schools that took part so that they can continue working with children on ethnic relations' issues. The project also hopes to have the DVDs shown on national television. Meantime, the six puppeteers who were trained by the EU project to perform the plays – who are otherwise trained actors working at the Children's Theatre – are planning to stage the plays at several drama festivals in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other western Balkan countries later this year.

Project name:	Inter-ethnic intended-outcomes children's puppet theatre
Duration:	2003 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 200,000



## The standard bearers of product conformity

EU funds establishment of public institutes to check standard of goods

In any country applying inconsistent quality controls on products and goods means that foreign buyers are deterred from trusting the quality of home-produced manufactured items or produce. For example, if an investor opens one good bottle of wine from a batch of bottles, they need to be sure that when they open a second from another, it will be of equally high quality. A lack of confidence on the part of importing companies

in a country's quality standards has a bad knock-on effect on a country's economy; it loses out on new trade and is unable to export. This situation is similar to the one that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia finds itself in today. However, the country has recently taken on the challenge of raising product standards across the board to improve its economic potential.



*“The campaign that the project ran to promote awareness of the institutional work was also very useful”*

The country's government set the country on its way towards an EU-harmonised standardization system by passing in 2002 a batch of new laws on standardization, metrology, accreditation and product and conformity assessment. The laws establish the legal framework for creating an institutional infrastructure with the capacity to take on increased standardization work. All countries that are seeking to join the European Union are expected to have 80% of their standards in place before acceding. So far, out of the 14,000 EU standards that exist, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has only introduced 20. However, with only a relatively short history in the field this is not unsurprising. Since the modernisation process is expected to take around four to five years at best, an EU project funded to the tune of 1 million euro, is therefore helping the country bring its three standardization institutes up to speed in the field as soon as possible.

The institutes the project is working with are the Institute of Standardization (ISR) which checks that internal standards are harmonised with those of the EU and other international markets; the Institute of Accreditation (IARM) which acts as a guardian of quality levels by checking that product standards are being certified correctly and the certifiers, in turn, are checking them appropriately and accurately; and the Bureau of Metrology (BOM) that is run by the Ministry of Justice and which checks that all instruments and machines needed to measure for quality standards are in fact precise.

In its first year, the EU project helped lay the legal groundwork for the establishment of the three institutes. Starting from scratch, it drafted laws regarding their set-up, and launched an enquiry point for importers and exporters on the new standards regulations, as well as a notification authority to inform the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva on laws and conformity. Product quality guarantees are now an integral part of world trade, with the ISO 9000 standard being considered the international standard. All certificates issued within the ISO 9000 family guarantee a buyer or investor that an organisation implements “quality management” and that a customer's quality requirements will be met.



Metrology Lab, Skopje

Training staff from the three institutes in new management procedures and the latest developments in their own speciality field, such as EU practices in legal and industrial metrology, have also formed a significant component of the project's work. The EU project has organised a number of visits for institutional staff to European Union countries to learn more about processes and practices in counterpart organisations. During its final phase, the project will continue training through 41 courses, including on-the-job training for laboratory technicians.

In addition, the EU team has bought equipment for the institutes and launched an integrated management information system that allows the bodies to share information to help them in the implementation of correct standards procedures. Says Zoran Grkov, Director of the IARM: “We've benefited from new premises, computers, telephones, and equipment for measuring. The campaign that the project ran to promote awareness of the institutional work was also very useful.”

Says Nikos Mouzopoulos, team leader: “It's important that this work is done now. The standardization process in the EU has a 20-year-lead over the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in implementing such procedures. If it doesn't get help now in adopting the standards, it could seriously hamper the country's aspirations to enter the EU.” Once it does, the country will be able to penetrate new markets and finally re-orientate its economy towards exports.

Project name:	Technical Assistance to the Institutes for Standardization, Metrology, Accreditation and Quality Validation – SMAQVa
Duration:	July 2003 – August 2005
Total funding:	€ 1,020,000

## A honey pot of job ideas

EU promotes jobs and training schemes for long-term unemployed



“I’m here so that I can learn how to set up a honey-making business and to survive,” says Ubavka Pavlova with a smile before returning to inspect her bees in a field near the town of Sveti Nikole, in the south-east of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Pavlova is one of 50 people on an EU-funded beekeepers’ training course for the long-term unemployed. Organised by the 53-member strong BA Polen, a municipal beekeeping association, together with Medkom, a honey-making cooperative, the course is instructing its trainees in bee family maintenance and the art of producing honey, propolis (a bee ‘glue’ used for its healing properties), and royal jelly. “The course has given me an apiary and a bee family with which to start my own business. It’ll be hard work but it will keep my family healthy,” says Pavlova.

Like many towns around the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Sveti Nikole lost a lot of its traditional markets when Yugoslavia collapsed. And when the town’s main factory closed down a few years ago, Pavlova, an accountant at the firm, lost her job. She’s now been without a job for some time, but the course

looks set to offer her a way back into the job market. Says the President of the Beekeepers Association of Macedonia and course director Zlatev Petko: “Once the trainees have completed their training they will become members of the association and have access to selling their honey to Medkom. We hope very much to increase employment in the area.”

Unemployment in the country officially stands at 37%. And the country’s economy is struggling to grow; recent regional political instabilities and a lack of foreign and local investment mean that it is urgently seeking to generate more dynamic private sector firms and create a real labour demand. The EU project funding the pilot beekeeping course is also assisting the country in reaching its broader employment aims.

In its early stages, the project helped compile the country’s first coherent National Action Plan for Employment 2004-2005. This is a wide-ranging document that identifies policies for tackling unemployment, promoting job creation and supporting vocational training nation-wide. It also pinpoints the



Hibernating bees need constant monitoring to check their condition



Ubavka Pavlova from Sveti Nikole, a trainee beekeeper on the project in Zid

*“The course looks set to offer her a way back into the job market”*

legal reforms that will be needed to ensure the Plan’s implementation and the conditions for modernising the Macedonian Public Employment Service.

