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ESSAY

Topic: How can EU funds be used for the benefit of the community in which you live?

The European Union provides funding for projects in various fields, such as: urban and regional development, employment and social inclusion, agriculture and rural development, maritime policy, research and innovation, humanitarian aid. Kosovo benefits from these funds as well. EU funding of Kosovo can contribute to the sector of democracy and governance to improve credibility, transparency, establishment of democratic institutions; in the rule of law for strengthening the state, fighting corruption and organized crime, law enforcement; in energy for energy sector reform, ensuring a sustainable energy supply; in competition and innovation for the design and implementation of competition policies; in education and employment to improve the functioning of the labour market, raising education standards; in agriculture and rural development to raise food safety standards; in regional cooperation to improve regional and neighbourly relations. EU investments in Kosovo amounted to EUR 158.2 million in 2019.

A contribution of EU funds in Kosovo can be in the project “Energy Efficiency Measures in Public Buildings at the Municipal Level”, which has an investment of about EUR 8 million. In Kosovo, building heating accounts for about 70% of total thermal energy consumption. This project focuses on improving heating, lighting and thermal insulation in municipal public buildings. This will help reduce Kosovo's energy costs and improve living standards, especially in schools and health centres.

Results:

- Municipalities will benefit from meeting local and international policy objectives, namely reductions in energy costs and an improved standard of living.
- It will save energy for heating and will reduce consumer costs and increase comfort levels in public buildings.
- The percentage of coal used, as well as pollution levels, will decrease, which will have a direct impact on the environment and community health.

Another investment is in the project “General Rehabilitation of Road 10 Phase 1, Fushë Kosovë - Border with the Railway Section of North Macedonia” about EUR 83 million. The railway corridor crosses Kosovo from north to south on Route 10, from the border with North Macedonia to that of Serbia, and connects Kosovo with the wider railway region. The entire railway is in poor condition,

with serious structural restrictions limiting traffic to 60 km/h. Route 10 is part of the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network Core Network Corridors in the Western Balkans. It has a total length of 256 km long, of which 149 km are in Kosovo. The road in Kosovo will be rehabilitated in three phases: Phase 1: Fushë Kosovë - Border with North Macedonia; Phase 2: Fushë Kosovë-Mitrovica; Phase 3: Mitrovica- Border with Serbia.

Results:

-67 km of railway tracks and 13 railway stations and stops updated to modern standards.

-Increasing the travel speed of passengers and goods to 100-120 km/h

-Safe and efficient rail transport of approximately 50% of the population of Kosovo.

-Passenger and freight rail capacity and travel time have been significantly improved.

-Railway network in Kosovo integrated in the Orient / East-Med Corridor, connecting the Western Balkans with Austria, Greece and Bulgaria.

Another project "Construction of Lepenc Canal and Firaja and Shtime Dams" about EUR 1.5 million. Water supply networks in Kosovo were established in the 1960s and suffered from investment neglect until recently. They are poorly equipped to handle the rapid population growth and urbanization that have occurred over the past two decades. Chronic water shortages result in rationing supplies up to 12 hours a day. The situation worsened further creating problems in the Municipalities of Ferizaj, Shtime, Kaçanik, Kamenica and Gjilan.

Results:

-Improved drinking water quality.

-Reduction of resource costs for consumers, industries no longer having to provide their own water supply systems.

-Benefits due to the reduction of diseases by eliminating pollution.

EU support was recently made in the fight against COVID-19 to cover urgent health needs and economic and social recovery and the regional economic reactivation package.

Above we mentioned some projects that with EU funding will achieve a better quality and productive development for Kosovo. The implementation of these projects would enable easier access of citizens and improve a better standard of living.