



*Ministero degli Affari Esteri*



**DGCS** | Office IX  
Evaluation Unit

## ART GOLD 2 PROGRAMME IN ALBANIA

Articulation of territorial and thematic networks  
of human development cooperation

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2013

Mid-term EVALUATION

This version of the Mid-Term Evaluation Report is a new edition of the:

**ART GOLD 2 PROGRAMME  
IN ALBANIA**

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME  
GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA  
ITALIAN COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

**MID-TERM EVALUATION  
REPORT**

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It is aligned to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs editing format.



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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADF	Albanian Development Fund
AGA2	ART GOLD 2 Albania
ART	Articulation of Territorial and Thematic Cooperation Network for Human Development
CDA	County Development Agency
CDP	Coordinated Development Projects
CfP	Call for Proposals
CoE	Council of Europe
CoM	Council of Ministers
CPC	County Partnership Council
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSRD	Cross-Cutting Strategy for Regional Development
CTA	Chief Technical Adviser
DC	Decentralised Cooperation
DGCS	Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (General Directorate for Italian Development Cooperation)
DLDP	Decentralisation and Local Development Programme
DSDC	Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination
ER	Expected Result
EUD	European Union Delegation
FA	Financing Agreement
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation)
GoA	Government of Albania
IDEASS	Innovations for Development and South-South Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILSLEDA	International Links and Services for Local Economic Development Agencies
INSTAT	National Institute of Statistics
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
ISD	Integrated Support for Decentralization
KIP	Knowledge, Innovations and Policies for Human Development
LEDA	Local Economic Development Agency
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
LGU	Local Government Unit
LT	Long Term
MADA	Mountain Areas Development Agency
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MBUMK	Ministry of Agriculture
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEI	Ministry of European Integration
METE	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy
MITIK	Ministry of Innovation and Communication and Information Technology
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoV	Sources and Means of Verification
MLSEO	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

MPWTT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport, and Telecommunications
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MTKRS	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
NARD	National Agency for Regional Development
NARDA	North Albania Regional Development Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPCRD	National Partnership Council for Regional Development
NPISAA	National Plan for the Implementation of the SAA
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PASARP	Programme of Activities in Support of Albanian Refugee Population
PB	Project Box
PCG	Programme Coordination Group
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PMT	Programme Management Team
PRAG	Practical Guide to Contract Procedures for EC External Actions
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
RD	Regional Development
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDC	Regional Development Concept
RDF	Regional Development Fund
RDP	Regional Development Programme
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SG	Strategic Guidelines
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (Netherlands Development Organisation)
SP	Strategic Plan or Strategic Planning
ST	Short Term
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
TL	Team Leader
TM	Team Member
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSG	Technical Support Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UTL	Unità Tecnica Locale (Local Technical Unit)
WB	World Bank
WP	Work Plan

## Executive Summary

1. This report presents the findings of the external on-going evaluation of the project called *ART GOLD 2 Albania*, '2' meaning the second phase (hereinafter referred as AGA 2), based on a review of relevant documents and interviews with project stakeholders and beneficiaries. Findings are broken down and discussed relative to four key criteria: effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability. Based on findings, the evaluation team drew conclusions, recommendations as well as lesson learnt. Provided the timeframe and the information available, the analysis of best practices was not conducted; for future purposes, some indications can be found in this respect in the AGA 2 Project Annual Reports.

2. The AGA 2 was presented to the UNDP Project Appraisal Committee on Sept. 2009. Participants endorsed the project and agreed on its "special importance and innovation and the need for a timely start". The project started in October, same year, and was later extended in different steps, until December 2013. The department for decentralisation and local government within the Ministry of Interior is the national counterpart and chairs the project steering committee.

3. The project has been primarily financed by the Government of Italy (US\$ 2,5 M) and, to date, co-funded by multiple donor trust funds within UNDP (US\$ 1,3 M). Implementation is mainly carried out by UNDP in Albania, with the exemption of the component of international networking, which is partially managed directly by the UNDP Geneva Office and the Guarantee Fund, which is managed by UNOPS. Activities have been carried out at the international, national and local level, in the regions of Shkoder and Vlore.

4. The team found that AGA 2 has been relevant to the Albanian context and responded directly to the ambition of the GoA to achieve balanced Regional Development and to strengthen the role of the Qarks (Counties). In particular it has been aligned to the main Albanian national strategies and plans (LGDS, SAA, NPISAA, NSDI, CSRD) and was coherent with UN policies (MDGs and One UN). The project, however, operated in an unclear and uncertain environment for Regional Development which, despite the effort deployed by all institutions in the country, lacks a coherent legal framework, appropriate resources and a "champion", an institutional advocate within the GoA. This jeopardises the long term impact of the project itself.

5. The project has been effective so far in progressing towards the achievement of the main outputs, namely:

- *County Partnership Councils* were established in the two Qarks and are currently operating under the leadership of the Chair of the County Council;
- the *LEDAs* were supported and reinforced in view of their acknowledgment as a key stakeholder in the region and their transformation into Regional Development Agencies. The transformation was observed to have progressed to a further degree in Vlora than in Shkodra;
- the *Strategic Plans* were produced, endorsed and are currently used as the region passport for the identification of priority project, marketing purposes and partnership building. The

United Nations Development Programme



4 September 2009

### Local Project Appraisal Committee Minutes of the Meeting

Project Title: "UNDP ARTGOLD 2 ALBANIA" Governance and Local Development at Regional level in Albania"  
Donor: Italian Government  
Budget: US\$ 2,540,000 (implemented by UNDP and UNOPS)  
Location: Tirana, Shkodra and Vlora  
Timeline: 18 months

Participants: Norimasa Shimomura, Country Director, UNDP



Shkoder Plan is focussed on tourism, whilst the Vlore Plan is focussed on environment and sustainable development;

- provided the unclear legal and institutional framework, targeted subnational institutions (i.e. Qarks) have greatly benefited from the AGA 2 in terms of capacity building and institutional development. Results have been observed particularly in their management of participatory processes and of international partnerships in view of European accession;
- the *Guarantee Fund* was restored and made operational in both regions and efficiently managed by the two LEDAs, in connections with the local Credins Bank. The team could directly assess the satisfaction of beneficiaries in terms of quick processing of applications, preliminary support by the LEDAs and flexibility of the approving criteria, based on success probability;
- local and national stakeholders have been exposed to potential *decentralised cooperation* partners (north-south and south-south) and managed to finalise agreements and implement common activities and projects in view of internationalising the Albanian systems;
- tangible deliverables have been produced: training activities have been organised (150 trainees only during 2012 and 10 projects fiches fully completed) and training manual published; five infrastructural projects carried out, massive communication materials issued; and two major international conferences organised.



6. The team also found that, in some key areas that will be detailed in the findings chapter, the AGA 2 performed under expectations namely:

- as explained in the following chapters, activities in the sector of academic development (the *Universitas component*) and, to a lesser degree, innovation research (the *IDEASS component*) were initiated but not fully accomplished. The remaining IDEASS-related activities are partially programmed to be carried out during the second part of 2013;
- activities directly targeting the most disadvantaged sectors of the population were not sufficiently prioritised, with some important exemptions, as is the case of the Protected House for mental health patients in Vlora;
- activities directly targeting the achievement of gender equality and women empowerment were not clearly programmed, although strong emphasis was made in supporting the leadership of women in local institutions, LEDAs and beneficiaries of businesses financed by the guarantee fund;
- the criteria for monitoring the SP, for each strategic action as well as for the Plan as a whole, were nor clearly defined, nor made explicit;

7. AGA 2 approach combines different instruments and methodologies in one coherent framework for action that fits each stakeholder role and facilitates participation, as it happens in several developed European regions. This has required highly skilled technical assistance - provided mainly by decentralised cooperation partners - and local ownership. In this respect, much has been achieved, but local knowledge does not yet allow for the full command of the approach, which still needs long-lasting support, particularly as far as the facilitator role is concerned.

8. Technical assistance by the AGA 2 has been crucial. The programme staff has supported local institutions and international partners not only through training and funding facilities, but also by a continued tutoring, making use of the most advanced techniques of coaching and shadowing used in the business sector. AGA 2 has provided practical instruments and tailor made technical assistance, also supported by the international networks such as ILSLEDA.

9. It has been noted that, despite participation not yet as instilled in the current culture of working practices in Albania due to historical reasons, and this is reflected for example in the lack of a legal framework that allows for public-private partnership, people and institutions are making considerable steps towards it. AGA 2 has contributed effectively in this direction.

10. Finally, the team has noted several key learning points from the implementation of AGA 2. It has also provided several recommendations for the main stakeholders, i.e. the GoA, UNDP and the Government of Italy, as the main donor, that could be used to strategically continue the benefits of AGA 2. They are discussed in detail in the next chapters of this report and cover the following areas:

- how to arrange the management of a regional development project when the regional development framework it's still unclear;
- how to incorporate the instruments created by the AGA 2 in the regular governmental procedures once the project is discontinued;
- how to improve accountability of the regional institutions using AGA 2 instruments;
- how to capitalise on the decentralised cooperation experience in Albania; and
- how to expand the beneficiaries, particularly the disadvantaged, regardless of a development project's own sustainability.

## 1. Introduction

1. Prior to commencing the field visits, the evaluation team was provided with key documents on the project and on the Albanian context for an initial desk review. From 13 to 21 March 2013 the team could visit project sites, hold interviews and meetings with the main stakeholders of relevant Albanian institutions, the Italian Cooperation and the UNDP as well as meet with the beneficiaries. During the visit in Albania the team collected significant additional documents and information. Additional meetings were scheduled in Rome on 4 April 2013 with high functionaries of the Italian MFA and with the coordinator of the ILSLEDA network. A preliminary draft of the findings chapter was circulated among project stakeholders. A second mission to Albania has been carried out on 8 May 2013 to discuss the draft in a workshop which involved representatives of almost all institutions participating in the interviews during the first visit. This second visit was also the occasion to meet with the main interlocutors of the donor's community in Albania, thanks to a reception organised by the UNDP Country Director. This report embeds all comments received.

2. The report is organised in accordance with the *UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* and subsequent *2011 Addendum*. The table of contents, as it stands now, also meets the requirements of the GoA and the Italian Cooperation evaluation report schemes.



## 2. Brief description of the intervention

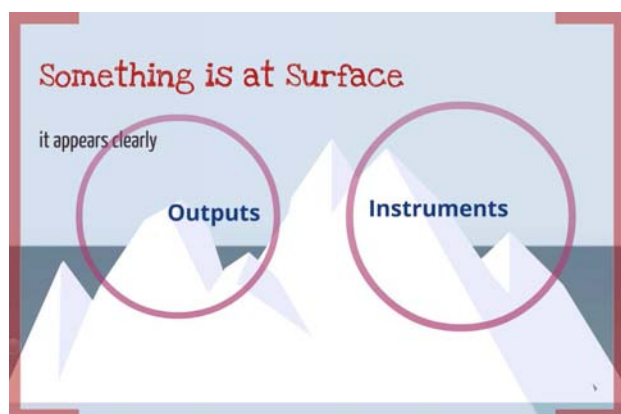
1. The institutional description of the project can be found in the UNDP Albania website: <http://www.undp.org.al/index.php?page=projects/project&id=190>. From the national perspective, the ART GOLD 2 Albania project has been one of the main instruments to support regional development in two pilot areas, Shkoder and Vlore, and to draw lessons in view of the implementation of the Cross Cutting Strategy for Regional Development at a national scale.

2. In effect, the main territorial focus of AGA 2, in line with the guidelines of the Global ART Initiative (<http://web.undp.org/geneva/ART/>), is the *Qark*, which corresponds to a *Region* or, to use the terminology adopted in official documents, to a *County*. Given the EU accession process that Albania is undergoing, this choice proved particularly appropriate.

3. The acronym *ART GOLD* stands for: Articulating Territorial and Thematic Networks for Governance and Local Development. In practical terms, the project aimed at creating wide-ranging partnerships that involve sub-national, national and international partners, to approach development potentials and respond to social needs in a comprehensive and participatory way. To do so the AGA 2 reinforced the ability of territorial actors to plan and manage territorial development through a number of instruments and tools based on public-private cooperation, aligned with national priorities and open to international opportunities.

4. The evaluation team, however, came to the understanding that the AGA 2 is more as ***framework for action***, a ***toolkit for partnership*** promotion and facilitation, rather than a traditional project. In addition to that, the support from the “Territorial and Thematic Networks”, under the coordination of the ART Global Initiative, appeared to be a critical factor for success.

5. During the final workshop the team used the image of an *Iceberg* to report these concepts to the stakeholders and ask: *what makes the ART approach peculiar with respect to a regular regional development project?* If one looks at the *surface*, i.e. the logical framework of the project document, there are 3 outcomes, one for each level of intervention: local, national and international. These outcomes were broken down into various outputs that correspond to the establishment of some basic instruments:



a) At the local level the project aimed at defining and implementing the strategic planning. To do so, its activities pointed at establishing the County Partnership Councils, facilitating the participation of all stakeholders of the region, including civil society, private sector and de-concentrated state departments; transforming the existing LEDAs into Regional Development Agencies that could help the planning process and the implementation of consequent projects;

and analyse the main value chain of the regions, as drivers for development.

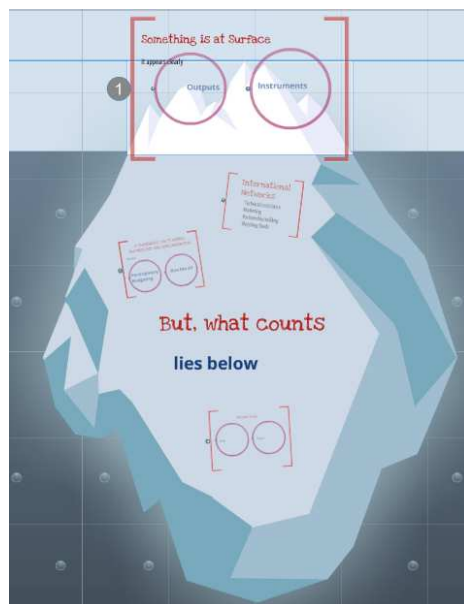
b) At the national level it aimed at reinforcing the capacities to support regional development, mainly through capacity building and training.

c) At the international level the project supported the internationalisation of the Albanian social

and economic fabric by facilitating partnerships with European institutions either through decentralised cooperation or horizontal cooperation.

6. But, more than the tangible outputs at each level of intervention, what makes ART GOLD peculiar is what lies below in terms of working and partnership methodologies.

7. At the local level, for example, the budgetary arrangements of AGA 2 allowed for attaching its financial resources to the outputs of the planning process, without having defined in advance neither the sectors nor the typology of projects to be funded. This gave flexibility and, in the end, made it feasible for all interlocutors to participate. Also development cooperation projects, by participating in the strategic planning process, took part in the definition of



of the budget allocation of the AGA 2. In return for that, the AGA 2 staff is part of the approving committee of other projects in the area, thus paving the way for an effective donor's coordination at the local level.

8. At the international level, the ART Global Initiative played a central role. From Geneva a number of specialised services were provided which would have not been technically and financially affordable for the project alone. For example services such as the marketing of the projects among decentralised cooperation actors, which resulted in matching funds and long term partnerships for Shkoder and Vlore institutions. In addition to that, highly skilled and experienced international technical assistance was made available at affordable costs from a number of partners and networks that were already experimented in ART GOLD projects in different areas of the world having proved trustworthy and accountable.



### 3. Evaluation scope and objectives

(from the TORs)

At a first instance, the evaluation assessed the contribution of AGA 2 in facilitating Albania's efforts and reforms of its local governance and decentralisation agenda.

Of equal importance was the assessment of whether AGA 2 has been able to achieve its overall objectives in supporting national and regional counterparts. In this context, the assessment also looked at the level of achievement of UNDP's commitment to the human development approach and at whether effectively equality and gender mainstreaming aspects were incorporated in the implementation of the project.

The other key purpose of the evaluation was to examine the appropriateness of the form of assistance provided, with a view to draw lessons and make recommendations for improved future assistance to Albania.

For this purpose, the evaluation team:

- assessed the *relevance* of the overall project and the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved;
- assessed the *effectiveness, impact* and *sustainability* of the project;
- looked at the project as a whole, identifying lessons learned to be used as a knowledge base for developing future technical assistance packages;
- analysed strategies and implementation modalities so as to provide recommendations to be integrated in the planning process in Albania;
- reviewed the project sustainability and potential life-long impact on Albania's social and economic conditions.

In doing so the team has reviewed the degree in which the AGA 2:

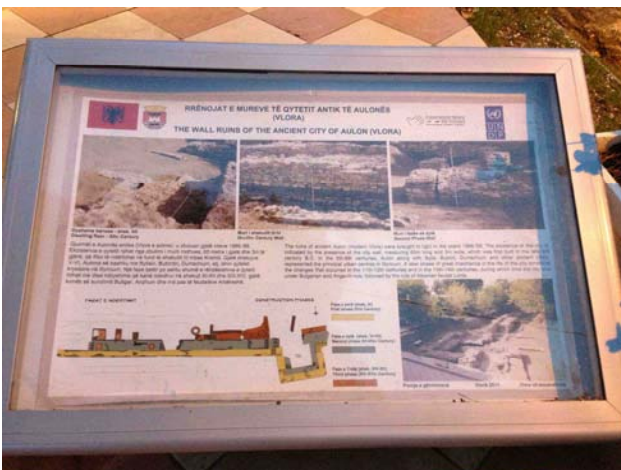
- strengthened decentralised policy and democratic governance with particular regard to integrated local development;
- supported central and local governments to coordinate and link to Italian and European contributions in supporting integrated local development;
- implemented local plans and strategies to achieve the MDGs at the local level.

## 4. Evaluation approach and methodology

1. The evaluation applies a qualitative research approach. The methodology used for data collection is document review, key interview with stakeholders, and direct observation.

2. The document review was conducted using secondary data, including documents related to the project implementation, government documents and donor's papers. A summary of the main documents quoted in this report is attached as an annex. The project staff also provided the team with a CD containing numerous minutes, proceedings and reports on each activity, including CPCs meetings, training and conference, as well as communication materials, publications, value chains analysis, etc. This material can be easily obtained at the UNDP and is not included for ease of reading.

3. Key informant interviews with stakeholders were conducted with persons directly involved in the project, except those cases in which the persons in charge have changed department, as implementers, partners, or beneficiaries. These were conducted either in the form of individual interview or group interview (for example the board of AULEDA in Vlore).



4. Interviews were conducted at national and local level in both project areas and also in Rome using a Questions Matrix of Double Entry broken down in 1) the four evaluation criteria and 2) project outputs. The Matrix is attached as an annex.

