



# ALBANIA QUARTERLY

## World Bank Country Office Newsletter

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Albania Quarterly is a publication of the World Bank Office (Tirana, Albania). It aims to inform the public at large about overall economic developments in Albania and the World Bank Group activities in the country. The newsletter consists of eight sections: (i) highlights of major policy developments; (ii) a review of key and recent economic variables; (iii) an analyses on a special topic; (iv) a section compares Albania with countries in the region as well as those of similar income levels on various development indicators; (v) information on new legislations, publications, conferences and donor activities in the country; (vi) information on the recent activities of the World Bank office; (vii) Status of the project portfolio and (viii) contact information of staff in the World Bank Office.

### Policy developments

**A**bout 1.6 million Albanians participated in the *national parliamentary elections*, on 3 July 2005, to choose the 140 new members of the Albanian parliament (choosing from 1,253 candidates representing 27 parties and two coalitions). International and national monitors confirmed that the voting was generally peaceful and that the elections process was overall better than the two previous parliamentary elections. Final official results are expected next month and the new parliament (2005-2009) is expected to convene in the third quarter of the year. The new Government is expected to be formed subsequently within the same quarter.

The Government of Albania adopted, in April 2005, *the Integrated Planning System* (IPS). A conference for launching the IPS took place in May 2005 in which all donors and development partners appreciated the efforts invested in the preparation of the IPS and confirmed their commitment to support its implementation. The IPS aims to integrate the various policy frameworks (NSSSED, Stabilization and Association Process, MDGs, etc) into a single medium-term development plan in 2007. The IPS establishes a new planning architecture that will harmonize, in a coherent way, all existing policies and strategies and integrate them in a unified medium-term plan for social and economic development in Albania which will be closely linked to the Medium-Term Budget Plan and



Award Ceremony of Youth Essay Competition

the annual budget. A new action plan for implementation of the IPS will be presented to the donor community in line with the goals and objectives of Paris Declaration on Donor Harmonization. The IPS also envisages a new architecture for donor coordination and management of external assistance.

The *Third Forum on Poverty Reduction Strategies* for the Western Balkans was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, during 27-28 May. The Forum brought together representatives of governments and civil society organizations from the countries with active Poverty Reduction Strategies (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro) as well as representatives from UNMIK/Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. The event provided an opportunity for sharing experiences in implementing development strategies for poverty reduction.

**The World Bank approved three new projects in June 2005** (total-

ing US\$ 51.5 million) to complete its lending program envisaged under the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS 2002-2005). The three projects are: ▶

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► (i) the Natural Resources Management Project (US\$ 7 million); (ii) the Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean Up Project (US\$ 17.5 million) and (iii) the South East Europe Regional Energy Market project (US\$ 27 million). The Bank is currently finalizing its new **Country Assistance Strategy** for the next four years. The Board of the Bank is expected to approve the new CAS in October 2005.

A two days Forum **social Inclusion and the Millennium Development Goals**, organized by the UNDP in close cooperation with the European Commission took place in Tirana in May 2005. The forum addressed poverty and social inclusion issues in the region. The President of the Republic of Albania, H.E Alfred Moisiu, who opened the deliberation at the forum, emphasized that alongside the work to strengthen tolerance and understanding, the governments of the Balkan countries are also committed to implement the Millennium Development Goals and their national strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion.

The Government of Albania approved on May 15, 2005 the **National Plan for the Approximation of Legislation** (NPAL). The plan presents in a single consolidated document the necessary actions required for fulfilling the commitments in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Process. The NPAL builds on the European Partnership Action Plan adopted by the government in 2004. The Plan establishes a timetable for development and revision of sectorial legislation. Monitoring of the implementation progress will be carried out by the Ministry of European Integration. ■

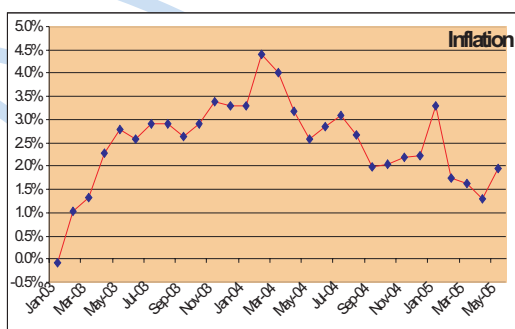
## Real sector developments and Inflation

**D**uring the first quarter of 2005, the economy showed signs of economic resilience and strong growth. On a year on year basis, the sales index increased by 10.3% driven by the extracting and construction industries. The rise in

followed by lower than 2% yearly inflation rates as a result of a decline in the price of food products. The combination of strong fiscal discipline and slight appreciation of the lek contributed to smoothing out inflationary pressures.

