

Toolkit Against Corruption (TAC) at Communal Level of Governance (CLG) in Albania

Implemented by SEDA
As a Support to Civil Society participation
to anti-corruption initiatives in Albania
Reference:EuropeAid/128392/L/ACT/AL

1.Objectives and Targets

The **Overall Objective** of this action is to combat corruption at local level of governance in Albania in order to improve public service.

The **Specific Objectives and Targets** are the following:

- Empower the role of CSO & business communities coalitions in fighting against corruption, by establishing permanent civic structures at local and regional level to exercise articulated professional anti-corruption pressure toward improving of the public services at local level of governance;
- Introduce and implement innovative, transparent and simple toolkits for reducing corruption through transparency measures.
- Increase of public awareness in fighting corruption through public discussion of the published Project Reports, Polls and Survey Results.

The **expected results** of the actions are :

R0- CSO & Business Communities and public are empowered with knowledge and tools to combat corruption

R1-Design and production of a Toolkit Against Corruption (TAC)

R2-Result from the Surveys in the 24 communes of 12 Regions (Qarku)

R3-Establishment of a Transparency Forum to coordinate and sustain the fight against corruption

R4. Publication and distribution of the project products

Project Locations in Albania

Qarku (region)	Big Communes	Small Communes
1-Tirane	Kashar	Helmas(kavaj)
2-Lezhe	Milot	Orosh
3-Shkoder	Bushat	Hajmel
4-Kukes	Shishtavec	Surroj
5-Korce	Pojan	Voskopoje
6-Elbasan	Bradashesh	Gjinar
7-Berat	Kozare	Bogove
8-Diber	Maqellare	Lure
9-Durres	Rashbull	Gjepalaj
10-Fier	Qender Clirim	Ballagt
11-Gjirokaster	Dropull /sofratike	Memaliaj
12-Vlore	Qender	Ksamil

2. Background

The project **Toolkit Against Corruption at Communal Level of Governance (TAC at CLG) in Albania** is being proposed while anticorruption issue for Albania is still a crucial topic in the agenda of the integration of Albania into EU.The **purpose of this project** is to support the Albanian government and society at communal level in strengthening anti-corruption measures

as set in national Anti-corruption Strategy (2007-2013) and assist in implementing the recommendations issued by the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and European Partnership commitments. Through a pilot component on 24 communes of 12 regions of Albania, the project will assist the Albanian local authorities to prevent and combat corruption within the local government administration.

The action is relevant and is linked with several ongoing initiatives such as AP/NPAA / EP/ SAA: Since 6 November 2007 the European Commission adopted its annual strategy document explaining its policy on EU enlargement¹. The report includes progress made over the last twelve months by Albania as a potential candidate country and identifies areas where further reforms are needed. The European Commission notes that the government is taking a more strategic approach regarding the **fight against corruption** which is a key European Partnership priority. However, corruption is widespread and remains a serious problem. Much work is still needed on all aspects of the issue, including judicial accountability and transparency of political party funding².

According to Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)³, Albania commits itself to continue and foster cooperation and good neighbourly relations to combating, corruption, money laundering, etc. Accordingly, Albania's 2007 European Partnership **In the field of corruption and economic crime short term priorities** include (which are relevant to this action):

- Implement the 2007-2013 anti-corruption strategy and the recommendations made in the 2005 evaluation report by the Council of Europe Group of States Against Corruption and investigate and prosecute cases of corruption in the police and the judiciary with due vigour.
- Strengthen the institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption.
- Implement legislation on preventing bribery with due regard for inter-institutional coordination.
- Strengthen mechanisms to enforce the Law on declaration of assets.
- Clarify rules related to the prevention of conflicts of interest in the exercise of public functions
- Clarify rules related to the public access to information in line with international standards
- Enhance the capacity of the financial intelligence unit, the prosecutor's offices and the police Economic Crimes Unit by ensuring appropriate financial and IT resources and improving working-level cooperation.
- etc(not relevant to this action)

