

TOGETHER



# GROWING TOGETHER 2

Most  
Successful  
EU Funded  
Projects in  
Serbia



# GROWING T

Photos on the cover page:  
Participants of the European Progress project in Raska  
House in Paracin renovated within the EU Assistance to Flooded Regions programme

Photos on the back:  
Primary School Jovan Jovanovic Zmaj, Obrenovac  
BioSense Institute building, Novi Sad

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# GROWING TOGETHER 2

Most Successful EU Funded Projects in Serbia

Belgrade, 2016

**GROWING TOGETHER 2**



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Dear Reader,

Did you know that the European Union is Serbia's biggest partner and donor? Since 2001, Serbia has benefitted from more than € 3 billion in non-refundable grants from the EU's pre-accession funds.

In this brochure, we present a selection of success stories from EU projects implemented over the last few years in Serbia. It is published as we, together with our Serbian partners, mark 15 years of EU-Serbia partnership and EU development assistance.

Since our first projects started in March 2001, the EU has become Serbia's main partner in improving the quality of life of Serbian citizens as well as enabling Serbia to make progress towards joining the EU.

In December 2014, Serbia opened accession negotiations with the EU. More is to come as work is progressing to implement necessary reforms.

Serbia receives about €200 million of grant funding a year from the EU's pre-accession funds and is the biggest beneficiary of EU support in the Western Balkans. This annual national package focusses in particular on economic and social development, reform of the justice system and public administration, protection of the environment, energy and transport sectors, cross border cooperation and many others. Special programmes support civil society organisation in areas such as human rights and freedom of the media. Soon, Serbia will have access to a new EU instrument for agriculture and rural development IPARD (Programme for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development). Serbian farmers and agro businesses will be able to benefit from €175 million through IPARD grants and co-financing.

In addition, Serbia benefits from regional EU funds including through the Western Balkan Investment Facility. Serbia is also a full participant in EU programmes such as Horizon 2020, Erasmus+ and Creative Europe, COSME and HEALTH which benefit Serbian scientist, researchers, students, creative industries, businesses and health care workers.



In this brochure, you will be able to read about some of the people in Serbia whose situation and lives have improved, and to learn more about how we work together to achieve our common goals.

Ambassador **Michael Davenport**  
Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia



# EU AND SERBIA: 15 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP



**W**ith more than €3 billion in grants provided over the past 15 years, the European Union is the biggest donor in Serbia, but also the country's first partner in supporting the development and ongoing reforms. In 2016, EU and Serbia mark the anniversary of development assistance, under the motto "15 years of partnership". Financial assistance has been spent on programmes and projects which fostered development and concrete reforms and which brought benefits to citizens in a number of areas.

The history of partnership has started in March 2001 through the CARDS or Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation programme. In 2006, CARDS was replaced by the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) programme which ran until 2013. Its successor, IPA II programme, will bring €1.5 billion for Serbia over 2014–2020 (around 200 million annually); it focuses on most important sectors in order to facilitate Serbia's preparations for membership in the EU.

Every year, Serbia and EU sign the IPA financial agreement for projects whose implementation is planned in the coming period. The total amount of IPA 2015 financial package is €196,6 million; the first financial agreement approving €39,7 million from the package was signed on 12 July, by representatives of the Serbian government and European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. The funds are intended

for projects in the judicial and home affairs reforms, as well as projects contributing to the negotiation process and alignment with EU legislation. Among other things, the programme will finance capacity building in the area of fighting organised crime, money laundering and terrorism, strengthening of internal control within the Ministry of Interior, setting up the efficient emergency system, implementation of Chapter 23 pertaining Action Plan as well as improving the efficiency of prosecution.

The EU is by far the biggest donor of non-refundable assistance to Serbia, which is the largest recipient of EU funds in the Western Balkans and one of the largest in the world. Currently some 600 EU projects are implemented in close cooperation with the Serbian authorities, municipalities, businesses and civil society. As of 2014, a novelty is the fact that Serbia, and not the EU Delegation, is in charge with management most of the funds allocated on a yearly basis: in March 2014, Serbian administration was accredited by European Commission to manage the EU projects.

The EU is also traditionally Serbia's key trading partner accounting for almost two thirds of Serbian overall foreign trade. Two-thirds of all foreign investments also come from the EU.

Serbia is also the biggest beneficiary of European Investment Bank loans, with €4,6 billion received in last 15 years. Finally, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has been an important investor in Serbia: since 2009, it has invested €3,5 billion, mostly in infrastructure and development of financial institutions.

## WHAT AREAS HAVE IMPROVED NOTABLY SINCE INCEPTION OF SERBIA'S OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE EU?

- ★ Visa free travel to the EU introduced in December 2009
- ★ Benefits for workers, consumers, businesses derived from trade and investment
- ★ Since 2000, €3 billion in free assistance for comprehensive modernisation of Serbia and preparations for joining the EU
- ★ Study opportunities in the EU and EU-funded exchange programmes for university staff and

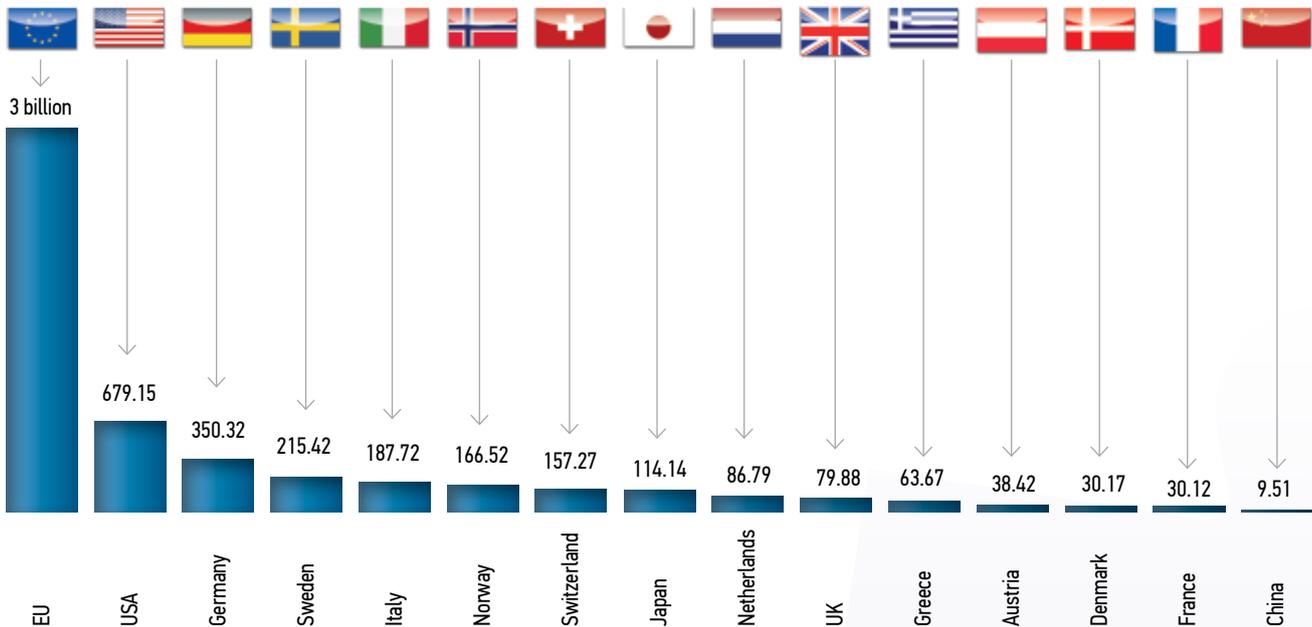


Photo: Botanical garden in Belgrade, reconstructed with the EU assistance. Author: M. Todorovic