	2002	2003	2004
<b>Contribution to GDP growth of agriculture</b>	0.6	0.8	1.1

Source: IMF and WB staff calculations



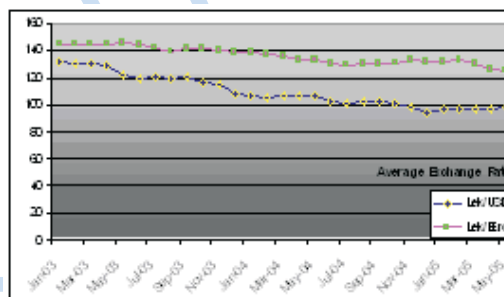
### A focus on Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors in Albania in terms of its impact on employment and poverty reduction. In 2004, the sector absorbed 58.6% of total employment and constituted 22% of total GDP. After a sluggish performance in the past few years, the sector grew by

credits to the private sector, and particularly in consumer credit have also contributed to increased domestic demand.

**Inflation remained subdued and averaged towards the lower bound of Bank of Albania's range of 2-4% during the first five months of 2005.** The hike in January

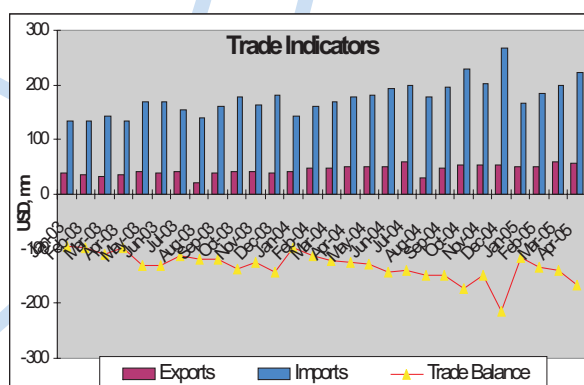
to 3.3%, caused by increased prices of 'rent, water, fuel and power', was



4.4% in 2004, and saw its contribution to GDP rise to around 1.1%.

## The External Sector

**D**uring the first quarter of 2005, the current account balance improved by 28% compared to the first quarter of 2004. The widening of the goods trade balance by 14% compared to the first quarter of 2004, was largely financed by a surge in remittances by around 32% during the same period.





Exports increased by 17% on a year on year basis in USD terms, outweighing the import rise of 14%. Exports of textile and related products (36% of total exports) increased by 8%, compared to the same period of last year, while exports of footwear rose by 22%. Relative to the first quarter of 2004, imports of mechanic, electric machinery and equipment increased by 16%, while imports of agriculture and food products only underwent a modest increase.

During the first quarter of 2005, 92% of exports reached the EU. Italy

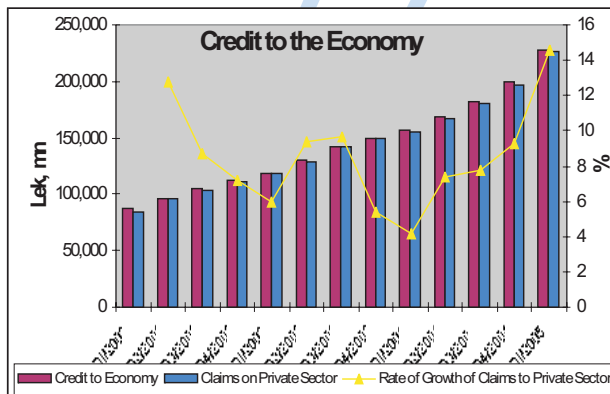
and Greece with 75% and 12% of total exports respectively, are the main recipients of exports, with exports towards Italy registering the highest growth of 17% on a year-on-year basis. Imports' sources were more diversified, with the EU supplying 64% of total, an increase of 11% during the first quarter of 2005 compared to the same period last year.