Further to assisting and training staff at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on how to implement its National Action Plan measures, the EU project has advised on the restructuring of the local employment centres’ services and delivered equipment worth 800,000 euros.

Following the Public Employment Service’s reorganisation, it is now called the Employment Service Agency (ESA) and the project has provided training seminars to staff at 30 ESA centres on a selection of topics, from Active Labour Market Measures to Employment Counselling. All these strands of the project’s work will be built on by a new EU employment project that is planned to start shortly and which will carry on assisting the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the further development of employment policies and in the light of the revised Lisbon agenda.

At a more immediate level, however, the present EU project is following the progress of the 11 pilot training schemes that it helped select for funding in 2004. One of the pilot schemes run by the Chamber of Craftsmen in Skopje has already received offers from local interested companies to take on 11 participants as employees. Targeted at unemployed people who have been jobless for more than 5 years, the Chamber, together with private companies, has provided training to 10 participants in a bakery, 10 in hairdressing and 5 in filigree (fine metal) silversmith work. Although vocational schools already exist in these subjects, says Chamber Executive Snezana Denkovska: “These places do not offer much in terms of training to those already on the job market. The Chamber got involved because it wanted to give jobless people a chance to improve their skills.”



Delivering bread from the Kozle bakery in Skopje

The trainees seem to be doing well. At the Kozle bakery, owner and trainer Drakche Kotsevski says: "I'm confident that by the end of the course they'll know all the basics and know how to make dough properly – that's the most difficult thing to master." The course requires that the students work 6 hours a day, 3 times a week in the bakery. It can be tiring. "We're working all the time," says trainee Jasmina Andovova. "But now I'm beginning to get the hang of it. I particularly like shaping the dough and making the bread."

At a jewellery workshop in the old town of Skopje, students are also being put through their paces in crafting fine silver. The trade had been a dying craft in the country, and the pilot scheme was glad to revive it through the training. In two months, trainer Enver Abdi

says their 5 students are already producing some fine, intricate pieces. Trainee Liljana Mangova is enthusiastic: "I love doing this job. Silver is such a great material to work with. Many of my ideas come from our country's cultural heritage and classic designs." The Chamber plans to put on an exhibition of all the work carried out by its trainees to help them get jobs once the scheme ends. With so much talent, they say, it would be a shame not to show it off.

Project name:	Technical Assistance to Institution Building in Support of Employment Policy
Duration:	May 2003 – May 2005
Total funding:	€ 2,500,000



## Creating an inclusive NGO network

Centres help consolidate non-governmental organisations' work

There are 81 non-governmental organisations registered in the area surrounding the small town of Negotino in southern former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Of these around 35 are considered active but many of them are not realising their potential as, up until around 18 months ago, there was nowhere for them to go for support and advice. They had little contact with each other and worked alone. Given that many NGOs in the country comprise only one permanent

member of staff, it can be tough for such organisations to get going – and, more importantly, stay afloat. That is why the Foundation Open Society Institute opened 12 centres around the country in 2004 to support NGOs in their networking and communication activities. By giving them a helping hand in developing links with other NGOs and government authorities and the media, the Support Centres are helping to improve NGOs' services to local communities.



Local NGOs meet at the Negotino NGO Support Centre

*“The Centre makes our local NGOs feel more united and able to take up their role in society”*

Out of the 12 Support Centres, 8 - including Negotino - are funded and managed by a Skopje-based EU project. This project is administered by the European Agency for Reconstruction. The other four centres are funded and run via the Swiss Development Agency. The NGO Support Centres network provides a general set of services. On a daily basis at Negotino, for example, volunteers and employees of local NGOs can come into the Centre and use its space, library and computers for free. The Centre also lays on training courses for NGOs, where staff can learn more about ways to enhance their capacities in such areas as public relations, strategic planning and EU structures. It also runs a mini-grant scheme, which provides financial support to small (up to 5,000 euro) projects that assist NGOs in their development, and acts a bridge between the NGO community and the EU.

Through the training and workshops that the Centre organises, NGOs are given an opportunity not only to increase their knowledge in new fields, but also to meet with other representatives from local authorities, schools and media. They are free to network with other local NGOs and exchange information. Director of NGO ‘Message Negotino’ Gordana Trajdoska, who set up her organisation six years ago to help get support for disabled children after her own daughter was born with a mental disability, found the Support Centre helped open doors for her. “Over the last two years, I have finally

been able to make contacts with other useful organisations and NGOs. And I have been to all of the Centre’s training sessions – it’s a big chance for us to learn.” In 2003, Trajdoska successfully opened a small day care centre for disabled children in Negotino.

At the centres in Negotino, Debar, Delcovo, Kratovo, Gevgelija, Resen, Strumica and Struga, Support Centre staff regularly offer logistical support in arranging meetings, round tables and press conferences on NGO-initiated ventures. At the Resen Support Centre, for example, one local initiative received organisational back-up when they ran a 3-day event to promote the start of the apple-picking season. This included setting up a painting event – 1001 ways to paint an apple – for children from Resen. Any NGO wanting more information on grants and programmes funded by the EU and other donors are also encouraged to approach the Centres and can receive training on how to apply for funds.

The Negotino Support Centre is busy: it has around 30 to 50 visitors a day, and around 220 internet users a month. In future, the Centre, says its local coordinator Roza Janevska, hopes to run more forums to promote greater levels of cooperation between business, administration and the NGO community.

Its relations with the municipality are good – the centre is offered its own space free of charge – and last year, when the town organised an exhibition as part of local celebrations, it gave an award to the NGO – Message Negotino – for the first time. Furthermore, the municipal council in Negotino offered one observer a seat in its municipal council meetings to NGOs. The NGO Support Centre organised a meeting with all Negotino NGOs, which democratically elected their NGO observer for the municipal council, who participates now in council activities. Says Janevska: “The Centre makes our local NGOs feel more united and able to take up their role in society. This is highly important if the NGO sector is going to thrive.”