## **5. Data analysis**

1. Data analysis was performed qualitatively and conducted simultaneously with the data collection process. The team reviewed and consolidated each individual member's notes to find out and collate key information from the interviews. The key information was summarised to contribute to the answers of the evaluation questions.

2. To confirm the accuracy of data and results, the team conducted a comparative analysis among the information gathered from different key informants, and a triangulation between the results of interviews with field observation and document/literature review. Whenever needed, the team conducted further interviews with certain key informants to reconcile contradictory information.



## 6. Evaluation Findings

### 1. RELEVANCE

This sub-section presents the Evaluators' assessment of the Relevance of the AGA2 Programme, namely the degree to which the Programme takes into account the local context and development problems. The analysis reviews the extent to which the AGA2 design (i.e. objectives, outcomes and implementation modalities) and approaches are consistent with Albania's policies and objectives (i.e. decentralisation, EU accession, regional development) and with beneficiary requirements and needs. Hence, this sub-section provides answers to Key Evaluation Questions (see Annex).

#### 1.1. Consistency of the project design with the UN and national strategies/policies

The analysis of the relevant documents and the fieldwork consultations have shown that to date, AGA2 **has responded directly to the ambition of the GoA to achieve balanced RD**. The relation and coherence of the AGA2 toward the UN and national strategies/policies and the respective background is described briefly below:

##### A. Consistency with UN Policies

1. Initially, the overall objective of AGA2 Albania is in line with the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** which are approved through a resolution by the Parliament of Albania in June 2003. This act followed the first Albania's steps towards RD taken in September 2000 by adopting the Millennium Declaration. Through the adoption of MDGs, GoA committed itself to achieve by 2015 eight targets in the areas of security, peace, governance, human rights, environment and development.
2. AGA2 fulfils the overall strategic objective of UNDP's assistance to Albania which is defined within the **One UN Programme Document for Albania**. 'Regional development to reduce regional disparities' is one of the direct outcomes to be achieved.

##### B. Consistency with National Policies

3. AGA2 project design refers to **Local Government and Decentralization Strategy (LGDS)** approved in 1999, revised in 2006 and 2008, but still not adopted by the Parliament which aims at moving forward the decentralization process by carrying out a territorial reform; further elaborating the election reform, the role and the competences of Counties (Qarks); developing the standards for service provision; as well as developing an integrated financial framework etc.
4. Next, in view of country steps toward EU the AGA2 complies with **the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)** signed by GoA and EU on 12 June 2006, where the country commitment for Regional and Local Development is stipulated in its Article 110 "The Parties shall seek to strengthen regional and local development cooperation, with the objective of contributing to economic development and reducing regional imbalances. Specific attention shall be given to cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation. Cooperation shall take due account of the priority areas related to the Community acquis in the field of regional development".
5. Also, the programme is in line with the **National Plan for the Implementation of the SAA (NPISAA)** which refers to the commitment of the GoA to "ensure a balanced development of the country regions, as per implementation of policies and projects, aiming at diminution of poverty and softening the differences in Regional Development".

6. Additionally, the AGA2 is in compliance with the **National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2007-2013** of October 2007 which is the overarching medium to long-term strategy for guiding efforts towards achieving sustainable economic development in the country as part of the EU and NATO integration process. The NSDI represents the fundamental strategic document of the country that harmonizes the perspective of the sustainable economic and social development, integration into the EU, as well the achievement of MDG. According to the NSDI 2007-2013 the GoA shall continue to deepen the process of governance decentralization, by ensuring a full compliance with the principles of the European Charter of the Local Self-Government and the Constitution of Albania. All of the existing sector and cross-sector strategies are prepared based on the vision and policies defined by NSDI in each of the respective policy sectors. Through NSDI 2007-2013 GoA is also committed to implement an integrated and coherent policy, aiming at balanced regional development and reduction of inequalities between regions. Currently, the NSDI 2007-2013 is undergoing revision and the GoA is in the process of formulation of a document for 2013 – 2020 period.
  
7. AGA2 acts fully in accordance with the **Cross-cutting Strategy for Regional Development (CSRD)** prepared by Ministry of Economy and Trade (METE) and approved by Decision No.773 date 14.11.2007 of Council of Ministers. Deriving from NSDI the goal of the CSRD is to ensure a coordinated approach to the sustainable socio-economic development of all regions and to create links at all government levels among institutions and other stakeholders interested in sustainable development and alleviation of socio-economic disparities. Though not implemented, RDCS is a legally binding document and so far has served as the basis for RD related governments initiatives or donor supported projects. In this strategy the GoA calls for “a balanced and sustainable socio-economic growth among the regions of Albania, in general, and of mountainous and peripheral areas, in particular, in order to support a fast development of the whole country and accelerate the integration processes into EU and NATO”. According to this document the County (Qark) Council should have a strategic and policy designing and orienting role in an RD process. CSRD was aiming at promoting a top-down and bottom-up approach for RD, emphasizing partnerships and the establishment of a complex institutional system
  
8. To date, AGA 2 operated in line as well as with the **other thematic national development policies and strategies** e.g. the **Inter-sectorial Rural Development Strategy (2007-2013)** which addresses RD through its strategic priority “To contribute to a fair development of all rural regions in Albania, to improve the quality of life in Albania’s rural area in a sustainable way and reduce poverty among rural population”, the **Social Protection Sectorial Strategy (2007-2013)** which highlights the need for the further/final decentralization of social protection services, rather than creating a link to RD and disparities. SPSS raises also the partnership issue/concept as a means that brings together the community, local government, civil society and business (highlighting also the business social accountability) in the process of services provision

Despite the coherence with UN and National Policies, AGA2 as other donor-funded initiatives in the area of RD and Decentralization, is operating in an **unclear RD and Decentralisation environment** due to the following situations:

1. To date, **the existing legal framework does not provide a clear role the County (Qark)**. The Constitution of Albania in its Article 110/2 defines County (Qark) as the second level of local government in Albania and as the unit where regional policies are implemented and harmonized with the national policies. The role and functions of the County (Qark)

are set in the organic law no 8652, date 31.7.2000, “On the organization and functioning of local governance”. Article 5/4 defines County (Qark) as a local government of the second level which represents a territorial and administrative unit that is composed of several communes and municipalities with geographical, traditional, economic, social and other common interests. Article 13 stipulates that County (Qark) has its own functions, such as the formulation and implementation of regional policies and their harmonization with the national policies at County (Qark) level, as well as any other function that could be assigned by law; delegated functions by one or more municipalities and communes located within its territory, based on a common agreement and delegated functions from the central government. Counties (Qarks) have decision-making power (usually for implementing national legislation) and have no legislative power and councils are elected by the component local authorities (i.e. municipalities and communes). County (Qark) has features of a region, it comprises several municipalities and communes in its territory; it is an intermediate level of territorial governance (though weak) between the central government and municipalities/communes; it is an institution that by constitution is responsible to harmonize policies and strategies (vertically and horizontally) at the regional level. County (Qark) is subject (as a territorial and institutional reference) to all projects and initiatives (from government or donors) related to RD; it is since 12 years being debated as subject for a future regionalization and territorial administrative reform. County has very few competencies and very little public expenditures are dedicated to it.

2. Despite the progress of the **decentralization process in Albania** to date, expectations on its pace seem to have been higher. Although NSDI 2007-2013 makes clear provisions on the advancing of the decentralization process the progress of decentralization so far, with regard to Qarks it has not followed the strategic paths defined by NSDI, or the Decentralization strategy. Based on the latest European Commission report the decentralization of state responsibilities has not been matched by appropriate transfers in administrative and financial resources from central to local level. In the same report it is stated that significant additional efforts are needed to strengthen both the administrative efficiency and the financial sustainability of municipalities with particular attention to the areas of strategic planning, human resources management and financial control. Despite many previous achievements in the political and fiscal decentralization, there is a general consensus that the process has slowed down in the recent years, also as a result of unclear strategic directions, weak government commitment and a protracted politicization on many governance and development aspects between the two main Albania’s political coalitions
3. To date, **there is no complete legal framework for Regional Development in Albania and the policies and instruments for RD have also changed continuously**. By drafting the CSRD the GoA aimed to have additionally an exclusive law to address its implementation. In 2008, GoA (with the support of the ISD Project funded by EU and UNDP and implemented by the latter) also prepared a draft-law on RD, which remains a draft to this day. Afterwards, GoA decided to strongly incorporate RD within the new NSDI 2013-2020 and with other sector strategies.
4. **No counterpart institution is formally in charge of promoting RD**, whereas, de facto, the main national counterpart responsible for decentralization is the MoI.

## 1.2. AGA2 facilitation for donor's dialogue, complementarity and harmonisation

### Key Evaluation Question:

1. Was the project a tool for facilitating donor's dialogue, complementarity and harmonisation?

AGA2 Albania strategy includes, in line with One UN strategy, the active research of synergies with other cooperation Programs, mainly those of the European Union. So, AGA2 Programme document foresaw creation of complementarities and synergies with other on-going initiatives in the area of RD and Decentralisation in the beneficiary regions and in Albania including e.g. Integrated Support to Decentralisation (ISD), Regional Development Programme (RDP) Northern Albania, Decentralisation and Local Development Programme (DLDP) etc.

In fact, it seems that to date the programme succeeded in the following:

1. **AGA2 is an important player in the area of Decentralisation and RD.** Hence, it is part of the **Sectorial Working Group (SWG) on Decentralisation**, coordinated by the Swiss Office for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The SWG monitors the progress of implementation of CSRD and is an important mechanism for the harmonisation and coordination of approaches of donors' initiatives related to Regional and Local Development in Albania. In addition, national conferences with the participation of the main RD and decentralisation partners and donors are organised by and/or supported by AGA2.
2. **AGA2 has built upon and/or revitalised the existing results achieved by other TA donor-funded initiatives.** The analysis of the relevant documents and the fieldwork consultations provide concretely some examples such as: AGA2 Strategic Planning (SP) process for both Shkodra and Vlora did not start from zero, rather it maintained continuity with the policies and structures already operating in the territory. The SPs applied a participatory "bottom-up" approach and made use of the existing mechanisms already established by donor-funded initiatives; e.g. in Shkodra it revitalised the existing planning County Partnership Councils (CPC) established for the drafting of "Strategic Concept for Regional Development in Shkodra Region 2010-2016" funded through a GIZ project. Here it should be highlighted that the CPC set-up, composition, role and profile refer to suggested approach by the CSRD.
3. **AGA2 contributed to the mutual utilisation of the donor actions for capacity development;** example: the CPCs structure to implement Strategic Planning has also been used within other initiatives.
4. **AGA2 has been open towards communication and potential partnerships with other donor-funded initiatives.** The consultations with representatives of other donor-funded initiatives in the area of RD and Decentralisation active in the regions indicate the existence of communication and coordination between these initiatives. Firstly, with regard to the cooperation with the on-going **Regional Development Programme (RDP)** funded by ADA and SDC, aiming at contributing to the equitable socio-economic development of Shkodra and Lezha regions, consultation with RDP Senior staff confirmed the role of AGA2 as an important partner in the implementation of the RDP activities. So, the SPT for Shkodra is one of the 3 main strategic documents considered for prioritising and financing "flagship projects" financed by RDP Fund. Additionally, AGA2 participates in the decision making and technical bodies of RDP e.g. AGA2 Local Coordinator for Shkodra Region participates in the RDP Evaluation Panel of the sub-regional - the so-called Window 2 - project proposals and in the observer capacity in the Programme Coordination Group (PCG). Also, several informative meeting between RDP TL and SPO and AGA2 CTA and NPM are

organised, mainly for the establishment of a Regional Development Agency (RDA). RDP considers TEULEDA as an asset and is open and willing for finding the appropriate solutions for the establishment of the RDA. On the other hand, TEULEDA is in favour of the option that it can be increased, but not transformed.

In this context it is important to mention the **GoA perspective** on the coordination level between both programmes. This recognizes a kind of “competition” between them and which it is trying to control.

Secondly, as regards the cooperation with the on-going **Decentralisation and Local Development Programme (DLDP)** funded by SDC, aiming to contribute to the development of Northern Albania and to the decentralisation reform at national level, consultation with DLDP PM evidenced that the methodology and the process of drafting the SPT have been of great interest for DLDP. Their staff has participated in the CPC and has been interested in knowing how this will affect the LGUs. However, it was confirmed that this presence has not been very pro-active. No other forms of cooperation are present.

Thirdly, no complementarity with **Integrated Support to Decentralisation (ISD) Project**, funded by EU and UNDP and implemented by the latter with a duration August 2008-December 2012, aiming at improving the capacity of the GoA to implement national and EU Regional Development policy, including programming support for the development of Strategic Coherence Framework (SCF) and the Operational Program (OP) for IPA III, build capacity for RD at regional level and development of project pipelines and implementation of some local infrastructure projects to improve knowledge on usage of future EU pre-accession funds is evident.

The **Decentralised Cooperation** is clearly a distinctive feature of this project. Some concrete examples of interventions will be detailed in the chapter about effectiveness. However, it is important to stress the coordinating role of the AGA2 in aligning and harmonising decentralised cooperation interventions within national and regional priorities (through the strategic planning). Otherwise, from the side of the Albanian partners, the level of entropy that is normally generated by the intervention in the same geographical area by different donors with various approaches could be dramatically increased by the presence of additional decentralised cooperation partners, whose experience and know-how are quite diversified. From the side of the decentralised cooperation<sup>1</sup>, the AGA2 contributed to identify and engage reliable and accountable partners, facilitate the monitoring of activities and funds and also ensure the consistency of the selected projects with the strategic plans.

### 1.3. Alignment with national policies and local priorities

Key Evaluation Question:

2. Was the project implementation aligned with regular national and local procedures and thus culturally feasible and accepted in relevant regions?

Desk review and fieldwork consultations have indicated the main following points:

1. **Activities of AGA2 have been widely accepted by the stakeholders involved in the programme.** For example, both SPs contents were agreed upon by the entire regional community and approved unanimously by the respective Regional Councils. Furthermore,

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<sup>1</sup> Comments by Mrs. Marilena Pinca, officer in charge for Apulia Region in Tirana

their ownership in their implementation has been enhanced. SPs are considered as the main documents for finding funding opportunities for the identified priorities.

2. AGA2 is implemented directly by UNDP in Geneva, UNOPS and UNDP in Albania for budgetary components they are responsible for respectively. These parties are each held accountable for the management and use of the funds they administer. Yet the substantive oversight is centralised in UNDP Country Office in Tirana (Albania), to whom the Chief Technical Advisor (Project manager) of the programme reports to facilitate coherent implementation of this program. Having said that, it should be highlighted that **AGA2 has applied entirely UNDP procedures and rules** e.g. procurement modalities and procedures for rules were applied. However, analysis did not find any discrepancies between these and the national set of rules, which might negatively affect the feasibility of the actions within the programme.
3. As the AGA2 funding components goes, **the applied procedures are supportive toward the beneficiaries and not burdensome.** Firstly, the Credits beneficiaries of the Guaranty Fund recognise the procedures as faster, more flexible and more transparent in comparison to other modalities applied by other national and/or foreign micro-credit institutions operating in Albania. Furthermore, LEDAs support in drafting and/or revising the business plans and preparing the documentation for applying to the bank for the credit is perceived by them as **a unique and very advantageous model in Albania.** In total, Credits beneficiaries are satisfied with those models.

Secondly, consultations with project beneficiaries supported by AGA2 e.g. Municipality of Shkodra have presented the advantages of the financing and implementation models. So, being not implied in the procurement processes but still supervising the implementation of works does not burden the grant beneficiaries but give them at the same time an ownership responsibility.

4. For the fund utilization at the national level, specific partnership agreements and project documents were prepared for each bilateral or decentralized cooperation partnership and these documents were signed by UNDP Albania, the Hub for Innovative Partnerships (HIP) and by other parties depending upon whether the funding is bilateral or decentralized cooperation.

#### 1.4. AGA 2 consideration of the regional priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries

Key Evaluation Question:

3. To what extent did AGA2 take into consideration the regional priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries?

The analysis of the available AGA2 documentation and organized consultations provided to evaluators appropriate information on the adoption of the programme according to the needs of the intended beneficiaries. For example:

1. The development of the thematic Strategic Plan for Shkodra was introduced on the one hand based on the priorities of the GoA, where the Region of Shkodra has been selected as priority area for tourism development and on the other hand considering the **needs of the County (Qark) for developing a regional Strategy on Tourism Development.**



2. Following this approach and based on the need, prioritisation and agreement in the Region Councils, **AGA2 has supported financially the implementation of five infrastructure projects.**
3. Based on the need of Region of Shkodra and Vlora, AGA2 has proactively promoted and supported the creation the decentralised partnerships.

### 1.5. AGA /2 promotion of the role of women in society and business

Key Evaluation Question:

4. To what extent did AGA 2 promote gender equality in its activities?

1. Although the team could not review any document regarding a specific component on gender, it was observed that both Strategic Plans published in 2012 highlight gender issues in Vlora and Shkodra regions and list several potential projects that focus on gender equality and women empowerment. Some examples are the creation of handicraft enterprises, production of artistic souvenirs for tourists, recovery of past experiences in food processing businesses (fruits, bakery, etc.) carried out in rural areas, fostering of family tourism, creation of help centres for women (victims of violence),etc.
2. In 2012 two new loans were disbursed to women. In addition the disbursement of loans to male entrepreneurs was also based on the number of jobs that they generate especially targeting women.

### 1.6. AGA2 flexibility to adapt its procedures and funding to emerging needs

Key Evaluation Question:

5. To what extent was AGA2 flexible to adapt its procedures and funding to emerging needs and/or significant priority changes in order to remain consistent with project purpose

Desk review of the relevant AGA2 documents, mainly Annual Reports 2010, 2011 and 2012 indicate that:

3. **Almost no quick response actions are implemented.** In addition, significant changes in external situation that would have required adaption of the programme are not evident.
4. However, during the lifetime of the programme, internal or external circumstances have affected the achievement of the planned results and the programme has adapted mechanism to these circumstances in order to achieve results. For example, during the year 2012 there have been changes in the programme planning. Due to financial constraints, the Territorial Marketing Plans of the two regions have not been conducted and have been postponed to 2013 through resource mobilization. According to AGA2 Annual Report 2012, the Albanian branch of the International School for Millennium Development is less likely to be established.
5. The participatory planning process promoted by the AGA2 has allowed the Regional Council to re-allocate funds and re-schedule payments in order to meet the requirements for the organisation of the celebrations for the Anniversary of Independence.

## 2. EFFECTIVENESS

This section presents the evaluators' assessment of the extent to which the outputs, as outlined in the project document have been actually achieved. It concerns the activities at the local, national and international level and refers to both desk review of reports and other documents and to the interviews hold in Albania during the first mission. Persons interviewed and documents quoted are reported in the footnotes.