Exports to SEE-7 countries, still starting from a low base, have increased by 28% during the first quarter of 2005 largely driven by exports to Kosovo and Macedonia. Imports from the region increased by 43%.

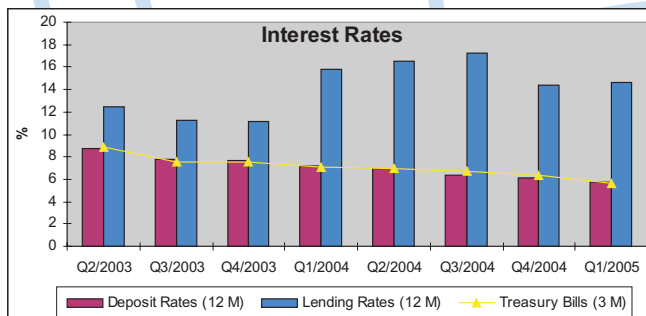
## Monetary Aggregates

**The Bank of Albania (BoA) pursued its policy of lowering interest rates throughout 2004 and into 2005.** The base in-

terest rate came down to a historical minimum of 5% at end March 2005. The downward trend in interest rates translated itself into higher growth in credit to the private sector. Credit to the private sector has grown by 49% on a year on year basis and saw its share out of total credit increase to 22% compared to 16% at end March 2004. In parallel, credit to the public sector has declined. The expansion in credit to the private sector was accompanied by a change in the term structure of loans. In particular, the share of long-term loans has increased to 31.4% of total credit to the private sector at the end of Q1-2005, up from 23% a year before. By the end of the first quarter of 2005, 31% of non-government credit had been extended to households



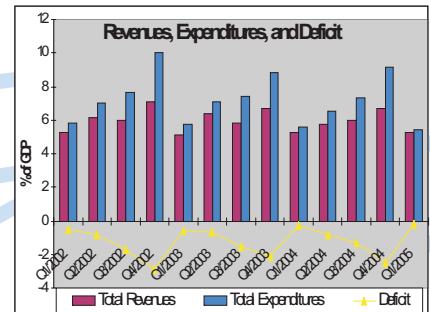
terest rate came down to a historical minimum of 5% at end March 2005. The downward trend in interest rates translated itself into higher growth in credit to the private sector. Credit to the private sector has grown by 49% on a year on year basis and saw its share out of total credit increase to



up from 26% of the total in the same period of 2004. The rest went to the private enterprise sector.

## Government Finance

**Government Finance** The electoral context notwithstanding, the performance of public finance during the first four months of



**2005 has been positive.** The overall fiscal deficit was reduced by 14 percent compared to the same period of 2004. It reached Lek 3.9 billion compared to Lek 4.5 billion for the same period last year. Revenues increased by 8% to reach about 29% of yearly forecasted revenues, and 99% of planned revenues until end of April. While tax revenues stood at 101% of planned, non-tax revenues fell short of their forecast by 14 percentage points mainly because of the low realization of profit transfer from the Bank of Albania. On the other hand, total expenditure increased by 7.53%, constituting 26% of the end-of-year forecast and 99% of planned expenditure for this period. Current expenditures were 103% of planned, driven by increased spending on operations and maintenance and subsidies (113% and 133% of planned levels respectively). Capital expenditure however registered 83% of planned only.





### Unsolicited Bids for Private provision of Infrastructure: Lessons from International Experience

#### 1. Introduction

There is a general consensus that the private sector has led the process of economic growth in Albania since transition in the early 1990s and the debate is now focused on the best ways to ensure more efficient and transparent privatization processes and to encourage the private sector in the provision of infrastructure. An increase in the number of unsolicited bids and projects received by the Albanian government has been noticed in the last couple of years, which is an indication of rising interest from the private sector. This note aims to provide lessons from international experience and to recommend measures to enhance efficiency, transparency and private sector development in Albania.

#### 2. Private Provision of Infrastructure<sup>1</sup>

In most developing countries, demand for infrastructure exceeds supply because of limited fiscal revenues and competing demands on government spending. Governments worldwide have increasingly looked to the private sector to fill this growing gap. Private participation in provision of infrastructure services in developing countries increased to about US\$ 750 billion during 1990-2001 through more than 2,500 projects. The bulk of these projects were in transportation concessions and water supply. Although shortage of public funding has been the main reason for attracting private provision, many governments have opted for it to improve performance and efficiency in the delivery of services.

