

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

2011-2012



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Welcome Word from the Director

Just a few weeks ago we certificated the sixth generation of new leaders, part of the “Albanian School of Political Studies”, the only program in Albania that continues to gather successful young leaders coming from different political parties, careers and backgrounds, with the same common desire to be open to new experiences and knowledge to overcome the daily limits.

From that moment, they joined “the family” of 200 other alumni who have completed this program and continue their successful personal career. It is a big family who grows every year, creating a wider network of values and bridges of cooperation not only within the Albanian society, but also in the region and beyond. The real value of the Academy of Political Studies is found exactly in each of these participants, who have been part of its courses and serve as bearers of these values in their daily activities.

However, it is not easy to summarize in a few pages the full dimension of a year-long efforts and activities of an organism, so complex as the Academy of Political Studies. There is so much to say about the participants of our programs; the alumni network which became part of new regional projects of political schools network; the domestic and foreign lecturers and other personalities who accepted with pleasure to be part of our courses, and our new and old friends and donors who showed trust in our values and experience.

By analyzing this entire year-long journey, we feel proud of the results achieved so far, but at the same time we are convinced that there is still much to do on the long road of creating new elite of leaders, open to dialogue and cooperation. Therefore, the Academy has further extended during this year the focus of its programs into new areas, such as training of local elected authorities, sensitizing young voters or even more ambitious areas as public awareness of renewable energy and energy efficiency. These new programs have served as a further opportunity to ensure the practical involvement and commitment of the participants and the alumni network of the school in public activities which enhance cooperation and dialogue between various factors, and implementation of contemporary practices at national and regional level.

Special gratitude goes to all those who made possible the growth and strengthening of the Academy during this period: the Council of Europe and the Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania SCO-A, as well as public institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Science, the Training Institute of Public Administration and other international organizations such as the German International Cooperation - GIZ, who are donors and partners in our programs and public initiatives. This positive experience of cooperation and partnership has created the right conditions for the sustainability and the strategic development of the Academy of Political Studies. At this milestone of the year, we know that we are in the right direction but on a long road in our mission.

Erjon Tase

Executive Director

1. APS AT A GLANCE

A. Values, Aims, Activities

A leadership training programme promoting democratic values

The Academy of Political Studies is a non-profit non-governmental organisation founded in 2009 to implement the programme of Albanian School of Political Studies (ASPS). The ASPS is a programme established in the wider framework of the Network of Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies whose main objective is to contribute to fostering a democratic culture throughout Europe. In Albania the programme seeks to encourage the emergence of a new community of young political and civic leaders dedicated to implement a democratic model of governance and development. The ASPS thus aims to promote a political culture embodying the values of pluralism, tolerance and open dialogue.

Since 2010 the ASPS programme is implemented largely through financial support from the Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania (SCO-A). In 2011-2012 the APS continued to benefit from the strategic and financial support provided by the Council of Europe to the Network of the School of Political Studies

The ASPS alumni network – drivers for change

The ASPS takes pride on six generations of alumni - representatives of political parties, public service, civil society, academia and media who have attended the programme since its launch in 2007, propagating the APS values and contributing to the achievement of its mission on an everyday basis in different public domains.

Public involvement through partnerships

In the course of recent years, the APS has continuously expanded its scope of activities. In 2011-2012 the APS continued to implement a number of initiatives intended to enhance awareness and interaction of different public actors in a number of fields such as local democracy, elections and energy efficiency. In this context the APS has placed an increased focus on building synergies and partnerships with national and international actors such as the Training Institute of Public Administration, Central Election Commission, Ministry of Education, municipalities, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) etc. Public initiatives also provide excellent opportunities for the involvement of the ASPS alumni.

B. Selection process and participants of the ASPS Programme 2011-2012

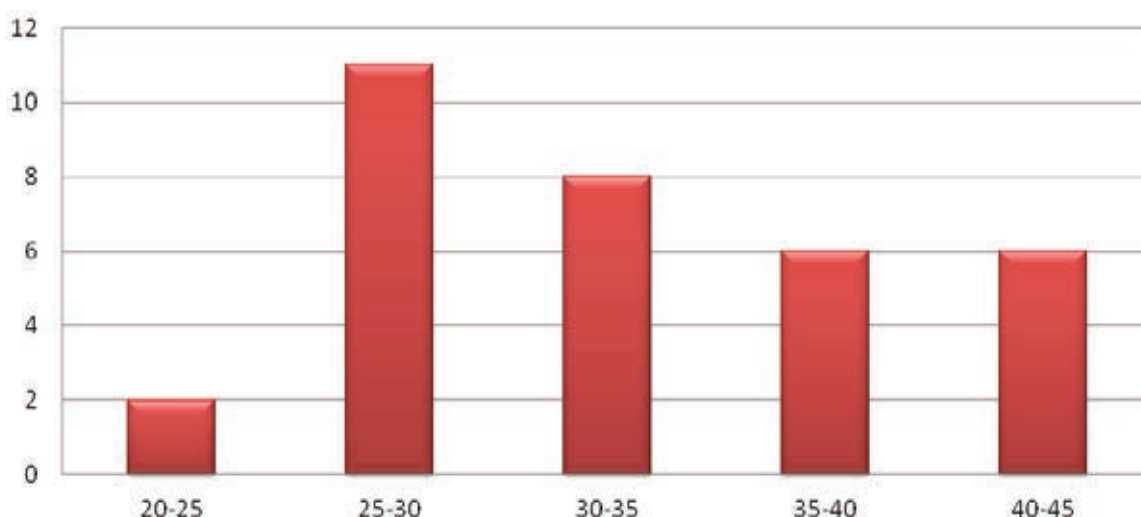
On 12 September 2011, the Academy of Political Studies launched the call for applications for the programme of the Albanian School of Political Studies 2011-2012. The Academy received around 80 applications from candidates representing a variety of political and public