### Key Evaluation Question:

1. To what extent has the project achieved its intended outputs?

### 2.1. Are Participatory County Partnership Councils (CPCs) established and operational?

1. Thanks to the AGA2 implementation, two County Partnership Councils (CPCs) were established in Shkodra and Vlora regions.

The CPCs, according to the Albanian Development Strategy<sup>2</sup>, are an advisory and consultative committee at county level whose membership is drawn from all relevant state bodies working at county level: County, Municipality and commune government; social partners and business and trade unions at county level; Civil society organizations, NGOs; representatives of central government". The Local Development Agencies AULEDA (Vlora region) and TEULEDA (Shkodra region) provide the needed technical assistance to the CPCs.

CPCs support the articulation of national and local priorities, operate in synergy and coordination with other on-going government and donor initiatives in the selected counties and bring in the comparative advantages of Decentralized Cooperation and partnerships.

CPCs were set up and recognised by the Regional Councils in September 2010. CPCs' operational capacities were strengthened by the recruitment of national and international experts in strategic planning, by the introduction of program features to local stakeholders and by the technical assistance for a road map for County Strategic Plans (SP)<sup>3</sup>.

CPCs have been operational throughout the project implementation. In both cases, though less so in Shkodra,, the CPCs kept on meeting even after the end of the technical assistance provided by AGA2 in May 2011<sup>4</sup>. The CPS have a broad base participation and have been an essential instrument for the Strategic Plan drafting in both regions<sup>5</sup>.

2. The general perception of the role of the CPCs has been positive. They are a well-accepted tool for planning and for the implementation of decisions. They proactively supported the SP exercise.

CPCs seem to be broad-based in both counties with public and private participants. Discussions have aimed at identifying priorities and at listening to the contribution of all members, so having a broad consensus.<sup>6</sup> Through the CPCs, many stakeholders operating in the region have come together and discussed on crucial sectors for local development. The

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<sup>2</sup> Ref. Regional Development Cross-Cutting Strategy of the Council of the Ministers/Ministry of Economy and Trade

<sup>3</sup> AGA 2, Annual Work Plan 2010

<sup>4</sup> AGA 2 has been the closest programme to the regional council, both for planning and implementing projects – e.g. the events for the 100 years of independence of Albania (2012). (*Anesti Dhimojani, Head of the Regional Council of Vlora*)

<sup>5</sup> For the specific functions of CPCs refer to AGA 2 Project Document

<sup>6</sup> Head of Vlora's Regional Council (*Anesti Dhimojani*)



final report on decisions made is normally brought to the Regional Council for approval. Usually, it appears that the participatory mechanism avoids great contrasts or refusals because it takes into account the specific requests of the municipalities and a great diversification of projects on the territory<sup>7</sup>. CPCs are models that seem to have offered new visions for regional institutions<sup>8</sup>.

CPCs are well acknowledged and widely recognised as an effective model for participatory planning and decision making. However, people<sup>9</sup> realise that their implementation requires specialised know-how, extended time-frames and appropriate resources.

3. The results of CPCs' work seem to be even more positive when considering that the participatory approaches to decision-making are not well-embedded in the Albanian culture of governance. CPSs make a great effort in gathering people together and promote common discussion in order to work together and take final comprehensive decisions<sup>10</sup>.
4. Given their importance, a member of the AULEDA Board<sup>11</sup> complained that the CPCs are currently attached to the Regional Councils instead of being attached to the Prefectures. The Prefectures, in fact, serve as the main de-concentrated State body that holds the legal power to certify CPCs decisions and involve other State departments. However, despite the fact that Regional Councils actually lack the proper financial means to implement projects<sup>12</sup>, the AGA2 is conceived as an instrument that promotes transformation and innovation from the traditional de-concentration of State functions towards an actual political and administrative decentralisation of powers. For this reason, this strategic option is definitely preferable.

## **2.2. Were the LEDAs transformed into new instruments better equipped in view of sustainability and efficient delivery of services to population?**

1. In general terms, during the implementation of the AGA2 project, LEDAs evolved solidly towards being more organised, representative and participated institutions<sup>13</sup>. They also appeared to the team as well managed, technically skilled and competent organisations, AULEDA being ahead in this process. Finally they showed strong engagement in local economic development strategies. In fact they consolidated trustful relationships with regional stakeholders as well as with relevant ministries; they also proved accountable for project management to international decentralised cooperation partners and traditional donors, to the point that they were awarded several European Funded projects.

From an operational point of view, beside the institutional activities and the management of projects, LEDAs facilitated and promoted microfinance activities, leveraging on the Guarantee Fund mechanism. This result was achieved through meetings with relevant ministries, exchange of information, Cooperation meetings with local Banks and provision

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<sup>7</sup> Head of Vlora's Regional Council (Anesti Dhimojani); Director of Shkodra Regional Development Office (Merita Kazazi)

<sup>8</sup> Maxhid Cungu (Head of the Regional Council of Shkodra)

<sup>9</sup> Deputy Major of Vlora (Arben Beqiraj)

<sup>10</sup> This aspect has been well described by the Director of the Regional Development Office, Merita Kazazi. CPCs are a somehow a new entity and belong to the Regional Development Concept, promoted by EU in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (2000) which states the regulatory mechanisms between national and local government.

<sup>11</sup> Mimoza Brecani – Member of Vlora Prefecture – Audit Functions; Chair of AULEDA Board)

<sup>12</sup> Director of the Regional Development Department of the Albanian Development Fund (Blendi Bushati)

<sup>13</sup> The Boards have been enlarged, the technical teams reinforced and the Statutes adapted.

of collateral for businesses<sup>14</sup>. Regarding the Guarantee Fund, whilst the beneficiaries of microcredits stressed the flexible and non-bureaucratic procedures to access credits, the rate of unreturned loans tends to zero. This demonstrates the capacity of the LEDAs to assess the business and select the most reliable applicants.

At the national level, two major events organised by AGA2 contributed to raise the awareness of institutional partners on LEDA's key role in regional development of Shkodra and Vlore: the Launching of the Strategic Plans of the two regions, and the International Conference on Decentralisation, Democracy and European Integration.<sup>15</sup>

However, LEDAs are not yet fully recognised at the national level as the one model to be referenced to implement the concept of the County Development Agencies (CDA) as expressed in the Cross Cutting Strategy.<sup>16</sup> In fact the Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Ferdinand Poni, looks at the LEDAs as one of the possible inspirations for a full-fledged CDA, but calls for "*positive competition*" among different practices to finally conceive and share one harmonised model to be supported by different donors. In this perspective an interesting test is provided by the concurrent Swiss-Austrian project operating in Shkoder and Lezhe (RDP – Regional Development Project), which is referred to above when analysing AGA2 relevance to national policies and as commented by Shpetim Quku (RDP local coordinator). A positive perception of LEDAs work has also been expressed by Enton Derraj (Advisor to the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports).

2. The agencies' transformation was supported by ILSLEDA's technical assistance in both Vlora and Shkodra regions. It was implemented in two ways: the creation of a general Strategic Plan as the main framework for all the projects deriving from the analysis of the "**Chains of Value**"; the enlargement of agencies' range of activities from economic issues to socio-economic issues, regarding also health, education, general "integrated" services.

Through the AGA2 programme, ILSLEDA supported AULEDA and TEULEDA with a specific methodology for SP drafting, and assisted the transformation by acting on four main areas: a) the statute, b) the shareholders (board composition), c) the prioritization of the activities, d) the agency management and organisation.

During AGA2 programme, the analysis of the situation and performance of existing LEDAs was completed by August 2010. By December 2010 a shared 5 years business plan was established for both agencies. More staff was recruited for the business plan development and for the implementation of the projects. New and improved terms of management of the Guarantee Fund were designed and agreed with the Credins Bank<sup>17</sup>.

3. The interviews give a clear picture of AULEDA's transformation, whether it seemed more difficult to obtain similar information regarding TEULEDA.

**AULEDA:** Continuously interfacing with the public administration, namely the Municipality, the Regional Council, etc , seems to have yielded mutual benefit for both AULEDA and the supported public institutions. The discussion and the participatory debate helped to identify the areas of improvement, which regarded management and financial procedures, the board functioning and the agency self-planning. The major support to AULEDA's improvement was provided through ILSLEDA's technical assistance, which

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<sup>14</sup> Annual report AGA 2 , 2011.

<sup>15</sup> National Launching of Strategic Plans, March 2012; International Conference, October 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Ref. Project document 19.10.2009. pag.29, AGA 2 Albania results and resources framework – Intended Outputs

<sup>17</sup> Ref. AGA 2 Annual Work Plans – 2010 – 2013 documentation; Ref. Giancarlo Canzanelli' reports, n.1 -11 from March 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 to April 28<sup>th</sup> 2012

helped to draft the Strategic Plan and to plan and implement the new management procedures, especially the communication procedures between board, members and technical staff.

In the last 10 years AULEDA's transformation has been significant. New functions and tools have been added especially for better executing the specific tasks, regarding both the strategic planning and the EU funded projects. With the help of ILSLEDA, AULEDA enlarged its operational capabilities by creating an experts' network in the territory, able to adapt to and fulfil all different projects. The Statute has been revised (no modifications occurred since 2003): AULEDA members are now 32 (they were 13) and officially approved by the board after a formal request; the board's members are now 9 (they were 7) with a 4 year mandate (it lasted 2 years); the legal representative is the board's president. A new Management Handbook has been drafted. AULEDA now has a 5-year Strategic Plan, based on the SWOT analysis carried on during the planning phase of the agency's transformation<sup>18</sup>. ILSLEDA also introduced AULEDA to the international public by means of the participation to major events. Furthermore, AULEDA can be the proud holder of national and international awards<sup>19</sup>

Today, AULEDA seems to be the operating hub which is necessary to all municipalities and communes to make projects and access to EU funds. It offers competence, capacities and creates the network: this is recognised at all levels, local, regional and national and it enhances Albanian's chances to become EU candidate<sup>20</sup>.

**TEULEDA:** TEULEDA was established in 2001 with PASARP (100% Italian funding). Legally framed as an NGO (like AULEDA), its board is elected every 2 years. Board members are: Universities, Regional Councils, the three main municipalities (Shkodra, Malësi e Madhe, Pukë), Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture Department, Farmers' association. To this date, TEULEDA staff is composed by 6 people + Director + a group of experts who work for specific projects. The staff is trained to look for the national and international opportunities for new projects and gives technical assistance to local stakeholders.

The tangible results of the "in progress" transformation of TEULEDA is the Financial Management Handbook and the 5-year TEULEDA Strategic Plan. These results are felt as the first phase for a further development of the agency in the form of a bigger and better structured organisation.

### 2.3. Were the Strategic Plans produced and endorsed at all levels?

1. At this date, Strategic Plans (SP) were produced with the support of AGA2. The SP planning and drafting followed a participatory process which was carried out at the local (county) level, therefore leading to endorsing them at the regional level. In the national perspective, they seem to have been recognised as excellent tools for planning and implementing policies, in line with the Albanian National Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance, even though they are not yet an operating component at national level of the general decentralisation system for policy implementation.

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<sup>18</sup> Mirela Koci, AULEDA's Director

<sup>19</sup> On 29 December 2011 AULEDA and Executive Director of AULEDA Mrs. Mirela Koci was honoured by the Municipality of Vlore with the Prize "The Protagonist of the Year 2011" with the motivation "For services to the citizens of Vlore." On October 4th in Seville, Spain at the opening ceremony of the congress of the organizers of this event was held the ceremony of quality certificates for 5 local economic development agencies worldwide, certificate granted under the EQUAL Program of EURADA / ILSLEDA.

<sup>20</sup> Mimoza Brecani, AULEDA's Board Chair

2. The regions of Vlora and Shkodra have clearly and formally defined their territorial development vision through the publication in March 2012 of the Strategic Planning documents for Vlora and Shkodra regions. Within the framework of AGA2, the Strategic Planning represents an innovative democratic process necessary to lead Albania towards EU integration and a useful instrument to complete the on-going administrative decentralisation in the country. The SP aims to engage the local community to create its own vision for the future and discover the best way to implement it by connecting the cultural, environmental, social and economic aspects of the territory.

The respective Regional Councils have formally approved the SPs and the ownership in their implementation has been enhanced. The SP has become the framework of projects implementation. At national level, this is perceived as a great improvement in respect to the past<sup>21</sup>. From the Decentralized Cooperation point of view, SPs are proactive tools for a more comprehensive scheme in which national and international stakeholders and donors can participate to projects<sup>22</sup>. Both in Shkodra and Vlora regions, the government's representatives seem to recognize the practical utility and the strategic value of the SP, within which all projects are implemented.

3. From a financial point of view, good opinions on the SPs are expressed by funding bodies (e.g. the Albanian Development Fund). They recognize plans as documents aligned with the national priorities and useful to work with, especially because they are felt as a guideline coming from a fairly participatory and transparent process. Some funded projects (e.g. infrastructures, roads) are linked to the main visions of each regional SP (e.g. sustainable tourism development).
4. At the county level, SP selection criteria are used whenever decisions must be taken on priorities and/or interventions to be funded by the money at disposal. When coming to the local operating level, namely to the specific application forms of single projects, SPs are always the compulsory framework on which the project's key components must be based<sup>23</sup>.
5. In Shkodra, it clearly emerged that SP drafting was advantaged by the previous discussion at regional level about the touristic potential of the region<sup>24</sup> and by the parallel implementation of projects, whose key characteristics were endorsed in the SP design. Projects were related to their impact on the territory and sustainability, so defining a set of more sophisticated criteria to be included in the final drafting of the SP for the accountability and awareness in choosing the future projects.

The participatory process for the SP drafting in Vlora was conducted on a broad base of participants (Ministry of Interior, local environmental and civic associations, farmers, Universities). This method fostered the enhancement of both the regional capacity (Vlora region learned to promote and manage the participatory process and the SP drafting) and the

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<sup>21</sup> While referring to the national regional planning, deputy-minister of MoI, Mr Ferdinand Poni declares that Albanian Regional Plans are not perfect but are much better than they were in 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Marilena Pinca (Decentralized Cooperation partner - Apulia region representative).

<sup>23</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

<sup>24</sup> Reference is made to a process earlier carried out by a GTZ-funded project. Merita Kazazi refers that when AGA offered its technical assistance for the drafting of the SP, Shkodra was well-prepared for planning a regional development strategy, since in the past years, thanks to the German Cooperation, it drafted several documents on the regional potentialities in matter of tourism.

municipalities' capacity (they exercised capacity building on their own SP with the help of Vlora region representatives during the Municipality participatory process)<sup>25</sup>.

#### 2.4. Which factors facilitated or limited the implementation of the Strategic Plan in all sectors?

1. It is common knowledge that the implementation of the SP gives added value to the regional and local development strategies. The SP is now the reference document for the presentation of the territorial priorities during specific events addressed to the public or to donors<sup>26</sup>. Whenever a potential donor is interested in the territory, the SP is always illustrated as the reference strategic document and used as the basis for reaching shared objectives with the potential partner (e.g. partnership with the Italian Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia)<sup>27</sup>.
2. The first factor that facilitates the implementation of the SP in the regional context is closely related to the SP structure. The SP envisages some main "strategic guidelines" and several thematic "project boxes", which define the main sectors of expected development. The majority of implemented projects can be clearly related to the SP structure and produce coordinated outputs in line with the document. Normally, project drafting includes the regional SP as the reference document<sup>28</sup>.
3. The SP structure is generally seen as flexible. Stakeholders can raise funds from different sources e.g. Regional Development Fund (which relies on the Prime Minister's Office), Albanian Development Fund (independent government agency), other international donors. The guidelines for intervention make a focus on the specific regional needs and convey funds on the "project boxes", thus creating a network on the project target for institutions (Ministries, municipalities, communes etc.), agencies and Decentralised Cooperation donors<sup>29</sup>.
4. SPs are built and produced upon a participatory process and therefore they are shared and recognised by all stakeholders. This entitles a full ownership<sup>30</sup>.
5. Notwithstanding the acceptance and the positive opinion of the SP, in some cases it appears fairly difficult to transfer the content of the document into practice and implementing changes. This happens especially when projects target social services goals. This may derive from people's requests or expectations, as for example the need for tangible infrastructures rather than "less tactile" services (such as technical assistance, IT, training etc.)<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora)

<sup>26</sup> Marilena Pinca, Apulia's Decentralized Cooperation office Director, refers that in the past Albanian's presentation of the territory were related to occasional events. Some projects implemented with Apulia region as a donor were built on a presentation in Lecce of the Albanian territory, during which a general brainstorming gave rise to the project.

<sup>27</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

<sup>28</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

<sup>29</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director), Aida Shllaku (Shkodra Urban planning Director).

<sup>30</sup> Anesti Dhimojani, Head of the Regional Council of Vlora) refers that the Vlora SP has been voted by 100% of the members of the Council. Strategic planning had a broad participatory process with the participation of the Ministry of Interior, Region, Municipalities, Environmental associations, farmers, entrepreneurs, civil society and also member and experts of universities.

<sup>31</sup> It is deputy-minister Ferdinand Poni's opinion that Albania needs more infrastructural projects since its business sector is suffering. In his opinion, Albania is not anymore a poor country but it is on the way of achieving the position of candidate for EU accession.

6. In some cases, for example among institutional personnel, there seem to be a lack of competence in project proposals drafting and an insufficient expertise in making lobbying to the concerned national or international decisional levels. In some other cases, the timing of funding may delay the SP implementation<sup>32</sup>.
7. If the general perception of the SP is positive, some critical issues arise when establishing the entity of a possible financial intervention. In fact, having a good plan implies to insert some big projects that often are not in the possibility of the local and regional government. The SP, as methodological approach, may also be a good background argument to present when the dialogue is raised to the national level. When it comes to the national level (ministries), a similar participatory process between national and local experts takes place in order to set priorities.
8. Limitation on the SP implementation often arise when funds are very limited, both public and private ones. Some regions have more capacities. For example in Shkodra and Lezha there has been a lot of investment, probably also due to the presence of a very good local economic development agency to which Shkodra can refer. Larger municipalities can count on bigger national resources whether smaller communes cannot (the amount is only 3% of each local government tax collection). This reduced amount makes the project implementation very challenging. So, notwithstanding the good strategic document and its ownership, often there are no means to implement projects. Raising the expectations through a planning exercise without sufficient resources may create frustration.<sup>33</sup>

## 2.5. Do strategic plans and LEDAs activities target actual population priority needs and regional potential for development?

1. Those interviewed generally expressed satisfaction about the presence and use of the SPs for the regions of Shkodra and Vlora and about the work of LEDAs. This opinion is shared at all levels, national and local, and both in the public and private sectors.

