



EUROPEAN UNION - BASHKIMI EVROPIAN

DELEGATION TO ALBANIA
DELEGACIONI NE SHQIPERI

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PRESS RELEASE
**Serious Crimes Court constructed through €6.5 million
of the European Commission**

The Serious Crimes Court, the construction of which was enabled through €6.5 million of assistance of the European Commission, was inaugurated today in Tirana. Almost three years after the beginnings of the works, the Serious Crimes Court now provides excellent conditions for both court and prosecution staff to carry out their work efficiently, professionally, and transparently.

The construction of the Serious Crimes Court is only one of the assistance initiatives of the European Commission targeting the functioning of the justice system in Albania. Poor justice infrastructure has been a continuous weakness of Albania's judiciary, which the European Commission has assisted for instance through the construction of the Serious Crimes Court in Tirana and the renovation or reconstruction of the courts of Saranda, Vlora, Dibra, and Korça. These investments alleviate some of the problems of the justice system noted in the European Commission's 2009 Progress Report for Albania, such as the holding of sessions in judges' offices, disrespect for the rights of all parties to a trial, or the lack of public access to proceedings.

During the inauguration ceremony, the Head of the European Union Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Helmuth Lohan emphasised that infrastructure works are necessary to improve the efficiency and transparency of the justice system in Albania. He added that "an adequate court infrastructure alone is not enough to overcome the weaknesses in the Albanian judiciary and to help it serve Albania's citizens well." "In addition," he said, "judicial institutions should be depoliticised, independent and accountable, and individuals working in the justice system - law enforcement officers, prosecutors, lawyers, judges – should be guided by the "rule of law" irrespective of their political convictions or of any economic or other personal interest."

Construction of the Serious Crimes Court began in April 2007. The court building is now finally at the full service of prosecution and court staff.

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