## Donations to Serbia in the period 2000-2015

Committed grants for Serbia in period 2000-2015, amounts in millions €



- Source: EU Delegation and ISDACON IS, November 2015. ISDACON system includes available data for the estimated aid in-flow in the period 2000- 2015.
- Data is provided by development partners. Total amounts relate to estimated grant assistance of selected development partners, not all active donors in Serbia
- No data on Russian donations is available in ISDACON.
- Estimated aid in-flow does not refer to financial disbursement but estimated value of grants provided in services, goods, works and financial resources

**TNS Medium Gallup**  
Report prepared for Delegation of EU to Serbia  
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Public opinion poll funded by the EU



- students: 3.257 scholarships granted so far
- ★ A number of projects have been carried out in the education sector including the reform of vocational and education curricula, introduction of adult education as well as social inclusion in schools. The EU has helped to reconstruct and refurbish 27 faculties in Serbia including the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade, the Belgrade Botanical Garden, as well as a new building for the Faculty of Sciences in Novi Sad
- ★ The EU has equipped hospitals, laboratories, institutes of public health and blood transfusion centres and provided 252 emergency medical vehicles for health centres around Serbia
- ★ The EU has assisted the reconstruction of the Sloboda, Gazela and Zezelj bridges, as well as roads, and the construction of Corridor 10

- ★ Over 1,500 new apartments and houses for Serbian refugees and internally displaced people built
- ★ EU funds have helped to protect Serbia's environment: waste water treatment plant in Subotica has been reconstructed; many illegal landfills have been closed down as EU funds had helped the construction of modern waste treatment systems such as in Uzice, Sremska Mitrovica, Pozarevac and elsewhere. Citizens of Obrenovac and Belgrade enjoy cleaner air due to EU-funded ash-filters installed in Thermal power plant Nikola Tesla
- ★ Over 800 EU funded cross-border projects have engaged border communities and facilitated regional cooperation and reconciliation
- ★ The EU supports Serbian private sector and innovative companies. Over the last five years, the EU has helped to establish the

- Innovation Fund in Serbia and funded over 50 innovative projects, which have improved the competitiveness of Serbian SMEs and helped to create some 300 high-end jobs
- ★ The EU has helped to establish a consumer protection system by financing EU projects and helping to draft and implement the core laws on consumer protection adopted in 2010 and 2014
- ★ The EU has helped to establish a National Cancer Screening Programme in Serbia
- ★ The institutions of the Ombudsman (citizen's defender) and of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection were established in 2007 with strong support of the EU.

EU has assisted in establishing Agency for Fight against Corruption; support continues ever since. ■



# EUROPEAN UNION ASSISTANCE FOR FLOOD RELIEF AND PREVENTION IN SERBIA

In May 2014, heavy rains in Serbia caused unprecedented floods and landslides, which left a significant damage behind. During floods, several dozens of citizens lost their lives, while over 30.000 were forced to leave their homes. The damage incurred in only a few days are estimated at €1.7 billion. The damages were recorded in more than 100 local self-governments, while floods and landslides affected 24 towns and municipalities. European Union was among the first to provide assistance to Serbia, sending rescue teams and humanitarian assistance, worth €6 million, through its Civil Protection Mechanism: Slovenia, Germany, France, Croatia, Bulgaria and other Member States have sent special equipment for pumping water, teams which worked alongside Serbian experts in flooded Obrenovac to protect Nikola Tesla power plant and units that provided drinkable water to flooded towns.

Reconstruction of flooded areas has been realized mostly through the EU Assistance for Flood Relief in Serbia Programme, worth €30 million from the

Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) 2012 funds. The Programme has originally been implemented in 24 local self-governments most severely affected by floods: Bajina Basta, Valjevo, Varvarin, Velika Plana, Jagodina, Kosjeric, Krupanj, Koceljeva, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Lazarevac, Loznica, Ljubovija, Mali Zvornik, Obrenovac, Osecina, Paracin, Svilajnac, Smederevska Palanka, Trstenik, Cacak, Ub, Sabac and Sid. Due to the need for construction of additional family houses outside the Programme area, 9 more municipalities were included: Ruma, Smederevo, Malo Crnice, Mionica, Lajkovac, Gornji Milanovac, Ljig, Pozega and Kursumlija.

The funds were used for the construction and reconstruction of private houses, rehabilitation of the public institutions, roads and for the revival of economy and agriculture sector.

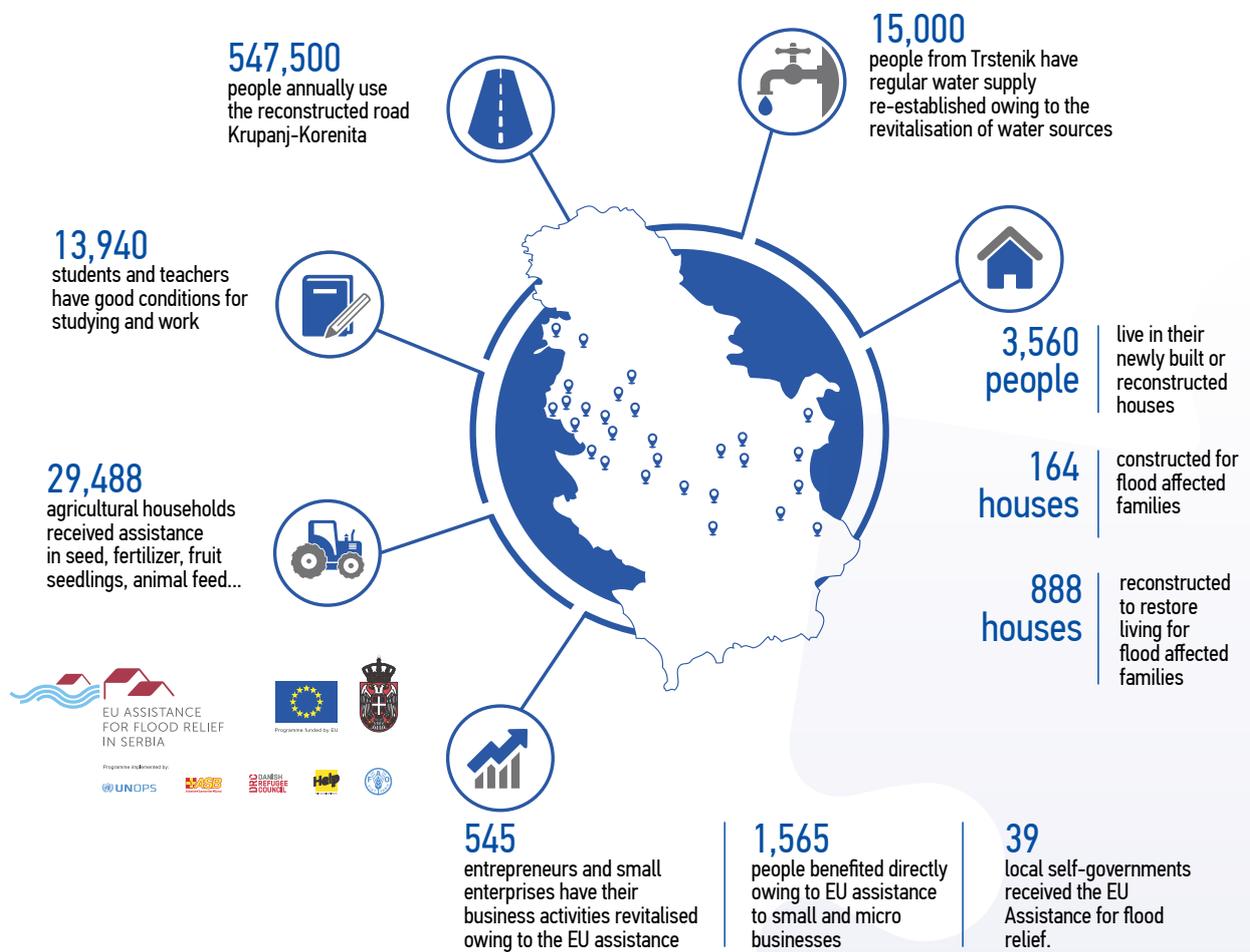
Seven partners are implementing the Programme - the United Nations Office for Project Services



Reconstruction in Obrenovac:  
Elementary school Posavski partizani, before&after



## EUROPEAN UNION ASSISTANCE THE YEAR OF RECONSTRUCTION



(UNOPS), the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO), Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V (Help), Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V (ASB) and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and World Bank (WB). Activities are planned and implemented in close cooperation with the institutions of the Republic of Serbia.