In order to foster economic development, ILSLEDA consultants carried out surveys on agro-food value-chains in both regions, providing guidelines for regional administrations, LEDAs and local producers on how to increase the economic value of 14 typical agricultural products in each region. Aiming at supporting small local businesses, in September 2010 the Credins Bank signed an agreement with UNOPS to reactivate a Guarantee Fund, with the purpose of improving allocation of financial grants to SMEs in both regions, with a security mechanism for those who are usually excluded from bank loans due to lack of assets and guarantees. During 2011 alone, 9 new loans were disbursed intended to open about 30 new jobs<sup>34</sup>.

2. SP drafting comes from a preliminary detailed survey of the existing documents and activities on the territory (performed by ILSLEDA through the AGA2 programme) thus taking into account its specific potentials. The participatory process enhanced the involvement of many stakeholders, not only coming from the institutions but also from the civil society. LEDAs were actively involved and, in the specific case of Vlora, were the

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<sup>32</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora) refers that Vlora region applied for a project on social inclusion, within the Italian Albanian Development Swap Program (IADSA), but he thinks that there are only few chances to obtain the funds because of the stated reasons.

<sup>33</sup> Blendi Bushati (Albanian Development Fund).

<sup>34</sup> AGA 2 - Annual Work Plan 2012

main promoter of the participatory process<sup>35</sup>. This methodology helped to make some direct connection between SP goals and population needs but still, SP issues seem to be too circumscribed in respect to the more general regional and local necessities.

3. In Shkodra, the SP is perceived as an excellent tool by all the interviewed institutional representatives. The “tourism” issue is felt as the crucial track to follow for regional development. This grows out from the past experience that the region had with the PASARP and the German Cooperation programmes. TEULEDA is felt as an asset on the territory and a successful case history. From the institutional point of view, to better match the regional targets, TEULEDA should grow by acting not only in the town of Shkodra’s premises but also at regional level<sup>36</sup>.

In the opinion of the Head of Shkodra’s Regional Council, the SP drafting not only allowed to reach a shared methodology for implementing projects for the region but also enhanced the personnel’s knowledge through the capacity building process. Municipalities learned to present projects by taking into account both design and implementation up to sustainability. This is perceived as a great and necessary improvement.

4. As far as TEULEDA is concerned, its direct link to the territory is demonstrated by the good performance on all projects. TEULEDA seems to be a necessary tool for the institutional and private stakeholders for taking advantage of existing funds. (EU funds, CARDS etc.).

Institutional representatives express more expectations on tourism development, such as putting in contact the town and the lake (Florence University drafted a feasibility study on aquatic sports in the lake) and to build a coastal road up to Montenegro in order to foster the connection between border regions and promote touristic itineraries<sup>37</sup>.

5. A general overview shows that the main projects for the Shkodra region and the municipalities enhanced by both the SP instrument and TEULEDA’s efforts are infrastructural projects which target tourism development.

In line with the SP and the “tourism vision”, the AGA 2 support, together with the action of TEULEDA, promoted the realisation of the external lightning system of the Municipality building and the renovation of the public areas (rehabilitation, lightning, green areas) of Puka. Other projects will hopefully be: the rehabilitation of a road in the Castle Itinerary context; the “Albergo Diffuso” experience in the tourist mountainous areas of the region<sup>38</sup>. TEULEDA is now working on projects for tourism and cultural heritage enhancement (Adriatic museum network; Marubi Museum collection) and on other projects targeting social inclusion, whose beneficiaries are the Roma and Egyptian minorities, funded by Hungary as international partner<sup>39</sup>.

6. The SP of Vlora’s region seems to have a wider view of the overall regional development and so, it appears to have a better and more comprehensive approach to the needs of the population. Its vision, “The zero emission territory” identifies some areas of interventions, which involve not only tourism but also agro-food pipelines and social and cultural services.

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<sup>35</sup> Mirela Koci, AULEDA Director

<sup>36</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

<sup>37</sup> Aida Shllaku (Municipality of Shkodra, Urban Departement Director)

<sup>38</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

<sup>39</sup> Klaudia Darragjati (TEULEDA Director).



The SP exercise involved many stakeholders (Ministry of Interior, local governments, environmental associations, civil society, farmers) and has been widely implemented also at the Municipality level, where specific SPs were drafted by having the regional SP as a model. The drafting phase of the SP involved not only institutional representatives but also private owners<sup>40</sup>. The SP has been used as a framework also for the institution of the Regional Department of Cultural Heritage Ministry. Future projects will hopefully involve wi-fi services (supported by AULEDA and the Municipality) and info-points for tourism<sup>41</sup>.

7. In Vlora, the opportunities given to the region by the implementation of the SP have been extended, especially in terms of the application of the AGA2 methodology and the participatory process. Vlora Municipality created specific departments which work on the SP issues and draft projects<sup>42</sup>.

Furthermore, within the priorities identified in the SP, the value chains gave useful guidelines for the development of activities in every sector. For example value chains criteria were used for projects on healing herbs (SOROS Foundation, UNDP programme for bio-diversity), rural production (milk and livestock project supported by Idea Verde, Oxfam)<sup>43</sup>.

Special attention has been given to the process of de-institutionalisation of psychiatric patients. This was done with the support of Decentralized Cooperation, namely Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Marche Regions. The participants in these projects could learn from the past experiences of Trieste, Ancona, Senigallia and Gorizia (municipalities within the above-mentioned regions). Initially, the project involved a small group of ten women who could be attended in a “Casa Famiglia” (protected homes) and then helped to approach the labour market (this includes the efforts currently done in presenting to a YUNUS<sup>44</sup>-supported scheme of financing, a project for the production and sale of flowers in order to support their economic growth). Hopefully, a new restaurant to be created together with a high school of commerce, will make them sustainable. At the moment, AULEDA is working on projects for the Adriatic network (food and tourism) and for the inclusion and support to disadvantaged such as youth, women and ethnic minorities (the latter with Swiss Cooperation)<sup>45</sup>.

The added value in the *Casa Famiglia* experience of deinstitutionalisation of mental health care lies in the fact that it is completely inserted into the National Health Care services. This means that both personnel (doctors and nurses) as well as the consumables are entirely provided by the Hospital itself. This is crucial in view of sustainability. The “bad” news is that this kind of treatment can be provided only to a restricted selection of patients, who incidentally live just “around the corner” thus amplifying the differences with the long care treatment in the hospital. In the opinion of all the people interviewed this experience deserves additional support to be extended to more patients.

8. As it happens in both regions of Shkodra and Vlora, all local institutional representatives recognise the local LEDAs as an asset of the territory. AULEDA, for instance, is able to

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<sup>40</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of Vlora’s Regional Council)

<sup>41</sup> Blendi Bushati, Albanian Development Fund, gives information about the funded interventions (a couple of rural roads) relating to the ecological valley of the Shushica.

<sup>42</sup> Arben Beqiraj (Deputy Mayor of Vlora). He reports about the following project for the Municipality: Restoration of the ruins of the ancient city of Aulona, Ethnographic Museum; old Prefecture of Vlora’s Façade restoration.

<sup>43</sup> Mirela Koci, AULEDA Director

<sup>44</sup> A local foundation, member of the international YUNUS Foundation promoting social enterprises

<sup>45</sup> Mirela Koci, AULEDA Director



both implement actual projects for the territory and to take into account national and regional strategies. AULEDA interacts with every administrative unit within the county's premises and creates proactive synergism in order to promote not only economic development projects but also integrated prioritized projects. This appears a good result in the perspective of EU accession<sup>46</sup>.

## 2.6. Did local authorities gradually take over implementation, management and monitoring of the strategic plans?

1. During the year 2012, the formal approval and ownership in implementation of the SPs by the respective Regional Councils occurred. The SPs outlined numerous projects which constitute a platform for all donors (international organizations as well as national, regional and local authorities). More specifically, the SP assist donors to better allocate funds on projects and to better use shared information that best reflect community needs, hence contributing to harmonization (donors-donors). SP fosters the stakeholders alignment (partners – donors) to national priorities<sup>47</sup>.
2. As previously reported (see question n. 2.5.6), in Vlora region the SP exercise has been widely implemented also at the Municipality level, where specific SPs were drafted by having the regional SP as a model<sup>48</sup>.
3. Both Vlora and Shkodra SPs foresee a “future” for their implementation. One of the steps is the implementation of the Coordinated Development Projects (CDP), a set of integrated projects, involving homogeneous zones of interventions based on their morphological, socio-economic and/or cultural features<sup>49</sup>. Most of the CDP are not active at this date. Nevertheless, some infrastructural interventions funded by the Albanian Development Fund have been performed, such as a couple of intervention for rural roads in the ecological valley of Shushica or a road for the infrastructural system as support for the tourism development in the Alps area<sup>50</sup>.

In this context, the project regarding the Marubi Virtual Museum seems to include the touristic vocation of Shkodra region and the appreciation of its cultural heritage. *De facto*, the project is an example of the alignment of the stakeholders (partners – donors) and of the harmonization donors – donors<sup>51</sup>.

4. Monitoring of the plans seems to be absent, at the moment. Actually, this is not even mentioned in the SP documents, while its importance is evident, provided that they are multi-year platforms. Nevertheless, in Shkodra region there seems to be a database in which

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<sup>46</sup> Mimoza Brecani (Chair of AULEDA's Board)

<sup>47</sup> 2012 AGA 2 Annual Report

<sup>48</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora)

<sup>49</sup> Strategic Plan publications: Shkodra Strategic Plan (pag. 132), Vlora Strategic Plan (pag. 149).

<sup>50</sup> Blendi Bushati, Albanian Development Fund.

<sup>51</sup> The Marubi Virtual Museum project is a national initiative. Partners are national Ministries, Shkodra Region and Municipality, TEULEDA, the Italian Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The sustainability is guaranteed by the contribution of Shkodra Municipality, which might eventually take in charge the management of the museum after its completion (Aida Shllaku, Head of the Urban planning Department of Shkodra Municipality). The participation of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the framework of the decentralized Cooperation is a very important added value.

all existing projects are collected, even those pertaining to other programs. The relationship between projects and the connection with the SP could be a way of monitoring the plan<sup>52</sup>.

During the implementation, LEDAs staff generally monitor the single projects that they take in charge<sup>53</sup>.

## 2.7. To what extent the achievements were facilitated by project methodological approach?

1. AGA2 methodology is perceived as an instrument well integrated with the territory necessities and with the respective stakeholders. It also reflects Albanian experience in matters of international cooperation. It consolidated the previous work done by other donors (PASARP, GIZ, and singular Decentralised Cooperation partners). It helped to create a network at local level by involving also international counterparts. Thus, it has become a reference point<sup>54</sup>. It is perceived as a good way to enhance capacities in order to meet European standards<sup>55</sup>. The AGA 2 methodology supports in fostering the idea of “network” between public and private stakeholders and donors<sup>56</sup>.
2. The first methodological tool of AGA2, the participatory process, involved many stakeholders and facilitated a broad-based discussion on a large range of needs. This also promoted the ownership of the projects by local and regional actors. A large participation seems to reflect a broad consensus by the stakeholders. This type of process, in some occasions, seems to pertain to the institutional management of the territory<sup>57</sup>.
3. The SP gave a general framework for the actual and future positioning of the development of the different projects. Because it is based on the survey of the existing potentialities and resources of the territory, it is well linked to the region’s specific characteristics and may foster grass roots approaches and perspectives. In addition, the SP is felt as a flexible instrument<sup>58</sup>.

The upgrading of LEDAs has been essential for providing Shkodra and Vlora regions with an operating tool for the effective implementation and management of projects.

The reactivation of the Guarantee Fund has been recognised as a useful instrument both for large and smaller projects. AGA 2 funding procedure, through LEDAs support, is felt as quicker and more flexible in respect to other modalities, which are often linked to long and more articulated procedures<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Merita Kazazi (Regional Development Office in Shkodra).

<sup>53</sup> Klaudia Darragjati (TEULEDA Director); Mirela Koci, AULEDA Director

<sup>54</sup> Aida Shllaku, (Head of the Urban planning Department of Shkodra Municipality)

<sup>55</sup> Arben Beqiraj (Deputy Mayor of Vlora)

<sup>56</sup> Arben Beqiraj (Deputy Mayor of Vlora) informs that there is a national programme, US financed, which aims at creating a network between 15 Albanian municipalities. USAID’s local governance project supports such local government functions as planning, economic development, and public asset management that help create a favorable climate for business and investment.

<sup>57</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora) reports that before AGA 2 Vlora Council already worked with associations, for example youth associations. AGA 2 methodology consolidated the work that had been done on the territory.

<sup>58</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora) reports that AGA has been the closest programme to the regional council, both for planning and implementing projects – e.g. the events for the 100 years of independence of Albania (2012).

<sup>59</sup> Aida Shllaku, (Head of the Urban planning Department of Shkodra Municipality).

## 2.8. Was technical assistance by the project perceived as instrumental for capacity building?

1. Both in Shkodra and Vlora regions the interviews highlight that AGA2 technical assistance has been essential for the LEDAs upgrading and for the capacity building of institutional personnel. As for LEDAs, they could avail themselves of the ILSLEDA's support thanks to the programme's assistance. At local level (regions, municipalities), the programme promoted capacity building both through the SP drafting and through "tailored" technical support sessions. The importance and effectiveness of AGA2 as a whole is shared at both national and local level. In addition to this, the Local Human Development Laboratories were set up for the implementation of training courses and capacity building exercise.
2. Capacities of approximately 150 stakeholders i.e. regional and local government staff, LEDAs staff, NGOs, and businesses, were enhanced through ten AGA 2 trainings on project design and implementation. The tangible outputs of the trainings were ten fully developed project fiches ready to be utilized in forthcoming calls for proposals. All the trainings were done based on a tailored manual created by the programme to the aforementioned purpose<sup>60</sup>.
3. LEDAs were strengthened as reported in section 2.2. and promoted at national level through national conferences and various meetings between the LEDAs and Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Tourism, Regional Councils, Municipalities, Communes. LEDAs members are now specialists in offering direct support and training courses for municipalities, regional institutions, community-based organizations and institutions at the central level for managing the processes of integrated local development.
4. The majority of the members of the institutions (county, municipalities) seem to have a very good opinion of the technical support of AGA2 for the development of their capacities in the knowledge management and drafting projects. Some members of the staff of Shkodra Municipality participated to courses on economic development and to stages: the tangible results are, for example, the infrastructural project for Shkodra Municipality and Puke<sup>61</sup>. In the case of Vlora, the capacity building exercise generated specific departments at Municipality's premises for project drafting and for planning lobbying activities and targets. Courses were organised for identifying priorities and single projects. They have been very useful also for the interface and cooperation with other programs<sup>62</sup>. The capacity building exercise at regional level had positive outcome on the lower level administration (municipalities could benefit from regions' personnel)<sup>63</sup>.
5. Local human development laboratories promoted by AGA 2 were a significant component for enhancing of knowledge management. The human development laboratories are mixed groups with the participation of the local University and local bodies within which experts illustrate the best practices of the territory and give training on how to improve them. Unfortunately, in this context, Universities role seems very weak, especially in terms of

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<sup>60</sup> AGA 2 Annual report 2012

<sup>61</sup> Aida Shllaku, (Head of the Urban planning Department of Shkodra Municipality)

<sup>62</sup> Arben Beqiraj, (Deputy Mayor of Vlora)

<sup>63</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora)

competence and links with the labour market<sup>64</sup>. In addition to this, many Universities are not formally aligned with European standards<sup>65</sup>.

6. Notwithstanding the great effort of the programme, it is a shared opinion at all levels that more training and capacity building are needed: regions and municipalities should improve their capacities in designing projects for applying to international calls for proposal and the general knowledge in planning<sup>66</sup>, project drafting, management and monitoring should be spread on a broader base<sup>67</sup>.

## **2.9. Did decentralised cooperation bring added value in terms of: partnerships, funding mechanism, preparing the ground for access to EU structural funds at grass-root level, project capacities**

1. It is a shared opinion that Decentralised Cooperation (DC) is a good instrument for implementing projects and for Albanian development. Regional partnership respects the territorial characteristics and enhances funding opportunities for the projects. In the Deputy Minister of Interior's opinion, it is a form of challenge between different areas, so that each region, Municipality and Commune aims at excelling in terms of projects results and enhanced political consensus. And more, DC brought added value to partnership, funding mechanisms, project implementation capacities, thus preparing the ground for access to EU structural funds.
2. Italian funded Decentralised Cooperation has an ancient worldwide tradition. In the framework of the UN it is operating since 1989, while EU up-scaled its potential and funding by year 1996. It is ruled by the constant and mutual Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Italian Regions in assessing priorities for projects and allocating funds. Funds turn out to be considerably increased by the co-funding double loans. In Albania, Decentralised Cooperation privileged Italian partners and knowhow. Such expertise seems to have given to Albania enhanced opportunities to have a short term access to EU.

Examples are PASARP programme and Apulia's DC experience. The latter promoted many projects involving Italian and Albanian institutions and some small and medium enterprises (SMEs). All experiences seem to have enhanced project capacities and given added value to fund-raising<sup>68</sup>. Special efforts were made in the health sector<sup>69</sup>. Other sectors (cultural

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<sup>66</sup> Anesti Dhimojani (Head of the Regional Council of Vlora),

<sup>67</sup> Blendi Bushati, Albanian Development Fund.

<sup>68</sup> Marilena Pinca (Decentralized Cooperation partner - Apulia region representative)

<sup>69</sup> Health sector projects:

- a large project (8 M euros) regarding the management of Health in Albania, equipment for hospitals and health services, capacity building for specialised surgery: projects regarded: womens' health problems (existing labs were enhanced with new instruments for mammography); a small department for great burn treatment; capacity building for kidney surgery.
- In the psychiatric sector, Decentralised Cooperation involving Friuli Venezia Giulia experts (100.000 euros) promoted the creation of communities for people with mental problems ("casa famiglia") in the framework of the Italian experience of de-institutionalization of psychiatric centres.

heritage, energy) involve multi-regional participation and many operating stakeholders, thus “training” Albanian participants to work in a team, to endorse assessed methodologies for project approach and implementation<sup>70</sup>.

3. At local level, DC is generally felt as a very important and positive experience. There are examples of cooperation in the urban planning sector (with Florence) and small projects involving the environment (with APQ). There are expectations for further cooperation with Friuli Venezia Giulia and Marche regions for projects on social services. At this date DC brings financial support to the Albanian territory, but in the aim of becoming EU member, DC could turn into a partnership within which exchanging experiences could be promoted (e.g. the wine itineraries)<sup>71</sup>.
4. DC also helped to expand the idea of “economic development network” beyond national borders to new markets. In DC context, Shkodra region is cooperating with Friuli Venezia Giulia with the aim of creating an Adriatic touristic network for the new emerging markets (such as Indians and Chinese tourists). It is an on-going process which may be consolidated with the opening of a Friuli Venezia Giulia office in Shkodra for the Italian SMEs that desire to work in Albania with TEULEDA’s support<sup>72</sup>.