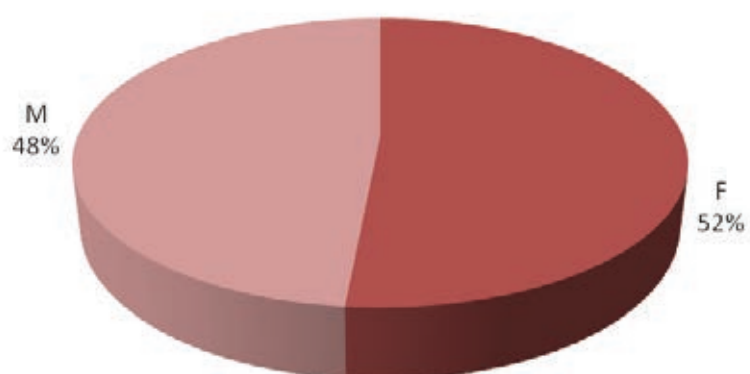
The President of Republic H.E.Mr. Bujar Nishani, the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mrs. Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, the Deputy Swiss Ambassador, Mr. John Ruhoff and the Albanian Ambassador in CoE, Ms Margarita Gega, in a family photo at the end of the diploma ceremony of ASPS 2011-2012 participants

life domains – political parties, public administration, media, local self-government, civil society, the judiciary, international organisations and academia, with public administration and civil society as top categories. An increase in the number of applications representing civil society was observed from 2010. 47 applications were pre-selected for an interview and a written test which were held from 29 October to 3 November 2011 and were conducted by a board comprised of the Director of the ASPS Programme, the Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tirana, and a representative of the ASPS Alumni network. On the basis of interview and test' results, 33 persons were selected to participate in the programme. In selecting the candidates in accordance with established criteria, the APS also sought to observe a balanced representation from political parties, different professional backgrounds as well as encourage participation of women, youth and vulnerable groups (see graphs 1-4 for more detailed information).

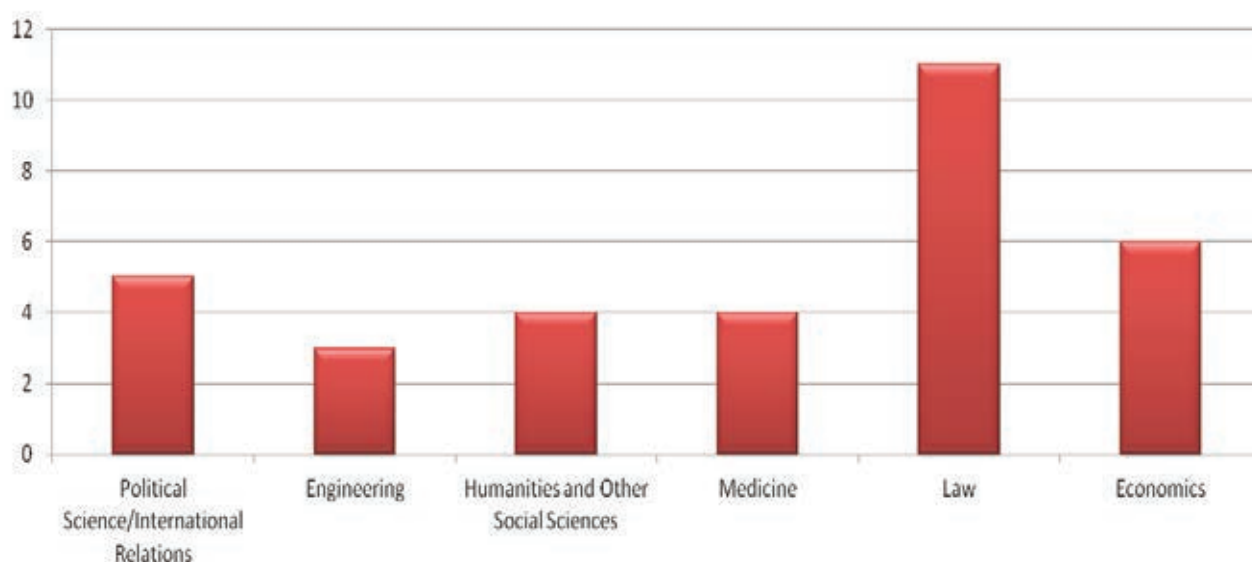
ASPS '11-'12: Age Distribution



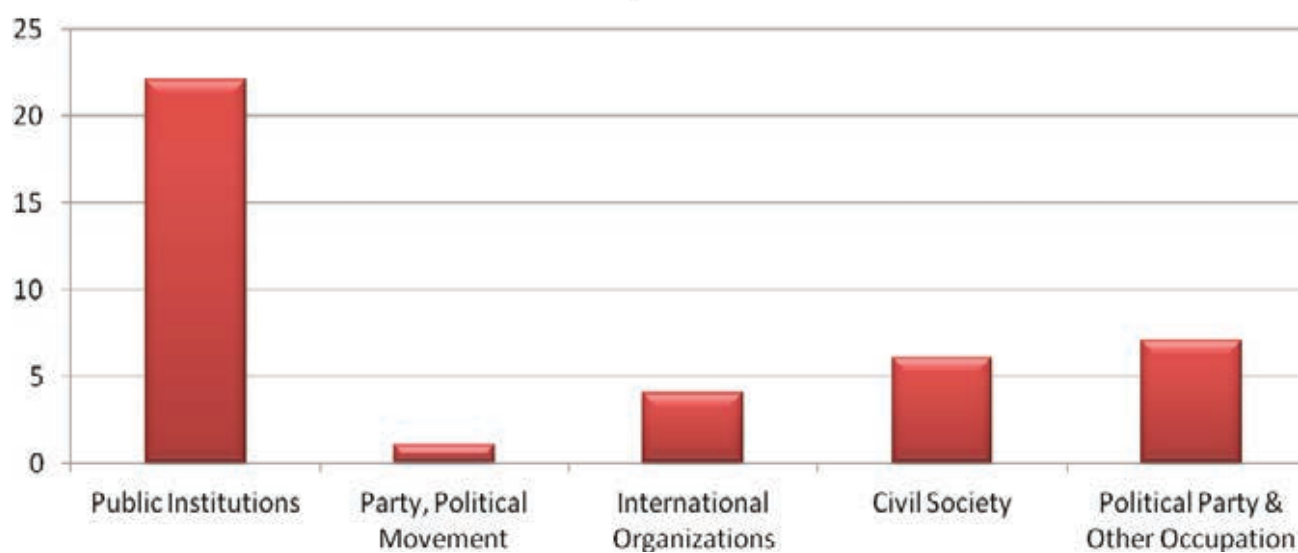
ASPS '11-'12: Gender Distribution



ASPS '11-'12: Participants' Educational Background



ASPS '11-'12: Participants' Public Involvement



C. Strategic development and sustainability

With the expansion and diversification of its programme in the course of past years the APS has been facing the need for a more strategic approach to sustainability through cooperation and enhanced institutional capacities. These two objectives lie at the core of the APS development strategy for 2013 and beyond. Activity-based cooperation with domestic partners in Albania as well as other Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies has proven effective in ensuring a greater impact. In 2012 the APS continued to explore cooperation possibilities with other international partners with the specific aim of reviewing and improving its training and project methodology. SCO-A support in this regard has proven essential.