For the continuation of the reconstruction, the EU allocated additional €62 million through the IPA 2014 Programme in 42 local self-governments in total, for the projects focused on the floods prevention and protection, rehabilitation of the landslides and damaged roads, reconstruction

and construction of private houses, support to the agriculture producers and small enterprises.

Serbia has also access to €62 million from the EU Solidarity Fund for flood relief projects (focus is on reconstruction on roads, bridges and other infrastructure) while the EU provided additional €10million to the Cross-border Programme between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina for the improvement of the flood prevention and protection system.

In total, the EU has offered €173,6 million as non-refundable assistance to Serbia, which has made the EU the largest donor for flood relief in Serbia. ■



# EU FLOOD RELIEF: FOR A BETTER LIFE OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

PROJECT TITLE:

**Assistance for flood relief in Serbia programme**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€30 Million**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2012**



BENEFICIARIES:

**39 municipalities in Serbia**



DURATION:

**June 2014 – September 2016**



Photo: Jovana Ilic, in front of reconstructed family house in Paracin

**A**fter just two months from the day of commencement of construction works, the Ilics, a family of two, has been provided with decent living conditions in the newly constructed prefabricated house, equipped with necessary quality furniture and household appliances.

In the dramatic floods that had hit Paracin Municipality, where flooding wave reached 1.5 meters in some places, one of the many residents of Paracin who went through ordeal was Zivka Ilic, a 64-year-old woman, whose household was severely damaged.

Zivka Ilic came to Paracin in 1961, completed high school and worked in a textile factory. In 1977, she married Gradibor Ilic who had a son from previous marriage. The stepson got married and in 2004 his daughter Jovana was born. Due to a difficult family situation, the custody over Jovana was entrusted to Zivka Ilic, upon her husband's death in 2009.

Since then, Zivka has been doing everything in her power to secure healthy and safe environment for the child, as well as the necessary means for her education. Even though the family lives off Zivka's pension only, 10-year-old Jovana's basic needs have been fully satisfied.

In May 2014, their home was completely destroyed in the floods. The shabby and dilapidated ground floor house could not be rehabilitated and cleaned, nor disinfected. The family was forced to move into apartment provided by Centre for Social Welfare, while expecting the construction of a new prefab unit.

Thanks to the Delegation of European Union to Serbia, Danish Refugee Council and local authorities, at the beginning of 2015, Ilic family moved into newly constructed prefab house equipped with necessary quality furniture and household appliances



## SVILAJNAC KINDERGARTEN RECONSTRUCTED THANKS TO EU FUNDING

On 18 February 2015, kindergarten “Decja radost” in Svilajnac was opened, after reconstruction financed by the European Union, B92 fund and Novak Djokovic foundation was completed. The biggest kindergarten in this city, “Decja radost” was severely damaged in May 2014 floods: children premises and playrooms, kitchen and administrative offices were destroyed. Reconstruction works included the replacement of damaged joinery and floors, plastering, paving, and repairing of roof and facade. Following the reconstruction of the facility, some 450 children from Svilajnac once again enjoy proper playing and learning conditions. Out of half million of euros needed for the reconstruction, the EU secured €240,000, while the rest was financed by the B92 fund and Novak Djokovic foundation.

Among other guests, European Parliament Rapporteur for Serbia David McAllister attended the opening ceremony, together with the Head of EU Delegation to Serbia, Ambassador Michael Davenport.

Ambassador Davenport underlined that reconstruction of kindergarten was a joint effort of the EU and local organisations: “I am particularly pleased with the reconstruction of kindergarten because it represents cooperation between the EU and B92 and Novak Djokovic foundations. We will continue our efforts in removing the consequences of the floods, and pay special attention to preventive measures in order to prevent future disasters”, he said.

After the May 2014 floods, the European Union allocated around €1.3 million for the construction of 11 houses and renovation of 90 households, reconstruction of Agricultural and Veterinary School, High School and kindergarten “Decja radost”, support to 42 micro and small enterprises and 600 agricultural producers in Svilajnac. Municipality of Svilajnac has awarded EU Ambassador with Recognition Letter for the support during flood relief. ■



Photo: Before and after reconstruction works



Photo: McAllister, Ambassador Davenport attend opening ceremony





# EU PROJECTS FAIR HELD IN BELGRADE AND NIS IN 2015

## EU AND SERBIA AT WORK

The most successful projects financed by the European Union during the last 15 years were presented at two EU Projects Fairs held under the slogan “EU and Serbia at work” : first such fair ever in Serbia was held on 17 March 2015 in Belgrade, while the south of Serbia has seen it on 22 May 2015, in Nis.

The fairs were organised by the EU Delegation in Serbia, the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO), the EU Information Centre Belgrade and the EU info corner Nis. This was the first time that successful projects were presented in one place, along with beneficiary institutions (ministries, local governments, public institutions, NGOs, etc.) and end users - citizens of Serbia. At the opening of Belgrade’s fair, citizens’ voice was represented by Dragoljub Zlatanović the director of the agriculture–chemistry school in Obrenovac. Zlatanovic thanked the EU for supporting the school for many years through various projects. From donating equipment and providing pupils with the Europa Diary, to helping refurbish the school after the catastrophic floods of May 2014, the “EU was bringing the school students closer to Europe”, he said.

Head of EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Davenport and Minister without portfolio responsible for European integration Jadranka Joksimovic opened the Fair, in the presence of dozens of journalists from Belgrade, Vojvodina and central Serbia. In total, 60 projects from 15 sectors financed with EU funds were presented.

The EIB also presented its projects in Serbia at the Fair. The Bank started its operation in Serbia in 2001 and since then as become Serbia’s biggest creditor. Serbia has signed loan agreements amounting to €4,3 billion.

In Nis, the Project fair presented projects from seven sectors most represented in the South: health, education, innovation, social inclusion, support to refugees and internally displaced persons and Roma, media, culture, civil society and the European Union Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy (EIDHR), local development and Cross Border Cooperation.

Both fairs were the first occasions for citizens and media to see, at one place, a synergy between Serbia and the EU at work. ■







# IPARD PROGRAMME: EU TO SUPPORT RURAL SECTOR IN SERBIA WITH €175 MILLION

**T**he EU Rural Development Programme for Serbia (IPARD) was adopted by the European Commission on 20 January 2015, forming the basis for EU support to the rural sector in Serbia for the next six years.

The main objectives of the Programme are to increase food-safety in Serbia and improve competitiveness of the agro-food sector as well as to help Serbia progressively align with EU standards.

The EU has allocated a budget of €175 million, which will be offered in the form of grants to Serbian rural stakeholders to co-finance appropriate investments up to a maximum public contribution of 70% of eligible expenditure. This should lead to a total investment in the sector of approximately €400 million (RSD 49 billion).