Project name:	Support of Civil Society – Strengthening NGOs: NGO support centres in socially and economically deprived areas of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Duration:	June 2003 – July 2006
Total funding:	€ 1,700,000

## A veterinary inspector calls

Border points improve their facilities to deal with animal and plant checks



## “The lab testing can be carried out on the spot”

Outbreaks of animal diseases in the EU have been widely reported in recent years. None more so than the devastating case of foot-and-mouth disease in the UK in 2001, which resulted in the culling of an estimated 6 million cattle. While other animal disease scares may have resulted in less extreme consequences, preventing the spread of such diseases at all times is imperative. One of the most effective ways of averting potential outbreaks of either animal or plant borne diseases is inspecting consignments of livestock, animal products and plants at national border crossing points. Checks like these not only help to protect the health of the animals, they also prevent diseases from being passed onto humans.

Like any other country the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is no stranger to outbreaks of animal diseases – it experienced a mini-outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease as recently as 1996. Aware of the complications that they can bring, it has been carrying out inspections on animals at its frontiers for some years. However, its border inspection post facilities were limited and checking procedures lengthy, as they had no place to carry out scientific testing of incoming

consignments. In a bid to raise the standards of veterinary inspections at the country's entry points, an EU project has invested around 2.2 million euro in developing inspection posts at Medzitlija and Bogorodica - the country's biggest border crossing that links the country to the busy Mediterranean port of Thessaloniki - that both lie on the nation's southern boundary with Greece. In the long term, this will help the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to meet required EU standards in the area.

Until the EU project began its works, Bogorodica had no storage facilities on site to keep animal shipments. Today it has some roomy stables, a quarantine quarter and an incinerator. This way suspected infected animals can now be kept under observation and either inoculated or destroyed. They can also rest and be fed, if they are on long overland journeys. This resting period is important for the animals' health and stipulated by an EU Directive in veterinary care for livestock in transit.

Near to the stables, a smart new veterinary and plant inspection unit has also been built. It is currently being equipped by the EU project. Each day there are new arrivals of office equipment and veterinary tools, such as bone cutting forceps, refrigerators and stethoscopes. Once everything is in place, the two veterinary inspectors at Bogorodica will be able to rationalise their consignment checking procedures, and ensure goods and animals are stored in transit better. The inspection

point has a relatively high volume of checks to carry out: during 2004, for example, it checked 4,285 consignments of animal origin of which 2,574 were imported and 1,371 in transit.

The changes brought about by the project will mean that the inspection post can now streamline their checking procedures. As Abdulezi Dogani, the Head of the Veterinary Inspection Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy explains: “At the border, inspectors first have to check a shipment's documents, such as customs forms and veterinary certificates to see that they conform to requirements. They also need to check that temperatures have been maintained properly and food or animals stored correctly. Then they carry out a second physical check, like looking at the labels and opening the load to assess the taste, colour and smell of the goods.”

This is a subjective test that is often followed up by a scientific testing of an incoming load. Product samples are sent to laboratories, most often in Skopje, for checking. With only limited facilities on site, this used to mean detaining lorries sometimes for up to seven days until the results were confirmed with the inspection post. Occasionally a shipment could be ruined by the delay. The new facilities here, and at Medzitlija, where the EU project has also overseen a new veterinary and plant inspection unit, mean that the lab testing can be carried out on the spot. Traffic will no longer be held up at the border

and improved storage conditions ensure that goods will be saved from spoiling.

The EU project has complemented its building projects – the two posts' facilities now meet EU standards in terms of inspection, sampling, testing storing and quarantine work - with training for inspectors on how to use new equipments. Says veterinary inspector Dr Venci Janev at Bogorodica: “With each year we get less and less problems with lorries.” In the future, they can expect fewer animals and food health scares too.

Project name:	Construction of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Border Inspection Post on Bogorodica and Medzitlija
Duration:	2003 – 2004
Total funding:	€ 2.200.000



Dr Venci Janev inspecting new equipment



Inspections can last well into the night



Checking consignments of food at the Bogorodica border crossing



# *Powering up the electricity grid*

EU assists in overhauling thermal power plant turbine

A loud siren sounds. "Don't be alarmed. It's part of a routine safety check," says Dragomir Marković, Deputy Manager of Serbia's Thermal Plants Nikola Tesla company (TENT). Marković is talking from the offices of Nikola Tesla A power station, one of four plants in

## "Once commonplace power cuts have fallen to zero"

the country run by TENT. The A plant dominates the horizon with a large turbine hall that along with the company's other three sites steadily generates around 40-50 percent of Serbia's electricity supply. Once the siren falls silent a minute later, only the sound of turbine blades turning disturbs the quiet. If the power station seems to be humming along today, a few years ago, it was seriously underperforming.

Nikola Tesla A lies close to the banks of the Sava River in Obrenovac, some 30 km upstream from Belgrade. It is fired by brown coal brought in from the surrounding countryside on a purpose-built rail system, and has been generating electricity for over 30 years. During the 1990s, however, the plant, like many others, was neglected as internal unrest and international economic sanctions took their toll on the economy. There was little investment in the electricity sector and Nikola Tesla A's six generating units began to produce less power as essential repairs went unattended. With time, it became apparent that urgent action would need to be taken if the country's electricity supply was to be guaranteed.

A study of Nikola Tesla a few years ago showed that its most immediate problems were a lack of spare parts for its units and the worn-out state of two units, A3 and A5. Both were deemed unreliable and unsafe. Based on these findings, several EU projects were launched to improve the situation, including one in 2004 whose aim has been to upgrade and renew unit A5 at a cost of 54 million euro. Since works began, the EU project has



Nikola Tesla A power station, Obrenovac



A new computerized control room at Nikola Tesla A power plant

overseen the revamping of A5's vast boiler and turbine, and the installation of a brand new computerised control room from which to operate the unit. The project is nearing completion and so far, the renovation works are on track. Says Marković: "All the tests have been successfully completed, and we're pleased with the results we've got. We're confident that this unit will be fully operational in 2005."