Among the many countries whose governments award infrastructure projects with private participation, most have in place efficient and transparent systems to attract pri-

mate investors and laws prohibiting the acceptance of unsolicited proposals. In a few countries, however, the legal systems permit private companies to initiate the process by suggesting project concepts through unsolicited proposals, often including detailed construction, operation and financing plans. Some of these countries have laws requiring that unsolicited proposals be thoroughly reviewed and market-tested before being approved but few countries have no formal policies for handling unsolicited proposals.

#### 3. Unsolicited Bids versus Competitive Bidding

Most countries seek competitive selection/bidding for private provision of infrastructure. However, in a few countries the unsolicited bids are permitted to encourage the private sector to bring to governments beneficial ideas for project development that might otherwise have been overlooked. In the Philippines about 15% of such private projects have been unsolicited, while in the Republic of Korea the share is even higher.

In practice, the experiences of most governments who permit unsolicited bids have been unfavorable. Many of the world's most controversial private infrastructure projects originated through unsolicited proposals (e.g., Dabho Power Plant in India and numerous power generation plants in Indonesia). These experiences have motivated many countries to prohibit the processing of any unsolicited offer for private provision of infrastructure because they worsen the perceptions about corruption and poor governance.

##### 3.1. Arguments Favoring Unsolicited Bids

Four arguments are made by proponents of unsolicited bids and sole-sourcing practices:

(i) the project developer has intellec-

tual property rights to the project concept or to necessary engineering technologies;

- (ii) the project is too small, too remote, or involves too much political risks;
- (iii) organizing a public tender may not be cost efficient for the government or the bidders; and,
- (iv) The project will be developed more rapidly through negotiations, an important factor in case of an emergency or widespread shortage.

While these conditions may exist in a few cases, they do not necessarily justify eliminating competitive mechanisms to determine the final project developer. First, many countries acknowledge intellectual property rights for project ideas and recognize them in the tender process by compensating the original proponent. For example, the government of Chile gives the original proponent an advantage in an open tender and provides for reimbursement of its project development cost. Other governments simply purchase the project concept and then hold an open tender for the project. While some companies may have innovative solutions, substitute technologies are often available even when original proponents claim otherwise. To assess the need for the proposed techniques, governments can define a selection process that emphasizes the expected output of the project and allows bidders to propose processes or methods. The proposals can then be compared with the unsolicited proposal while protecting the original proponent's proprietary rights.

The belief that the characteristics of the project or the country will not attract enough bidders is often used to justify unsolicited bids. Governments can test this claim by calling for expressions of interest. If there is indeed insufficient interest, they may be able to make the project more attractive





to draw in other potential bidders through polling of smaller projects (e.g., French water concessions) or inclusion of other services in the tender. Awarding a project without competitive bidding often creates public doubts about the project's legitimacy, because the process makes it easier to conceal corruption. Even where corruption does not exist, the lack of transparency will make current administrations vulnerable to accusations of corruption from political opponents. Having an open tender, even with only the original proponent, can demonstrate a government's commitment to transparency and process.

The third argument for unsolicited bids claims that governments can save money by skipping the tender process when they are confident that the original proponent will win. Putting together a simple tender process, however, helps to reduce other costs down the road, especially for long-term projects. While other bidders may not be forthcoming if an original proponent spent time and money to develop a project, governments can share the bidding costs up front because the original proponent would probably pass on the project development costs to consumers during the operational phase. A few countries have experimented with pooling the total bid costs and offering partial or full reimbursement once the project is operational.

Finally, some governments have used the emergency arguments to justify exclusive negotiations (e.g., Cote d'Ivoire witnessed a short-term energy crisis and negotiated a lease contract to operate and maintain its main power system after receiving an unsolicited proposal). International experience shows that sole-source negotiations usually take much more time than originally expected. While the initial design and implementation of a well-organized competitive bidding process may take some time, future projects can be more efficient and move much more quickly once the

process is in place. Over time both infrastructure companies and financiers will also become more familiar with the government's conditions and expectations.