On the basis of a detailed and objective analysis of the sector and thorough consultation with stakeholders, Serbian authorities selected the following measures:

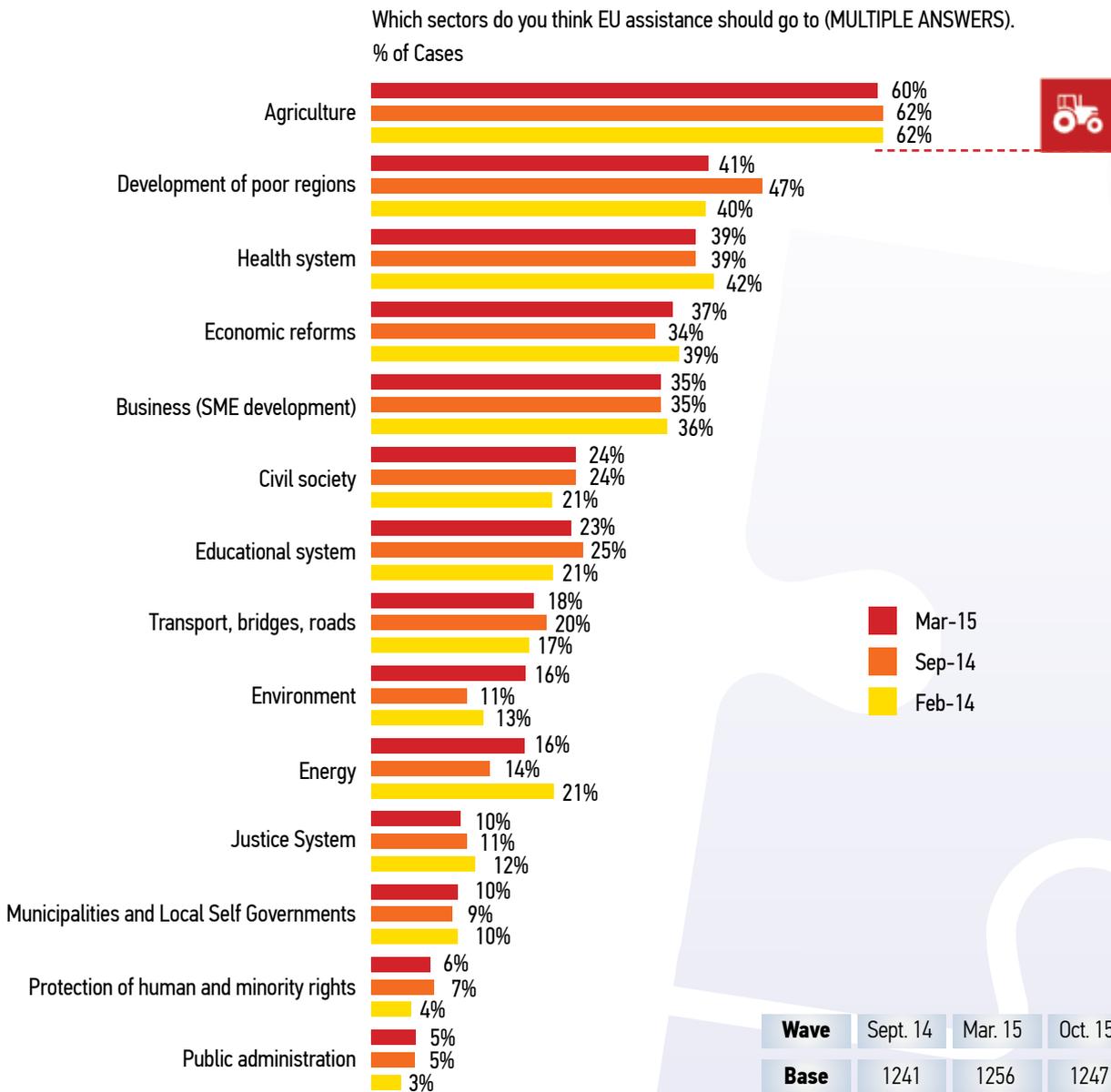
- 1** Investments in agricultural holdings – grants will be provided for farmers producing milk, meat, fruit and vegetables and other crops;
- 2** Investments relating to the processing and marketing of agricultural products – targeted towards micro, small and medium-sized enterprises processing milk, meat, fruit and vegetables;
- 3** Organic farming – support will be provided to farmers that introduce organic production methods;
- 4** Implementation of Local Development Strategies – under the so-called “Leader” approach, support will be provided for the implementation of local rural strategies by Local Action Groups (specially established public-private partnerships);
- 5** Farm diversification and business development - the measure will facilitate the development of private rural tourism facilities;
- 6** Technical Assistance – EU experts will assist national authorities with the implementation of the programme.

The EU will provide financial support to Serbia's agricultural sector through a management and control system that is compliant with good governance standards of a modern public administration equivalent to similar organisations in the Member States of the European Union. The Serbian authorities are currently preparing this system with EU support. This phase must be completed before the first calls for proposals can be announced. ■



## EU ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES (WISH LIST)

According to Serbian public opinion, agriculture is still the priority sector for EU financial assistance, followed by Development of poor regions, Health system, SME development and Economic reforms.



TNS Medium Gallup

Report prepared for Delegation of EU to Serbia

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Public opinion poll funded by the EU





# PERSONAL STORY: FROM BRANDY TO LIBRARY



Photos: Private archive

Ten years ago, in early February 2005, Serbia was covered in deep snow. The usual one-hour ride from the small town of Ljig, 80 km away from Belgrade, turned into a three-hour journey. A group of experts set off on to visit CSOs' projects, funded by the EU under the Support to Civil Society in Serbia programme.

Project Manager Mirko Markovic and a young volunteer Vukosav Sredojevic, 16, nicknamed Vule, first grade high school student, were at Internet club in downtown Ljig. Organising workshops designed to teach on how to use computers and access the Internet, the Club was an electronic resource training centre in this part of Serbia. Vule is tall and slender, shy in communication. When asked: *Why are you here?*, lowering his eyes he answered: *To learn about the Internet... I want to make a web-site through which my father would sell his home-made brandy.*

Vule has grown up in Babajic, a village 2 km away from Ljig, where his father has been making home-made plum brandy (shljivovitza) by a 100-year old family recipe invented by Vule's grandfather Vukosav, name bore the brandy: "Vulovaca". His father understood boy's fascination with computers and technology, so he bought Vule his first computer when he was only seven years old.

*"As soon as I got to know the world of Internet and web-design, I've decided to help out and repay my father. I was inspired by cheese and kaymak selling*

*web-sites (that already existed in Ljig at the time) so my first project ever was [www.vulovaca.com](http://www.vulovaca.com)," says Vule, now 27.*



Back then, Vule's web-site was the only one selling home-made brandy online in Serbia. Publication of Vule's success story on the web-site of the former [European Agency for Reconstruction](#) triggered an avalanche on the Internet. In 2005 only, his web-site had 15,000 single visits from across the globe, while Vule was named the youngest web-designer in Serbia. Web-site reached people interested in the product all the way from the US, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Switzerland...

In 2006, thanks to information on Vule's web-site, delegation of Europe's biggest fruit brandy



producer, Czech's [Rudolf Jelinek](#), visited Ljig and learned more about the Sredojevics' brandy-producing method. Given that a large number of Ljig's residents are engaged in brandy production, Vule has helped many of them to set up their own presentations and advertise on the Internet.

As a high school student, Vule dedicated himself to creation and maintenance of the Municipal web-site, [www.ljig.rs](http://www.ljig.rs). He was engaged in creation and maintenance of tourist locations' web-sites in this part of Serbia, including Banja Vrujci, [www.banjavrujci.org.rs](http://www.banjavrujci.org.rs). By promoting this resort, Vule was a part of the team which has built the first tourist "e-spot" in Serbia.