## **2.10. Was the project presence in the region visible and socially accepted (tangible results and communication)?**

1. AGA 2 presence in the regions seems to be socially accepted as far as the interviewed stakeholders are concerned. The above reported statements show that all privileged speakers are well aware of the presence and of the operating activities of the programme in the two regions of Shkodra and Vlora.

The effects seem to go beyond regional borders, for example in Lezha region, which seems to be willing to have its own LEDA as a support for the regional development and is trying to partner on its own (Lezha is lobbying for itself in Brussels)<sup>73</sup>.

2. The SP seems to be the passport of the regions through which regions themselves speak to the decentralised cooperation and to the national level<sup>74</sup>.

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- Vlore’s “casa famiglia” began during the PASARP implementation and has been mentioned as a best practice during the Copenhagen Consensus 2008 conference. After this experience Vlore autonomously created two more “casa famiglia”.

<sup>70</sup> Decentralised Cooperation promoted the establishment in 2004 of the Universiteti katolik Zoja e Këshillit të Mirë (Università Cattolica Nostra Signora del Buon Consiglio) in Tirana and Elbasan. Ongoing agreements have been signed with the Italian Universities of Milano (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Rome (Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”) and Bari (Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro).

To date, Albania is participating to the AGRONET project in the IPA Adriatic Programme framework (2007-2013) which promotes the enhancement of the Adriatic Area sustainable development. AGRONET directly involves 10 partners, both Italian and European. The project is a permanent network of logistic, distribution and service infrastructures in food production lines in the Adriatic area, aiming at developing transnational economic Cooperation (more than 2,5 Mln euros loan).

<sup>71</sup> Merita Kazazi, Director of Shkodra Regional Development Office.

<sup>72</sup> Aida Shllaku (Shkodra Urban planning Director). Ongoing project in the framework of DC are the “Marubi Virtual Museum” and the “Albergo Diffuso” experience.

<sup>73</sup> Estevan Ikonomi, AGA 2 National Programme Officer

<sup>74</sup> Estevan Ikonomi, AGA 2, National Programme Officer. See also previous interviews.

3. At the national level, AGA 2 is certainly visible as a good partner in the wider field of international cooperation. The existence of many programmes, such as AGA 2, Decentralised Cooperation, Italian Cooperation, Swiss-Austrian and Swiss programmes, enhances the regional development and also its general visibility<sup>75</sup>.  
AGA 2 outputs had a leading role in some main conferences: the January 2011 conference which involved the main government posts and international donors<sup>76</sup>; Albania's LEDAs results have been pointed out as a best practice during the first LEDAs conference in Seville (Spain) in October 2011<sup>77</sup>; the Shkodra and Vlora SP official presentation in March 2012<sup>78</sup>; the October 2012 conference in Tirana, where AGA 2 was presented as one of the most proactive programmes on the Albanian territory<sup>79</sup>.
4. In particular, the participatory process of AGA 2 offers an operating methodology that promotes awareness of the process itself and visibility at the local level.

Thanks to a great number of meetings with Albanian government bodies, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders operating in the areas, the SP participatory methodology was widely shared and agreed upon. In Shkodra the SP process was significantly shared especially between TEULEDA and important institutional subjects (Albanian Ministries, Italian Cooperation, World Bank, Regional governments, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.). More than 70 meetings were related to the coordination between the AGA 2 technical staff (included UNDP, ILSLEDA staff), Universitas program coordinators, Regional Council members; more than 30 meetings were dedicated to local stakeholders (Ministries, regional and municipal institutions, banks, universities, NGO's, representatives of international on-going programmes on the territory etc.)<sup>80</sup>. In Vlora, the SP exercise promoted Open Days with more than 100 participants and public debates<sup>81</sup>. The visibility of the programme was enhanced by numerous web-publications (websites, newsletters etc.), public events (e.g. National Tourism Fair promoting LEDAs), participation to cooperation exercises and networks (incl. UNDP's Bratislava Regional Centre, Europeaid etc.)<sup>82</sup>.

## **2.11. Has the public private civic society collaboration been incorporated in the regional authorities procedures (building of social capital)?**

1. Notwithstanding the promotion of the public private civil society collaboration on the territory, the aforementioned findings show that public private participation is not completely incorporated in the regional institutions' procedures.

<sup>75</sup> As previously reported, in the Deputy Minister of Interior's opinion, the presence of more programmes is a form of challenge between different areas, so that each region, Municipality and Commune aims at excelling in terms of projects results and enhanced political consensus.

<sup>76</sup> *European integration, knowledge, innovations and democratic governance of development. The strategic role of decentralized cooperation in economy, environment, services and capacity building* was held in Tirana on 13th and 14th January 2011

<sup>77</sup> *First World Forum of Local Development Agencies*, 5th – 7th October 2011.

<sup>78</sup> March 29, 2012 “*The Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism*” in Shkodra region and “*Strategic Plan of Vlora Region – the Zero Emission Territory (ZET)*”

<sup>79</sup> *High level Conference: The Role of Decentralisation on the Consolidation of Democracy in Albania and European Integration* Tirana, 30-31 October 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Shkodra Strategic Plan publication, Final document, June 2011

<sup>81</sup> Vlora Strategic Plan publication, Final document, June 2011

<sup>82</sup> See 2012 AGA 2 Annual Report.



The CPCs exercise contributed to build a broad-based participatory experience for the public and private stakeholders during the SP drafting. Nevertheless the acquaintance with this type of exercise did not develop into institutional procedures to be autonomously managed by the Regional Councils. In Shkodra and Vlora Regions the Councils limit themselves in approving CPCs outputs.

2. If LEDAs are an effective operating tool for the actual implementation of public-private partnership, the “private side” of the Albanian social society seems to be unprepared to approach large investments, due to the substantial absence of significant professional registers, organisations and/or associations of business or rural sectors<sup>83</sup>. The lack of important private stakeholders is also reflected in the composition of LEDAs boards (both AULEDA and TEULEDA boards are composed of 9 members whose representative majority is public).

It is also to be underlined that there is not yet a legal framework for concrete public – private joint business or partnership.

## **2.12. Did the project facilitate the connection between regional and national priorities and policies**

1. AGA 2 has made a great effort in promoting the connection between regional and national priorities and policies. The bottom-up process has been fostered through communication and mutual exchange of opinion. The debate on shared objectives has been promoted on several occasions. National policies and documents for the regional and economic development strategy were taken into account during SP drafting. National representatives were involved in the participatory process and in the SP planning. Communication, open days and conferences were held.
2. Specifically, at national level, AGA 2 promoted meetings with the line Ministries e.g. Interior, Tourism Culture Youth and Sports; organized the aforementioned October 2012 conference on decentralization policies. AGA 2 is now part of the Sector Working Group (SWG) of Decentralization, coordinated by the Swiss office for Development Cooperation. AGA 2 promoted 5 meetings throughout 2012 and one High Level Intergovernmental Conference on June 2012, thus improving the cooperation between regional and national level actors<sup>84</sup>.
3. These overall activities fostered the mutual collaboration between national and regional level. Nevertheless a political framework has not yet been defined in terms of decentralization. The interviews show that national representatives are very interested in regional dynamics and in AGA2 results together with the general outputs of international cooperation programmes. However it seems that, at the moment, participatory process and strategic planning pertain mostly to the regional level. Inter-ministerial commissions for debate and drafting of thematic strategies do not seem to be in force and operating<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Most of the interviews and documents regarding the participation to conferences and meetings organised by AGA 2 report a high percentage of public stakeholders.

<sup>84</sup> This office aims at harmonizing donors’ efforts towards more decentralized governance in Albania, in terms of joint programming and monitoring (2012 AGA 2 Annual Report)

<sup>85</sup> Giancarlo Canzanelli, ILS LEDA expert

4. A better connection between national and regional policies is felt as necessary for a harmonious general development. On one side regional development seems to involve both local and national stakeholders with a bottom-up approach. On the other side EU indications for regional development seem to prefer national counterparts for priority setting and also for implementation. Coherent policies between the two levels and an enhanced bottom-up approach could promote bigger and more significant programmes, such as IPA cross-border, or give an answer to the emerging need for urban planning.

### **2.13 Were territorial partnerships promoted at the European level in view of internationalization?**

1. Provided that the dissemination of territorial marketing documents is part of the on-going 2013 work-plan, thus excluded from this evaluation exercise, the AGA2 supported the organization of contacts either through exchanges of visits or through the organization of international conferences in Albania and abroad.

Reference is already made to the January 2011 international conference in Tirana with the participation of representatives from almost 20 Embassies of foreign countries in Albania, several representatives of European networks (e.g. French decentralized cooperation, Greek Association of Regions, EURADA) and more than 40 European representatives of local authorities. Reference is also made to the International Conference in Seville, Spain, where for the first time regional development agencies from all over the world participated and where AULEDA was awarded a special prize.

2. It has also been already highlighted the role of the AGA2 in connecting decentralized cooperation partners to the Albanian regional authorities and to the LEDAs, supporting the formulation and co-financing the implementation of several decentralized cooperation projects within the framework of the SP.

In addition, members of the national project staff could visit and exchange experiences with the Kosovo and the Morocco ART projects. Various visibility activities in terms, for example, of newsletters, meetings, interviews in the media, reporting in Albania and abroad have taken place. The only website is still to be fully implemented, but this is apparently due to changed UNDP regulations related to dedicated project websites, not compatible with the original project expectations.

### **2.14 Do Albanian partners participate in the different ART International thematic networks (ILS-LEDA, IDEASS and UNIVERSITAS).**

1. Wide reference was made to the participation and partnership with the ILSLEDA network, which was completely successful.

Regarding IDEASS<sup>86</sup> component, AGA2 outsourced the implementation of a large part of this component which regarded a national survey to identify the best innovative practices to solve common development problems. Innovations were referred to as practices that have the characteristics of being replicable and adaptable in view of national and international exchange. In that regards, thirteen innovations were identified that encompassed the following sectors: agriculture, breeding, local development, environmental technologies and

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<sup>86</sup> Involving the Albanian Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation



social inclusion. The thirteen innovations identified are now part of the IDEASS online catalogue which is accessible here:

<http://www.ideassonline.org/innovations/brochYellow.php?id=11>

Finally, with overall technical assistance and supervision provided by the Universitas network, AGA2 implemented the Laboratories for Local Human Development, largely complying with the donor's request to implement a Centre for Training on Human Development. As it will be detailed in next chapter, on the one side the discontinued support from the donor side as well as the weakness of the academic sector in Albania and the absence of a private research sector, the eventual up-scaling of this initiative has been, at the moment, discontinued.

### 3. IMPACT.

#### Key Evaluation Question:

To what extent were the outcomes achieved?

1. Concerning the first outcome, it can be affirmed that the AGA2 has been successful so far in supporting the Albanian counties in defining and implementing their Strategic Plans, liaising with the national policies, involving the County Partnership Councils, with the support of the Decentralized Cooperation and of the UN Agencies involved within the ONE UN Strategy.

From this perspective, the missing link is to scale up the process and extend it to additional regions to finally test its effectiveness and coherence. This has to do with the second outcome, which remains halfway: strengthened Government's capacity to support decentralization and local Strategic Planning process, sharing information and best practices as well as implementing training initiatives.

While many activities have definitely been promoted in this direction (see previous chapters), to the point that the AGA2 was requested and actually drafted a "National Strategy for Local Economic Development", the Albanian context is not yet "regionalization-friendly". As stated in the chapter on relevance, the decentralization process is progressing at a slower pace than expected<sup>87</sup> and the regional development has not its own institutional champion. Also donors' projects are implemented either at the national or at the local scale.

So it has to be clarified that in order to have a significant impact on the meso-layer of development, there will be need of longer time as far as the Albanian institutional and political process evolves in that directions, which is out of reach of the AGA2.

In particular, although there are several sector working groups (tables) where this issue is being discussed (e.g. the new NSDI 2014-2020), more commitment has to be seen from the government on this issue in respect to budgeting, development mandate of the Qarks, RD Strategy design and approval as well as the Law on regional development.

UNDP, as a development organization, considers it imperative to work in the meantime with regional and local levels and mainstream local development through democratic participation and sound approaches on planning, prioritization and implementation so as to

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<sup>87</sup> EU Assessment study on Regional Development Capacities on the Ground, 2011

prepare local partners for future development engagement and requirements entailed by EU accession support.

2. However, since this evaluation refers to an on-going project, and provided that the consolidation actions are generally planned in the last implementation period, the impact criteria can only be dealt with by verifying whether there are the base requirements for achieving it.

### **3.1. Did the project share information and best practices at the national level in view of Government's capacity building?**

1. AGA2 involved national level representatives in all phases of the programme. During the survey studies for the regional SP drafting national policies, information, documents and existing best practices on the territory were taken into account. For the SP drafting, Ministries' and Government Departments' representatives were involved by means of mutual exchange of opinion and experience during the participatory process. The key component of AGA 2 methodology is accepted and recognized as good practices for the Albanian development. Both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Tourism Culture Youths and Sports, through their representatives, seem to be well aware of the positive experience of AGA 2.

Partnership had good results in most of the AGA 2 projects and in the DC framework. At this date it seems that the idea of "network" is on the way to be well acknowledged by the Government.

LEDAs activities and their essential role in technical assistance were communicated in various meetings and conferences. LEDAs upgrading has been promoted and the results, especially in Vlora, are on the way of certification by the competent institutions<sup>88</sup>. This process promotes the transformation of existing agencies in County Development Agencies in the ONE UN strategy framework for the implementation of the national Cross-Cutting Development Strategy.

LEDAs financial scheme (Guarantee Fund) is efficient, gave excellent results, visible also at national level and witnesses a good and sustainable practice for small project implementation at local level.

### **3.2. Were training initiatives put in place in view of coordinating sectorial and territorial policies?**

1. The training initiatives mostly regarded project proposal drafting or were instrumental for the strategic planning, the study of the Chains of Value or for designing a business proposal for the guarantee fund.

More efforts could have been put for managing complex developmental issues, as stated in the SP: the so called "Coordination Development Projects" (CDP). CDP include different thematic areas coming from the SP "project boxes" and promote the coordinated development of sectorial issues on the territory.

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<sup>88</sup> Mirela Koci, Auleda Director

### **3.3. Did the project disseminate information in view of coordination with partners and donor's involvement?**

1. As previously reported, AGA 2 disseminated information on its own actions and work performed both to beneficiaries and to donors. This occurred through their involvement in the participatory process (e.g. capacity building during the SP exercise<sup>89</sup>) and through training and/or capacity building in specific Human Development Laboratories.

As previously reported, Human Development Laboratories were set up for the implementation of training courses and capacity building exercise. Unfortunately, the two Universities involved in this component resulted to lack the appropriate capacities to take full ownership and run these laboratories.

### **3.4. Did the project form a new and innovative leadership, taking into account a gender bias?**

1. The interviews that the team had with persons in a position of leadership in the different institutions (regional councils, municipal councils, technical departments of local and regional government) and in the LEDAs boards showed that each of them did absorb at a high degree the approach and the working tools of the AGA 2. Among these leaders, particularly so among LEDAs' staff and boards, women represent the overwhelming majority.

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<sup>89</sup> In Shkodra, members of the Swiss-Austrian Cooperation were involved in the CPCs for the SP drafting - Shpetim Quku (Staff member of an ongoing Swiss-Austrian Cooperation project)

## 4. SUSTAINABILITY

Extent to which the benefits of AGA2 will survive once the project discontinues its direct support.

### Key Evaluation Question:

#### 4.1. To what extent will the benefits of AGA2 survive once the project discontinues its direct support.

1. At local level, the sustainability of projects' benefits is normally guaranteed by the forecast on the maintenance and management of the asset by the institution in charge which allows investing the required resources for the maintenance and/or the management of the operating activities.

In this respect, the project supported by AGA2 appears to be sustainable because this provision of resources for sustainability has been a selection criteria. An example is the provisions being made for the implementation of the Marubi Virtual Photographic Museum, which foresees income generation through ticket selling and might eventually be sustained by both the Municipality (maintenance) and by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism<sup>90</sup>. Another example regards the actual intervention in an urban area of Puka town (Shkodra Region) where maintenance is guaranteed by the Municipality. Another example was quoted previously and regarded the Protected House for mentally ill patients, which is completely financed by regular resources of the public health system.

2. As far as the business projects are concerned, they all proved sustainable, as demonstrated by the regular return on disbursed loans. This result was achieved through a very careful selection of beneficiaries and of project proposals, as well as through a close collaboration with business persons, that found in the LEDAs not simply a provider of the much needed cash and finances but primarily a promoter agency offering concrete technical assistance.

#### 4.2. Are: LEDAs, CPCs, Strategic Plans elaboration methodology implemented as sustainable and participatory instruments? Is it likely that they will be promoted by the counterparts regardless of project support?

1. Sustainability of the LEDAs is one of main concerns since their beginning. They are designed from the beginning to achieve it by different means.

In the first place, a LEDA needs a very skilled technical structure in order to be able to mobilise resources and to properly manage projects in order to be held as accountable and trusted partners by national and international funding providers. In this respect both TEULEDA and AULEDA are well positioned.

Secondly, they need to be managed by boards that have innovative vision that allows them to lobby and cooperate on a long term base with other national and international partners such as, for example, other regional agencies from elsewhere in Europe.

They also need to be part of the regional participatory mechanisms, in order to be perceived as know-how providers and be fully integrated into regional development strategies.

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<sup>90</sup> Arben Beqiraj , (Deputy Mayor of Vlora)

From all these points of view, both TEULEDA and AULEDA seem to be well positioned and largely sustainable. However, assistance from UNDP is further needed to sustain local applications into IPA funds especially regarding agriculture and cross-border cooperation.

LEDAs should also start to consider the next challenges or needs that are or will become soon relevant for a diversified and sustainable development, calling for a new focus on social programmes and especially in areas where international assistance can be of use, such as:

- Innovation
- Territorial marketing
- Innovative finance (venture capital, online funding, fund of funds)

The issue of innovative finance is of essence because LEDAs current legal status as a not-for-profit organization does not clearly allow for direct financing from the government; they have served only as implementer of several projects thus government co-financing or fund matching has not been applied. Therefore, both agencies are sufficiently sustainable to manage donor funds; however it is important to ensure support/recognition from central public institutions and be eligible for receiving government funds to provide more integrated and professional services to the implementation of local strategies, given the accumulated experience and knowhow of the agencies in the area of local development.

#### **4.3. Is current country and regions' situation favourable for sustainability?**

1. It seems that the participatory approach of the CPSs and the SP formulation has been well endorsed at local level. In fact, despite the contractual end of technical assistance provided by AGA2 in May 2011, Vlora CPCs kept on meeting for organising, for example, the special event for the 100 years of Albanian Independence (proclaimed in Vlora in 1912 and consequently turning Vlora to being the first capital of modern Albania)<sup>91</sup>. CPCs and SP are recognised as essential tools for regional development also by other donors and by DC. Therefore, from a cultural and institutional point of view, they are sustainable.
2. From a financial point of view, both Strategic Plans formulation process and CPCs operations seem to be less sustainable with only local resources, because of actual operating costs for participants and for the requirement of specialised technical assistance.

