



EUROPEAN UNION - BASHKIMI EVROPIAN

DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO ALBANIA  
DELEGACIONI I KOMISIONIT EVROPIAN NE SHQIPERI

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### ***PRESS RELEASE***

## **Saranda District Court renovated and refurbished through a fund of €410 000 of the European Commission**

*During his four day tour to the south of the country, the Head of the European Commission Delegation to Tirana, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan inaugurated the newly renovated and refurbished Saranda District Court. The main problems of the building which the project has successfully addressed were a lack of isolation rooms for defendants, a security system, fire prevention measures, computer networks as well as humidity, cracked walls etc. In the framework of assistance for Albania's judiciary reform, the European Commission continues to finance a series of interventions, in judiciary infrastructure, capacity building and training.*

Strengthening the independence of Albania's judiciary and improving its efficiency is one of the key aims of EC's cooperation with the Government of Albania in the Stabilisation and Association Process. Adequate court infrastructure is an important pre-condition for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and judicial administrators to work effectively and to contribute to the development of a more independent, impartial, efficient, professional, transparent and modern justice system.

The renovation and furnishing of the Saranda District Court, as well as the previously completed Appeal Courts in Korça, Vlora and the Dibra District Court, follows from the "Masterplan for Judicial Infrastructure", which identified these courts as priority investments. The Masterplan, completed by the European Commission and the Albanian authorities in 2005, provides a complete overview of the situation of the courts in Albania and makes recommendations for investments in the sector over the next 15 years.

While thanking all contributing parties for the successful implementation of this project, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan pointed to the comprehensive and complementary nature of EC assistance for judiciary reform: "Here, we have supported the provision of adequate physical infrastructure, a necessity considering the previously difficult working conditions. But bricks are not simply bricks and the €410 000 invested in the renovation of the Saranda District Court aim further. Namely, they aim at enhancing the professionalism of the work of the judiciary. Such 'hard' assistance complements what other assistance missions, such as EURALIUS, accomplish on the so-called 'soft' side through capacity building, legislative and structural guidance". He also noted that "In order to guarantee the sustainability of this achievement and the further improvement of judicial infrastructure Albanian authorities should be mindful of the operational and maintenance needs of this and similar buildings the construction of which is heavily supported by the European Commission".

During his four-day tour in the South of the country, Ambassador Lohan has visited various project sites aiming at assisting Albania's overall development from various angles, such as education, gender equality, environmental protection, road infrastructure, border security and so on. In order to evaluate the impact of EC assistance first hand, Ambassador Lohan has met and discussed with the local communities, businesses, civil society and academia.

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