The government of Albania expresses its commitment in a proactive approach in the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy as part of the **National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI)**. The priorities of the strategy, relevant to this action, focus on the following fields:

1. Strengthening of the political system and of the operation of public ethics
2. Update and consolidation of procedures
3. Sector reforms (audit, business climate, civil service, public service, education, health, finance, justice, local government, etc.).
4. Consolidation of transparency and integrity in the public administration
5. Approximation of legislation in the fight against corruption
6. Persistent information and education campaigns

The project TAC at CLG proposed by (SEDA) addresses clearly the need of transparent monitoring and fighting corruption, by means of elaborating, testing and developing innovative, simple and transparency toolkits for improving service performance in the Albanian local government level. This project aims to involve all the main stakeholders in a broader coalition against corruption practices aiming to establish a wide collaboration spirit to reduce corruption.

¹ ALBANIA 2007 PROGRESS REPORT, Brussels, 6.11.2007, SEC(2007) 1429.

² Brussels, 6.11.2007, COM(2007) 663 final, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL: Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008

³ Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Albania, of the other part, Brussels, 22 May 2006.

The main constraints that the project has to challenge and the specific problems to be addressed by the action is the lack of know-how in Albanian CSOs and Business Community about organizing a good anti-corruption action based on specific professional monitoring tools. Another important constraint is the low level of the public awareness related to way of combating corruption.

The target groups and final beneficiaries of the actions are the following.

- Staff and Civil Servant of these 24 communes (tier of Local Government Units in Albania)
- Local civil servants of central government institutions such as 12 prefectures, 36 Local Immovable Property Registration Offices

The final **beneficiaries** of TAC at CLG project can be listed below

- Civil Society Community, NGOs, CBOs,
- Business Community
- General public-all citizens

3. Project Activities

SEDA proposal activities for TAC at CLG provide directly support to the needs and constraints of the target communes and the 12 regions of the whole territory of Albania.

The following is a dense description of the proposed action:

Identification of partners of the project which involves already identified the main partner to be the Albanian Association of Communes (AAC) and have agreed with AAC and the respective communes for the selection of the 2 communes for each region (qarku). SEDA will organize the current civil society, communities and main stakeholder of each of 24 communes to form the **communal anticorruption team** (CAT) that will support the project activities and will monitor the effect of project activities process

Organize Survey on Public Corruption Perception .There will be organized two surveys : one at the start of project activities and the other near the end of the project activities. The purpose of the First survey is to measure the stakeholder and public perception and understanding of corruption in order to better find the ways to combat corruption. The purpose of the Second survey is to measure the Difference (if any) benefited by the project activities and implementation of TAC. Both surveys will be developed in the 24 communes of 12 regions of Albania and will have the following structure for each commune : (i)3 *Business Interviews and survey on Corruption*;(ii)10 *Interviews of People in the Street on Corruption*; (iii)3 *Interviews of Officials of Local Government Units and 2 from region's*;(iv)24 *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with different stakeholders :Business, communal officials chamber of commerce etc*;(v)*National On line interviews and survey*. The Interviews will be conducted through special Guides of Conduct an Interview and FGD. The result of both surveys will be computed in ACCESS, SPSS or similar software to produce plots with total interview score results and will be inserted in power point and multimedia presentations.

DESIGN THE (Toolikt Against Corruption) TAC at Communal Level of Governance (CLG) comprise tables of investments , list of licenses issued , list of the people who are granted social assistance, tenders developed and to be developed, figures of taxes collected and the way the funds are used for public interest, etc. The final elaboration of the TAC will be made in close collaboration between the SEDA experts and ACC experts, as well as with the participation of all the selected and engaged representation of the officials of local and central government of 12 Regions.