#### **4.4. Did the project include an exit strategy/continuity mechanisms?**

1. In the findings, it was highlighted that the importance of the strategic plans is multi-dimensional. They serve as a resource mobilization instrument but also as a marketing tool. However, it was noted that it is crucial to pay attention to:
  - the monitoring of their progress;
  - the implementation especially as regards their financing, which requires further addressing with the national authorities.

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<sup>91</sup> Merita Kazazi (Shkodra Regional Development Office Director)

As it is the case of AGA2, but also of other donor projects which have adopted participatory planning, the processes followed are generally good and responsive with regard to the processes per se; however the question is “what comes next”? There is no dedicated national budget line for regional development, while resources committed to carrying out strategic regional activities and projects are limited.

For this reason, it is to be pointed out that there is the need for more commitment from national institutions in budgeting (i.e. from Ministries) in support to local planning with the aim of special allocation towards regional development and therefore the strategic plans and the necessity to mainstream these plans into the national framework.

## 7. Conclusions, Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

1. The AGA2 overall and specific objectives are relevant, consistent and aligned with Albania's priorities and obligations for the achievement of the MDGs, with national priorities and do actually support Albania's process towards EU Accession.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
A stronger role of local and regional governments, in terms of clear competencies and sufficient finances, is critical for the success of a regional development project. If this role is not strong enough the AGA2 lacks sustainability. Its results can be discontinued and its impact put in jeopardy.	Given the weak and unclear overall Regional Development framework, it is recommended that from a policy point of view, a unified coordinating role is given to a competent national department either existing or to be created. In its absence, projects at a regional scale should be oriented by a collegial, multi-stakeholder committee.

This recommendation derives from the fact that the UNDP is a development organisation and, therefore, the lack of a clear legal framework cannot and should not stop its action in the field of local and regional development. Nevertheless, in order to achieve a deeper impact and to root solidly the entire process in national institutions, in the absence of a political and financial champion for regional development, the team suggests that regional development projects are managed keeping attached the Ministry of Economy, of Finance, different line ministries and the RDF, through a smoother work of the Steering Committee.

For the time being, the Ministry of Interior, appears to be the right institutional counterpart since, in fact, the Regional Councils in Albania do not constitute exactly a different layer of public governance rather than an assembly of local governments.

2. The main instruments that characterise the AGA 2 approach at local level, namely the *CPCs* and the *LEDAs* did strongly contribute to the regional development planning and management. They are sustainable to a large extent and continue working efficiently regardless of project financial support.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
2. These instruments were either created ( <i>LEDAs</i> ) or designed ( <i>CPCs</i> ) previous to this second phase of the project. Therefore their success heavily depends on the continuous and coherent support over time and their capacity to adapt, evolve and innovate, thanks to specialised know-how and appropriate resources provided by AGA2.	2. Should the GoA aim at incorporating these instruments as a model to replicate in other regions, financial support has to be raised to continue international technical assistance, although with much lower intensity; national capacities have in fact been created that can be capitalised.

As noted during the workshop, the need for further support and technical assistance in these areas remains very relevant. Existing local capacities, resources and priorities could and should still be supported and assisted with additional expertise, experience, know-how transfer and innovation to

the benefit of communities and improved democratic governance.

This recommendation comes for the general appreciation of the role, performance and increasing sustainability of the LEDAs. But this is the result of AGA 2 inasmuch as it can be dedicated to the support extended from previous projects (PASARP and AGA 1). AGA 2 up-scaled its assistance to take the LEDAs to a new stage of development, being transformed into proper Regional Development Agencies. This process has started successfully but needs continued support.

To obtain additional support, it is key that this model is further advocated at the national level for closer review, adaptation and support.

3. The *Strategic Plans* were formulated in a process that was broadly participatory and professionally advanced at the same time. Each of the members of the CPCs finds its interests reflected in the SP and use the SP as a tool for project marketing and resources mobilisations.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<p>3. The importance of the SP lies not only in the technical approach, but also in its political value. It has been an effective instrument for consensus building, dialogue between majority and opposition, through policy making in tourism and the environment. SPs are where politics meet policy.</p>	<p>3. Given their political importance, therefore in view of social cohesion and democracy, it is worth monitoring their progress towards the achievement of the integrated objectives of the SP, as articulated in the different project boxes. This could be an affordable way for local authorities to demonstrate accountable to citizenship. In this respect the SP need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- further improvements to include monitoring criteria, for which resources have to be allocated</li> <li>- more national ownership in terms of inclusion in the national agenda and budget</li> </ul>

Regarding the national ownership, the team recommends the intensification of advocacy efforts from UNDP, the government of Italy and the donors' community at large, for the institutionalization of the strategic planning process. This implies several consequences:

- a champion is needed in this sector
- the planning should be closely linked to potential sources of funding

Looking forward to the EU accession, in fact, we observe that the strategic plans of the European Regions can access specialised loans and non-refundable resources. It is true that these sources do not cover the entire financial needs of the plans, and therefore these are formulated also for resources mobilisation purposes. However, the EU offers many ways for local authorities, local institutions and companies to be financed (POR, Social Funds, etc.) and this is actually what triggers the strategic plans formulation process.

4. *Decentralised Cooperation* proved not only effective in project design and implementation, but also conducive to a true cooperation, based on partnership rather than on a donor/recipient scheme.



In several cases, the partnership has survived the interruption of project financial support, thus enabling local stakeholders to engage directly. This is of great importance in view of European Accession process.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<p>4. There are many ways of implementing decentralised cooperation activities, for example the one facilitated by the European funds. But the AGA 2 reflects a unique model. It is based on a multilateral framework, where the UNDP CO provides locally the instruments for planning and partnership building (CPCs and LEDAs) and, at the international level, the ART Global Initiative in the UNDP Geneva Office facilitates the dissemination of good practices and marketing of projects. The GoA is constantly kept informed and ensures alignment and harmonisation, whilst the donor representatives may coordinate and create synergies between different cooperation partners from its country.</p>	<p>4. There is therefore a momentum for Italian decentralised cooperation in Albania and, actually, the Italian regional and local institutions do invest considerable resources. Since the Italian Cooperation, in partnership with the UNDP, holds the know-how and a key facilitating role, it is strongly recommended that it may continue supporting, in different ways, the main decentralised cooperation projects implemented in the framework of AGA2, particularly those in the social sector and open activities in other Albanian regions that are priority targets for Italy.</p>

It is also recommended that the UNDP profits of the Italian support to raise the commitment of additional donors, particularly those that may have a strategic interest in investing in regional development in Albania. This would have two positive consequences:

- On the one hand, the project would be associated not only to the Italian Cooperation, but felt as a UN Albania initiative;
- Italy, on the other hand could capitalise on its long and considerable support to this kind of approach and play a catalyst role within donors' community.

5. The *Guarantee Fund* has been restored and made operational through the work of the two LEDAs. It is the main instrument to actually target disadvantaged population by providing microcredit. Its management is perfectly efficient in terms of return on loans and in terms of financial costs, despite the very unfavourable Albanian conditions.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<p>5. The “secret of success” of the credit line for which the guarantee fund provides collaterals, is the work at the grass-root level done by the LEDAs technicians who are able to select reliable applicant and successful business and provide training and assistance in negotiating the application with the financial institution.</p>	<p>5. Provided this specific know-how by both LEDAs, for the UNDP it could be worth exploring opportunities for lobbying with the UNOPS to take over ownership and responsibilities for the guarantee fund, as well as for opening it to participation of additional donors, so as to provide more options to the disadvantaged in Shkoder and Vlore and, at the same time, provide additional financial means for LEDAs sustainability.</p>

6. *The AGA methodological approach* is the sapient combination of all previous instruments in one coherent strategy; it is more a toolkit to promote and facilitate partnership in development, than a financial or budgetary line for project implementation.

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
6. There are several Albanian institutions that partially hold knowledge on the AGA2 approach, but none holds the overall know-how.	6. It is recommended that the UNDP largely promotes to the donor community the AGA2 methodology in current and additional areas or it promotes coordination between different projects based on the Art approach. In current areas there is an installed capacity for efficient delivery of results; in additional areas to consolidate national ownership and modelling the approach to the Albanian context.

By doing so, not only the UNDP could continue supporting Shkoder and Vlora or open activities in additional areas. It could also advocate for a better donors' coordination in the field of regional development, which seems to be too weak at present.



## 8. Annexes

Annex 1 – ToRs of the Evaluation

Annex 2 – Agenda of the evaluation (Listing Informants Interviewed)

Annex 3 – List of documents reviewed

Annex 4 – Key Evaluation Questions

Annex 5 – Art Gold Albania results and resources framework



## **Annex 1**

### **ToRs of the Evaluation**





*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

**Terms of Reference  
For  
Independent External Evaluation of Art Gold 2 Programme in Albania**

Vacancy Number:

Post Title:

Duration of Assignment:

Project Name: Art Gold 2 Programme in Albania

Period under evaluation: 2009-to date

Type of Evaluation: Mid-Term

Type of Contract:

Educational Background:

Work Experience:

Deadline of Application:

Tentative starting date:

**1. Background and context**

Despite great efforts and reforms undertaken in the area of decentralization and regional/local development, Albania has still a long way to make in consolidating its institutions, developing the capacities of national, regional and local stakeholders and unleashing further development potentials of multi-layered economic actors for a sustainable, competitive and integrated growth at par with its neighbouring countries.

Since the initial decentralization reforms in early 1990's several donors have been active and supportive to deepen decentralization, enhance public administration capacities and develop proven and successful models of governance. Increasingly, the need for strategic planning, territorial approaches, vertical and horizontal coordination and partnerships have come to emergence and grown.

As part of the global development context, UNDP has promoted the attainment of Millennium Development Goals at local level, particularly through its Local Governance Programme (LGP) 2002-2005, while the Government of Italy financed a large programme on local economic development, the PASARP (Programme



of Activities in Support of Albanian Regions and Prefectures) during 2000 - 2006, in the Albanian regions of Vlora, Durres and Shkodra.

The ART GOLD Western Balkans Programme in Albania (ART GOLD 2)- AID 8611.01.3 has been funded by the Italian Government by means of a contribution to the "ART" Trust Fund of UNDP. The aim of the Programme was to consolidate successful practices and strategies already developed in Albania through UNDP's LGP and UNOPS's PASARP programmes.

Based on the implementation results of ART GOLD 2 Programme as well as its objectives, targets and additional generated expectations and identified niches, the Programme has subsequently received support from UNDP HUB Geneva and the One UN Coherence Fund for expansion and extension. Currently, the Programme's end implementation date is end of 2012, but further possibilities and prospects for extension are present.

The Programme is composed of three interrelated components, managed distinctly by UNDP Albania, UNOPS and UNDP HUB Geneva. UNDP Albania is responsible for the implementation of the Programme in Albania, while UNOPS is in charge of the international technical assistance and UNDP HUB Geneva provides overall guidance and coordination as well as facilitates partnerships and collaboration with various potential development actors and institutions.

With regard to UNDP Albania's component oriented towards implementation of activities in the field, the Programme has a three-level focus as follows:

- At the national level, the Programme helps enhance governmental departments' capacity to support improved governance and development in the regions and municipalities of the country, using decentralized cooperation modalities.
- At the regional/local level, the Programme assists in strengthening local stakeholders' capacities in planning and managing integrated territorial development. The project operated at different levels to support local administrations in carrying out monitoring processes and in improving planning documents and action plans.
- At the international level, the Programme has made use of decentralized cooperation modalities to promote the exchange of innovations, experiences and good practices with Southern and Northern Countries. The aim has been to promote Albania and bring its cultural, economic and social reality into an international contest.

ART GOLD 2 Albania is part of UNDP's ART Initiative, which is intended to promote national co-operation framework programmes for governance and local development in developing countries. As such, the Programme supports the Albanian Government in implementing its national policies and strategies to locally achieve the MDGs through a territorial approach, in particular at the level of regional and municipal administrations, in accordance with the overarching National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), the national Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance as well as other thematic national development policies and strategies, in particular those of Ministries of Health, Education, Environment and Culture.

To achieve these goals, UNDP ART GOLD 2 Albania encourages the participation of different local, national and international actors, promoting the active role of public and private social actors in development processes and creating and supporting innovative partnerships, including European Regions and Local Communities, within a global system of cooperation.

The Albanian Programme focuses its activities in the two Regions prioritized by the Albanian Government, namely Vlora and Shkodra. Through technical assistance, the Programme has been instrumental in the organization of regional strategic planning exercises, including the identification and implementation of strategic projects involving the public, associative and private social actors as well as the local offices and

representatives of central institutions, an effort that has been culminating with the formulation of Regional Strategic Planning documents for both Albanian Regions.

#### Main Objectives of ArtGold 2 Programme

- Support to the national government in outlining and implementing decentralized and regional development policies to achieve the MDGs and contribute to the implementation of the National Strategy for Development and Integration' goals in a coordinated way and in partnership with various stakeholders.
- Enhancement of regional and local governments' and other stakeholders' capacities, in the selected regions, in local planning, implementation and monitoring processes and provision of support during the implementation of their regional development strategies.
- Linking and establishment of partnerships among European, Albanian and other regional and local Authorities and communities to set up development interventions aimed at the implementation of local plans and strategies.
- Support to achieving the MDGs by fostering cultural dialogue and European integration of Albania.

#### Key Programme Results to Date

The Programme has commenced in November 2009, following and expanding on its predecessor, the ART GOLD (first phase), which in turn benefited from the experience of UNDP's Local Governance and UNOPS's PASARP programmes. In line with the set Programme objectives, the key results achieved to date by the ART GOLD 2 Programme include:

- Strengthened capacities of Local Economic Development Agencies in Vlora and Shkodra region (AULEDA and TEULEDA) through technical assistance. The LEDAs' staff is trained on development of business plans, project management, organizational development, creation of new partnerships, etc., focusing on economic activities that benefit the disadvantaged.
- Fostered economic development by carrying out surveys on agro-food value-chains in both regions, providing guidelines for regional administrations, LEDAs and local producers on how to increase the economic value of 14 typical assets in each region. Together with AULEDA and TEULEDA managed a guarantee fund scheme providing, during 2010- 2012 alone, with 14 bank micro-loans to small family businesses and start-up SMEs up to a total of 1,2 M USD prioritizing the young, women and unprivileged.
- Enhanced the coordination of development projects on the territory, by providing expert support to regional authorities to carry out two Strategic Planning (SP) processes (one in each region) focusing on the sustainability of tourism. The latter were launched at a national level though the participation of the Albanian Prime Minister and other relevant local and regional partners. In each Programme region ART GOLD 2 has started to implement a number of projects identified within the SP, considered as development priorities and/or development entry points by the County Partnership Councils (CPC).
- Supported national as well as county level governments of Vlora and Shkodra in designing and implementing project initiatives in line with the relevant government priorities of development
- Fostered knowledge and innovation through the organization of two key International Conferences on European integration, knowledge, innovations and democratic governance of development and several other county level workshops and forums.
- Fostered the sharing of knowledge related to good practices by establishing partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, universities in both Programme regions and local authorities in setting up pilot Laboratories of Local Human

Development, a mixed academic and non-academic local development training programmes. The laboratories involve a combination of fieldwork, academic tutoring, lectures and peer-learning.

- Increased capacity building through activities at the local and county levels, ensuring that around 100 local government officials are certified in design of project and budget actions with a focus on inter-municipal cooperation on joint socio-economic issues.
- Initial discussions on new potential partnerships with decentralized cooperation actors are ongoing and linked specifically to the present implementation stage of the Programme

Key partners of the Programme include the Ministry of Interior as the central level and increasingly the ministries of Health, Education, Labour and Culture. Naturally the Programme has active interaction with regional and local public officials and administrations, the LEDAs as well as other local level stakeholders. The Programme coordinates its activities and cooperates with other donors most active in the area of local governance and decentralization, including chiefly the Austrian and Swiss Cooperation offices.

## **2. Evaluation purpose**

The ART GOLD 2 assistance to Albania has made a long way and delivered several products to date, creating expectations, momentum and response by the counterparts. In this context, the present independent evaluation exercise will serve to fulfill several purposes.

At a first instance, the present evaluation will assess the contribution of ART GOLD 2 in facilitating Albania's efforts and reforms of its local governance and decentralization agenda.

Of equal importance is the assessment of whether ART GOLD 2 has been able to achieve its overall objectives in supporting national and regional counterparts. In this context, the assessment will also look at the level of achievement of UNDP's commitment to the human development approach and at whether effectively equality and gender mainstreaming aspects are incorporated in the implementation of Programme.

The other key purpose of the present evaluation is to examine the appropriateness of the form of assistance provided, with a view to draw lessons and make recommendations for improved future assistance to Albania.

## **3. Evaluation scope and objectives**

The evaluation team will:

- assess the relevance of the overall project and the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved;
- assess the effectiveness, , impact and sustainability of the project;
- look at the project as a whole, identifying good practices and lessons learned to be used as a knowledge base for developing future technical assistance packages;
- analyze strategies and implementation modalities so as to provide recommendations to be integrated in the planning process in Albania;
- review the project sustainability and potential life-long impact on Albania's social and economic conditions.

Finally, the evaluation will review: the initiatives aimed at:

- the strengthening of decentralized policy and democratic governance with particular regard to integrated local development;
- supporting central and local governments to coordinate and link Italian and European contributions in supporting integrated local development;
- implementing local plans and strategies to achieve the MDG at the local level.

## **4. Suggested Analytical Framework**

The evaluation team can include other aspects in accordance with the purpose of the evaluation and in agreement with the executing agency (UNDP). The key evaluation criteria revolve around the following aspects:

- **Relevance:** The evaluation team will assess the degree to which the project takes into account the local context and development problems. The evaluation will review the extent to which the objectives of the project are consistent with beneficiary requirements and needs, and assess whether the approach was coherent with the Country's policies and Poverty Reduction Strategy objectives. The evaluation will also review the extent to which the project design was logical and coherent, and it will assess the link between activities and expected results, and between results and objectives to be achieved.
- **Effectiveness:** The evaluation will assess the extent to which the Programme's objectives have been achieved, compared to the overall project purpose. In evaluating effectiveness it is useful to consider: 1) if the planning activities are coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; 2) the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives.
- **Impact:** The evaluation will assess the main impact effectively achieved by the ART GOLD Project in the context of reference. Even if the evaluation exercise is *in-itineris*, it is suggested to assess the probability that the objectives will be achieved, and if the project is able to reach the intended purpose within its planned conclusion.
- **Sustainability:** The evaluation will assess the project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time. In evaluating the project sustainability it is useful to consider to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded and the principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the project sustainability.