The overhaul of A5 has taken around a year to complete. "We were able to move fast thanks in part to the experience we gained with EU experts in overhauling our other unit A3," says Marković. EU-funded renovation works began on unit A3 in 2002: it was considered more exhausted than A5, producing around 230 MW of energy instead of an optimal 305 MW. It has since been overhauled too and the combined modernisation of the two units is significantly improving the capacity of the plant, and has extended the units' lives by many years. Moreover, repairs that were funded by the EU in the early years of this decade mean that between 2000 and 2002, the reliability of Serbia's power plants rose by 8%, and that once commonplace power cuts have fallen to zero.

Although the EU project on A5 unit will end in 2005, it is by no means the end of EU-funded work on site. Says Marković: "We are now involved in plans with the European Agency for Reconstruction to improve our ash disposal system. At the moment, the ash produced during the coal-burning process for Nikola Tesla A and another nearby TENT plant is pumped into shallow pits not far from the sites." The excess ash is mixed with water before being allowed to settle: studies into this waste disposal approach show that it is only partly successful. The high ratio of water to ash – 10 to 1 – means that heavy metals contained in the ash sink into the ground before seeping into the River Sava. This is contaminating the water and putting the Obrenovac community at risk.

Simultaneously, the ash which stays in the pits dries to a fine dust which then blows across nearby fields. After weighing up the clean-up costs in relation to the effectiveness in pollution reduction, the EU has agreed to fund the introduction of new methods to resolve these air and ground pollution problems. It is also planning to fund the modernisation of district heating supplies in several cities which rely on heating piped to their buildings from thermal plants like Nikola Tesla A.



Inside the turbine hall of Nikola Tesla A

Since 2000, around 400 million euro has been donated by the EU, most of which was for the modernisation of Serbia's energy sector. Its main partner in this task is the Serbian power utility EPS. Although there is still a way to go before the country will be able to meet the challenges of a regional energy market – a top priority for the Ministry for Mining and Energy – the EU is now moving away from large-scale reconstruction efforts, such as overhauling units at Nikola Tesla, and making plans to fund schemes to promote capital investment into the power sector, together with other international financial institutions, such as the World Bank. Serbia's electricity industry, it seems, is on the road to recovery after a long period of decline – a fact which no doubt would make the TENT power plant A's namesake, the renowned Serbian-American scientist and inventor in electricity Nikola Tesla, proud.

Project name:	Rehabilitation of block A5 Nikola Tesla A power plant
Duration:	2004 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 54,000,000



Renovation works are on track



## Managing medicines effectively

Health care centres start computerisation of patients' files





A new IT system will help to reduce paperwork

capacity of the Ministry of Health. "It's a small ministry – there are fewer than 50 members of core staff, excluding health and sanitary inspection," says Vučković-Krčmar. "But together we are making progress. The Ministry issued a national health policy in February 2002. A new law on medical products has also gone through in 2004."

Helping in the drafting of the new law was an ongoing 5-million euro EU project on improving medicine management practice in the country. As part of a bid to improve the efficiency of patient case management and the dispensing of drugs by doctors in Serbia, it has assisted the Ministry of Health in determining how medical drugs should be regulated and appear on the market, as well as in launching an ambitious computerisation programme of medical records. Says project team leader Jan Komrska: "At the primary health care centre in the Savski venac municipality of Belgrade, for example, we've installed an IT system which allows doctors to access patients' case histories from a centralised computerised database. Following a consultation with a patient, they can then record their diagnosis on the computer file and any drugs dispensed to the patient, before referring them automatically, if necessary, to another General Practitioner in the Centre."

*"It helps to produce a coherency in treatment"*

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Serbia boasted a relatively robust healthcare system. However, the under-funding and mismanagement of the health sector that ensued in the following 10 years resulted in an inefficient system which was failing patients' interests. By 2000, pharmacies across the country lay empty and the public's trust in the health system had worn thin. "At this point, the first action the EU took," says Serbian Dr Maja Vučković-Krčmar of the European Agency of Reconstruction in Belgrade, "was to re-stock our pharmacies with essential medicines, as a form of emergency protection for the health of Serbians." Since 2000, around 90 million euro has been allocated by the EU to improve pharmaceuticals, health service and health systems management in the country.

The approach being taken by the European Union towards improving the health system in the country is incremental. Across the sector, measures are being devised to tackle one pressing health issue at a time, without imposing a new structure on top of the present one. This way, it is hoped, the country will gradually adapt to changes in healthcare delivery centrally and then modify its regional system later. Part of this process has involved investment by the EU in strengthening the



Medical records for computerisation

The system took around a year to develop and will, with time, enable the health centre to reduce its paperwork and save money. At the Savski venac health care centre, for example, a large X-ray machine has been recently installed using the financial savings the centre has made since the system's introduction. Besides cutting waiting times for patients and streamlining GPs' management of cases, the new system also helps the EU project build up an idea of prevalent diseases among patients to help draft guidelines for doctors in their treatment. The EU project team has produced national guidelines with the assistance of Serbian doctors on, among other illnesses, lumbar pain, obesity and depression for general use by GPs. "There is a need to spread such information nationally," says Komrska, "It helps to produce a coherency in treatment and reverses the trend in recent years for doctors to specialise in one area at the expense of general patient care."

Installing a computerised medical healthcare system has one other crucial function – it assists the health profession in assessing how often and accurately doctors are dispensing drugs to patients, and where

mismanagement might be occurring. The national health insurance fund to which all employees contribute a slice of their salary spends on average 100 million euro on medicines. Doctors are able to prescribe drugs at their own discretion and various indicators and anecdotal reports have suggested that in the past some GPs issued prescriptions unwisely and at a cost to patient care.