In this context, during 4-8 September 2012, members of the APS staff and management board organised a study visit to a number of fellow Swiss institutions implementing activities similar to those of the APS in leadership training as well as civil and political education. Meetings took place with representatives of the Centre of Competence for Public Management (KPM) at the University of Bern, Centre for Democratic Studies (ZDA) in Aarau, Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Basel, the Bernese Association of Municipalities and the BWD School in Bern.



The APS delegation meeting the directors of BWD School in Bern

Each individual meeting served as an opportunity to discuss approaches and methodology, curricula and expertise necessary for the development of training courses and other activities targeting various groups of public actors at central and local level. Possibilities for potential cooperation and institutional partnerships were explored in common areas of interest, such as trainings of young political leadership, local government officials, youth, including exchanges of lecturers and experts. Of particular interest was the visit at the Federal Assembly of Switzerland and the presentation of educational digital platforms used in public education and information campaigns as the APS is already implementing similar civic education activities which could benefit from the use of such platforms.

On 5-6 June 2012, the APS staff participated in two training sessions focusing on project development and writing as well as project management with the aim of increasing the staff project management skills. The training was conceived and delivered by "Euro Partners Development".

II. ASPS NATIONAL PROGRAMME 2011-2012

The Albanian School of Political Studies is the core activity of the APS. It focuses on knowledge transfer, training and generation of new ideas for change for young politicians, public administrators and civil society leaders in a number of areas such as good governance at the central and local levels, public policy development, political communication, EU integration etc.

The core programme is composed of national courses, which take place outside Tirana as well as a series of seminars on various topics pertaining to theoretical and practical aspects of politics. Seminars combine a theoretical approach with case studies from Albanian context and other countries. Each session is carefully designed, taking into account the participants' professional background, needs and interests and in a way, which challenges unitary mentality and fosters co-operative spirit and team work. Upon completion of the programme, participants are required to submit a final essay.

Meetings and exchange of views with senior national and foreign politicians are regularly organised in the framework of the programme.

A. ASPS National Courses

1. "Leadership and Active Citizenship", Pogradec, 27-29 January, 2012

Keynote speakers: Ms Eldisa Zhebo, Executive Director, Institute for Change and Leadership Albania; Dr Frank Prochaska, Chair of Management Emeritus, Colorado Technical University, USA; Mr Gazmend Haxhia, Co-chairman, Albanian Centre for Management Services, Davos-nominated Young Global Leader.

The course was composed of three sessions, each following a specific aim and methodology. In *Be the Change - Modern Systemic Approaches to Change Management and Facilitation*, participants were introduced to modern theories of change facilitation and management as well as trained on change planning and facilitation tools and methods in various political and public contexts. *Leadership for Leaders* was designed as comprehensive leadership exercise with the aim of developing new conceptual foundations on effective democratic leadership and change. Participants were able to identify and work on improving the necessary skills for managing change processes through interactive problem-solving exercises targeting individual and team strengths, leadership profiles, effective team building etc. Upon completion of the training participants received a certificate from Pro System Intl. and Colorado Technical University. *Leadership and Crisis* focused on lessons for leadership in the current context of global economic crisis underpinned by the assumption that crisis can be beneficial to leadership.

2. "Political Communication and campaigning, Public and Government Relations", Gjirokastra, 24-25 February 2012

Keynote speakers: Mr **Alban Bala**, PR practitioner, Founder of the Albanian Institute of Public of



Professor Frank Prochaska from Colorado Technical University engages participants' leadership skills

*Relations; Mr **Afrim Krasniqi**, Adviser to President of the Republic; Mr **Ian Marquardt**, Partner at Loftus/Marquardt Political Campaign Consultants (Bulgaria).*

The main aim of the course was to enhance knowledge on political communication aspects of relations between politicians and political parties, state institutions, civil society actors and the public as well as strengthen the participants' communication skills. The course started with an Introduction to political communication; theoretical aspects- a brief presentation on contemporary approaches to political communication. The following session tackled Political communication from a strategic planning perspective in terms of context, target audience and resources. Several case studies were presented for discussion such as the public relations strategy the Albanian Institute of Statistics concerning the 2011 general housing and population census in Albania. In the afternoon session Actors in Political Communication: Parties, NGOs and Social movements, participants were provided with communication profiles that different public actors display when they enter in co-operation, inter-dependency, partnership and competition relationships. Efficient communication strategies for civil society to exert influence in policy-making were also discussed. The second part of the course consisted in presentations and exercises on communication techniques and PR technologies used in political discourse and speech-making, political campaigning and elections etc. The session Challenges of communication for campaigns and government explained political communication strategies on the basis of two case-studies involving Bulgaria and Kosovo. Participant's received concrete guidance and training on communication techniques through two special workshops Creating a Message and Delivering a Message, which focused on rules to create and build a winning written/verbal political message, through addressing a variety of aspects such as language, symbols, argumentation and efficiency vs. ethical standards.

ASPS participants work in teams on message formulation and delivery techniques assisted by Mr Ian Marquardt Partner at Loftus/Marquardt Political Campaign Consultants



3. "Governance, Policies and Models of Development for a Sustainable Democracy", Sarande, 25-26 May 2012.

Keynote speakers: Mr Bernard Zeneli, Director, Brain Gain Programme; Mr Ismail Beka, Expert, GIZ Albania; Mr Artan Hoxha, Director of Institute of Contemporary Studies, President of Tirana Business University; Mr Roland Bejko, Expert, graduate of Ecole Nationale d'Administration; Mr Philipe Valeri, International expert, France.

