

ANNEX 4 DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE FINNISH KOSOVO COUNTRY PROGRAMME

This reconstruction of the formation process and evolution of the Finnish Kosovo programme is based on interviews, archive material and mission reports of the then Kosovo cooperation desk officer. Due to missing documents and some undated material in the archives, some details concerning the timing along with other details may be inexact.

The international community was already preparing for humanitarian assistance to Kosovo when the Rambouillet peace negotiations failed. At the same time, a political decision was made to engage Finnish peacekeeping troops in Kosovo, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time (currently the President of the Republic of Finland) insisted on budget allocations for reconstruction. When the NATO bombings started in Kosovo, massive numbers of refugees flooded into Albania and Macedonia. After the visit of the Minister for Development Cooperation and the Environment to Macedonia in early May 1999, a funding decision was made on humanitarian assistance and direct aid to be given to the Albanian and Macedonian governments for managing the refugee crisis in their territories. This aid was given as support to balance of payments (budget support).

Towards the end of the bombings between May and June 1999, the then Unit for Central and South-Eastern Europe applied for funding from the Department for International Development Cooperation (ex-FINNIDA) for planning the reconstruction of Kosovo. This budget line had its own project code and it figures in the archives as a project (West Balkans reconstruction project, code 86202201), although it was mainly used for short-term consultancies, short-term TA assignments, appraisals and identification missions. This type of activity (Finnish short-term TA to local Kosovo institutions) later continued until 2005. The same budget allocation permitted the Kosovo development cooperation desk officer to organise a fact-finding and identification mission to Kosovo immediately after the bombings had stopped (late June 1999). The mission was carried out by a locally established NGO led by a Nordic person who had lived in Kosovo for a long time. The mission report found the topic of human rights (and human rights education) particularly pressing: no reconstruction would be possible in the immediate aftermath of the conflict before addressing the human rights situation. The report also raised the need for education and small enterprise development.

Towards the end of summer 1999, it became obvious that massive funding was envisaged for reconstruction by the large donors, and the Unit for Central and South-Eastern Europe decided to concentrate on human rights and education in its cooperation with Kosovo, which was considered more appropriate for a small donor with limited funds available. Additionally, Finland already had experience of working in education in the Balkans, which it had been doing in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1996.

By August 1999, a project on human rights education was in its design process, after it was realised that the OSCE civil administration staff employed for the purpose did not have any human rights training. At the same time, a multilateral FAO initiative on Agricultural Relief for Kosovo (fertilisers, seed production and distribution) came under the Finnish assistance programme, with the purpose of guaranteeing the next year's harvest. The human rights education project involved the OSCE, the Kosovo Helsinki Committee, Finnish higher education institutions and the Law Faculty of Pristina University.

Another result of the engagement of the Minister for Development Cooperation and the Environment was the initiative on clearing environmental hotspots (impoverished uranium residues), funded partially by Finland through the UNEP/Habitat and initiated immediately after the end of the war. A Finnish NGO (although a quasi-official one), the aid organisation of the Lutheran Church, FinnChurchAid (FCA), had started a housing and reconstruction project of its own in the Mitrovica region, and approached the MFA for extra funding. Another project that started in October 1999, a women's training and employment project in Mitrovica, the Mitrovica Women's Centre, was the personal initiative of the wife of a Finn involved with the FCA reconstruction project, which later also applied for assistance from the MFA. The Ministry's short-term TA funds were initially used for this purpose. The project collaborated with a local women's NGO, Mundesia, and HandiKOS, the association for the disabled. Later in 2001, a consultancy contract with the Finnish Refugee Council was signed to implement the project.

The specialisation of Finland in special education/pedagogy came about for historical reasons. As a result of the previous experience in funding teacher training in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Finland later decided to concentrate on teacher training in special education (later inclusive education), a decision that was also supported by the

MFA sector advisor for education. One of the implicit objectives was to diminish the influence of the DDR-originated school of defectology that was dominant in the ex-Yugoslavian educational system at the time. Defectology refers to an academic school within special pedagogy that classifies (and isolates) children according to their handicap (“defects”), and designs teaching according to the category of the defect, not according to the special needs and potentialities of the individual child. “Defectology” can therefore be considered as being diametrically opposite to inclusive education.

All these projects were being designed or implemented as far back as October 1999. In addition to human rights and special education, some of the additional elements of the Finnish programme in Kosovo began to become established, such as environmental hotspots, FAO agricultural support and FCA reconstruction. During the visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to Kosovo, (probably) in September 1999, she had been persuaded by the then Finnish head of UNMIK’s health administration that Finland should engage in the health sector, particularly nurse training, and by October an initiative to design a health project had officially been taken. Not long thereafter, towards the end of the year, an order from the highest echelon of the MFA was received by the Unit for Central and South-Eastern Europe demanding that Finland should not only be involved in human rights and social sectors in Kosovo but also offer business opportunities to Finnish companies in infrastructure projects. Water and sanitation was chosen as the field in which a project would be implemented.