By installing computerized files, health care centres can monitor and control more closely the supply and prescription of medicines to patients. In a country where five years ago pharmacies stood virtually empty, better medicine management and accurate prescriptions all contribute to improving the quality of medical care delivered, patients' wellbeing and in the long-term increased and better regulated access to medicines for all.

Project name:	Improving medicine management practices in Serbia
Duration:	2003 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 5,000,000



The recently installed X-ray machine at the Savski venac health care centre was bought with financial savings the centre made since the IT system was introduced



## Fare standards for all

Improving standards in the food safety laboratory network



Animal product analysis at the Institute of Meat Hygiene and Technology, Belgrade

“Welcome to our temple of meat,” says Lazar Turubatović, director of the Belgrade-based Institute of Meat Hygiene and Technology. His “temple” is a smart neoclassical building tucked away in one of the capital’s leafier suburbs. “We’ve been based here for over forty years now,” he says. During this time, the Institute has built up a good track record of analysing and monitoring animal tissues and animal products for national food safety purposes. Its particular area of expertise, however, is monitoring for drug residues in meat tissues. But before the institute can be certified as reaching EU standards of monitoring in the field, it still needs to install equipment that can confirm the presence of dangerous residues in minute concentrations. An EU project dedicated to improving the standards of food safety laboratories is therefore helping it reach its goal by providing crucial equipment. “We are 90 per cent of the way there now, and should be up to standards by the summer,” says Turubatović.

The final meat checking analyses may sound insignificant, but they form an important part in maintaining Serbia’s food safety for consumers. Mismanagement or gaps in food checking procedures make it all too easy for food-borne diseases, such as salmonella, E Coli and listeria to be passed onto humans when they buy food from their local shop or supermarket. Protecting consumers from such health risks lies central to the EU project’s aims and underpins why it is funding state-of-the-art monitoring equipment for the country’s 31 food safety laboratories and two national “reference” centres for complex food checking.

“The project is funding state-of-the-art monitoring equipment”

The 31 food laboratories form a regional and local network which will provide the government with accurate test results on animal products, such as meat and milk, before they are sold on the market. Most have existed for many years and back in 2000, there used to be around 140 of them. However, reviews of the labs conducted by the EU showed that many of them were operating independently and with variable management and controls. Many were also in urgent need of modernisation, using outdated equipment to perform their analyses. The Ministry of Agriculture and Water Management, together with the Ministry of Health agreed to their rationalisation in 2003. Reforms being carried out by the Ministries and funded by the EU will, when completed, result in a leaner network.

To increase the homogeneity in the laboratories management structure and food sample testing methods, the EU project has also been active in providing a number of training schemes to food laboratory staff, including scientific and technical training and data management using LIMS, or Laboratory Information Management Systems. It is expected that the laboratories will be run according to standards that conform with EU standards in food safety, and be managed, if recently drafted legislation is passed, by a single government Agency. This is



Maintaining food safety is important throughout the food chain

important to Serbia, not only in terms of internal consumer protection, but also to help it continue exporting food to the EU and elsewhere. At present, Serbia, along with several other western Balkan countries, enjoys trade concessions from the EU, provided it meets certain requirements, including those in food safety.

Besides updating Serbia's food laboratory network, the EU is now funding a series of projects that should help the country manage its food safety system more comprehensively. One of them is dedicated to the tagging of cattle. Formal identification and registration of cows through the stapling of yellow tags to their ears will provide the government, the public and farmers with a way of tracing contaminated meat back to the animal of origin. The tagging system is designed so that inspectors can work out where an infected animal was reared and where it may have been before reaching its final holding. In Serbia, tagging of cattle is due to be completed by autumn 2005. With improved food and agricultural safety management systems in place such as these, the country's consumers may now begin to have greater confidence in the quality of food being stacked on their shelves.

Project name:	Upgrading national laboratories for veterinary – sanitary – and phytosanitary inspections
Duration:	2003 – 2006
Total funding:	€ 6.000,000



Serbia's food laboratory network will operate according to EU standards in food safety



## University course for nurses and midwives

EU-funded project sets up Bachelor degrees in nursing and midwifery

The limited availability of nursing and midwifery education at higher level in post-conflict situations is a priority of the WHO's global health policy "Health for All" in the 21st century. One area of the world where this situation noticeably exists is Kosovo. For most, nursing or midwifery education comprises a secondary vocational 4-year course that is completed after 8 years in mainstream schooling. On leaving vocational schools,

students either go directly to work as nurses or midwives or complete further studies to become a doctor. Many thousands of nurses and midwives have been trained to this level in Kosovo. However, high unemployment in recent years means that few are getting jobs and the nursing and midwifery professions as a whole are suffering from a lack of investment and respect.



*Student nurses gain practical experience with qualified medical staff*

As a way of boosting health care delivery in Kosovo and the reputation of nursing and midwifery, the EU has set up a project to develop a 3-year university degree course in nursing and midwifery at Kosovo's University of Pristina. The Bachelors in Nursing and Midwifery courses are developed according to EU and WHO standards and are being managed by the Department of Nursing and Midwifery. This Department was opened in October 2003 to assist the project in Pristina University's Faculty of Medicine.

Before the EU project began, a six-month study was carried out by its experts to work out the needs and state of the nursing system in Kosovo to draft recommendations for a course curriculum. "Negotiating the curriculum so that the University of Pristina's academic standards were met, the Ministry of Health was satisfied and the EU's directives for nursing and midwifery education were fulfilled has been no easy feat," says EU project expert Professor Valerie Fleming. "But the support we received on both the EU and the Kosovo side has been tremendous."