The course was used as a platform to generate a debate through which participants and invited experts analysed the link between good governance models applied in economic development policies and democracy, in the context of interdependent economies and globalization. Discussions started with Good governance and good government - Definitions and practiceduring which, based on definitions and criteria for good governance participants examinedseveral case studies with the aim of studying the application of good governance models in Albania. In the following sessionSustainable Regional Economic Development,- discussions revolved around the topicregional development as a basis for a sustainable economic growth for the country. Participants were presented with a number of public-private partnerships examples aimed at developing tourism in micro-regions in Albania.During the third session, Regulatory Reforms and Improvement of Business Climate, participants had the opportunityto learn about adoption, implementation and evaluation of public policies through the examples of two major reforms implemented by Albanian government: establishment of the National Centre of Registration and the Centre for National Licenses. A discussion followedconcerning the impact of these reforms on the development of the private sector and the overall business climate in Albania as well as challenges from an "efficiency vs. democratic principles" perspective. The last session onPublic Service, Development and Democracy - Reform in Times of Crisis, focused on the role of public administration in democratic reform and development processes. The invited experts also identified the challenges for public administration at central and local level in Albania and discussed with the participants the steps ahead, namely the adoption of the new law on civil servants as well as the possibility for establishing a National School of Public Administration. A presentation was made on the experience of Ecole Nationale d' Administration and its role in creating a professional public administration in France.

4. "Albania and the trends of European integration", Pogradec, 22-24 June 2012

Keynote speakers: Mr Alexis Vahlas, Associate Professor at University of Strasbourg and Political Adviser to the Commander of French Air Defense and Air Force Operations; Mr Clive Rumbold, Head of Political, Economic and Information Section in the Delegation of EU in Albania; Ms Grida Duma, Deputy Minister of European Integration of Albania; Mr Ditmir Bushati, MP and Chairman of the European Integration parliamentary committee.

The course objective was to provide the participants with substantial knowledge on the EU and the European integration process, in order to help them better understand Albania's challenges in its path towards the EU. It started with an exchange of views with the Head of Political, Economic and Information Section in the Delegation of EU in Albaniaon current integration phase/challenges of EUand a debate on the current political situation in Albania and the key priorities that Albania should fulfil to receive EU candidate status.The following session Classical theories and practice of European integration, presented by theDeputy Minister of European Integrationfocused on major theories of EUas an entity sui-generis propagating common values of democratic and economic rights.In EU Common Foreign and Security Policyparticipant examined one of the most important pillars of the EU policy- and explored the role that EU plays in the world after the Lisbon treaty. Part of discussions was dedicated to the Arab spring and the role of the EU diplomacy in the democratic transition developments in the MENA countries. InEU enlargement policy: an overview from

Albania, the Chairman of the European Integration Parliamentary Committee provided an overview of Albania's path towards the EU and explained the pre-accession mechanism together with the requirements for the EU candidate status. Participants then discussed the impact of political developments on the country's EU integration process.

B. ASPS Seminars

Apart from the national courses the ASPS 2011-2012 national programme comprised 11 seminars structured in three modules. The seminars constitute short informative and interactive sessions on a specific topic intended to provide the participant with the necessary knowledge level for participation in the national courses and workshops and the writing of the final essay.

Mr Marsel Çapi, ex director of the APS introducing the expert Mr Ismail Beka during the seminar "Sustainable development, energy and environment"



Module I Elections and Political Parties

1. "Organisation and functions of political parties in a democratic system", Tirane, 2-3 December 2011

Keynote speakers: Mr Afrim Krasniqi, Political scientist and Adviser on Institutional Relations to the President of Albania; Prof. Dr. Rexhep Mejdani, former President of the Republic.

The seminar focused on the role and functions of political parties as the main actors of political process. The seminar also analysed the Albanian political party system and its influence on the democratic transition and consolidation processes. Various aspects of political parties were debated including political party leadership and financing of political parties.

2. "Electoral systems and elections", Tirane, 9-10 December 2011

Keynote speakers: Mr Afrim Krasniqi, political scientist and Adviser on Institutional Relations to the President of Albania; Mr Kastriot Islami, MP and Member of the Albanian delegation to PACE

The seminar included a comparative analysis of the plurality of election systems, followed by a discussion on the electoral law and practice in Albania. Discussions focused in particular on model(s) of the elections system that fits best in the Albanian context, while respecting the principle of all-inclusiveness of political forces. Participants were also provided with insights on the mechanisms of the current electoral system in Albania. Albania's performance

in past elections vis-à-vis international standards and the aspects of a possible electoral reform in the eve of the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations and the Venice Commission recent opinion were also discussed.

3. “Political party programmes: political ideologies revisited” Tirane, 16 December 2011

Keynote speaker: Mr Blendi Kajsiu PHD, Political Scientist

The seminar provided a presentation on the concept and relevance of political ideologies followed by a discussion on the extent of state regulation of the market and society. The strength and weaknesses of neoliberalism as the modern mainstream western ideology and its alternatives were also analysed.

Module II Political institutions and Democracy

4. “State institutions and inter-institutional relations in a democratic system”, Tirane, 20 January 2012

Keynote speaker: H.E Mr Karsten Ankjær Jensen, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark to Albania

The seminar was organised as a free exchange of views between the Ambassador and the participants on functional independent institutions as a measure of democracy in practice underlining the importance of institutional independence and continuity. Participants showed particular interest on the role of international community and international assistance in the democratisation process in Albania and addressed concrete questions on the role that the EU will play in this regard, from the perspective of the Danish Chairmanship of the Council of the EU.

5. “Democracy at the local level: Relations between central government and local authorities”, Tirane, 21 January 2011

Keynote speaker: Mr Ferdinand Poni, Deputy Minister of Interior in charge of local self-government

In his intervention the DMOI focused on the decentralisation reform in Albania, its achievements and remaining problems. The importance of decentralization as a process which brings democracy closer to the citizen was emphasised. Discussions followed on aspects related to the delegation of powers to local authorities, subsidiarity and fiscal autonomy as well as LGU's capacities to apply for international assistance and implement internationally funded programmes. The idea of creating a database of successful LGUs based on feedback in order to streamline assistance and avoid overlapping was also discussed.

6. “Division of powers in the contemporary states: Drawing the line between State and Political Power”, Tirane, 3 February 2011

Keynote speaker: Mr Xhezair Zaganjori, Member of the Constitutional Court of Albania and lecturer of international public and human rights law in the Public University of Tirana.

The separation of powers as an essential pre-condition for the existence of rule of law was the starting point for this seminar which analysed the existing constitutional mechanisms guaranteeing the implementation of separation of powers and problems of co-habitation of legislative, executive and judiciary powers and independence of the judiciary in Albania.