## 5. Outputs and Deliverables

The evaluation team shall produce the following deliverables through the course of the assignment:

**Work plan** – within two days of the start of the assignment. The evaluation team will submit the work plan which will include a detailed approach and methodology and schedule. In particular, the work plan will require a clear approach to data collection and work organization to examine the project in its full scope. The work plan will be evaluated by the project's Steering Committee for quality and content, upon which clearance to proceed with the full evaluation will be granted.

**Preliminary findings and draft evaluation report** – within 10 days of the start of the assignment, the evaluation team will share a draft report indicating the scope of assessment in key components for validation by the Steering Committee and other stakeholders. The purpose of this report is to demonstrate progress on the assignment and adherence to the TORs, and will identify any evaluation issues that may need further clarification before completion of the in-country mission.

**Presentation of findings** – within 12 days of the start of the assignment a presentation of findings and preliminary recommendations to key stakeholders will be carried out through a workshop. The purpose of this session is to provide opportunity for initial validation and support further elaboration of the evaluators' findings and recommendations.

**Final evaluation report** – within 15 days of receiving the consolidated comments from stakeholders, the Evaluation Team will submit a final document that addresses relevant comments and provides comprehensive reporting on all elements of the assignment. This report will be submitted to the ART GOLD 2 Albania Steering Committee for clearance.

**Summary of the report** - a two-page summary of the Project Evaluation Report should be provided in addition to the fully fledged evaluation report.

## 6. Evaluation Report Outline

As a minimum, the Evaluation Report (draft or final) shall include the following components (the exact structure of the report may be influenced by the project components and components of the Evaluation TOR):

- i. Executive Summary
- ii. Introduction
- iii. Project outline
- iv. Methodology
- v. Analysis
- vi. Findings
- vii. Best Practices and Lessons Learned
- viii. Recommendations
- ix. Relevant Annexes, for example:
  - a. List of people interviewed
  - b. List of acronyms
  - c. Evaluation work plan and TOR
  - d. List of key reference documents

## 7. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation will be carried out through the analysis of various sources of information including desk analysis, survey data stemming from the performance monitoring, as well as interviews with governmental counterparts and project partners, direct beneficiaries (more precisely, with people of the Country, and with the partner agencies).

## 8. Management arrangements, work plan and time frame

<b>1. Desk review</b>	Review of key project documents	(2 working days)
<b>2. Field visit</b>	The evaluation team visits project sites, interviews stakeholders and beneficiaries and gathers additional information.  (Evaluators and Project team)	(5 working days)
<b>3. Report drafting</b>	The evaluation team drafts the evaluation report	4 working days
<b>4. Workshop</b>	Workshop on the presentation of the draft report	2 working days
<b>5. Final report</b>	The evaluation team finalizes the report embedding the comments	2 working days

It is expected that the evaluation team will conduct consultations and meetings with representatives of the following institutions:

- UNDP Albania
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Tourism, Youth and Culture, Health
- Select members of the Project Local Working Groups in Vlora and Shkodra
- Regional Council of Vlora
- Regional Council of Shkodra
- TEULEDA (Local Agency for Economic Development in Shkodra)

- AULEDA (Local Agency for Economic Development in Vlora)

## 9. Evaluation Principles and Ethics

The evaluation should be conducted in accordance with the principles laid out in UNDP Evaluation Policy <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/><sup>92</sup> and the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation’ <http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ethical+guidelines>.

## 10. Implementation Arrangements

The Evaluation team will report to An Evaluation Reference Group which will be established and which will encompass representatives from Government, the Italian donor and UNDP. The Evaluation Reference Group will provide guidance in the development of the work plan and ensure the monitoring of satisfactory completion of evaluation deliverables. UNDP may provide office space and access to standard office services as needed. The Evaluation Team should provide their own computer and communications equipment.

In consultation with the Evaluation Team Leader and as requested, UNDP personnel will make available all relevant documentation and provide contact information to key project partners and stakeholders, and facilitate contact where needed.

## 11. Evaluation Team Composition and Required Qualifications

A team of **previously unrelated** experts will undertake the evaluation. The team will be composed of international and national consultants. The Team Leader will lead, organize, and supervise the work of the evaluation team, ensuring a division of labour that is commensurate with the skills profiles of the individual team members. He or she will have overall responsibility for the production of deliverables, in particular the evaluation report, and is ultimately accountable for its quality. The Team Leader is also responsible for ensuring adequate consultations with all stakeholders and for reporting to UNDP on progress. The Team Members will provide assistance to the Team Leader for the completion of all tasks mentioned above. They will provide with inputs and contribute to the assessment as well as the formulation of the Evaluation Report. The Team Members will also facilitate the communication and liaising with the project stakeholders.

### National expert Qualifications

1. Post-University Degree in economics, public administration and/or closely related field of studies
2. Substantial knowledge in the field of Albanian local governance, local development and decentralization as well as public administration
3. Knowledge of, and 3 – 5 years of experience with project evaluation
4. Excellent analytical and synthetic skills
5. Good communication and report-writing skills in English

## 12. Time Frame for the Evaluation Process

The Evaluation is expected to start in January 2013 and have an expected total duration of 15 working days. The final work plan will be confirmed by the Evaluation Team and upon submission of a draft work plan for discussion.

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<sup>92</sup> The UNDP M&E Handbook <http://www.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/> is another useful reference to UNDP’s evaluation principles.





## **Annex 2**

### **Agenda of the evaluation (Listing Informants Interviewed)**



**ART GOLD 2 ALBANIA**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> PART OF THE EVALUATION MISSION**

(13 March – 21 March 2013)

	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
<b>Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup></b>			
14:30 – 15:30 Introduction meeting at Italian Cooperation  Premises: Italian Cooperation	Mr. Andrea Senatori <i>Head of the Italian Cooperation office in Tirana;</i> Mrs. Stefania Santuz <i>Technical Advisor;</i> Mr. Ismail Ademi <i>Programme Assistant</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	
16:00 – 17:00 Introduction Meeting at UNDP CO  Premises: UNDP CO in Tirana	Ms. Yesim Oruc <i>UNDP Country Director</i> Mr. Vladimir Malkaj <i>UNDP Cluster Manager</i> Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i> Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	
<b>Thursday March 14<sup>th</sup></b>			
09:00 – 10:00 Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Ferdinand Poni <i>Project's Steering Committee Chair and main line Ministry counterpart</i>  Premises: Ministry of Interior		Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i>
11: 30 – 12:30 Meeting with Decentralized Cooperation partners - Apulia region representatives	Mrs. Marilena Pinca <i>Director of the Decentralized Cooperation of Apulia region in Tirana</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i>

	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
Premises: Apulia region Cooperation Office in Tirana		<i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	
14:00 – 15:00 Meeting with a representative of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports Specialist  Premises: MoTCYS	Mr. Enton Derraj <i>Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports Specialist</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
15:30 – 17:30 Travel to Shkodra			
17:30 – 19:00 A tour of the project's contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shkodra Municipality building: façade restoration project;</li> <li>• Shkodra main pedestrian area: street lighting project.</li> </ul>		Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme Spartac Sokoli AGA 2 project staff member</i>
Overnight stay in Shkodra			
<b>Friday March 15<sup>th</sup></b>			
10:00 – 11:00 Meeting with Shkodra Region representatives  Premises: Shkodra Regional Council	Mrs. Merita Kazazi <i>Shkodra Regional Development Office Director</i>  Mr. Maxhid Cungu <i>Head of the Regional Council of Shkodra</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme Spartac Sokoli AGA 2 project staff member</i>
11:30 – 12:30 Meeting with Shkodra Municipality representatives	Mrs. Aida Shllaku <i>Head of the Urban Department of the Municipality of Shkodra</i> Mr. Alfred Luleta	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme Spartac Sokoli AGA 2 project staff</i>

	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
Premises: Municipality of Shkodra	<i>Director of Public Services</i>	Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	<i>member</i>
14:00 – 16:00 Meeting with TEULEDA representatives  Premises: TEULEDA office	Mrs. Klaudia Darragjati <i>TEULEDA Director</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i> Spartac Sokoli <i>AGA 2 project staff member</i>
16:30 – 17:15 Meeting with a Staff Member of an ongoing Swiss-Austrian cooperation project in Albania <i>Regional Development Programme Northern Albania</i>  Premises: Shkodra	Shpëtim Quku <i>Senior Programme Officer</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mrs. Afrida Domnori <i>Ministry of Interior Albania, Team Member</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i> Spartac Sokoli <i>AGA 2 project staff member</i>
17:30 Departure to Tirana			
19:00 Meeting with a Staff Member of an ongoing Swiss cooperation project in Albania <i>DLDP – Decentralisation and Local Development Programme</i>  Premises: Tirana	Valbona Karakaçi <i>National Programme Manager</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
<b>Saturday March 16th</b>			
Desk review			
<b>Sunday March 17th</b>			
Desk review			

	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
<b>Monday March 18<sup>th</sup></b>			
7:30 – 10:00 Travel from Tirana to Vloora			
10:30 – 11:30 Meeting with a representative of the Regional Council of Vloora  Premises: Vloora Regional Council	Mr. Anesti Dhimojani <i>Head of the Regional Council of Vloora</i> Mrs. Mirela Koci AULEDA Director	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
12:00 – 13:00 Meeting with a representative of the Municipality of Vloora  Premises: Municipality of Vloora	Mr. Arben Beqiraj <i>Deputy Mayor of Vloora</i> Mrs. Mirela Koci AULEDA Director	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
14:00 – 15:30 Meeting with AULEDA representatives  Premises: AULEDA office	Mrs. Mirela Koci AULEDA Director Mrs. Arianna Bubeqi <i>Auleda Responsible for the Guarantee Fund management and staff</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
15:45 – 17:30 Meeting with AULEDA Board representatives  Premises: AULEDA office	Mimosa Breçiani <i>Auleda Board Chair, Member of Prefecture</i> Mr. Arben Beqiraj <i>Auleda Board Member, Deputy Mayor of Vloora</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
17:30 – 19:00 Tour of the project's contributions ÷ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vloora ancient walls restoration;</li> <li>• Vloora Ethnographic Museum project;</li> <li>• Façade restoration of the former Vloora Prefecture Building.</li> </ul> Premises: Vloora Municipality		Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>

	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
Overnight stay in Vlora			
<b>Tuesday March 19<sup>th</sup></b>			
8:30 – 10:00 Meeting with the beneficiaries of the guarantee fund and/or Social Enterprise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health project (director of the “Casa Famiglia”)</li> <li>Winery cellar (entrepreneur)</li> </ul> Premises: Vlora Region	<i>Director of the “Casa Famiglia”</i> <i>Entrepreneur of the Winery cellar</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>  Mrs. Arianna Bubeqi <i>Auleda Responsible for the Guarantee Fund management</i>
10:00 – 12:30 Departure to Tirana			
14:00 – 15:00 De-briefing Meeting at UNDP CO  Premises: UNDP CO in Tirana	<b>UNDP Participants:</b> Ms. Yesim Oruc <i>UNDP Country Director</i> Mr. Vladimir Malkaj <i>UNDP Cluster Manager</i> Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i> Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	
<b>Wednesday March 20<sup>th</sup></b>			
9:30 – 10:30 Meeting with a representative of the Albanian Development Fund  Premises: Albanian Development Fund Offices in Tirana	Mr. Blendi Bushati <i>Director of the Regional Development Department</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i>
10:45 – 12:00 Meeting for reviewing information gaps  Premises: Tirana	Mr. Estevan Ikonomi <i>AGA 2 Programme Officer</i> Mr. Luigi Cafiero <i>International Art Expert, AGA 2 Programme</i>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i> Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i> Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i>	
12:00- 13:00 De-briefing meeting	<b>Italian Institutional representatives:</b>	Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i>	



	Interviewed	Evaluation Team	Accompanied by
<p>with the Italian Ambassador and the representatives of the Italian Cooperation Office</p> <p>Premises: Italian Embassy offices in Tirana</p>	<p>Mr. Massimo Gaiani, <i>Italian Ambassador in Tirana</i></p> <p>Mr. Andrea Senatori <i>Head of the Italian Cooperation office in Tirana;</i></p> <p>Mrs. Stefania Santuz <i>Technical Advisor;</i></p> <p>Mr. Ismail Ademi <i>Programme Assistant</i></p>	<p>Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p> <p>Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p> <p>Ms. Evis Disha <i>UNDP, Team Member</i></p>	
<p><b>Thursday, March 21th</b> Departure of international Team Members from Tirana to Italy</p>			
<p><b>Thursday April 4th</b></p>			
<p>11.30 – 12-30</p> <p>Meeting with a representative of ILS LEDA (technical assistance to AGA 2)</p> <p>Premises: Rome</p>	<p>Mr. Giancarlo Canzanelli <i>LS LEDA Territorial Economic Development expert</i></p>	<p>Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i></p> <p>Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p> <p>Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p>	
<p>12.30 – 13-30</p> <p>Meeting with a representative of the Italian development Cooperation - Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>Premises: Rome</p>	<p>Mrs. Lodovica Longinotti <i>Italian development Cooperation expert.</i></p>	<p>Mr. Gianluca Vignola <i>UNDP, Team Leader</i></p> <p>Mr. Valerio Levi <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p> <p>Ms. Mariasilvia Cosma <i>Italy, Team Member</i></p>	
<p><b>Expected Workshop dates in Tirana (to be confirmed):</b> <b>May 8th</b></p>			

## **Annex 3**

### **List of Document reviewed**



## **AGA 2 Evaluation mission report – 13-21 March 2013.**

### **Desk review Docs**

#### **2012**

*Policy Paper. Regional Development Policy Construct for the revised National Strategy for Development and Integration*, May 2012, Integrated Support for Decentralization Project. Working for Regional Development. Funded by EU and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Albanian Government.

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2012, Annual report.

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2012, Annual Work Plan.

#### **2011**

*Albania – Regional Development capacities on the ground. An institutional assessment study*, Dec. 2011, Integrated Support for Decentralization Project. Working for Regional Development. Funded by EU and implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Albanian Government.

*United Nations, Delivering as One for Development*, 2011, One UN Programme, United Nations, Albania.

*Strategic Plan of Vlora Region. “The Zero Emission Territory”*, Jun. 2011, final document drafted in the framework of UNDP Art Gold 2 Albania Programme.

*Strategic Plan for Sustainable tourism in Shkodra Region. “Towards Sustainability of Tourism”*, Jun. 2011, final document drafted in the framework of UNDP Art Gold 2 Albania Programme.

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2011, Annual report.

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2011, Annual Work Plan.

#### **2010**

*Albania national report on progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, Jul. 2010, special edition.

UNDP Project Support Team Backstopped by UNDP Albania, *PROGRESS REPORT 1 for the period: Jan. 2010 – March. 2010. Regional Level Governance and Local Development - ART GOLD 2 Albania*

UNDP Project Support Team Backstopped by UNDP Albania, *PROGRESS REPORT 2 for the period: Apr. 2010 – June 2010. Regional Level Governance and Local Development - ART GOLD 2 Albania*

UNDP Project Support Team Backstopped by UNDP Albania, *PROGRESS REPORT 3 for the period: July 2010 – Sep. 2010. Regional Level Governance and Local Development - ART GOLD 2 Albania*

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2010, Annual report.

*Art Gold 2 Albania*, 2010, Annual Work Plan.

#### **2009 - 2005**

*Regional Level. Governance and Local Development. Art Gold 2 Albania. A Government of Albania programme implemented by UNDP Albania, UNDP/HUB Geneva and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)*, 2009. [Project Document].

UNDP Project Support Team Backstopped by UNDP Albania, *Preliminary PROGRESS REPORT for the period: Oct – Dec 2009. Regional Level Governance and Local Development - ART GOLD 2 Albania*

*Regional development Cross-Cutting Strategy*, Oct. 2007, Final Document of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy, approved by decision nr. 773 dt. 14.11.2007 of Council of Ministers. December, *Local government and Decentralization Strategy*, 2006, Republic of Albania, Ministry of Interior.