For Vule, going to college was a double challenge – getting used to a new environment in Belgrade as well as the need to study and work at the same time in order to make a living. He graduated from the [Faculty of Informatics and Computing](#), Department for Programming and Projecting, in Belgrade, simultaneously creating and maintaining around 40 web-sites. "My jobs didn't always involve the Internet... I was sometimes engaged in hard physical work, but I completed my studies within four years," Vule recalls.

"I have never forgotten what the Internet Club did for me. I have always been there for them and took part in their projects," Vule explains and adds: "Thanks to working with them, in 2011, I participated in Library of the City of Belgrade web-site design, [www.bgb.rs](http://www.bgb.rs). In cooperation with librarians, I became interested in books and documents cataloguing and database creation."

Vule's commitment and persistence were recognised by "Svetozar Markovic" University Library in Belgrade, where he found a job as a system administrator and web and software developer. As part of the web team, Vule is responsible for the fact that, as of 1 January 2015, this Library has a modern and efficient content on its [www.unilib.rs](http://www.unilib.rs) web-site.

During his employment at the Library, Vule has developed an e-book reader app for World War I collection, which he developed to commemorate a centenary of the Great War. His job at the Library includes participation in [Europeana News-](#)



paper project, a digitised collection of millions of books, archives, photos and documents. He has held several lectures on digitisation of archive material in Serbia and made a guest appearance at a conference in London. Apart from this, Vule is also a web editor of the [Infoteka](#) magazine, dedicated to digital humanities.

"I always enjoy going back to my beginnings and I want to help as much as I can. Within the project [Knowledge for Everyone](#) I give lectures on how to use the Internet for free. I realise it is time for me to pass my knowledge on to younger generations. The EU's project helped me discover myself and reveal my future. It is time I proved to be worthy of the trust," Vule said.

Ten years later, in March 2015, Vule was the one to tell his story at the opening of first EU Projects Fair in Belgrade, together with EU Delegation and Serbian government officials. He was the voice of citizens benefiting directly from the EU funding in different spheres of life in Serbia.

His story was recognised by the European Commission, too: in December 2015, Vukosav Sredojevic received a plaque of "My Story of e-participation", which the Commission awards to the most interesting examples of good practice of cooperation between the EU and the citizens. Out of 11 winners, Vule was the only one coming from the non-EU country. ■



# JOBS FOR THE VULNERABLE - SOUVENIRS OF PERSISTENCE

PROJECT TITLE:

**Together on the  
Way to Work**



SECTOR:

**Local Development,  
Social Policy**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€11,768 (part of the  
European PROGRES  
programme, worth  
€22.4 million)**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2012**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Association for  
Helping Persons  
with Special Needs  
in Raška**



DURATION:

**February 2015 –  
August 2016**

Until a few years ago, records of the Centre for Social Work in Raska, municipality of 25,000 citizens in South Serbia, showed there were 90 unemployed people with disabilities. One man, with the support of committed local self-government and the European PROGRES programme, has halved this discouraging statistic. So far, the project activities created jobs for 45 people with disabilities while the work on achieving long term improvement in their quality of life is ongoing.

These days, you cannot miss the neatly carved signs showing the previously unmarked road to villages of Golija mountain.

They fit seamlessly into their picturesque surroundings, pointing to nearly forgotten villages on the road leading from Raška to Golija. The story behind them is extraordinary; the EU, together with local citizens, helped to improve the quality of life of the disabled people in Raska.

“As a father of child with disability I have experienced first-handedly how the lack of adequate social and financial support impacts child’s as well as family’s life. My son Veljko is not physically able to work but that did not stop me from helping his friends to start working,” says Zlatan Vukosavljević, founder of the Association for Helping Persons with Special Needs in Raška.

There are 250 disabled residents registered at Social Centre in Raška, 90 of which are of employment age

and living with caregivers. In Serbia, people with 70-80% disability do not receive enough social support to cover supplementary medical therapy and living expenses. Independent living becomes impossible due to lack of income. The disabled are hindered from getting institutional opportunities to obtain competitive education or vocational training and, those living in the remote and rural areas, are further exacerbated by lack of access to services.

“When you live in a small town you meet families that are dealing with similar issues, so it was sensible to put experience and knowledge we acquired over the years to good use. This is how the Association was established,” says Zlatan. “Municipality of Raška recognised our initiative immediately and remained committed to support and help us in the effort to make our children’s lives easier and enable them to take care of themselves once we are no longer around.”

Since its establishment in 2003, the Association provided various forms of support to its members but has since focused on provision of professional training and employment of people with disabilities which helps both beneficiaries and their families.

In 2011, with the financial support of European Union and Government of Switzerland, through the EU PROGRES Programme, the Association implemented “Carpentry Workshop – A Step to Independence”, a project which supplied the Association with machines and tools and enabled carpentry training for people with disabilities. Results were inspiring. Over the



Photos: [www.europeanprogres.org](http://www.europeanprogres.org)



course of four years, some 45 beneficiaries were employed through public works in the production of, amongst other things, road signs for Golija villages. In 2015, through the EU PROGRES successor programme - European PROGRES - the initiative expanded into training and employment of 10 persons with disabilities for production of souvenirs. The project enabled purchase of specialised equipment – a machine with laser systems for engraving and cutting, worth €11.768. Project also envisages the establishment of a permanent workshop for the production of keepsakes and other products made of wood that would be sold in Kopaonik and Golija tourist centres. The two activities should result in securing income for the trained beneficiaries and it is expected that, as the business grows, workshop should both train and employ even more Association members who have already shown interest in taking part.

“I know, from my personal experience, that people with disabilities are capable of achieving almost anything,” says Zlatan. “What they cannot do is conform to the standards of work and life that majority of people accept as a norm. This is why we have decided to create the environment that conforms to their working needs and as a result we have a workshop full of happy and productive workers.”

Smiling faces of employees who are willing to demonstrate how to produce an impressive keepsake of the Raška District, confirm this. Aco, Veljko, Milivoje and Marko dominate the conversation about this life changing experience. They think of themselves as carpenters and feel confident about finding jobs in the future.

“Have you seen the Pavlica road sign? We made it! The weather was bad during the past month but we managed to put it up together!” said Milivoje.

#### EUROPEAN PROGRES IN BRIEF

European PROGRES is the largest area-based development programme in Serbia whose objective is to support sustainable development of 34 municipalities in South East and South West of the country. Two major donors - the European Union and the Government of Switzerland together with the Government of Serbia - provide the funding necessary to reach the set programme goals. The budget of the three and a half year long programme, launched in May 2014, is €24.46 million: European Union, through its [Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia](#), contributed with €19.6 million, while the Government of Switzerland, through the [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Office \(SDC\)](#) in Serbia, contributed with €4.86 million. The Programme provides financial, technical and advisory support to the beneficiaries. It is a successor of the programme EU Progres implemented in 25 municipalities in the period from 2011 to 2014.



Meanwhile in Raška, the production of souvenirs is searching for product placement and new customers that would enlarge the workshop workforce. Keep this in mind when looking for a reliable workshop to carve your keepsakes and wood products. And don't forget to look for the signs along the road, they might be telling more than what you can see at first glance.

“Together on the Way to Work” is one of 20 projects that have received a total of €382,000 of funding through European PROGRES's Citizen Participation Fund. The implementing organisations and local self-governments are obligated to provide ten percent share per project. For this project, Municipality of Raska allocated €1,910 while Association itself provided some €90. CIF projects focus on social inclusion, migration and improvement of inter-ethnic dialogue. ■

#### RESULTS

- 10 persons with disabilities trained and employed
- Specialised machine with laser equipment for engraving purchased for Association for Helping Persons with Special Needs in Raška



# SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF SINGLE MOTHERS

PROJECT TITLE:

**Enhancing Human Rights and Economic Empowerment of Single Mothers in Serbia**



SECTOR:

**Social Development**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€59.117**



INSTRUMENT:

**European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) 2013 Programme**



DURATION:

**February 2014 – June 2015**

For years, Vesna, Daliborka, Biljana... have dreamed of starting their own businesses which would enable better life for them and their kids, being single parents. With the EU donation, this came true.

