



PRESS RELEASE

EU and UNICEF reinforce their commitment to improve Juvenile Justice in Kosovo

Prishtinë/Pristina, 12 May 2010

Today, the European Commission Liaison Office and UNICEF jointly launched the second phase of the 2.2 million Euro project to support juvenile justice system reforms in Kosovo.

The programme is a partnership between the EC Liaison Office, UNICEF, the Kosovo authorities and civil society which aims to strengthen the juvenile justice system in Kosovo by improving existing standards and promoting juvenile crime prevention.

Kosovo has an innovative Juvenile Justice Code which introduces alternative sanctions and diversion measures. These measures are new to Kosovo lawyers, police, justice and social welfare professionals. The project will help officials to ensure that the Code is adequately implemented and that children's rights are respected in the justice system, including offenders, victims and witnesses. Research, training and new operating procedures will be developed based on good practices in European Union Member States.

Mr Kjartan Björnsson, Head of Operations at the European Commission Liaison Office said: " This project additionally confirms the high commitment of the EU in ensuring that Kosovo judiciary institutions improve standards and performances in the area of justice. This project cements the strong partnership between EC Liaison Office and UNICEF in promoting child rights on the way towards European integration"

Mr Luciano Calestini, Head of UNICEF's office (Officer in Charge) in Kosovo stressed the importance of investing in juvenile justice. "European and international standards require that correctional facilities should be used for children only as a last resort and responses to juvenile crime emphasize reintegration rather than punishment. Creative solutions are also required to establish non-residential centres or programmes for the reintegration of juvenile offenders."

The effort was welcomed by the Minister of Justice, **Mr. Haki Demolli**, who said: "Kosovo has a modern Juvenile Justice Code. It is aligned with international standards, but we need support to implement the law and in preventing juvenile crime. Our staff is motivated and we are looking forward to cooperating with UNICEF as the specialized agency for children."

Background information:

The Programme launched today is a continuation of the successful implementation of the first phase of the Programme between 2007 and 2009. Key achievements include an increase in the number of juvenile cases diverted from the justice system, the development of a feasible model to prevent delinquency in children under 14 of age and the increased ownership by the local institutions of juvenile justice reforms. The overall objective of the second phase of the Programme is to continue contributing to the strengthening of rule of law in Kosovo through a better functioning and reformed Juvenile Justice System. This will be achieved by ensuring juveniles and children in conflict with the law, as well as victims and witnesses where appropriate, are treated by the juvenile justice system in line with Kosovo, international and European standards.

Who will benefit from the Programme?

- All children in contact with the law will be better protected during all phases of the justice process.
- At least 400 children who will receive improved services from Probations and Corrections, including diversion measure and aftercare programmes.
- At least 400 children at risk for juvenile delinquency or those who have committed an offence under the minimum age of prosecution (e.g. 14 years) who will benefit from direct prevention activities and case management.
- Approximately 150,000 adolescents through general prevention activities.
- Up to 300 various juvenile justice professionals who will benefit through advocacy and capacity building initiatives.
- Parents and up to 500 school teachers throughout Kosovo who will benefit from training activities linked to prevention of violence and juvenile delinquency in schools.

The Steering Committee established by the Ministry of Justice will monitor ongoing reforms and ensure sustainability of the 2.2 million Euro programme.

Who are the key partners?

Ministry of Justice (Probations and Correctional Services), Kosovo Judicial Institute, Kosovo Judicial Council, Kosovo Police, Kosovo Center for Public Safety Education and Development, Centers for Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Terre des homes, Caritas. For further information please contact:

Arbena Kuriu, Communication Officer, UNICEF: tel.038 249 230/231, +377 44 221 935 e-mail: akuriu@unicef.org

Maja Pavlovic, Press and Information Manager, EC Liaison Office: tel +381 38 5131 253. maja.pavlovic@ec.europa.eu