*Albanian Regional Development Fund. Opportunities and challenges. Mission report, 2005, September 12-26, prepared by the Government of Albania with the support of the United Nations in Albania.*

Giancarlo Canzanelli, *Mission Reports, nr. 1 – 11, 2010 – 2012, ILS LEDA missions for assessment on the re-organisation of the Albanian LEDAs in Shkodra and Vlora and support to AGA 2.*

**UNCLASSIFIED**

UNDP/Art Gold 2 Programme in Albania, *Art Gold 2 Work Plan.*

## **Annex 4**

### **Key Evaluation Questions**



	EVALUATION CRITERIA	INDICATORS	KEY QUESTIONS
1	<b>RELEVANCE</b> Extent to which immediate objectives, outcomes and implementation modalities are consistent with -national and UN policies -local priorities -needs of beneficiaries	To what extent the AGA2 project design (i.e. objectives, outcomes and implementation modalities) is consistent with national policies (i.e. decentralisation, EU accession, regional development)?	<p>Was the project a tool for facilitating donor's dialogue, complementarity and harmonisation</p> <p>Was the project implementation aligned with regular national and local procedures and thus culturally feasible and accepted in relevant regions</p> <p>Did the National Counterparts lead the project mainstream and retain its approach?</p> <p>Was the logical framework coherent and clearly oriented towards project purpose?</p> <p>To what extent did the AGA2 took into consideration the regional priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries?</p> <p>To what extent was the AGA2 flexible to adapt its procedures and funding to emerging needs and/or significant priority changes in order to remain consistent with project purpose?</p>
2	<b>EFFECTIVENESS</b> Extent to which outputs have been achieved	To what extent has the project achieved its intended outputs?	<p>Were Participatory County Partnership Councils (CPCs) established and operational?</p> <p>Were the LEDAs transformed into new instruments better equipped in view of sustainability and efficient delivery of services to population?</p> <p>Were the Strategic Plans produced and endorsed at all levels?</p> <p>Which factors facilitated or limited the implementation of the Strategic Plan in all sectors?</p> <p>Do strategic plans and LEDAs activities target actual population priority needs and regional potential for development?</p> <p>Did local authorities gradually take over implementation, management and monitoring of the strategic plans?</p> <p>To what extent the achievements were facilitated by project methodological approach?</p> <p>Was technical assistance by the project perceived as instrumental for capacity building?</p> <p>Did decentralised cooperation bring added value in terms of: -partnerships -funding mechanism -preparing the ground for access to EU structural funds at grass-root level -project capacities</p> <p>Was the project presence in the region visible and socially accepted (tangible results and communication)?</p> <p>Has the public private civic society collaboration been incorporated in the regional authorities procedures (building of social capital)?</p>



			Did the project facilitate the connection between regional and national priorities and policies
3	<b>IMPACT</b>	<p>To what extent to the outcomes were achieved</p> <p>Which is the probability that they will be achieved upon project completion?</p>	<p>Did the project share information and best practices at the national level in view of Government's capacity building?</p> <p>Were training initiatives put in place in view of coordinating sectorial and territorial policies?</p> <p>Did the project disseminate information in view of coordination with partners and donor's involvement?</p> <p>(Include laboratories: what has been done, why was it discontinued? What recommendations will we offer?) Universities?</p>
4	<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> Extent to which the benefits of AGA2 will survive once the project discontinues its direct support	To what extent will the benefits of AGA2 survive once the project discontinues its direct support	<p>Are: CPCs LEDAs Strategic Plans elaboration methodology implemented as sustainable and participatory instruments? How (what facilitates what doesn't)?</p> <p>Are these instruments already used and is it likely that they will be promoted by the counterparts regardless of project support</p> <p>Is current country and regions' situation favourable for sustainability</p> <p>Did the project include an exit strategy/continuity mechanisms?</p>

## **Annex 5**

### **ART GOLD Albania Results and Resources Framework** (from:

*Regional Level Governance and Local Development.  
Art Gold 2 Albania Project Document”*

Signed by UNDP Albania on Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> 2009  
Signed by UNDP/HUB Geneva on Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> 2009)



## 10. ART GOLD Albania Results and Resources Framework

Intended Outputs	Output Targets (Indicators)	Indicative Activities	Responsible parties	Inputs
<b>LOCAL LEVEL Support the Albanian Counties in defining and implementing their Strategic Plans, liaising with the national policies, involving the County Partnership Councils, with the support of the Decentralized Cooperation and of the UN Agencies involved within the ONE UN Strategy..</b>				
Participatory County Partnership Councils (CPCs), chaired by the counties presidents, established to support the Strategic Planning exercise.	Participatory County Partnership Councils established to support the Strategic Planning exercise, chaired by the counties presidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support to the organization of the County Partnership Councils (CPCs) in target counties (see Annex I) and start up of the Strategic Planning exercise. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>CPCs recognized as pilot structures by the Ministry of Economy and Trade. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Strengthen the CPCs' operational capacities: provision of technical and informatics equipment, logistic organization, information management and needed tools. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Visits to Italian and European Strategic Planning and Local Development good practices. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	UNDP AGA2, ART International; Dec. Coop. Partners; CPCs and Counties Authorities.	AGA2 staff; Experts; Workshops and Training; Seminars; Equipment; Travels
Technical assistance provided to the CPCs by UNDP ARTGOLD2 Program, through Strategic Planning national and international experts and Decentralized Cooperation partnerships.	Technical assistance provided to the CPCs by UNDP ARTGOLD2 Program, through Strategic Planning national and international experts and Decentralized Cooperation partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment of national and international experts in Strategic Planning. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>Introduction of the program features and scope to the local stakeholders, organized within the CPCs. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>Provide national and international technical assistance in order to define a road map for the elaboration of County Strategic Plans, shared at local and national levels. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>Definition of the program Work Plan in each territory, to be implemented with the program's funds and supported by the national, regional and municipal actors. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Technical assistance by national and international experts in Strategic Planning. Technical missions of Decentralized Cooperation experts. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>Organization of training courses for the CPC's representatives on Strategic Planning implementation, management and monitoring. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>Organization of training courses about thematic issues, prioritized by the County Partnership Councils. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	NSC; UNDP AGA2 CPCs; ART International, International ILS LEDA Network; LEDA staff; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.	AGA2 staff; Experts; Equipment; Travels

<p>Review and assessment of exiting local development and investment plans, studies, priorities, good practices and Decentralized Cooperation projects at the county level, in order to collect data for the Strategic Planning process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Data collected for the Strategic Planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review of existing local development plans, priorities, assessments and studies related to the target county. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Review and acquaintance with existing local structures in charge of planning and monitoring and their related capacities/gaps for carrying out their tasks. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>NSC; UNDP AGA2, CPCs; ART International, International ILS LEDA Network; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.</p>	<p>AGA2 staff; Experts; Equipment; Travels; Project cost sharing</p>
<p>County economic potentialities valorised and improved, through the map of the economic strategic, competitive and sustainable resources drafted. Technical assistance provided to improve and maintain competitive territorial value chains, able to include the most disadvantaged people in the economic circuit, assure gender equity, and protect the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Map of county strategic economic resources realized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Competitive and sustainable economic value chains prioritized and strengthened.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of the potential competitive and sustainable territorial resources, realization of the correspondent map, and identification of the priorities for the territorial economic development plan. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Realisation of a plan for the inclusion of the most disadvantaged people in the mainstream economy. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Training and support to territorial economic value chains. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Realisation of territorial marketing strategies, including internal and external marketing, branding typical products, supporting improvement of their quality to respond to the international standards; inclusion of territorial marketing strategies within the program outputs could be decided during the preparation of the Inception Work Plan to adapt the activities to the progress made in the regional and decentralization strategies. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Fostering capacities for supporting innovations. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>NSC; CPCs; ART International, ALS; ILS LEDA Network; CDA staff; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.</p>	<p>AGA2 staff; Experts; Travels. Training Seminars</p>
<p>Subject to approval from the Albania national Government, pilot Development Agencies established at counties level, through supporting the transformation of the existing LEDAs, and/or creation of new ones; jobs and incomes increased and living conditions of the population improved through CDAs. The CDAs will be established within the framework of a national pilot project, involving the line ministries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two LEDAs transformed in CDA</li> <li>• One pilot CDA created</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement with the Ministry of Economy, the involved line Ministries (i.e.: Interior, Education, Labor, Health and Environment), and the local county governments in order to perform a pilot project interesting Shkodra and Vlora counties, in order to set up 2 County Development Agencies. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Analysis of the situation and performance of the existing LEDAs, with the aim of assessing the modalities for transforming them in County Development Agencies, (<b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b>) with particular reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the memberships, through including more stakeholders as members for taking into account new sectors the LEDAs will deal with.</li> <li>• the statute, taking into account the new functions and activities</li> <li>• the organizational model and chart, for including the new field of actions, according to the analysis of the prioritized demand (regarding economy, social services, environment/climate changes and planned county objectives) and of the existing services supply.</li> <li>• Definition of a new, shared 5 years business plan, taking into account the new and diversifies tasks, and the budget constraints, due to the foreseen income, in order to verify the self-sustainability in the long term.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>NSC; CPCs; ART International, ALS; ILS LEDA Network; CDA staff; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.</p>	<p>AGA2 staff; Experts; Equipment, Travels, Training, Seminars,</p>

		<p><b>UNOPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of the capacity building for the CDAs members and for the technical unit, possibly through an agreement between UNDP ARTGOLD2 Albania and a national university. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Recruitment of the new needed personnel, through procedures including an international call, in order to try to attract Albanian experts from the diaspora. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Provision of services to local institutions and population, with particular regard to the most disadvantaged one for increasing sustainable jobs and incomes, and improving living conditions, within the human development vision and approach, also through the assistance of ART International LED Service, and twinned European Development Agencies. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Definition and setting up of a process allowing the identification of standard procedures and mechanisms for monitoring the performances of the Agencies. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>		
County territorial marketing strategies formulated, shared and agreed upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County marketing strategy elaborated</li> <li>• Territorial Profile Document finalized</li> <li>• Internal and external marketing carried out</li> <li>• Territorial brand realized</li> <li>• Local Actor empowered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration of the county marketing strategies through workshops with local actors, taking into account a shared vision towards territorial future and development strategy, mainly through the analysis of the territorial personality, and its characterizing and distinguishing (tangibles and intangibles) factors. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Prepare the county profile documents; identify the unifying and synthesizing elements between its personality's different factors. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Finalize a survey within the population and local institutions in order to detect their territorial image. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Carry out the internal marketing strategy, by improving local heritage knowledge, and activating a responsible citizenship. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Carry out the external marketing strategy, by identifying the groups towards which this action is oriented and defining the tools as well as publicity, propaganda, public relations, direct marketing, use of the residents living abroad, etc. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Define territorial brands, in order to characterize the territorial products/supply and the mechanisms of brand conformity control by local entrepreneurs. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Train the local actors for territorial marketing management. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	NSC; CPCs; ART International, ALS; ILS LEDA Network; CDA staff; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.	AGA2 staff; Experts; Travels. Training Seminars

<p>Immediate identification, formulation and implementation of the Strategic Projects, according to the Strategic Planning preliminary guidelines and taking into account the county/municipalities development, investment plans or priorities</p>	<p>Strategic development projects defined according to the Strategic Planning preliminary guidelines, according with the county/municipalities development, investment plans or priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the CPCs in conducting county survey aimed at identifying the good practices of the territory. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Provide technical assistance to the CPCs in order to formulate at least four Strategic Projects, based on the good practices finalized or ongoing in the county. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Provide technical assistance to the CPCs for the implementation of the Strategic Projects, within the framework of the Strategic Planning process. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Identification of the most appropriate modalities and indicators for monitoring and evaluating the projects results. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Organization of missions to Albania of delegations from European Local Communities and Regions, to support the implementation of the Strategic Projects and formulate decentralized cooperation initiatives in support of the Strategic Plans. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>UNDP AGA2, CPCs, ART International</p>	<p>AGA2 Staff; Equipment; Travels</p>
<p>Enhance the capacities of the local authorities to implement, manage and monitor the Strategic Plans within their territory.</p>	<p>Technical assistance and support provided to local authorities to implement, manage and monitor the Strategic Plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical assistance and support for the start up and finalization of at least three County Strategic Plans. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Implementation of the priority actions and start up of the resources mobilization activities. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS/HUB</b></li> <li>• Provide technical assistance (national, international and Decentralised Cooperation experts) and support to the implementation of two county Strategic Plans. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Provide support to the target counties, in order to set up technical structures to manage the Strategic Planning process. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>UNDP AGA2, CPCs, ART International</p>	<p>AGA2 Staff; Equipment; Travels</p>
<p><b>NATIONAL LEVEL: Strengthened Government's capacity to support decentralization and local Strategic Planning process, sharing information and best practices as well as implementing training initiatives.</b></p>				
<p>Program Office established in Tirana</p>	<p>PO set up, equipped and fully operational</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalization of the procedures for recruiting the national and international personnel of the Program. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Revision of the equipment, furniture and vehicles of the program (owned by UNOPS). <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Finalization of the procedures for purchasing needed equipment, furniture and vehicles. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Finalization of the procedures for renting the program's premises. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> </ul>	<p>UNDP AGA2</p>	<p>AGA2 Staff; Equipment</p>
<p>National Steering Committee (NSC) established to supervise the Program's activities, channel resources from International cooperation to counties and municipalities, within the framework of the Strategic Plans.</p>	<p>NSC established and fully operational.  Additional resources from International cooperation directed by the NSC to CPCs to implement projects in the framework of the Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to the establishment of the National Steering Committee. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Meetings with international cooperation actors operating in the country to introduce the program and encourage the participation of other international cooperation's actors, also by means of the promotion of territorial marketing documents and presentation of the Strategic Planning process. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Exchange information and organize meetings with the Embassies of the countries involved in decentralised cooperation partnerships with the target counties. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Support to actors of international cooperation interested in establishing</li> </ul>	<p>NSC; UNDP AGA2, ART International.</p>	<p>UNDP AGA2 staff; Experts; Equipment; Travels; Events</p>

		<p>partnerships with the target counties: technical assistance for the formulation of collaboration plans or drafting the project documents necessary for channelling new resources to the program. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working sessions to define collaborations, within the framework of One UN Program, with the specialized United Nations Agencies interested in the Decentralization Cross-Cutting Strategy and the Strategic Planning exercise. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Support by the NSC to the county Strategic Planning process, in order to disseminate the good practices and support/improve the related national strategies. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Support the NSC to organize workshops and forums on specific topics of interest for national institutions and realization of specific studies, in collaboration with national and international universities. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Finalise agreements with national and international universities for carrying out systematic academic activities related to the Strategic Planning issues. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li></li> </ul>		
Strengthen national capacities for local economic development policies, improving the coordination between the thematic sectors (tourism, agriculture, industry, SMEs, trade, research, etc.) for addressing county development, according to territorial vocations and opportunities.	The capacities of national authorities in coordinating actions for supporting local economic development enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulation of the potential of the ART International LED Service; planning and implementation of training courses on innovative strategies for economic development, territorial competitiveness and territorial marketing; promotion of territorial partnership projects of common interest between the Albanian County Development Agencies and economic actors in the European regions; inclusion of the CDA into the ILS LEDA network, and information interchange via the ILS LEDA website. <b>UNOPS</b>Improvement of coordination between the thematic policies (tourism, agriculture, industry, SMEs, trade, research, etc.) for addressing county development, according to territorial vocations and opportunities. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	NSC; UNDP AGA2; ILS LEDA network; CDAs.	UNDP AGA2 staff; National and International Experts.
National actors involved in NSC fully participate to ONE UN strategy, through UNDP ARTGOLD2 Program and actively support, at national level, the development process ongoing in counties and municipalities.	<p>National actors supported and trained to improve national policies for local development.</p> <p>Technical assistance provided to national institutions to support interregional cooperation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization of 10 national and international technical assistance activities, aimed at supporting the ONE UN Strategy, the Regional Decentralization Cross-Cutting Strategy and the County Strategic Planning process. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>Organization of 5 national events on Decentralization and Strategic Planning, involving UN Agencies, local and national actors. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> </ul>	UNDP CO; UN Agencies; UNDP AGA2; NSC.	UNDP AGA2 staff; Experts; Trainers; Travels.



<p>Elaborate and disseminate the information concerning the achievements of the program to the involved donors and partners, in order to facilitate the coordination with other ongoing initiatives.</p>	<p>Information concerning the achievements of the program elaborated and disseminated to the involved donors and partners, in order to facilitate the coordination with other ongoing initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of documentation on the experiences and dissemination to the UNDP ARTGOLD2 target counties. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Formulation of documents required by donors to support the program. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Editing and disseminating of an UNDP ARTGOLD2 Albania electronic newsletter. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Presentation of the program, brochures and visit letters to potential donors, in view of their possible participation to the program. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Organization of press conferences, seminars and meetings with the main concerned beneficiaries, partners and donors for sharing the program achievements. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Establish a program webpage, within the UNDP Albania site, to disseminate experiences of the program both nationally and internationally. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Organization of public awareness campaigns, production and publication of divulgation materials. <b>UNDP CO</b></li> <li>• Organization of donors' meetings. <b>UNDP CO/HUB</b></li> </ul>	<p>UNDP AGA2.</p>	<p>UNDP AGA2 staff; Experts; Equipment; Travels.</p>
<p><b>INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: Strengthened the capacity of national and local Albanian actors through international partnerships of decentralized cooperation.</b></p>				
<p>Internationalisation of Albanian regional development supported in the European perspective by promoting territorial and thematic international partnerships (decentralized cooperation).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A congruous number of partnerships of decentralized cooperation established through the UNDP ART GOLD participatory modality;</li> <li>▪ A number of decentralized cooperation project realized;</li> <li>▪ Program web page set up and maintained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of the different county territorial marketing documents, by the international ART services, to the network of Regions, Provinces, Municipalities and Local Development Agencies of the European countries interested in establishing decentralized cooperation partnerships. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Support to foreign local governments to formalize their participation to the Program by ART International Services. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Support the organization of visits to UNDP ARTGOLD2 target counties by the foreign communities interested in establishing decentralized cooperation partnerships: meeting with the responsible national authorities, the embassies of the respective countries and with the County Partnership Councils, in order to define decentralized cooperation projects based on the ongoing Strategic Planning process. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Organization of visits of delegations from the target UNDP ARTGOLD2 counties to the foreign local communities, to present the territorial marketing documents and Program's strategic plans, aimed to mobilizing additional resources, identify new projects and implement technical training activities. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Realization of decentralized cooperation projects, with the support of experts from the partner communities. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Maintain an updated program's web-page in the International ART web-site, to disseminate experiences of the program both nationally and internationally. <b>UNDP CO/HUB</b></li> </ul>	<p>NSC; UNDP AGA2, CPCs; ART International, International; IDEASS; UNIVERSITAS; ILS LEDA Network; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.</p>	<p>AGA2 Staff; Experts; Travels; Project cost sharing</p>
<p>Structured and stable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A number of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of Albanian scientific counterpart to provide technical assistance to the IDEASS activities in Albania. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>NSC; UNDP</p>	<p>AGA2 Staff;</p>

<p>relations established and projects ongoing between the actors participating in the Program and the different ART International thematic networks (IDEASS, UNIVERSITAS, ILS LEDA, UNDP HUB Geneva, UNOPS Rome office).</p>	<p>Innovations in Albania identified and promoted in the framework of IDEASS; A number of innovation from abroad promoted in Albania;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Active participation of the ART international thematic networks in the different ART GOLD Albania program's activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of the active participation of the scientific community and academic centres of Albania in the IDEASS activities in Albania <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• National survey about the best practices on local development in Albania. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Technical assistance to the author of Albanian Innovations to draw out the Innovation Brochures, to be published in the IDEASS website. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Presentation to the NSC of the IDEASS catalogue of the best national and international practices on local development. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Organization of four missions in Albania of inventors of the best practices, prioritized by the NSC, in order to organize national presentations of the innovations. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Organization of two missions of Albanian inventors to ARTGOLD programs, in order to share the innovations with other local communities. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Diffusion and promotion of the IDEASS innovations implemented in one Albanian county to other interested areas of the country. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Capacity building to Albanian enterprises, organizations and local administrations to implement the innovations in their territories. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Implementation of the innovations in Albania, according to the decisions of the NSC. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Articulation of the potential of the ART International LED Service; planning and implementation of training courses on innovative strategies for economic development, territorial competitiveness and territorial marketing; promotion of territorial partnership projects of common interest between the Albanian CPCs and economic actors in the European regions; inclusion of the CDAs into the ILS LEDA network, and information interchange via the ILS LEDA website. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Promoting strategies in gender approach supported by ART in collaboration with relevant organizations and realization of trainings targeting participants of local participatory decision-making structures. <b>UNDP CO/UNOPS</b></li> <li>• International technical assistance; research activity to improve the gender approach in all program's fields of action; organization of seminars, production and dissemination of documents. <b>UNOPS</b></li> <li>• Promotion of the potential of the UNIVERSITAS initiative within the network of Albanian Universities; support to Albanian Universities for elaborating or improving a curriculum of formation specialized in different fields of human development and decentralized cooperation based on the experience of the UNIVERSITAS network. <b>UNOPS</b></li> </ul>	<p>AGA2, CPCs; ART International, International; IDEASS; UNIVERSITAS; ILS LEDA Network; Decentralized Cooperation Partners.</p>	<p>Experts; Travels; Workshops and Training; Seminars; Project cost sharing</p>
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