Ten single moms from five Serbian cities have received grants to start or expand their own business through project "Enhancing human rights and economic empowerment of single mothers in Serbia", funded by European Union via its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) programme.

The project, started in February 2014, was implemented by Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation and Jel-ek Foundation. Its aim was to improve the quality of life of single mothers in Serbia and encourage their active participation in society, through the strengthening of institutional support and direct support to economic empowerment through providing grants for self-employment. All of that based on the fact that, according to statistical data from the period when project started, there were some 75.000 single-parent families in the country.

Project was implemented in five cities: Novi Sad, Belgrade, Kragujevac, Leskovac and Nis. In each city, through a series of activities focused on advocating for improving the situation of single parents families, the project tried to influence the improvement of existing legal regulations. A workshop "Single Parents and Labour Market" was held in all five cities, with participation of decision makers at both local and national levels. A brochure "Protection of single parents in Serbia - analysis of the legal framework and recommendations" was published, with proposals how to find appropriate solutions to improve the existing legal framework

regulating their position. An initiative to amend the relevant laws governing the life of this population has been launched; this applies to the amendments proposed to the Family Law.

The Single Mom's Competition was organised in order to choose those who will be supported through the project. Out of 26 applications received, ten single mothers from five abovementioned cities were given the opportunity to start their own business, through the award of self-employment grants. Each was given the funds or equipment in the value of approximately €1,000. Apart from the funds necessary to buy equipment, raw materials and attendance of education and training sessions, these single moms have also been provided with mentor support by business consultant who assisted them in developing their business ideas, as well as in creating and implementing their business plans.

## WE PRESENT THEIR STORIES:

**1. Vesna Ilic** (43) from Nis is a single mom of a nine-year-old boy. She has for years dreamed of opening a salon, but has always been one step short of succeeding. She entered the Single Moms competition and opened her own beauty salon.

**2. Veroslava Kocic** (44) is a single mom of three from Nis. As a hobby, Veroslava and her two sons have been making ornamental items of behaton. They have decorated their garden with beautiful drinking fountains, ornamental objects and flower pots. Thanks to funding won in the competition, they have turned their hobby into small family business that would provide her and her two sons with jobs.



Photos: Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation



**3. Daliborka Smolovic** (41) from Kragujevac is a single mom of a seven-year-old girl. She is a baker and has for years made and sold cakes and desserts. Her desire was to open her own bakery and had been for several years saving money and buying parts of equipment. Thanks to the funds received, her small shop – SM bakery - in Aerodrom neighbourhood in Kragujevac has already started its operation.

**4. Svetlana Rankovic** (41) from Kragujevac is a single mom of two boys. Given that she has been unemployed for years, she decided to start her own business. Thanks to support of the Single Moms competition, Svetlana has launched a catering service.

**5. Snezana Svedic** (33) from Novi Sad is a single mom of two girls. Snezana is a trained kindergarten teacher who has been out of work for years but has seized the opportunity and entered a retraining programme available to persons registered at National Employment Service. After finishing her training, she became a beautician and applied for competition with an idea of opening a beauty salon. She has since received necessary equipment and started her own business.

**6. Vesna Krcmar** (39) from Novi Sad is a single mom who has for several years owned and managed company Olson and Johanson, which specialises in cosmetic services and trainings. Aware of difficulties faced by single moms, she signed up for funds willing to expand her business and hire another single mother.

**7. Biljana Cakic** (36) from Leskovac has three sons. Despite her degree in Serbian Language and Literature, Biljana has for years looked for a job in the profession, but without success. "I only had a love for my children and desire to secure them a better life. It was difficult," said Biljana. Since she has been engaged in fitness, she applied for the competition with the aim to

open her own fitness club. Thanks to EU funds, she has acquired necessary equipment and started her business. Only two months after the club's opening, Biljana has managed to gather a group of ladies who practice regularly and is also a personal and strength coach: "The feedback is great; now I can earn and secure better childhood for my kids".

**8. Marina Cuk** (40) from Belgrade has recently become a proud owner of a health food store, "Kadifica". Marina is a displaced person and a single mom of two girls (9 and 4 ages). Following her husband's death she lost her job and had to take the initiative and start her own business. As a grantee, Marina could afford necessary equipment for her shop and start a business. Apart from hers, there are no other healthy food stores in Zemun polje where her shop is located, and is slowly becoming a local store gladly visited by neighbours.

**9. Ljubica Stojanovic** (36) from Belgrade is a single mom of boy named Luka who suffers from autism. Having in mind her responsibilities, to Ljubica, it is highly important she has a job with a flexible working schedule. Ljubica graduated in Economy but has been out of work for years. She entered the competition for single moms with the aim to start a firm specialised in providing accounting and consulting services in order to have a steady job which can be done from home. Ljubica received necessary IT equipment and underwent training in accounting.

**10. Vesna Stosic** (33) is a single mom from Belgrade who has, after entering the competition, started her own sole proprietorship business that specialises in sewing and selling. Sewing has for years been a hobby for Vesna, a single mom of two girls. She has sewn over 300 different types of dresses before deciding to turn her hobby into a business idea, subsequently supported by the Foundation within competition. ■

The European Union in Serbia supports the economic empowerment of women through the development programme European PROGRES, for which, together with the Government of Switzerland and the Serbian Government, has provided 375,000 euros. This means that 45 women from 22 municipalities in the southeast and southwest Serbia will launch their businesses; the programme will provide to future female entrepreneurs mentoring and technical assistance in business management in order to ensure the sustainability of the business. Through these and other activities, including the opening of two social enterprises, it is expected that by the end of 2017 it will be provided at least 85 new jobs in the municipalities covered by the programme.

## RESULTS

- Ten single mothers started their own businesses
- Workshops "Single Parents and Labour Market" held in five cities
- Brochure "Protection of single parents in Serbia – analysis of legal framework and recommendations" published
- Initiative to amend the relevant laws governing the life of single parents launched
- Small business started within the project proved sustainable a year after their start.





# DANUBE STREAM FOR GREEN DREAM

PROJECT TITLE:  
**Danube Stream for Green Dream**



SECTOR:  
**Tourism, Local Development**



PROJECT VALUE:  
**€193,210**



INSTRUMENT:  
**IPA 2011**



BENEFICIARIES:  
**Local self-government**



DURATION:  
**September 2013 – March 2015**



Photos: [www.pustolovina.rs](http://www.pustolovina.rs)

**H**ow to become a top eco-tourist destination? Some answers are provided by Vojvodina Environmental Movement: their project “Stream4Green” aimed at development of ecotourism as a key instrument in fight against poverty, environmental protection and promotion of sustainable development. European Union financially supported it through Socio-economic Development of Danube Serbia Region (SEEDSR) project, implemented by Austrian Development Agency.

“Stream4Green” project has utilised abundance of natural resources in the area of Sremski Karlovci and developed innovative eco-tourism products providing authentic educational, recreational and gastronomic experiences for those coming to this region. It has also created sustainable job opportunities for community members, by involving them into development of joint products and thus co. Another goal of the project was that the products receive international certificates “Eco-label” or “Green Sticker” as a proof of their ecological orientation.

