

ART GOLD SERBIA PROGRAMME

Preparatory assistance for the ART GOLD Serbia Programme lasted from July 2 2007 to 31 March 2008 and produced the project document for the first three years of operation. The document was approved by the Serbian government in the tripartite meeting held on March 31, 2008 in Belgrade, with the participation UNDP and DGCS which financed preparatory assistance activities.

The programme aims to support the processes of decentralization and regional development underway, following the guidelines formulated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The programme lays special emphasis on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the local level, in line with the National PRSP Paper and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Serbia (UNDAF), which focus on the processes of inclusion and institutional strengthening for development.

Serbia has a population of 7,498,001 people (2002) and a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0,797 (2003), which puts the country at an average level in the world HDI ranking. Since 2003, Serbia has been a potential candidate for EU membership and by 2008 a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) is expected to be signed. Meanwhile, Serbia has implemented various structural reforms on decentralisation and regional development to gradually harmonize their policies with those of the EU.



In this framework, the ART GOLD Serbia Programme promotes a development strategy based on an integrated territorial approach in inter-municipal areas. The Serbian government sees the programme as an effective tool to channel and coordinate various initiatives at local, national and international levels, in support of sustainable and balanced social and economic regional development. In these terms, the innovative feature of the programme is the strong link between economic and social development and the involvement of decentralised cooperation in the planning and implementation of activities.

ART GOLD Serbia is a framework programme that is open to participation by various donors, including those of decentralised cooperation. The Greek government has already expressed interest in taking part.

Overview

Duration	The preparatory phase lasted one year, beginning in the summer of 2007. The first operational phase is scheduled to last three years starting in summer 2008
Operation and	The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development (MoERD) is the

coordination at the national level	national institution responsible for coordinating the programme.
	<p>National Coordination Committee (NCC). The committee consists of representatives of the following institutions: the ministries of Economy and Regional Development; Labour and Social Policy; Public Administration and Local Self-Government; Health; Office for the National Investment Plan; Office for Serbian European Integration; Conference of Municipalities and Cities; donor countries, UNDP and other UN agencies. The committee coordinates, sets guidelines, approves work plans and ensures that all initiatives are consistent with national development policies.</p> <p>Depending on the issues under discussion, the committee will also include representatives from other Serbian ministries involved in specific projects; representatives of local working groups (LWGs); representatives of European decentralised cooperation, other international organisations and any other relevant institution put forward by the committee.</p> <p>Programme Management Unit (PMU). The unit is coordinated by a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA). It is responsible for managing activities, implementing projects, and technical assistance; it prepares work plans and budgets, under the supervision of UNDP Serbia.</p>
Operation and coordination at the local level	Local Working Groups (LWGs). Local working groups coordinate activities at the regional and inter-municipal level, producing the programme's local strategies and plans. The working groups include representatives of the local authorities involved; local institutions and public services; chambers of commerce, professional associations, NGOs, women's organisations, trade unions, other civil society associations, and international cooperation actors operating in the area.
Cooperation Partners	<p>UN agencies: UNDP</p> <p>Donors: Italian government</p> <p>Decentralised Cooperation: Numerous contacts are under way with decentralised cooperation actors in Europe and in Italy</p>
Funding	Italian government (DGCS): Preparatory Assistance: 380,205 U.S. dollars. First three-year operational phase: 3,000,000 euros

Preparatory Assistance activities and results

The main result of ART GOLD Serbia Preparatory Assistance was the completion of the *ART GOLD Serbia Framework Programme Document*, formulated with the participation and cooperation of all actors at central and local levels. The document was drawn up taking into account the results of an evaluation carried out by the City-to-City Programme, supported by Italy, and a reconnaissance of national and international decentralised cooperation experiences completed or under way in Serbia.

The evaluation conducted by the UNDP/UNOPS "City to City" Programme assessed potential results, in view of launching the ART GOLD Serbia Programme. It was carried out by independent experts designated by UNDP, in agreement with the UTL and the Italian Embassy in Belgrade, and representatives of UNOPS, with the assistance the ART GOLD Serbia international manager, who prepared the supporting documents. The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development (MoERD) followed the whole evaluation process and drew up a list of important public figures involved in the "City-to-City" Programme to be interviewed. The evaluation was based on documents regarding the most important projects, interviews with local actors and missions to various cities included in the programme. The recommendations concerning the start-up of ART GOLD Serbia were included in the framework programme document.