7. “Ethics and governance”, Tirane, 18 February 2012

Keynote speaker: Mr Lutfi Dervishi, Director of Transparency International Albania, political analyst

The seminar introduced several topics for analysis and discussion such as principles of good conduct of politicians and government officials, public administration transparency and accountability as well as measures to combat corruption including the role of media and civil society in exposing corruption practices.

8. “Nationalism and democracy; competing or complementary logics?”, Tirane, 11 May 2012

Keynote speaker: Mr Piro Misha, researcher and publisher, Director of the Institute of Dialogue and Communication

The seminar discussions focused on different concepts and theories of nationalism and its implications for modern democracies. The seminar also analysed and compared nationalistic tendencies in Albania and the region.

9. “Freedom of expression and the role of media in a democracy”, Tirane, 2 June 2012

Keynote speaker: Mr Remzi Lani, publisher and director of the Albanian Media Institute

In the first part of the seminar the protection and implementation in practice of the freedom of expression, was analysed from a human rights perspective. In the second part, participants discussed media's independence and professionalism as important safeguards for the fulfillment of the role of media in a democracy. The impact of the financial crisis on the independence of media in Albania, and the related emergence of new electronic and social media formats were also analysed.

Module III Good Governance and Development

10. “Sustainable development, energy and environment”, Tirane, 12 May 2012.

Keynote speaker: Mr Ismail Beka, Expert, GIZ Albania

The aim of the seminar was to study the connection between energy, environment and sustainable development in a time when environmental and energy efficiency issues are now high in the political agenda in many countries and their presence in the public discussions in Albania is increasing. The seminar introduced some of the latest approaches and key international mechanisms of environment protection and energy efficiency and analysed the situation in these areas in Albania and the region,

11. “The financial crisis: implications for national and global governance”, Tirane, 18-19 May 2012

Keynote speakers: Mr Arben Malaj, MP and former Minister of Finance and Economy; Mr Adrian Civici, Rector of European University of Tirana and member of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania

The seminar was conceived as an exchange of views between the experts and the ASPS participant on origin and causes of the financial crisis, its impact on the free-market paradigm

and neoliberal ideology, including international financial regimes and organization such as IMF, as well as the measures undertaken by the governments to cope with its economic, political and social effects.

C. Participants Essays

Upon completion of the programme participants are required to submit a final essay/paper on a subject of their choice, which should be related to the thematic of the programme. Three broad subjects were identified and proposed for 2012:

- Sustainable development policies in Albania
- Institutions and functional democracy in Albania
- Political Parties and Elections in Albania

The ASPS programme includes specific training on academic and essay writing which is delivered in parallel to the essay writing process. On 1 and 8 June 2012, two such sessions were conducted under the guidance of the general coordinator for the essay writing exercise. Participants were explained the techniques and elements of style for argumentative and analytical writing. They also received feedback and recommendations from experts working on the issues, selected as subjects for the essays.

Participants' essays are important research tools that are used by participants and/or alumni in APS public discussions and advocacy initiatives in relevant fields. In 2012, nine essays were selected to be part collection of papers on good governance that will be published by the APS. They are also published as a supplement to this annual report.

D. Meetings with national and foreign decision-makers

While politicians and other leading public figures are regularly invited as lecturers in the framework of ASPS programme, specific meetings and exchange of views with senior decision-makers on current policy-making issues constitute an important part of the ASPS programme. They are part of the APS wider efforts to facilitate discussion between different groups on matters of public importance as well as increase the role of the APS, through participants and alumni, in informing the policy-making process in various areas.

On 8 December 2011, the APS jointly with the EU Delegation in Tirana organised a meeting with members of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe. The meeting was conceived as a reflection on the impact of the current economic challenges in the EU including on the enlargement process and democratic development in the Western Balkan countries. MEPs and ASPS participants also exchanged views on the prospects of Albanian democracy and its capacity to comply with the requirements stemming from EU membership. The debate took place during the official visit of the EP Delegation to Albania and was covered by several national media.

On 21 September 2012, the APS participant met with Mr Myqerem Tafaj, Minister of Education and Science to discuss the higher education system reform and its role in the sustainable economic development of the country. Minister Tafaj explained the national strategy of Albanian government for increasing the number of public and private universities and educational institutions in the light of the increased demand for a higher professional education. Concerns related to the quality of higher education provided by private institutions



[Image – The participants of ASPS programme discussing with members of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with South-East Europe]

were discussed together with the need for increasing research and scientific work in public universities. The minister explained that these issues remain major challenges in the higher education system and will be addressed the second phase of the national strategy for the period 2013-2017.

In the sidelines of the Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy, the ASPS participants met with Prime Minister of Albania, H.E. Mr Sali Berisha to discuss, among others, the added value of the Schools of Political Studies programme in political and civil education based on democratic European values and the role of young leaders in political processes. The meeting was attended also by participants of the Pristina Institute for Political Studies.

III. APS ACTIVITIES AND COOPERATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

A. Local Government Officials Training Programme

In 2012, the APS started to implement a new training programme for local government officials. Through expanding to the local level knowledge transfer practices based on the peer-to-peer approach the APS ensures a greater and more focused outreach of its objectives and impact. The trainings are expected to contribute to further improvement of good governance practices at the local level. The full training cycle consists of four 2-day training sessions and includes study visits in local government units to encourage peer-to-peer dialogue at local level and dissemination of best practices. The programme is implemented in cooperation with the Training Institute of Public Administration. Upon completion of training a certificate is issued jointly by the APS and TIPa.



Mr Marco Leidekker, Head of Office of the Council of Europe, and Mr Fatmir Demneri, Director of the Training Institute of Public Administration addressing the welcome word on the first course of LGO training programme

1. "Decision-making and budgeting at local level", Tirane, 27-29 January 2012

Participation: 15 local elected representatives and members of municipal administrations from Tirana, Kamza, Burrel, Vau Dejës, Përmet, Berat, Kavaja, Shijak, Lushnja and Oricum.