“The biggest value of the project was a creation of a new perspective for development of the region of Sremski Karlovci. A lot of tourists have already visited the town and its vicinity, but only for a day trip, because we have lacked the offer that would attract visitors to stay longer. There are two localities where Karlovci open towards Danube – Kovilj-Petrovaradin Rit and Fruska Gora; this project enabled people to enjoy not only the city itself, but those other places as well,” says Project Manager Nikola Blagojevic.

Within the project, a valuable new infrastructure was acquired for the Mountain hut Strazilovo which was turned into energy efficient building with 50 beds, fully equipped for organisation of educational and sports activities. Facilities, among other things, include artificial climbing rock and modern sport terrains. According to Nikola Blagojevic, those facilities became permanent ownership of the local community, more precisely, they are owned by Mountain-ski club Strazilovo.



In addition, camping equipment for groups of up to 30 persons was purchased, along with 20 mountain bikes. Some 10 kilometres of trails at Fruska Gora and in Kovilj-Petrovaradin Rit are marked and available for hiking and biking. A catamaran for transportation of tourist groups over Danube, as well as five canoes for recreational river ride were purchased, offering tourists an opportunity to explore Danube and enjoy the landscape.

Promoted on several occasions, including international fairs abroad (Utrecht, the Netherlands and Ljubljana, Slovenia, both in January 2015) and at home (Belgrade), the project significantly contributed to the rise of number of tourists in the area of Sremski Karlovci: "Our estimation is that, thanks to the equipment acquired within the project and programmes generated around it, around 40 percent more tourists paid us a visit in May this year compared to the May 2015," Blagojevic says. Tourists came from all over the world – from Lithuania to the United States, they are interested mostly in cycling and going to eco-camps.

The project offers various possibilities to visitors – from organisation of youth/school camps to so-called corporate packages to companies and their employees. What visitors find the most attractive, according to project employees, is a catamaran.

Once completed, the project became self-sustainable and continued its operation. What makes this particular project a "golden star" is the fact that it directly employs 10 people who work for Vojvodina Environmental Movement while 30 business entities (individuals and local companies) are indirectly involved and make profit out of it.

At the same time, local companies have gained access to a new market: a good example is a catering company, says Blagojevic, underlining the fact that, indirectly, some 30 people from local community are economically strengthened via the project.

Sremski Karlovci municipality co-financed the project with €10,000. Asked about reactions of local people, project manager replied: "Citizens



of Sremski Karlovci had fantastic reactions because it was the first time that the Municipality has supported a partnership between civil and public entities. More and more local people want to see if there is 'room' for them too. We are now literally seen as the only ones working on a development project in the Municipality."

Added value – results which were not planned ahead of the project – reflects in creation of a cluster in the field of eco-tourism, but it exceeded expectations, so a Local Action Group (LAG) was formed, including following five municipalities: Sid, Sremski Karlovci, Beocin, Irig and local communities Mestin and Vizić as part of Backa Palanka municipality.

Its name is LAG Fruška Gora-Dunav, says Blagojevic proudly.

Project is also working to develop a new image of Sremski Karlovci and its positioning as an attractive eco-tourism destination.

The 2016 tourist season official opening was held on 23 April, when some 240 people used free facilities offered by the project. Web site promotion is ongoing, as well as the one in social media, and seems that both function very well. But the best promotion is always having satisfied visitors that are welcomed by local hosts pleased to be in position to earn their living in their improved local community. ■

## RESULTS

- Mountain hut « Strazilovo » renovated
- Summer stage/ conference room in Sremski Karlovci constructed
- 10 km of trails for hiking and bicycle ride marked at Fruska Gora and Kovilj/Petrovaradin Rit
- 10 people employed in Vojvodina Environmental Movement
- 30 people from local community strengthened economically



# MUNICIPAL BONDS – NEW CHANCE FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT TITLE:

**Municipal Finance Support, Component 2 of the EU Exchange Programme**



SECTOR:

**Local Development**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€5.8 Million (Entire Exchange 4 Programme)**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2012**



BENEFICIARIES:

**SCTM, Local self-governments**



DURATION:

**May 2013 – September 2015**

Sabac and Stara Pazova are the first cities in Serbia which have issued the municipal bonds by public offering, which enabled cheaper and more favorable financing of major infrastructure facilities, while customers – citizens and companies – got a chance to safely and conveniently invest their money. The entire emission was realised with the support of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, within the Exchange 4 programme, funded by the European Union. The aim of the EU Exchange 4 Programme is to improve the management of local self-government units in the Republic of Serbia, and to improve the level of services in the towns and municipalities in order to promote local development.

Citizens of these two pilot municipalities thus were first to experience benefits of municipal bonds as a new pipeline of financing. This was the first time in Serbia that all domestic and foreign organisations and individuals were able to buy municipal bonds (previously it was the practice only for a known customer).

After thorough preparations, in December 2014, the emission of long-term municipal bonds of the city of Sabac, in the value of RSD 400 million (€3.3 million), and with Banca Intesa as a selected sponsor, has been fully implemented; the demand was 50 percent higher than the supply. Official results of the first public municipal bond emission were presented on 12 January 2015, when it was announced that the money collected

would be used for reconstruction of the city swimming pool.

“I am pleased with the success of joint municipal bond emission project implemented by the City of Sabac and the SCTM. I would like to thank all bond buyers, both citizens who have bought bonds worth RSD26 million, and businesses, i.e. economic entities who have recognised this offer as a way to earn money. We have now secured conditions for reconstruction and construction of the city swimming pool,” said Mayor of the City of Sabac, Nebojsa Zelenovic.

Djordje Stanicic, SCTM Secretary General and Exchange 4 Component 2 coordinator said that “the City of Sabac was the first Serbian local self-government to publicly issue municipal bonds aimed at domestic and foreign, natural and legal persons, which made an example for other towns and municipalities to follow. Citizens are able to see how, through their own investment, major infrastructure facilities are being built in their vicinity and, once the deadline has passed, get their money back with interest rates much higher than those they would gain when saving money in banks.”

Aleksandar Bucic, SCTM Assistant Secretary General in charge with finance, stressed that Sabac was the first town in Serbia whose securities were traded on Belgrade Stock Exchange which, as he said, was an important development for Serbian capital market.



Photos: Goran Sivacki



Reconstructed and enlarged city pool in Sabac was opened six months after the completion of the sale of bonds, on 17 June 2015.

After this successful start, a path for another success was laid – Municipality of Stara Pazova issued municipal bonds in May 2015. With the support of the SCTM and sponsored by UniCredit Bank, this municipality has successfully placed the whole issue of debentures in the amount of RSD125 million (€1.05 million) during the enrolment period, which lasted from 4-19 May. The demand made by both legal and natural persons was higher than supply roughly 2.7 times.

Public offering has enabled all interested investors, domestic and foreign legal and physical entities to buy Stara Pazova municipal bonds. 12,500 euro-indexed bonds were placed at the individual value of RSD10.000 and with an interest rate of six percent per annum. This emission has provided funds for renovation of the downtown Nova Pazova, construction of sports hall with a bowling alley in the village of Golubinci and construction of kindergarten in village Belegiš.

“It is very important that through such cooperation, citizens can at the same time contribute to regulation of local community and save their money as if they had put it in a bank. The interest is high, and our intention is to implement similar activities in the near future, at the best interest of citizens,” said President of Stara Pazova municipality Djordje Radinovic on the occasion of municipal bonds issuance.

#### WHY MUNICIPAL BONDS ARE GOOD INVESTMENT

- Bond-based revenues are completely tax-free (as opposed to savings in banks where tax amounts to 15 per cent)
- Apart from the generated income, citizens get a bridge, a kindergarten, a new street or any other local infrastructure project that is always and exclusively of capital nature
- This form of investment is guaranteed by local self-governments' budgets
- Citizens may sell their bonds at any given moment at secondary market, i.e. Stock Exchange, thus gaining a more liquid investment compared to bank deposits (cancellation of term deposit lowers the interest rate, whereas selling a bond one can even earn extra money due to difference in buying and selling price).