The curriculum that was eventually approved allows all students in their first year to get a basic grounding in nursing or midwifery by reviewing such subjects as human biology and human psychology. In year two, the course splits so that students can either specialise for their final two years in nursing or midwifery.

Says the programme's organiser Professor Dr Karaholda-Gjurgjeala: "The approach of the teaching is different to what we have known before. Part of the teaching is traditional with lectures, for example, but part of it is small tutorials and lots of individual work, which the students are not used to." Karaholda-Gjurgjeala sees other significant differences too. "At vocational schools nurses were taught by doctors," she says. "Now they are taught by nurses and this helps them to relate better to the lecturers. Also, 60% of the course work, as opposed to 40% in years gone by, is practical." The students' practical work is mainly carried out on the job, while theoretical work is taught on the site of Pristina's city hospital.

The EU project's first intake of students in October 2003 – each academic year runs from October to October – totalled 54, and the second in October 2004, 55. Many of the students are already qualified nurses and midwives who wanted to take advantage of the higher level education on offer; indeed some of them have many years experience that is proving useful for the project and their nursing fellows in increasing their understanding of Kosovo's nursing needs.

Until the first intake completes the three-year degree course, it is planned that EU project experts from Glasgow Caledonian University will conduct 75% of the training to the students. The EU project set up a separate fast-track scheme at the beginning of its work to train seven students – five nurses and two midwives – from Kosovo to take over the teaching of the Bachelors' courses in October 2006. In the first stage, the selected students

were sent to Glasgow Caledonian University to complete the final year of a three year Bachelor in Nursing or Midwifery degree, to which they were admitted with advanced standing, before returning to Kosovo to follow a Master's Degree in Nursing or Midwifery by distance learning.

The main hurdle the EU project is currently facing is ensuring that the EU nursing and midwifery teachers will be allowed to carry on teaching until the end of the first three-year course. Negotiations are currently underway with the Ministry of Education (under whose jurisdiction the course is now supervised) regarding the possibility of extending the EU project until the end of 2006. According to present rules, it is not possible to teach nursing or midwifery without a Master's Degree in the subject: the project's trainee teachers will not be ready until October 2006.



*The student nurses work regularly with patients*

*“The degree they will acquire is an internationally recognised certificate”*

Once these issues have been resolved, however, the students who complete the first three-year course will go onto work in hospitals. And the Bachelor in Nursing or Midwifery degrees that they will acquire is an internationally recognised certificate. To help the future students in their studies, the Department of Nursing and Midwifery is putting together a library of medical books in Albanian. Says Kumrie Ejupi, a student following the EU project's Master's Degree in Midwifery: “The Master's course and self-directed learning is difficult. But I found it useful to be taught by nurses and midwives and to see how differently nurses and midwives in Scotland are treated. Here, we're more like assistants than nurses or midwives.” With the new degree course in place, it is hoped that more respect

will be afforded to nurses and midwives in Kosovo. Something which head of Pristina's Mother Theresa Clinic Sadije Llaloshi feels they deserve: “Once they have this demanding degree,” she says, “they will definitely raise standards in our healthcare.”

\* World Health Organization

Project name:	Nursing and Midwifery Education Programme
Duration:	October 2003 – October 2005
Total funding:	€ 1,200,000



The student nurses work closely with mentors throughout their practical training



## Improved training for practical professionals

EU prepares programme to raise quality of training courses

“In the past, our education system has placed far greater importance on producing theorists and academics, than practically focused professionals,” says Dejan Šuvakov of the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR), Belgrade. “As a result, adult education and vocational training has had something of a bad press. The programme we are now working on represents, among other things, a step towards reshaping the image of professional training and adult education into a more positive one.” Šuvakov is referring to a 13-million euro Vocational Education and

Training Reform Programme project that is funded by the EU and administered by EAR around Serbia. This EU project is carrying out a broad review of, and investing in, the country's vocational education system to help to push forward essential changes in the sector. It is also providing visible aid in the form of school repairs and new equipment (on which €7.5 million will be spent), and setting up an “Innovation Fund” – which is a “first” for Serbia and will promote education innovation at grassroots level.

Launched in August 2003, the Programme being devised by the project has progressed through a consultative process between the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sports and a consortium of European consultants in the field. Gabriela Bratić, coordinator of Serbia's national VET programme, explains: "The EU project's work is focusing on improving vocational education in agricultural and food production, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, construction and health. At national level, we are of course working on reforming the vocational system across all sectors."

"We've been working closely with the EU project in vocational education," says Bratić, "as it's vital for our country that we tailor the practical skills of people to what is actually required by the present labour market. In the past, for example, there has been an over-representation of technicians in the electrical sector. In the country's present economic conditions, training such a high quota of technicians is no longer necessary."

At present Serbia has a high unemployment rate – around 30 per cent – and its future economic development depends to a large extent on the rejuvenation of vocational educational schools to ensure that pupils enter the workforce equipped with the right skills for prospective employers. The EU project is providing strategic advice and teacher training, and has been working on developing new curricula in its target economic areas. "The resulting curricula," says Bratić, "are generally less theoretical and more practical than the old ones. They also allow for greater flexibility and offer more variety, so that pupils are not constrained to pursue one option after leaving secondary school. The teacher training will equip staff with modern methods for teaching pupils, and is vital for implementing the new curricula."

This more flexible approach is now offered to the pupils attending the Zvezdara vocational secondary medical school in Belgrade. The school is the country's

biggest medical school and was first set up in 1921 by British nurse Edith Newton. At the time there were only a handful of trained nurses in Serbia. Today, around 500 students leave Zvezdara each year either to enter further education or to take up a post as a paramedic. "Since becoming a pilot school in the EU project's vocational training programme," says the school's principal Dr Anđelka Dimitrov, "we have managed to introduce a new curriculum for our pupils to ensure they are given a good grounding in old and new medical learning, and receive a more balanced education in terms of theoretical and practical training."