### **3.2. Arguments for Competitive Bidding in private provision of Infrastructure**

International experience to date shows that unsolicited proposals have been associated with many problems, especially the risks they raise for competition and transparency. Many of the world's most controversial private infrastructure projects originated as unsolicited proposals. In these cases, private companies submit unsolicited proposals in an attempt to avoid a competitive process to determine the project developer. If successful, they were then able to finalize project details through exclusive negotiations behind closed doors.

To reduce public sector corruption and opportunistic behavior by private proponents of projects, many governments have opted to forbid all unsolicited proposals. Although competition by itself does not always guarantee greater public welfare, under normal conditions a competitive process will drive down the tariff requested by the private operator as long as it attracts more than one bidder. The winning participant's investment and operating costs should be similar whether the project is awarded through competition or sole source negotiations. The main effect of sole sources negotiations is a potential increase in the developer's profit margin, which would probably be passed on to consumers through a higher tariff or lower quality.

A competitive bidding process enables governments to define sector development objectives by establishing long-term conditions in the tender documents. In negotiated unsolicited proposals, private proponents establish the initial criteria often without taking into consideration the

government's long-term strategy. Consequently, the project may lead to long-term infrastructure bottlenecks. A competitive process provides government with financial benefits even if the original proponent wins with the original conditions. The participation of other bidders gives the government more leverage because it provides a fall-back option in case the original proponent fails to complete the project or violates agreed upon terms. That reduces the likelihood that the original proponent will partially complete the project and then demand a higher tariff or longer concession period because of cost overruns – a common outcome in infrastructure projects.

### **4. What Can Countries do with regard to unsolicited Bids?**

Many countries prohibit the use or processing of unsolicited bids according to their procurement, privatization and concession legal frameworks and do not waste their limited capacities in considering them. Whenever the need to attract private sector in the provision of infrastructure is sought, governments resort to soliciting competitive bidding. In countries where unsolicited bids are not prohibited, governments set systems to maximize competition and transparency through two methods. The first method allows the Government to purchase the intellectual property rights for a project concept from the proponent and then award the project through a competitive bidding process in which no bidder has a pre-defined advantage. The second method allows the government to offer the original proponent an advantage in a competitive bidding process by creating a reward that satisfies him while still allowing a truly competitive process through formal systems such as the Bonus and the Swiss Challenge systems.

**The Bonus System:** The governments of Chile and Korea support unsolicited proposals awarding a **bo-**



**nus** in the formal bidding procedure to the original proponent. The original proponent's offer is then selected as long as it falls within a stipulated percentage of the best offer. In Chile, most unsolicited projects involving a bonus have been airport concessions. In Korea, the maximum value of a bonus is 10%, with the exact value determined by other characteristics of the tender process. Projects are usually awarded on the basis of a complete evaluation covering the financial plan, construction plan, operation plan, and social contribution.

**The Swiss challenge system:** This system has been used for several years in the Philippines. It allows third parties to make better offers (challenges) for project during a designated period. The original proponent then has the right to counter match any superior offers. Several other governments now use modified versions of the Swiss challenge system such as South Africa, Guam and the Indian state of Gujarat.

In the Bonus and Swiss challenge systems it is not easy to find the right balance between incentives to propose beneficial projects and incentives for third parties to submit counterproposals. In theory, both systems give challengers a reasonable chance of winning. In Korea, Chile and the Philippines however, very few projects have been successfully challenged. In an effort to find the right balance, some countries (e.g., Argentina) have begun to explore hybrid systems combining elements of the bonus and the Swiss challenge systems.

If a government actively pursues private participation in infrastructure, the private sector is likely to come forward with ideas. Governments are under no obligation to accept unsol-

ited proposals, unless exceptional considerations many compel them to consider some of them. The experience of Chile, Korea, the Philippines, and South Africa shows that a government is better equipped to handle these pressures if it already has a transparent system in place for addressing unsolicited proposals. In these cases, governments can still consider offering cost reimbursement and setting time limits for completing certain steps.

