

EU localisation

SNV's good governance practice

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation has long had a solid governance focused capacity building advisory service for public administrations and civil society throughout the Western Balkans. Today, our governance practice is articulated around two pillars, namely "Governance for Empowerment" (inclusive and participatory policy, planning, administration and services) and "Localisation of the EU" (helping local municipalities to benefit from the EU accession process). The objective of our Localisation of the EU practice is to build the capacity of local municipalities in candidate and pre-candidate countries of the Western Balkans to meet EU standards of public service delivery expected by accession to the Union.

The EU accession process

Of the countries of the Western Balkans where SNV currently operates, Macedonia has obtained candidate status to the EU, and Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia & Hercegovina have potential candidate status. Some of the countries are expected to reach the next stage imminently and Serbia's warming relations with the international community also offers the prospect of EU membership sometime in the future. All of these countries could benefit from the recent experiences of new EU Member States such as Bulgaria and Romania, particularly in terms of administrative decentralisation and the capacities of local authorities.

Local administration and basic services

Local municipalities usually have a range of public service functions, ranging from residency registries to waste management, complemented by a regional development role which includes support to small businesses and local development schemes. The experiences of local municipalities in Bulgaria and Romania show that decentralisation of functional tasks was often insufficient and coordination between central government and these municipalities found lacking. Many local municipalities lack the project development and management capacity necessary to administer EU structural funds. Local municipalities often find themselves without a clear understanding of how they can operate effectively within the new EU regulatory framework. Last but not least, local municipalities need to learn a new culture of participatory planning, inclusive and consultative administration, which is often not part of their background.

SNV's "Localisation of the EU" service

SNV's Localisation of the EU service seeks to address these shortcomings through capacity building programmes and training sessions that gradually instils a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of EU accession at the local level, and readies local municipalities for the realities of operating efficiently within the new environment. SNV complements an assessment of infrastructure and equipment needs with training for civil servants on EU legislation and the regulatory framework, exposure to operational EU programmes, and planning for new administrative procedures. The objective of SNV's organisational adaptation programme for municipalities is to position them in such a way that they can benefit from the EU's regional development programmes.

Prepare communities to benefit from EU membership

Localisation of the EU is a profoundly democratic process, whereby the benefits of being in the EU percolate to the level of government closest to people. SNV has taken the lead in helping governments to coordinate the accession process between national, regional and local levels. SNV has an active regional network of governance advisers who specialise in organisational and institutional development, and our practice is growing in the region.