The school is just one of 55 Serbian vocational schools already in existence that are receiving technical support from the EU project. Zvezdara's new curriculum took many months to design and was developed in consultation with numerous experts from the labour market, as well as educational, medical and social sectors. Says Dimitrov: "The previous one was quite good, but it wasn't always relevant." Aged between 16 and 19, the students at Zvezdara can receive specialist training in, among other courses, pharmaceuticals analysis, nursing, and haematology. Under the new curriculum, the school also offers its students a course on laboratory technician work. "If they wanted to, they could now work abroad, as our diplomas have recently become recognised by other institutions outside Serbia," says Dimitrov.

New microscopes and personal computers are installed along wooden benches in many of Zvezdara's classrooms. "The EU project funded these so that our pupils can record their work and experiments more

## "A more balanced education in terms of theoretical and practical training"

efficiently," says Dimitrov. "The children have adapted to using them swiftly. We've also been granted funds to carry out some essential renovations to the building – such as the installation of new toilets for the students."

In its selected pilot schools elsewhere in Serbia the EU project's funds have also been used to carry out vital roof repairs and improve classroom heating installations. And it is not only secondary school children, who are benefiting under this vocational training project. Five pilot schools have also been selected to be re-organised as Regional Training Centres for Adults. These, the EU project hopes, will contribute to raising adults' skills generally by offering tailor-made training courses in vocational subjects, and especially those who are unemployed in towns or areas in economic decline. Many economically run-down areas of Serbia used to be reliant on heavy industry, which in more recent years has suffered cutbacks. Unemployed adults here are now in the tough position of either re-training for a new economic sector or facing long-term unemployment. The Centres should provide them with a life line out to better job opportunities in future.



New microscopes are installed in Zvezdara vocational secondary medical school, Belgrade

Project name:	Vocational Education and Training Reform Programme – Capacity Building and Implementation Support
Duration:	2003 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 13,000,000



## Keeping animal and plant disease at bay

Montenegro raises standards of veterinary and plant protection services



Animal blood sampling at the Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory, Podgorica

While it is a small territory – less than half the size of Belgium – Montenegro is rich in flora and fauna. Forests, pastureland and meadows cover around 80% of the country and its attractive landscape is host to an estimated 2,800 plant species and sub-species. Much of its agricultural production revolves around vineyards, olive plantations, and fruit orchards of apples, pears and plums. All of them need to be protected from harmful parasites that could, if left uncontrolled, ruin a harvest and damage local livelihoods. Montenegro has its own plant and seed inspection service to monitor and control the spread of plant diseases. The service has, however, in recent years suffered from a lack of investment and has been struggling to meet the challenge of rapidly diagnosing pests and diseases to enable the country's secure rural development.

An EU-funded project has therefore been set up to strengthen Montenegro's capacities in plant and crop protection, as well as tackle the equally pressing task of improving animal disease control. The EU project

team has led several reviews in both sectors to help it provide valuable advice to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management (MAFWM) in how to fill gaps in its plant and veterinary services, and to reduce the risk of animal or plant diseases entering the country. At the top of MAFWM's agenda is ensuring that its standards in the fields are raised towards EU levels and that its practices are re-organised to meet their implementation.

At the Plant Protection Department at Podgorica's Biotechnical Institute, such action is firmly underway. Its laboratories are lined with plants on which research into parasite control is being carried out and new equipment bought with separate EU funds to carry out rapid diagnosis of crop diseases. During the course of the EU project's operation, the team has organised a number of seminars to train staff in the Department on the latest information in the field, such as a seminar on the "Marketing of plants and plant products according to EU legislation" and a workshop on "Diagnosis of fungal plant diseases".

The work has not only been confined to the laboratories as plant pathologist and project expert Jelena Latinović explains: "We've also held several discussions with

surveillance and diagnosis of livestock, plants and crops. To improve Montenegro's plant control, it has also catalogued varieties of pears, plums and apples and submitted new proposals to MAFWM for plant certification and an early alert system.

*"The work has not only been confined to the laboratories"*

Montenegro inspectors at border-crossing inspection posts to help us get a better idea of what changes need to be made here to prevent plant and animal diseases entering the country." The EU project team passed on its findings to the MAFWM, and has since provided advice on how to improve its operational programme for the

At the same time, the EU project's veterinary experts have been advising the MAFWM on its programme to transform and privatise its public veterinary service. There are an estimated 120 veterinarians in Montenegro. And until recently animal health care was provided predominantly by public veterinary stations. Under a recently adopted new veterinary law that is in keeping with EU standards, the complete field service is being privatised with private veterinarians in future being able to perform public duties, including blood sampling, tuberculosis testing, vaccinations, and disease reporting. So far, farmers are said to be satisfied with the services that private practitioners are providing.



Research laboratory at Podgorica's Biotechnical Institute

At an institutional level, the EU project has also helped to bring about changes in the organisation of veterinary services in the MAFWM. Established in January 2002, MAFWM's Veterinary Department, with only four veterinarians as advisor for veterinary affairs, urgently needed to be developed. Based on recommendations made by the EU project, a new Veterinary Directorate within the Ministry of Agriculture has been created. Says project assistant and expert Sandra Vukasović: "This re-organisation has been one of our most successful contributions to improving the running of the veterinary service." Vet Predrag Sojović agrees: "I was a little sceptical in the past in what the new directorate might do, but now I am more hopeful that real change could happen."



Improving plant protection to increase fruit and crop production

The EU project has not been working in isolation: several other EU-funded projects including one to buy vital, modern pieces of equipment for the Montenegro's Plant Protection Department at Podgorica's Biotechnical Institute, and another to build a new veterinary diagnostic laboratory to perform toxicological tests on animal products are all contributing to enhancing the overall standard of plant and animal inspection services. The new Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory took two years to set up and now stands next to the Biotechnical Institute providing "state of the art" veterinary diagnostic services. Aware that Montenegro cannot afford to run excessively complex and costly diagnosis research and tests, the EU project has been advising the MAFWM on the types of equipment that should be bought in order to guarantee that standards in the field are kept but at minimal expense.



New Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory (foreground) and Podgorica's Biotechnical Institute

Today, plans are afoot to set up more projects that can build on the project's work and develop ways to cultivate produce that will meet with EU food security standards so that it can be exported, and set up an identification and registration system for cattle in Montenegro. Gradually, the country's infrastructure for veterinary and plant inspection services is improving, and with it, the prospect of improved crop cultivation and animal husbandry that can generate greater local revenue.

Project name:	Strengthening of the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Services Technical Assistance
Duration:	2005 – 2005
Total funding:	€ 579.910





## Municipalities plan for their own future

EU funds programme to develop local infrastructure and planning

Southern Serbia is generally recognised as being one of the poorest regions of the country. Following years of neglect and under investment, local Albanians, Serbs and Roma have suffered from high levels of poverty, unemployment – as much as 60% in some areas – and a poor social infrastructure. At the end of the 1990s, the region's problems were exacerbated by the armed conflicts that took place following the war in neighbouring Kosovo. In 2001, the Serbian government

introduced a relative peace into the area, by negotiating with ethnic Albanian guerrillas to withdraw from the Ground Safety Zone along the administrative boundary line with Kosovo on the understanding that it would invest in political reform and develop local infrastructure in the region's 13 municipalities. So far, this stabilisation process appears to be working and the area has experienced far fewer armed incidents in recent years.

At present there are several schemes in south Serbia funded by international donors and the government alike that are attempting to honour the country's commitment to developing the region's economy and infrastructure. One of them is an EU-funded project that is administered by the European Agency for Reconstruction and run locally by UNDP\* called the Municipal Improvement and Revival Programme - or MIR as it is better known. MIR stands for "peace" in Serbian and "good" in Albanian. It is a fitting title for the project as programme manager, Thomas Thorogood explains: "This project is all about moving on from the conflict and towards longer term development." The EU project is carrying out its work in 11 municipalities – Bojnik, Lebane, Medvedja, Leskovac, Vladičin Han, Surdulica, Vranje, Bosilegrad, Trgovište, Bujanovac and Preševo in south Serbia (Vlasotince and Crna Trava municipalities will be included at a later phase) to increase their capacities to deliver services to the community in line with their actual needs, and to improve the management of municipal planning and future local development strategies.

There are nearly half a million people living within the designated area, which is also very ethnically mixed. Around 40% of Medvedja, for example, are Albanian while in Bosilegrad, 60% of the population is Bulgarian. A newly passed Electoral Law means that mayors are also now directly elected. Consequently, municipalities are more representative of their ethnic make-up: the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac, for example, have just elected Albanian mayors for the first time. In

*"This project is all about moving on from the conflict and towards longer term development"*

addition, local municipalities today have a far greater degree of independence in their activities, following another new law on local self government in 2002, which decentralised many of the former responsibilities and role of Serbia's centralised government to the municipalities. However, with only limited budgets to manage these responsibilities in an already poor area, the municipalities in southern Serbia have been struggling to meet the challenge.

The EU project has therefore been investing its funds and efforts over the last two years in transferring knowledge to the municipality administrators in how to launch and run small-scale infrastructure projects. In each of the 11 municipalities it has set up a Municipal Investment Fund – co-financed by the EU and the municipalities – to be used by the municipalities to invest in selected local development projects. At a daily level, this means the municipalities are now in charge of tendering out potential project contracts themselves, under the supervision of UNDP staff.

Support is given to the municipalities via Project Implementation Units that the EU project has also set up in the municipalities. They are all staffed by one UNDP employee and one municipality representative. Says



Computer room for high school students in Han, South Serbia



Junior school pupils in Presevo

Dejan Stanojević of the Municipality of Vranje: “We play a leading role in procedures. Our Unit directly communicates with the citizens before they submit a development works proposal and we then supervise its realisation, and control and ensure its sustainability.” Stanojević’s Municipality is also helping its citizens further by setting a one-stop shop in the area where the public can come to get advice when dealing with the administration. This should help to cut down on time dealing with submitted project proposals.

At each of the Project Implementation Units, the EU project has helped to develop guidelines and a project application form before publicising them to public entities for financing. Since the EU project began some 434 project proposals have been received from the municipalities of which 87 have been approved for implementation. Each proposal is designed on the basis that it will be financed by the Municipal Investment Fund and receive either financial input or ‘input in kind’ from the community. This way the EU project aims to increase the involvement of the local population in developing regional infrastructure. Contract winners have been preselected and subjected to control by the municipalities, the UNDP, the European Agency for Reconstruction and civil society organisations, such as NGOs, alike. Applications for development projects continue to pour in and they will continue to be reviewed until the money in the funds run out.

It’s not all been plain-sailing, though, as Thorogood explains: “The tendering process is quite complicated and as they are not always aware of the procurement rules. We’ve had to trouble-shoot a few problems here and there.” Nevertheless, through on-the-job training provided by the Project Implementation Units to local municipalities it is expected that misunderstandings such as these will gradually be ironed out. So far, the EU project has run 13 sessions on procurement, 3 sessions on planning law and 4 sessions on basic computer training.

The selected proposals are all carried out by local contractors, and many of the projects are helping to train local children in new skills. For example, the IT project in Han, a small town north of Vranje, that received financing from the MIR scheme has helped to buy 10 computers with internet access in a school with 550 people. And at the biggest school in Preševo – and Serbia – which has 2,600 pupils, a selected MIR project oversaw the building of six new classrooms. Gradually, through the MIR project and other schemes in the area, the communities in this region of south Serbia are finally being given a chance to get involved in actions to shape a more constructive future for themselves.

\* UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

<b>Project name:</b>	<b>Municipal Improvement and Revival Programme (MIR)</b>
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