## The World Bank Supports Kosovo in Building the Program for Broadband Internet Development in Rural Areas

The World Bank Supports Kosovo in Building the Program for Broadband Internet Development in Rural Areas<br /><br />The World Bank is helping Kosovo to improve its existing rural broadband Internet coverage by providing analytical support on how to (i) design a national broadband program to address connectivity gaps; and (ii) best organize effective infrastructure sharing across the telecommunications and energy sectors.<br />Broadband development is uneven in Kosovo, with significant gaps between rural and urban regions. At the same time, even rural municipalities are faced with consistent population growth, leading to an increased demand for broadband and information and communication technologies (ICT).<br />In cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development of Kosovo, the World Bank is organizing a two-day workshop, entitled Development of Rural Broadband for Inclusive and Green Growth, to present the results of two grant-financed technical assistance activities that aim at extending broadband connectivity to rural municipalities and accelerating the countrys development and greener growth.<br />The workshop convened government, telecommunications and energy regulators, internet service providers, public utilities, and international donors for discussions on (i) the state of rural broadband connectivity, broadband infrastructure investment bottlenecks, and the public sectors role in promoting investments to expand broadband access; and (ii) the Broadband Infrastructure Atlas, the infrastructure sharing plans by the Electricity Transmission System and Market Operator of Republic of Kosovo (KOSTT) J.S.C., and the benefits of rural broadband infrastructure development.<br />Blerand Stavileci, Minister of Economic Development, stressed that the "Ministry and the Government of Kosovo have been very pleased with the progress achieved on the ICT cooperation with the World Bank. Through the technical assistance granted, we gained new knowledge and insights regarding the steps our government should take to increase the reach of telecommunication services and improve infrastructure service delivery, thus creating multiple positive externalities such as indirect job creation and environmental protection. We look forward to deepening this engagement to be able to act on the recommendations provided in a systematic and strategic way."<br />"Modern technologies can be powerful instruments in addressing Kosovos overarching challenges of unemployment and economic inactivity, which are particularly pronounced for the tech-savvy youth and women, who are-more often than men-constrained in their mobility by family responsibilities of child or elder care," said Jan-Peter Olters, World Bank Country Manager in Kosovo. "Therefore, the expansion of internet in rural areas of Kosovo will bring tangible benefits for households, businesses, and the Government, as it connects people to information and jobs and creates new economic opportunities."<br />The World Bank supports the Government of Kosovos plans to roll out rural broadband development - including through infrastructure sharing mechanisms - as part of its ICT work program managed by the Transport and ICT Global Practice. The work program started in June 2014, thanks to a grant from the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF), which provides support to the Ministry of Economic Development of Kosovo and the public company KOSTT J.S.C..<br />"Infrastructure sharing enables countries to use their infrastructure assets more efficiently by reducing infrastructure investments (civil works) required to expand broadband networks and provides new revenue sources for utilities," said François Bergere, PPIAF Program Manager. "For these reasons, PPIAF was delighted to support this activity and hopes that this work will help facilitate private investment in Kosovos broadband network."<br />The Korea Green Growth Trust Fund, managed by the World Bank, catalyzed additional funding for the development of a rural broadband program that aims to identify and prepare a series of feasibility studies for bridging infrastructure gaps between urban and rural areas.<br />"Ubiquitous broadband coverage is a prerequisite that can really drive green growth in Kosovo by using information and communication technologies to quickly improve the quality of life," said Eun Joo Allison Yi, Korea Green Growth Trust Fund Coordinator. "We hope that this technical assistance will provide the government with solid analytical input to extend broadband coverage and derive benefits from it. Then Kosovos action in implementing green growth will serve as a model for expansion of broadband connectivity and rollout of broadband services in other countries facing similar challenges."<br />With two trust-funded technical assistance activities under way, the Ministry of Economic Development has requested deepening of the ICT engagement. The Government of Kosovo and the World Bank have started discussions on a potential project, which would be focused on the broadband Internet coverage extension pilots in selected rural areas of the country.<br /><br />Media Contacts<br />In Prishtina<br />Lundrim Aliu<br />Tel : +38138224454<br />laliu1@worldbank.org<br />In Washington<br />Kristyn Schrader-King<br />Tel : +1 202 458 2736<br />  kschrader@worldbank.org  <br />Lucie Blyth<br />Tel : + 1 202 473 9262<br />  lblyth1@worldbankgroup.org  <br /><img src="http://www.pressrelations.de/new/pmcounter.cfm?n_pinr_=594005" width="1" height="1">

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