

## **Italy grants further funding to Afghan educational radio and television** **News**

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Italy continues to give its support to UNESCO for the reconstruction of the Afghan educational radio and television service ERTV. For the last five years the Italian government has been funding the reconstruction project implemented by UNESCO and the Afghan Ministry of Education.

This project aims at reinforcing the educational broadcasting infrastructure in Afghanistan to ensure that education reaches remote parts of the country and groups that do not have access to schools.

UNESCO has undertaken the capacity building of the Afghan teachers and broadcasters. Training was conducted both in-house and overseas (Malaysia, India and Pakistan) in order to increase the staff's capacity.

Throughout the project UNESCO has brought technical expertise and advice to the ERTV as well as to the Ministry of Education, for instance in helping to set up an information technology system. At the end of 2008, the attitude of staff, their capabilities and hence the quality of programmes noticeably improved. ERTV in many ways gained confidence and new initiatives were launched, for example live TV broadcasting of educational programmes to the Kabul surroundings. Programme formats were changed as well as the content of established ERTV radio and TV programmes. During the running of the project, 104 radio programmes were produced: 52 in Dari and 52 in Pashto, and 12 TV programmes were conceived: 6 in Dari and 6 in Pashto.

The project has led to the creation of a fully operational educational radio and TV production house with broadcasting capabilities. The newly renovated ERTV started broadcasting 24-hour radio programmes and 3-hour TV programmes, on a daily basis, in April 2008.

There are still several issues to be addressed: geographic reach, professionalised administration and technical capacity. This is why UNESCO suggested continuing the capacity development of ERTV, taking into account the positive results already achieved. The aims are to build on the achievements attained and to produce teacher training modules on peace education and psychosocial support in literacy.

The new project will be funded bi-laterally by Italy and Afghanistan; it will run over a 3-year period, starting in mid 2009. UNESCO continues to support the strategic planning processes to ensure the long term sustainability of ERTV. When the funding phases out in 2011, the Afghan Ministry of Education will take on an important portion of the operating costs.

For the moment ERTV still relies heavily on external support and direction, but it is taking its first steps alone, initiating new programming and live broadcasting and also working more closely with other media. ERTV is taking the direction of fulfilling its role as an education service provider to count

on.