Trainers: Ms Neza Vodušek, expert, Governmental Office for Local and Regional Policy in Slovenia; Ms Albana Dhimitri, Executive Director of Institute of Public and Private Policies and former Deputy Mayor of Tirana Municipality; Ms Afrida Domnori, Director of Local Finances in the Ministry of Interior



The mayors and other participants of the LGO training programme visiting one-stop-shop system in Kamza municipality

Participants had the opportunity to learn about the local decision-making and citizens' participation experience in Slovenia thanks to an extensive presentation by an expert of the Governmental Office for Local and Regional Policy in Slovenia. In the following session, the Albanian experience in local budgeting was addressed through the examples of budgetary policy practices of in the Tirana Municipality and several other municipalities. Central government financial support for local government units as well as procedures for receiving central government grants as well as recent legal guidelines for collection of local revenues were explained during the third session. The participants discussed concerns related to distribution of grants, including lack of information. In the framework of the event, a visit to the municipality of Kamza was organised, where participants were acquainted with the municipality good practices concerning tax collection and one-stop shop services, resulting in increased revenues for the municipality. Part of the training session was also attended by Mr Marco Leidekker, Head of Office of the Council of Europe, and Mr Fatmir Demneri, Director of the Training Institute of Public Administration attended the event.

2. "Staff Management, conflict resolution and public communication", Durrës,

Participation: local elected representatives and members of municipal administrations from Tirana, Kamza, Burrel, Vau Dejës, Përmet, Kukes, Kavaja, Shijak, Durrës, Himara and Pogradec.

Trainers: Mr Erind Kraja, expert on local government; Ms Albana Dhimitri, Executive Director of Institute of Public and Private Policies and former Deputy Mayor of Tirana Municipality; Mr Alban Bala, PR Practitioner

The first session focused on staff management and conflict resolution. Presentations and on the later subject proved particularly valuable to the participants who discussed conflict management situations in relationships with other municipalities or respective city councils. Several examples of conflict management in the context of inter-municipal cooperation over water supply in Burrel, Kukes and Permet were discussed as good practices. Building good and proper relationships with the community with the aim to secure public confidence in the work of the local government unit was the second major topic of this training session. The importance of public hearings was underlined and solutions of creating communication bridges with citizens on specific initiatives were discussed. The session concluded with guidelines on implementation of public relations campaigns as well as building and enhancing the local leadership image.

3. “Application for the European Union funds at local level”, Durres, 18-19 May 2012

Participation: 20 local elected representatives and members of municipal administrations from Tirana, Durrës, Lezha, Kamza, Burrel, Vau Dejës, Përmet, Berat, Kavaja, Shijak, Lushnja, Himara and Orikum.

Trainers: Ms Greta Rakaj, Head of the Regional Cooperation Unit, Ministry of Integration; Ms Jolanda Trebicka, “Euro Partners Development”

A presentation on EU funding and application possibilities introduced the participants with the available funding options for local governments under the National and Cross-Border-Cooperation Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance. LGU representatives were informed about the government bodies that they can address to identify funding sources as well as procedures for applying. The second part of the training session Writing a project proposal – Budgeting - Goals - Action Plan was designed as a practical exercise for the participants. An expert was invited to explain the stages of an EU application: project proposal writing, project management, reporting and evaluation. A light workshop was conducted to train the participants on developing project ideas and proposals.

4. “Local governance and sustainable development at local level”, Durrës, 29-30 June 2012

Participation: 20 local elected representatives and members of municipal administrations from Tirana, Durrës, Lezha, Kamza, Burrel, Vau Dejës, Përmet, Berat, Kavaja, Shijak, Lushnja, Himara and Orikum.

Trainers: Mr Ismail Beka, GIZ Albania; Ms Alba Dakoli Wilson, Executive Director of Foundation of Local Autonomy and Governance – FLAG; Ms Albana Dhimitri, Executive Director of Institute of Public and Private Policies, former Deputy Mayor of Tirana Municipality; Ms Vasilika Vjero, expert; Ms Ogerta Manastirliu, expert.

The training started with a session on Sustainable Development and Territory Management during which participants explored different regional development strategies based on the experiences of GIZ in developing tourism strategies in rural areas and projects for the local efficiency use of energy. In this context, a comparative analysis of Albanian and European experiences was conducted. The following session focused on issues related to co-operation between local self-government units to improve the delivery of public services and notably on good practices of inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) in different regions in Albania. Participants were also provided with the Council of Europe guidelines and toolkit for IMC, prepared in framework of the project “Reinforcing Local and Regional Government Structures in Albania”. The last two sessions had as their central topic the process of local strategic development planning and included an overview of the different government instruments for harmonization of the national and local strategies of development.

B. Electoral Assistance - First Time Voters Awareness-Raising Campaign

The First Time Voters Awareness-Raising Campaign is implemented in partnership with the Council of Europe. It constitutes one of the main components of the Council Europe Action Plan to support general elections in Albania building on successful results of the CoE assistance to last local elections in Albania in 2011. The campaign takes in consideration the priorities of the Central Election Commission (CEC) for voters’ education and is conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and the CEC.



The voting exercise in the high school "Ajet Xhindole", Berat

The campaign is implemented through several stages. In the first stage in cooperation with MoES, the APS identified the target regions: Tirana, Shkodra, Elbasan, Durrës, Vlorë, Berat. 15 trainers identified by the Regional Education Directorates were trained on 12 December 2012. During the second stage, 150 high schools in these regions were selected and 150 teachers were trained during the period 15-17 December 2012. In addition APS provided the curricula and materials for a general information class on democracy, active citizenship and elections in all 384 high schools in Albania reaching a target of about 33000 young voters. The campaign will carry on in 2013 with two consecutive classes/workshops focusing on elections and voting with an outreach 17 150 young voters from the 150 selected schools.

About 3000 posters and 33.000 brochures were prepared and will be placed in and out of the 384 high schools premises to support the campaign.

IV. COOPERATION AT REGIONAL LEVEL

The APS considers regional cooperation an important tool to support the political, economic and social reforms in the region, through inclusive public dialogue, awareness-raising and exchange of good practices. The ASPS alumni are regularly involved in regional NSPS programmes.

Since its formation the APS is a member of the Network of the Schools of Political Studies (NSPS) created by the Council of Europe in 2005 in order to strengthen the ties amongst Schools and between the Council of Europe and the Schools. The Network supports the development of horizontal ties between the Schools, particularly at bilateral, regional and inter-regional levels. It also facilitates opportunities for the Schools to work on partnership projects and joint initiatives.

During 2011-2012, the APS continued to work together with other members of the Network of the Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe. In 2012, the APS contributed to the preparation of the "Strategy for the School of Political Studies for 2012 and beyond", a Council of Europe document intended to consolidate cooperation among Schools and ensure increased sustainability and impact of their mission with support of the Council of Europe. The implementation of the new strategy was discussed in a meeting of the Directors of the Schools of Political Studies hosted by the APS on 16-17 May 2012, in Tirana. In the framework of the meeting the APS organised an exchange of views with the Chief of Cabinet of the Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Ilir Meta on the priorities of the Albanian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

A. Regional Academy for Democracy

In 2011-2012, the APS contributed to the preparation of the regional project "Regional Academy for Democracy - Shaping the European Future of the Balkans - Building a New Political Culture and Political Elite".

