

reducing the risk of conflict

Improving access to justice in the Balkans

A major programme for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has improved access to justice in the Balkans in order to reduce the risk of conflict.

Between 2002 and 2006, Atos successfully implemented this major programme called 'Safety, Security and Access to Justice in the Balkans'.



DFID's key remit is to alleviate poverty in poor countries. Related to this is an objective to reduce conflict – a key factor in poverty. In addition to the humanitarian benefits and developing regional stability, conflict prevention reduces UK expenditure on resources for peacekeeping and post-conflict activities abroad.

The issue

In 2001, following over a decade of war, the Balkans region was in the grip of corruption and organised crime. The lack of safe and fair access to justice was threatening to allow conflict to escalate. Relations between the community and the justice authorities were extremely poor, with perceived injustices running along ethnic lines and with many crimes unsolved.

DFID had an ambitious strategy to reduce conflict in the Balkans by improving the effectiveness of the police, the courts, prisons and the central government ministries running these systems. In July 2002, DFID awarded Atos a £12.5 million contract to implement this strategy.

The three objectives were:

- ▶ Creation of affordable policies which link all parts of the justice system and effectively address the needs of its users
- ▶ Successful implementation in selected local areas of community-based justice, policing and crime prevention strategies
- ▶ Delivery of mechanisms which enable lesson-learning on justice sector reform across the region.

Our solution

Atos put together a wide-ranging consortium to implement the programme. At its peak, this comprised nearly 100 people in 17 locations, working in four different languages.

Atos first carried out high-level assessments of the justice and home affairs systems in: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia. The team also designed a robust conflict assessment framework to prioritise the countries and beneficiaries with whom we worked.

There had been over a year of government-to-government discussions to shape the programme, so by the time Atos was appointed, British Embassies were ready to mobilise. The team identified three 'fast-track' projects that were up and running within weeks. Over the next three years the team completed a rolling programme of all 11 projects which ended in March 2006.

Success factors

The challenges on this programme were on a huge scale. DFID and the beneficiaries had differing interests and agendas. DFID wanted to promote good practice and maximise benefit from limited funds. Beneficiaries were focused on their short-term objectives (such as building courts or buying equipment), and could be resistant to concepts such as value for money.

There were many other donors working in the Balkans, particularly the United States and the European Union. Work had to complement other donor initiatives.

With complex needs and differing priorities between countries, agencies and between justice systems, Atos ensured that every activity was linked directly to the prevention of conflict.

Critical to the success of the programme was to recruit and develop the consulting skills of 35 local people as key members of the team. They were heavily involved in the preparation of meetings and workshops, leading such sessions wherever possible. In order to overcome resistance to change, the team engaged individuals in the beneficiary organisations personally in how their work roles and careers would be enhanced through improved performance, customer service and accountability.

In the Balkans, government decision-making is highly centralised and there is little tradition of an independent civil service. Atos' working relationships tended therefore to be with Ministers and Assistant Ministers, many of whom were not in post for long. The team quickly learned to divide work plans into small, inter-connected parts, in order to minimise the loss of momentum when Ministers left office.

Managing a consortium comprising eight partners delivering 11 projects across five different countries proved to be a major management challenge.

Atos gave individual project managers the freedom to manage, mentor and appraise their teams while ensuring regular communications between projects through meetings, a programme intranet and workshops.

Atos avoided delegating separate areas of work to consortium partners. This meant Atos retained control over the quality of all individuals deployed while maximising competition within the consortium. In this way value for money was assured while not compromising on the quality of project teams.

“Local and international consultants were extraordinary...All were devoted and went the extra mile to sort things out.”

Mr Darko Maricic & Mr Damir Kajtez
Community Policing Unit, Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“It has been a great experience...We feel motivated and recognise that our aim is to satisfy the citizen...The project gave us greater sensitivity in how to treat clients...The consultants always allowed us to state our attitudes first, and listened...we could always rely on them.”

Ms Kata Ravnjak
Head of Court Registry, Zepce, Bosnia and Herzegovina



“The programme has been managed with great professionalism. The commitment of staff interviewed was striking. The lead contractor brought to the programme strong management expertise and systems which have contributed to smooth delivery of programme activities.”

ODI Review of Balkans Safety Security and Access to Justice Programme

The benefits

With much of the governments’ performance data either unreliable or unavailable, demonstrating the benefits of the projects was a challenge in itself. The achievement of well-functioning justice systems in the Balkans is work in progress and will take many years.

However, Atos managed to demonstrate improvement across the 25 beneficiary organisations. Ultimately, major conflict did not reignite in the former Yugoslavia between 2002 and 2006.

New, more targeted approaches to policing:

- ▶ Improved police-citizen relations - shown through public surveys (for example, a 20% year-on-year improvement in the Serbian public’s confidence in the police) and through the increased reporting of crime
- ▶ Improvements in crime clear-up rates; for example a 40% reduction in juvenile crime in 2004 in a major Serbian city
- ▶ Decentralisation of police management, resulting in revised police shift patterns targeting crime hotspots
- ▶ Greater strategic clarity and openness - such as the public launch of Bosnia’s first-ever police strategic plan, and the use of crime audits in Macedonia to prioritise policing efforts.

Improved delivery of justice in the municipal courts

- ▶ Case backlogs reduced; for example, outstanding property cases of ethnic Albanians in South Serbia reduced from 738 to 40
- ▶ Efficiency of delivery of summons increased, for example, in Serbia where in one court the non-delivery of summons was reduced from 30% in 2004 to 7% in 2005
- ▶ Performance statistics systems introduced, such as tracking the causes of adjournments for the first time in 2004, leading to a reduction in adjournments in 2005
- ▶ Improved quality and quantity of information provision, through the introduction of information desks and citizen charters.

Successful roll-out of piloted improvements at national level

- ▶ New laws passed, such as Kosovo’s new ‘Community Safety Strategy’
- ▶ Revision of national rulebooks and training curricula to reflect the improvements on the ground
- ▶ Creation of a new national volunteer victim support service in Croatia.

In 2007, the project’s achievements were recognised by the UK Management Consultancies Association, winning the Gold Award for Best International Engagement and the Platinum Award for Best Overall Engagement.

“The project team solved many of the issues of the judiciary...I seriously count on your experts... and have relied very much on their work...I have a very high opinion of how we have worked together.”

President
Kosovo Supreme Court

Next steps

For further information please call 020 7830 4444 or visit uk.atos.net

About Atos

Atos is an international information technology services company with annual 2010 pro forma revenues of EUR 8.6 billion and 74,000 employees in 42 countries at the end of September 2011. Serving a global client base, it delivers hi-tech transactional services, consulting and technology services, systems integration and managed services. With its deep technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works with clients across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail, Services; Public, Health & Transport; Financial Services; Telecoms, Media & Technology; Energy & Utilities.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organisations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic Games and is quoted on the Paris Eurolist Market. Atos operates under the brands Atos, Atos Consulting and Technology Services, Atos Worldline and Atos Worldgrid. For more information, visit: atos.net