A reconnaissance of national and international decentralized cooperation experiences was carried out through direct contacts with decentralized cooperation actors and with national and international NGOs. Moreover, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, ART GOLD Serbia collected data on programme territories of Macva and Kolubara (southern Serbia) and Sumadjia and Pomoravlje. The Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region contributed to the mapping of existing initiatives in the Province of Vojvodina. Meetings and contacts with the UNOPS regional coordinator, an expert in the management of decentralized cooperation experiences, especially in the Balkans, made a significant contribution to the provision of more detailed information. The results of the reconnaissance on decentralized cooperation experiences will be presented at the ART GOLD Serbia start-up conference.

The framework programme document was the main aim of the preparatory assistance project and the "City-to-City" Programme evaluation, which provided many suggestions and recommendations. The programme team also collected information on various UNDP projects in the country, also carrying out field missions. Meetings were held with UN agencies and other international organizations (UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, UNOPS, Save the Children, Italian regions, STCM, EAR) to collect data and useful information. In terms of local economic development, a major contribution was provided by the international coordinator of the ART ILS-LEDA Programme, who carried out three missions between September and December 2007.

Constant contact with the MoERD characterized the entire process of formulating the document and a first draft was submitted to the donor country and the Serbian government for comment in December 2007. On January 18, 2008 the first official tripartite meeting (Serbian government, the Italian government, and UNDP) was held in Belgrade to discuss the ART GOLD Serbia Framework Document and the executive programme for the Italian contribution, which is an integral part. The observations made during the meeting were included in the framework document, which was the subject of further verification by UNDP LPAC on March 6, 2008. The final tripartite meeting was held on March 31 with the approval of both programme document and the executive programme for the Italian contribution.

Results at the national level

Specific preparatory assistance activities, with the active participation of the Serbian government, involved setting up the programme's National Steering Committee (NSC). Numerous meetings were held with the Ministry of Economy to identify and define the guidelines, terms of reference and working mechanisms for the national committee, which was to be officially established in the programme's start-up phase.

ART GOLD Serbia will support strategic interventions coordinated by the NSC, designed to increase the capacity of Serbian actors and disseminate in the country the best experiences in the following fields:

- Local economic and environmental development, through initiatives supported by the international thematic ART ILS LEDA Programme;
- Innovations to improve the quality of local development, in line with the Millennium Goals (MDGs). Interventions will be supported by the international thematic ART ILS LEDA Programme.
- Collaboration between Serbian universities and specialized centres with local working groups to research innovative solutions, provide development training for local officials and systematize local experiences. Interventions will be supported by the international ART Universitas Programme.
- Welfare and reform of social health services in accordance with the priorities identified by NSC. Interventions will be supported by ART WIN Programme in collaboration with the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region.

Following MoERD indications, ART GOLD Serbia will be carried out at the inter-municipal/regional level. This means that the local working groups (LWGs) will involve a number of municipal districts, similar in concept to that of a region. It should be noted that when the project document was drafted, the term "region" had not yet been defined in Serbian legislation, although a regional development law was under discussion. This proposal and the request to support capacity building for future regional management drew the attention of European regions, with their long experience in this area. The participation procedures offered by ART GOLD Serbia for decentralised cooperation allow European

regions (institutions, business associations, civil society) to support the process of decentralisation and the formulation of local development plans (regional/inter-municipal) in Serbia.

Results at the local level

Programme areas were identified through criteria established in numerous meetings with the Serbian government and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM). In the first preparatory assistance phase (September-December 2007), selection criteria were fine-tuned, in close contact with the abovementioned stakeholders, based on data provided by the MoERD Department for Regional Development Policies, territorial reconnaissance, the interests of decentralized cooperation actors, human development indicators, and the priorities expressed in Serbia's Regional Development Strategy to foster integration with the EU. At the end of this phase, the Ministry of Economy selected the districts of Macva and Kolubara for ART GOLD Serbia intervention, a decision confirmed by the final tripartite meeting in March 2008.