The program is a new initiative of Western Balkan part of the Network of Schools for Political Studies of the Council of Europe, with the aim to build a new political culture and a new political elite in the region. RAD will gather next-generation political leadership from the entire Western Balkan in a comprehensive effort at facilitating their mutual understanding and cooperation. Envisaged as a learning and sharing experience, RAD offers a challenging curriculum that will help decision-makers in the region better address the most pressing issues confronting their societies. By linking regional and global leaders, RAD will also contribute to promoting the Western Balkans as a whole to its European and international partners.

RAD will have a duration of 3 years and is expected to start in 2013 with the first thematic cycle on Justice and Security Cooperation. The program is supported by the European Union, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).



The Regional Academy for Democracy participants present on the first seminar in Subotica, Serbia]

B. Regional Project “Public Dialogue on the Sustainable Use of Energy in South-East Europe”

Since 2011 the APS is an implementation partner of the regional project “Public dialogue in a sustainable use of energy in the South East Europe” financed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project is carried out jointly with 6 other Schools from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, BiH and Kosovo. On 17-19 October 2011, APS participated in the regional conference “Energy-Development-Democracy: Shaping a New Energy Future for South-East Europe” held in Belgrade, and ensured participation of a high level of representatives from Albanian parliament and other institutions at this event.

First phase

The objective of the first phase was to lobby with the relevant policy makers and facilitate and inclusive public discussion on the new energy efficiency legislation as one of the most important tools for the implementation of the objectives set by Albania in this sector.

In February 2012, the APS organised a series of meetings with different stakeholders including Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Productive Activities, Trade and Environment and representatives of the Ministry of Economy in order to create the grounds for a public discussion on the matter.

A roundtable with stakeholders and experts was organised on 16 March 2012. The activity gathered 30 stakeholders that include members of Parliament, heads of institutions, experts and representatives of civil society. A number of key proposals and recommendations concerning the creation of the energy efficiency fund, a National Agency of Energy Efficiency and certification system for household and other appliances were put forward and summarised in a recommendation document, which was officially submitted to the decision makers in the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Transport and also to the relevant parliamentary committees.

In order to raise the public awareness on benefits and tools of energy efficiency and also focus the decision-makers attention to the energy efficiency legislation, a communication

strategy was developed. The presentation of the roundtable suggestions of the 16 March 2012 were broadcasted by the national TV “Top Channel” and published in the weekly economic magazine “Monitor”.

Second Phase

The objective of this second phase was to raise the awareness of local authorities on the importance of energy efficiency and assist them in developing training and education on the new law, promotion of measures of diversification of utilisation of energy and creation of incentives to support energy-efficiency- friendly businesses.

During the period October – November 2012, APS contacted and met with representatives of local authorities in the Tirana, Durres and Berat regions, state institutions, agencies, media, NGOs, and business in order to ensure their involvement in the subsequent phases of the project. APS alumni were also involved in the regional work.

Three round tables were organised with the aim of and establishing a long term dialogue among different groups of interest on the implementation of the new energy efficiency legislation at the local level. The round tables were held on 21 November, 11 and 19 December 2012 in Durres, Tirana and Berat respectively and brought together a total of 75 representatives of municipalities, city councils, prefecture offices, local businesses NGOs and media. The APS invited international and national experts to facilitate the discussion and share good practices on energy efficiency policies and measures at the local level. At the same time participants had the opportunity to to share their own examples and concerns on the implementation of the energy efficiency standards in their region. All three round tables received broad and national local media coverage.



The roundtable organised in Tirana region brought together representatives of municipalities, city councils, prefecture offices, local businesses NGOs and media

C. Regional Conference “School for Local Democracy”

In 1-3 December 2011, the APS participated in the Regional Conference of the School for Local Democracy: “Western Balkans Experience with Decentralised Systems of Governance: Coexistence Building and Community Integration through Decentralisation”, in Pristina. In this framework the ASPS also arranged the participation in the conference of local government representatives and experts of local self-government from Albania. The conference was organised by the Pristina Institute for Political Studies and the Kosovo Local Government Institute with the support of OSCE Mission in Kosovo and UNDP Kosovo, as part of the “School for Local Democracy”, initiated by the Council of Europe. Local government representatives and experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo, shared their experiences on the decentralisation and local autonomy.

D. Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy

On 7-12 October 2012, the participants of the Albanian School of Political Studies attended the Strasbourg World Forum of Democracy a major event organised by the Council of Europe on an annual basis. Among the keynote speakers addressing the forum were Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Bernard Cazeneuve, French Minister in charge of European Affairs etc.

The WFD’s central topic “Bridging the gap: democracy between old models and new realities” and sub-thematic sessions provided a genuine platform for discussions and exchanges of experience between public figures, political and academic experts, national and European parliamentarians and local elected representatives alongside civil society activists, bloggers and members of the public with the aim of identifying possible answers to challenges arising in today’s societies

What forces will be shaping democratic societies in the future? Will the emerging voices of the Arab Spring bring about lasting stability? And can they be a source of inspiration for reforms in established Western democracies? These were amongst topics that were debated by about 1500 participants from 120 countries together with 200 experts, including participants from all eighteen Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe.





The Albanian School of Political Studies and the Pristina Institute of Political Studies had an exchange of views with the Prime Minister of Albania. H.E. Mr Sali Berisha

In the side-lines of the Forum participants of the Albanian School of Political Studies and the Pristina Institute of Political Studies had an exchange of views with the Prime Minister of Albania. H.E. Mr Sali Berisha.

The World Forum for Democracy also serves as a major venue for establishing contacts and networking between politicians, experts, media and civil society activists contributing to future involvement and cooperation activities at regional and other levels.