The international experiences so far leave it unclear whether providing cost reimbursement influences the quantity or quality of the unsolicited proposals that governments receive. Offering cost reimbursement maintains private sector interest during the development phase of a project, help to ensure that the source of ideas is not limited to large investors with deep pockets, and encourages proponents to allocate the resources needed to ensure that projects are professionally developed. But it may also increase the number of frivolous projects by giving developers an incentive to propose unnecessary projects, lead project proponents to exaggerate the project development costs, or put challengers at a financial disadvantage adding extra project expenses to their bid. National laws on private participation in infrastructure usually specify a time limit for reaching preliminary approval of a project, reaching final approval, putting the project out to public bid, and submitting counterproposals.

### 5. Conclusions

Governments should attract foreign investors into the provision and maintenance of infrastructure. The best way to do it is to ensure that the business environment is conducive for such provision. With the increase in the interest of the private sector in infrastructure projects, the practice of

submitting unsolicited bids to governments has also increased. International experience suggest that many projects that have developed through uncompetitive and non-transparent processes ended up as "white elephants" causing considerable fiscal drainage and did not lead to the anticipated benefits. Such projects also worsened perceptions about weak governance and corruption and deterred further attraction of sound direct investments in these countries.

Governments could use several approaches to handle unsolicited proposals. The most favored option is simply to adopt a law prohibiting unsolicited projects and many governments around the world have done this. A second option is for governments to purchase the project concept and then award to project through a competitive bidding process in which no bidder has a predefined advantage. A third option is to offer the original proponent a predefined advantage in a competitive bidding process. Under this third option two main approaches have developed the bonus system and the Swiss challenge system.

The many negative experiences with unsolicited proposals for private infrastructure projects has led many governments to blanket refusals of such proposals (often prohibition) as the only way to safeguard against potential problems. Governments should be especially wary of unsolicited proposals requiring sustained public sector support and masking significant contingent liabilities. Many private companies are well positioned to recognize potential demand for infrastructure, and the challenge for the respective governments is to harness and promote private participation during the conceptualization of a project without losing the transparency and efficiency gains of a well-conceived competitive tender process. ■

<sup>1</sup> This note draws heavily on two World Bank publications: (i) World Bank (2003). "Unsolicited Proposals" Public Policy for the Private Sector Note # 258, March 2003, Private Sector and Infrastructure Network (by John Hodges); (ii) World Bank (2003). "Unsolicited Proposals: the Issues for Private Infrastructure Projects" Public Policy for the Private Sector Note # 257, March 2003.





## Forests and illegal logging

Forest areas in Albania cover about 10.000 km<sup>2</sup> which represents more than 36% of the total area of the country compared with 40% of

and the nature of illicit activities in these countries. While commercially motivated activities often receive most attention because of the large

Based on official statistics, the volume of illegal logging varies considerably among ECA countries. The lowest proportions have been recorded in Serbia and Montenegro, Moldova and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where illegal logging volumes equal 0.3–2.2% of the total timber supply. At the other end of the scale are Azerbaijan and Tajikistan where official estimates of illegal logging amount to

Forests	Albania	Europe and Central Asia
Forest area (1.000 km <sup>2</sup> )	10.0	9.464.0
Forests area (% of the total land area)	36.200	39.7
Annual deforestation (% change 1990-2000)	0.8	0.2

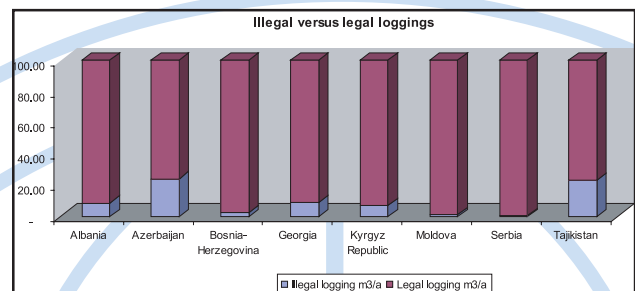
Source: World Bank (2004) "The Little Green Data Book, 2004".

the whole Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. Albanian forests represent only about 0.11% of all forest area in the ECA region. Recent estimates from the Albania National Forest Inventory put the total area covered by forests and woodland in Albania at about 15.000 km<sup>2</sup>.

Deforestation and illegal logging are major challenges in most of ECA transition countries. There are some regional variations in these trends depending on their stages of economic development, poverty trends

economic interests involved, illegal procurement of fuel-wood is becoming a major concern in the region.