Implement the TAC of CLG in the 24 communes of 12 Regions involves collection of data from the 24 communes and compilation of the TAC tables for each selected Commune. Once the compilation of the TAC for each commune is ready, the next step in the process of public

information to ensure the maximum of the transparency to the public and will be carried out in different forms like following ;(i)bill posting of TAC data tables in most public visited places like bread shops , small supermarkets, bus station etc;(ii)publication in the local newspapers;(iii)broadcasting in local television in the form Multimedia presentation;(iv)organize a round table in local TV ;(v)Multimedia presentation in the project meetings(vi) Open Days for public in each Commune as well as Workshops and Focus Group Discussions in each commune selected from different 12 Regions. In order to increase the involvement of local CSO and other local stakeholders the SEDA team will carry out several training sessions in each of 24 communes in 12 regions.

Transparency Forums activities includes (i)organization of Kick off Meeting and Opening /Introductory workshop with participation of communal officials, community representatives main stakeholders and CSOs from 24 communes of the 12 regions; (ii)Organization of Meetings in each of 24 communes of the 12 regions to discuss details of TAC component, issues of public information and media program, etc; (iii) Organization of Second Workshop to Discuss the Result of the First Survey on Corruption. Third and Final Workshop to discuss the Result of the Second Survey on Corruption and the project outputs before preparation of Final report. The Transparency Forums will be supported by the following measures(i)- establishment of “virtual forum” in the SEDA web site; (ii)-publication of the current status of the project activities in the web site and discussions of the activities of the project on line;(iii)TV/radio/multimedia Forums; (iv)-Newspaper/magazine-articles forums in a special rubrique of one selected local and national newspapers

4.Sustainability of the action

The main preconditions and assumptions during and after the implementation phase are the cooperation of Albanian Association of Communes (AAC) and the chiefs and staff of 24 Communes of 12 regions of Albania. SEDA team has long experience with different cases of project risks and solutions to sustainability. Based on the previous experiences in Albania, the following the table anticipate some risks and provides the mitigation measures:

Risk analysis and possible mitigation measures

Risk	Mitigation measures
Insufficient commitment by the 24 Communes	The project intends to involve AAC and the communal staff from the very beginning to the end of the project in the consultation and consensus building process with all stakeholders to ensure the ownership of the project products.
High political pressure resulting	The project has considered carefully the current situation in Communal level of governance and will try to avoid political usage of the action by involving in consultations curricula and stakeholders from all political wings in close cooperation with NGO and CSO community.
Tensions between local and central government	This risk will be addressed through the open meetings and workshops where there will be invited representatives of central government of Prefecture (which is depended from central government). Similar official notices and invitations will be send to central and local government institutions (such as local Immovable Property Registration Offices which are depended from Central office in Tirana and which have corruption problems) focusing on the problem to be solved and cooperation needed.

Risk	Mitigation measures
Insufficient funds made available on domestic level to ensure sustainability	It is common that once the project is over the project products risk to fade away in a short time. This risk will be dealt with and efforts will be made toward (i) convince Region offices and Prefecture to fund the continuation of monitoring the corruption ; or (ii) consult the Chief of communes and/ or local NGO/private business how to apply to follow –up the TAC at CLG success story.

The main assumptions is that staff of AAC and communes, business community , NGO, CBO, etc will support the project activities either with participation or with consultation process in order to achieve to organize consensual activities and sustain innovative TAC products. However SEDA team is prepared to provide solutions and face other situations as listed in above mentioned table

TAC at CLG proposal is an innovative idea and ***it is proposed in the right time*** (because of the stage of Albania in the EU integration and because the stage of local government decentralization) **and** this counts for major factor of sustainability.

The project approach of involving 24 communes in 12 regions of Albania and other local stakeholders to include national ones (like central and local Immovable Property Registration Offices depended from central office in Tirana) works for ***forging the local and national ownership of the project.***

The project activities includes also assistance *to illuminate and convince AAC and 24 communes, Prefecture and Regions to fund continuation of TAC at CLG as a constant civic vector to combat corruption ;* Other direction/ measure will be to *consult the local NGO/private business how to apply to follow –up the TAC at CLG success story because TAC at CLG project is targeted only to improve public services at local level*

The project started in September 2009 and duration will be 18 months.