ANNEX I

List of ASPS 2011-2012 Participants

No	Name	Occupation
1	Ms Albana SHTYLLA	Chief of Cabinet, Office of the Albanian Ombudsman
2	Ms Alisa DEMOLLARI	Spokesperson, Min of Health
3	Mr Altin HOTI	Lecturer of International Economics, Mediterranean University, European University
4	Mr Altin IBRO	Lawyer, Celibashi Consulting shpk
5	Mr Andi SEFERI	Representative, Comunita di Sant'Edigio
6	Ms Anisa SEFERAJ	Lawyer, Municipality of Tirana
7	Ms Ardita KONGJONAJ	Specialist, National Examination Agency, Ministry of Education
8	Mr Arian GALDINI	Chairman of the FDE (freedom, democracy and ethics) party
9	Ms Baisa SEFA	Junior Policy Researcher, European Movement Albania
10	Mr Elidon LAZE	Director - Legal and Appeals' Directorate, Central Office for the Registration of Real Estate Property
11	Mr Erlis SHAHU	Private Sector
12	Mr Ermal SIMAKU	Member of the Socialist Party Youth Branch
13	Mr Ermir GODAJ	Bailiff Service, Min of Justice
14	Ms Ervina DOMI	Director of Legal Directorate, the General Directorate of Customs
15	Ms Eva DAUTI	Project Coordinator, Terre Des Hommes
16	Ms Florensa HAXHI	Strategy Coordinator, Council of Ministers.
17	Mr Fredi GUGA	1. Director, Healthcare Centre Durres, 2. Project Coordinator at EPD (ngo)
18	Mr Ilir KONDI	Director, Qendra Publikimeve Zyrtare
19	Mr Ilir KORBI	Lawyer, Central Office for the Registration of Real Estate Property.
20	Mr Ilir MIMANI	Specialist, National Agency of Natural Resources
21	Ms Jorina GJINARI	Project Manager, Study Center Future
22	Mr Ledio BRAHO	1. Lawyer, Ministry of Integration 2. Assistant professor, University of Tirana

23	Ms Margarita KOLA	Legal Specialist, US embassy
24	Ms Mariola QESARAKU	Institution for Democracy and Mediation
25	Ms Marsida ÇELA	Program manager at Child Center SOT/ Case manager, GC social service agency NY USA
26	Ms Merita OSMANI	Lawyer, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energetics
27	Ms Mirela KARAPICI	Public relations and Marketing Director, Albanian Post
28	Mr Oltion KUKE	Head of Division, General Directorate of Customs.
29	Mr Rezart XHELO	OSCE, National Officer
30	Ms Romina KUKE	OSCE, project assistant
31	Ms Rovenia ROJBA	Evaluation Inspector, Regional Directorate of Taxes, Tirana
32	Mr Sokol BEGA	OSCE, political assistant
33	Ms Suela LALA	Civil Society activist

ANNEX II

List of ASPS lecturers and experts

No	Name	Occupation / Professional carrier
	Albanian School of Political Studies Programme	
1	Prof. Dr. Rexhep Mejdani	Former President of the Republic
2	Mr Afrim Krasniqi	Scientist and Adviser on Institutional Relations to the President of Albania
3	Mr Kastriot Islami	MP and Member of the Albanian delegation to PACE
4	Mr Xhezair Zaganjori	Member of the Constitutional Court of Albania and lecturer of international public and human rights law in the Public University of Tirana
5	Mr Arben Malaj	MP and former Minister of Finance and Economy
6	Mr Adrian Civici	Rector of European University of Tirana and member of the Supervisory Council of the Bank of Albania
7	Mr Ditmir Bushati	MP and Chairman of the European Integration parliamentary committee

8	Ms Grida Duma	Deputy Minister of European Integration of Albania
9	Mr Artan Hoxha	Director of Institute of Contemporary Studies, President of Tirana Business University
10	Ms Eldisa Zhebo	Institute for Change and Leadership Albania
11	Mr Gazmend Haxhia	Co-chairman, Albanian Centre for Management Services, Davos-nominated Young Global Leader.
12	Mr Alban Bala	PR practitioner, Founder of the Albanian Institute of Public of Relations
13	Mr Bernard Zeneli	Director, Brain Gain Programme
14	Mr Ismail Beka	Expert, deputy director of GIZ Albania
15	Mr Roland Bejko	Expert, graduate of Ecole Nationale d'Administration
16	Mr Blendi Kajsiu	PHD, Political Scientist
17	Mr Ferdinand Poni	Deputy Minister of Interior in charge of local self-government
18	Mr Lutfi Dervishi	Director of Transparency International Albania, political analyst
19	Mr Piro Misha	Researcher and publisher, Director of the Institute of Dialogue and Communication
20	Mr Remzi Lani,	Publisher and director of the Albanian Media Institute
21	Mr Clive Rumbold	Head of Political, Economic and Information Section in the Delegation of EU in Albania
22	Mr Ian Marquardt	Partner at Loftus/Marquardt Political Campaign Consultants
23	Dr Frank Prochaska	Chair of Management Emeritus, Colorado Technical University, USA
24	Mr Philippe Valeri	International expert, France
25	Mr Alexis Vahlas	Associate Professor at University of Strasbourg and Political Adviser to the Commander of French Air Defense and Air Force Operations
	Prominent speakers	
26	Prof. Dr. Sali Berisha	Prime Minister of Republic
27	Mr Myqerem Tafaj,	Minister of Education and Science
28	Mr KarstenAnkjær Jensen	Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark to Albania

	Local Government Officials Training Programme	
29	Ms Afrida Domnori	Director of Local Finances in the Ministry of Interior
30	Ms Greta Rakaj	Head of the Regional Cooperation Unit, Ministry of Integration
31	Ms Albana Dhimitri	Executive Director of Institute of Public and Private Policies and former Deputy Mayor of Tirana Municipality
32	Ms Jolanda Trebicka	Expert, partner of “Euro Partners Development”
33	Ms Alba Dakoli Wilson	Executive Director of Foundation of Local Autonomy and Governance – FLAG
34	Mr Ismail Beka	Expert, Deputy director of GIZ Albania
35	Mr Erind Kraja	Expert on local government
36	Ms Vasilika Vjero	Expert on local government
37	Ms Ogerta Manastirliu	Expert on local government
38	Mr Alban Bala	PR practitioner, Founder of the Albanian Institute of Public of Relations
39	Ms Neža Vodušek	Expert, Governmental Office for Local and Regional Policy in Slovenia

ANNEX III - APS partners

Council of Europe

Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania SCO-A

German International Cooperation - GIZ

European Commission

Institution of the President of the Republic of Albania

Albanian Ministry of Education and Science

Central Elections Commission

Training Institute of Public Administration