Albania faces similar challenges to those other ECA transition countries with regard to deforestation and illegal logging, but the pace in Albania is quicker as evident by the rapid rates of deforestation (see the above table).



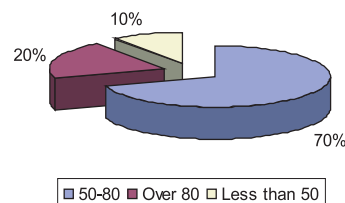
20-30%. Illegal logging in Albania is considerable and represents 9.3 % of the total timber supply.

### Determinants of Illegal Logging

Two main factors impact illegal logging: (i) commercial activities; and (ii) fuelwood harvest. Actual timber production is larger than the legal supply and the difference is attributed mainly to fuelwood consumption and to a lesser degree illegal industrial logging (e.g., 5 to 8 times the legal supply for industrial timber and up to 10 times for fuelwood). Only in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina the share of illegal timber is estimated to be relatively modest, 5-20% of the legal supply, while the gap between actual production and legal supply was estimated to be widest in Georgia, Armenia and Albania.

In several countries, the production of fuelwood exceeds the legal supply by a large margin. In the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Albania and Armenia fuelwood harvest is estimated to be more than 10 times larger than the amount indicated by official data.

% of rural population depending on fuelwood



Illegal logging is becoming a major cause of concern in the ECA region; Poverty-driven illegal logging emerges where poor people have little choice but to resort to illegal logging. The harvested quantities are typically small, sufficient for subsistence consumption, but still they have a large collective impact on natural resources. The graph below shows that 70% of the countries under study, including Albania, depend on fuelwood as principal source of energy.

### Illegal logging has both economic and environmental consequences:

**Economic Impact:** Illegally logged timber commands substantial stumpage value. In Albania the estimates are about US\$ 10-20 million, placing Albania in the same place with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia (based on the definition of illegal logging used in the ECA region). Elimination of corruption related to logging and timber sales would directly benefit government finances and the result would immediately show in higher government revenue.

**Environmental impact:** Illegal logging has the most damaging environmental impact when the total harvesting volume exceeds the maximum level considered sustainable. Apart from its impact on overall sustainability of forest management, illegal logging can also have very detrimental local impacts on the environment. ■

<sup>1</sup> Generally this section of the newsletter relies on external sources of data and information. The World Bank does not necessarily share the methodologies, views or findings of these databases. The derived indicators do not reflect the position of the Bank, its Executive Directors or the countries they represent.





## Albania Portfolio: Projects under implementation

No	PROJECT ID	PROJECT NAME	APPROVAL FY	CLOSING DATE	CREDIT AMOUNT (US\$ MN)	TOTAL DISBURSEMENT (US\$ MN)
1	P041442	MUN WATER/WW	2003	12/31/2009	15.0	3.4
2	P054736	AG SERVICES	2001	12/31/2007	9.9	6.1
3	P055383	SOC SERV DEVT	2001	03/31/2008	10.0	1.3
4	P057182	LEG/JUD REF	2000	09/30/2005	9.0	7.0
5	P066260	ROAD MAINT	2002	06/30/2007	30.0	23.3
6	P069479	FISHERY DEVT	2002	09/30/2007	5.6	3.5
7	P069939	PUB ADM REF	2000	06/30/2006	8.5	3.7
8	P074905	PWR SECT REHAB/RESTRCT'G	2002	03/31/2006	29.9	8.3
9	P077297	COM WRKS 2	2003	09/30/2008	15.0	3.5
10	P077526	POWER SECTOR GENER & RESTRCT'G	2004	01/31/2008	25.0	0.3
11	P082128	WATER RES MGMT	2004	06/30/2009	15.0	0.7
12	P082375	NATURAL RES DEVT	2005	11/01/2010	7.0	0.0
13	P086807	COASTAL ZONE MGMT (APL #1)	2005	03/31/2010	17.5	0.0
14	P090656	ECSEE APL #2 (ALBANIA)	2005	07/31/2009	27.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>					<b>224.4</b>	<b>61.1</b>

Source of information: Business Warehouse, last update as of July 24, 2005.

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