The end of this process meant that work could now start on setting up local working groups in the districts of Macva and Kolubara. Due to the Serbian government's resignation following events related to the situation in Kosovo, formal meetings could not be held to present the programme to the municipalities of the two districts. The programme team, however, were able to carry out a reconnaissance of the local facilities for planning and participation, including a sort of "functional region" which includes most of the municipalities of the two districts as a first attempt at a common approach to the problems of local development. ART GOLD Serbia also fine-tuned local working group guidelines and terms of reference, in collaboration with SCTM and MoERD. Getting them up and running will be the first initiative to be carried out when the programme is launched.

The districts of Macva and Kolubara are located in western Serbia, covering an area of 5,472 square kilometers (comprising 6.5% of Serbian territory) with a population of 540,224 inhabitants in 446 towns and villages.

In this area, ART GOLD Serbia will help to set up local working groups (LGW) at a regional/inter-municipal level to define local development strategies and plans in all fields of human development. Support will be provided for all phases of the process:

- Analysis of territorial potential;
- Identification of development strategies,
- Formulation of plans,
- Formulation of projects within the framework of identified strategies and plans.
- Implementation of the projects, internal monitoring, periodic evaluation and adjustment of activities, technical assistance and training.

The programme will also support decentralized cooperation actors in establishing partnership relations with the inter-municipal working groups, also supporting specific interventions in other areas of Serbia.

Results at the international level

With the support of ART Initiative's international networks, contacts were established during preparatory assistance with many qualified representatives of the scientific, cultural and academic community to verify the possibility of setting up a scientific committee to follow up the programme. Particular interest was expressed by representatives of the Belgrade University Rector's Office, during an ART Universitas mission to establish an initial nucleus of the Scientific Committee in the start-up phase of ART GOLD Serbia.

There were specific requests for technical assistance during preparatory assistance. These included a request from the Governmental Commission on the Reform of the Welfare System for the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric institutions and disability support, and a request for assistance in the introduction environmentally friendly technologies in house building. Thanks to an agreement signed between the international ART Initiative, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the Progetto Musica Association, already operating in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and other Balkan countries,

the programme will be backed by the cultural and artistic community of Friuli (conservatories, music academies and artists) to support local development initiatives and issues of national interest.

More generally, international ART services and networks will support ART GOLD Serbia activities in the following initiatives:

- Promotion of international decentralized cooperation partnerships.
- Participation of Serbian actors in study trips, workshops and other international events.
- Technical assistance and partnerships for Serbian local and national actors, in the field of local economic development, provided by the ILS-LEDA Programme.
- Assistance and exchanges on welfare through the ART-WIN Programme (Welfare Innovations Laboratory), which, with the support of decentralized cooperation, offers technical assistance for the integrated organization of basic services and the access of more vulnerable groups to social and health rights.
- Assistance and exchanges through the IDEASS ART Programme, which identifies and disseminates human development innovations through specific South-South and North-South cooperation projects.
- Assistance and exchanges on higher education and academic research through the ART Universitas Programme.

One of the most important results of the PA, at the international level, was the interest shown in an ART GOLD Serbia by decentralized cooperation actors and other international cooperation agencies. Of particular note is the participation in ART GOLD Serbia of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), which will be sending a delegation, guaranteed by the President and Secretary, at the international launch of the programme to formalize the arrangement. ART GOLD Serbia has established contacts with Italian regions and the Interregional Observatory on Development Cooperation (OICS), which has shown concrete interest in participating in the programme.

A vast network of contacts has also been established with various UN agencies. The UNHCR, which will be part of both local working groups and the National ART GOLD Serbia Committee, took part in an ART WIN Technical Scientific Committee meeting in Trieste and a field trip to Sabac. Concrete contacts were established with UN-HABITAT to identify common areas of intervention, with a view to possible participation in the ART Initiative.

During the March 2008 tripartite meeting, it was decided to launch the ART GOLD Serbia Programme in an international conference open to all those interested in participating in the Programme.