Some minor initiatives also took place in 1999, e.g. funding to the International Crime Tribunal for Yugoslavia for war crime investigations, and a budget for small projects of the civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) by the Finnish KFOR Forces. The Liaison Office in Pristina started operating in late August in order to coordinate EU assistance during the Finnish Presidency; the political decision to continue the operations after the Presidency was taken only at the very end of 1999.

The last (but not least) element of the Finnish Kosovo programme deserves a special mention because of an anecdote told by all the Finns interviewed for this evaluation. In the report by a Finnish TV company on Kosovo refugee camps in Macedonia, shown in a primetime news broadcast in Finland, a disabled person in a wheelchair had made a desperate call for help to his Finnish friend, a known spokesman for the disabled in Finland (“Kalle, help us, the disabled are suffering in Kosovo!”). His personal involvement in the second half of 1999 resulted in a support project for the association for the disabled in Kosovo, HandiKOS, which had originally been implemented through Oxfam due to non-existent banking operations in Kosovo at that time, and later given to FIDIDA and the Finnish Association of the Deaf through a consultancy contract.

By the end of 2000, Finland had three larger projects in Kosovo that had been tendered for and/or implemented by Finnish companies (in special education, water management, and primary health services), and five smaller ones: the FAO agricultural support project in its second phase (March 2000–October 2001), a human rights education project (local NGO), the FCA reconstruction project, support to HandiKOS (at this stage implemented by FIDIDA) and the project on women’s empowerment (Mitrovica Women’s Centre by the Finnish Refugee Council). In addition to these projects, the Finnish KFOR forces carried out their CIMIC projects funded from Finnish ODA funds. An additional project was given funds from Finland in 2000 (which continued until August 2001), a mine clearing project implemented by ACT (Action Churches Together, Norwegian People’s Aid and UNOPS). Kosovo also formed part of two regional projects as of 2000: a Balkans regional exchange of TV news material (ERNO) and an interethnic youth football project.

Between 2001 and 2007 only a few additional short-term initiatives were funded by Finland (e.g. paying for translators at the Kosovo Ombudsperson’s Office, a continuation project of the UN-Habitat environmental hotspots cleaning, UN-Habitat funding for a land register and solving property claims, a grant to the UNDP for women’s security and safety and three regional projects), which highlights the stability and strength of the chosen approach. With only one exception (human rights education), the projects’ first phases came to an end in 2002–2003, and their objectives became more ambitious in the second phase (2003 or 2004 to 2007).

The case of the human rights education project illustrates this change. During its first phase (1999–2001) the evaluation carried out was largely positive. The objective of information and awareness building and human rights education had largely been met, the establishment of a Human Rights Centre at the University of Pristina had been a success and the project had become a known actor in the field of human rights in Kosovo. This was achieved in spite of considerable “flexibility” in management (no official guidelines were followed, but nevertheless there was a good, adaptive response to local conditions). Three years later, in a mid-term review of the second phase (May 2004) after the project had been tendered by a Finnish company, the new objective of mainstreaming human rights education in all university teaching was seen as time-consuming and little progress had been made – although the project was still seen as an experienced and respected player in Kosovo.

Something similar happened in all the larger projects. In the health sector, the project's first phase, which started slightly later than the other major projects in 2001, changed from being a project on in-service training for nurses to a project on developing capacity, forward planning, establishing regional networks, and nationwide coordination and quality control systems. In education, the objective switched from in-service teacher training in special education to promoting the attendance of children with disabilities in ordinary school classes (inclusive education), and support to the Faculty of Education of Pristina University in order to make inclusive education central to all teacher education (according to a project document, to the establishing of the Faculty of Education), and to public policy formulation. In the water sector, the first phase had concentrated on establishing water management associations and promoting post-graduate training in the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, whereas in the second phase the purpose was to build the capacities of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning to develop water resources. In spite of several positive achievements, in all these projects there were problems and little progress towards the general objective during the early years of the second phase. The water project was dropped from the project portfolio after its completion in 2004, probably partially victim of the 2004 Development Policy but also on the basis of a disastrous evaluation.

Mitrovica Women's Centre would almost certainly have been cut had it not been for the written intervention by

Political priorities influenced the choice of funded projects (at least) once, in 2004, when the funding for the the Embassy of Finland in Belgrade making it vigorously clear that the phasing out of the project at that precise moment would be a political mistake and give the wrong signal, as Mr Harri Holkeri's term as SRSG was facing difficulties in the aftermath of the 2004 riots and violent outbursts. Except for this political decision and some active pressure from business interests for infrastructure reconstruction in the initial phases of cooperation, the Kosovo programme has been managed under normal technical criteria of international development cooperation.

A further characteristic in the cooperation with Kosovo was highlighted by all three Kosovo cooperation desk officers (1999–2008) interviewed. In their experience, Kosovo (and the Western Balkans in general) was a much more difficult place to work in than the traditional partner countries of Finland (or other developing countries), which was manifest in regular health problems of expatriate project staff, particularly in occupational health. The fact that today, in 2008, this is difficult to understand on the basis of the conditions prevalent in Pristina is proof of how much the situation has improved since the early post-conflict years.