The most important novelty of this programme is that citizens can be buyers of municipal bonds. Currently, Serbian citizens hold more than €8 billion of savings in short-term deposits (up to 1 year). Interest on savings in euros during the past years have fallen significantly and now is between 1% and 2%. In a situation where the city / municipality decides to issue bonds and to allow citizens to buy them, citizens have the opportunity to invest in the development of their city and to earn money on the basis of interest rate that is higher than the interest rate that can be obtained by classical savings.



Swimming pool in Sabac, photo: Jugoslav Radojevic

Representatives of SCTM emphasised the importance of support this process had received from the EU Delegation to Serbia through programmes Exchange 3 and 4. “The emission of municipal bonds in Stara Pazova, which has been realised more than successfully, is the real indicator of the prospects for these securities to the domestic capital market and of the future that lies in financing local investment projects. We have already had feedback from other towns and municipalities who want to follow the example of Stara Pazova; besides motivating citizens to invest in their community, to us at the SCTM, it was indeed the primary objective.” ■

#### RESULTS

- Swimming pool in Sabac constructed and opened in June 2015
- Leftover money from sale of bonds in Sabac spent on street lightning and park landscaping



# SUPPORT TO THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNGEST

PROJECT TITLE:  
**Improvement of  
Preschool Education  
in Serbia (IMPRES)**



SECTOR:  
**Education**



PROJECT VALUE:  
**€3.75 million**



INSTRUMENT:  
**IPA 2009**



BENEFICIARIES:  
**Ministry of  
Education, Science  
and Technological  
Development**



DURATION:  
**February 2011 –  
January 2014**

In a bus – mobile kindergarten belonging to Po-zarevac Preschool Institution “Ljubica Vrebalov”, children from Roma families are attending the preparatory preschool programme. Accompanied by their preschool teacher Ivana Vratonjic, they spend four hours a day in this mobile kindergarten. “The children adapted quickly. We are playing, improving language skills and physical education, hygiene habits,” says Vratonjic.

The bus – mobile kindergarten is an EU donation, delivered to preschool institution within IMPRES project (Improvement of Preschool Education in Serbia). The joint project with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development was implemented from February 2011 until April 2014 and funded by European Union with €3.75 million. It was the first project ever to be implemented in the area of preschool education in the country; it focused on improvement in the quality of preschool programmes and preschool institutions capacity expansion.

Fifteen pilot municipalities were included in project activities: Pozarevac-Kostolac, Petrovac na Mlavi, Arandjelovac, Leskovac, Krusevac, Razanj, Surdulica, Gadzin Han, Bela Palanka, Uzice, Tutin, Ruma, Beocin, Sabac and Mali Zvornik.

The project produced special and specialised programmes for preschools, for different needs of children and parents. It provided nine mini-vans and one bus-mobile kindergarten which transport children from rural and remote areas to pre-schools.

Three-year old Andjela from a village near the municipality of Mali Zvornik could not go to kindergarten because she lives in a remote mountain village, there is no-one to drive her there and also because the overcrowded kindergarten did not have a place for her. Another 40 children from several villages in the area could not have playtime and early childhood education with their peers. In spite of the municipality’s efforts to find a solution and the goodwill of staff in the pre-school institution “Crvenkapa” in Mali Zvornik, these children were denied the opportunity to grow in the kindergarten

because there was no place for any new children and the transportation issue remained unresolved. Thanks to the IMPRES project, a mini-van picks up Andjela and her friends every day, takes them to the kindergarten where a special programme has been created for them, and then drives them back home. The transportation is free, and beside the children, parents and teachers are satisfied too.

Through the project, 1,700 children aged 3 to 5.5 years across Serbia have been involved in preschool education. These children had previously never been able to come to kindergarten because they live in rural families, their parents are often unemployed and their homes located in remote areas with no transportation.

IMPRES project had also financed the construction of seven prefabricated facilities now serving as kindergartens in Sabac, Ruma, Uzice, Krusevac, Leskovac and Tutin. Preschool waiting lists have been eliminated or at least shortened. Parents were given the possibility to enrol their children to preschool on time and provide them with better education. Equipment delivered was intended to ensure improved access to preschool education



Photos: Project archive



especially for vulnerable children (from rural and poor areas, Roma or other minorities, handicapped, etc.).

In Mali Zvornik municipality, children from vulnerable groups are included in special programmes that have been developed within the project. More than 50 preschoolers from seven villages participate in daily activities in special programmes – playroom, organised in the primary school in village Brasina.

“The progress is obvious in many ways, such as discipline and socialisation with other children. It’s also easier for me that she spends more time with other children and gets used to school,” says a mother from Brasine, whose child is included in preschool education. “We spend time together and in that manner build a certain sense of belonging to the group and to each other, as well as develop tolerance and understanding,” says Natasa Ristic, a teacher.

Added value of the project was introduction of good European practice: in March 2014, representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, school advisers, representatives of preschool institutions involved in the project and project team members participated in a study visit to Ghent, Belgium.

Activities of IMPRES Project included trainings, workshops and seminars for representatives of local self-governments and the staff working in



Photos: Opening of the kindergarten in Krusevac

pre-school institutions. In addition, the Project provided support in the organisation of pre-school networks and the development of an appropriate legal framework for pre-school education. According to data provided by the Serbian Ministry of Education, 32% of children aged from two to six-year old were in pre-school education in 2002, 47 % in 2009, while in 2011 and 2012 the figure reached 48 % of pre-school children included in the institutionalised preschool education. ■

## RESULTS

- 1,700 children aged 3 to 5.5 across Serbia have been involved in preschool education.
- Opening of seven kindergartens
- 10 vehicles – 9 mini vans and a bus, serving as a mobile kindergarten, delivered to preschool institutions. Every day, children are transported from their homes to kindergartens.





# FOR A BETTER LIFE: HELP IN DIFFICULT TIMES

PROJECT TITLE:

**European Union  
Support for  
Improving the Living  
Conditions of Forced  
Migrants**



SECTOR:

**Support to Refugees  
and IDPs**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€14.2 million**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2012**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Commissariat for  
Refugees and  
Migration Of The  
Republic Of Serbia,  
Office For Kosovo  
And Metohija**



DURATION:

**April 2014 –  
April 2016**

Šardan Avdulji was born in Gnjilane, Kosovo. He lived there until 1999, when, in search of security and a better life, in the age of only 20, he fled to Bujanovac; having no means of his own, he was given modest accommodation at the “Salvatore” collective center, living in conditions that were far from adequate. He saw humanitarian work as his calling, so he started to work as a volunteer in a local Red Cross center in Bujanovac. That was where he met Turkijana, who would later become his wife, and mother of his three children. The Avduljis became a family of five, but they still lived in a small room at the collective center. Both Šardan and Turkijana continued to work with the Red Cross; years went by and they managed to save enough money to buy a small plot of land in Bujanovac. When they heard about the possibility that within the EU funded project “For a Better Life” they can apply and be granted a prefabricated house, they were overjoyed – after 16 years of living in a collective center, they saw a chance to open a new chapter in their life. They submitted their application and after it was established that they meet the requirements, they were granted a prefabricated house. Implementing organisation – the Housing Center helped them and equipped the house, and provided assistance with the construction permit issuance and infrastructure connection. In December 2015, the Avdulji family moved into their new 60m<sup>2</sup> house in Bujanovac, and indeed they opened a new chapter in their lives, full of opportunities.

Avduljis are among 189 families who were granted prefabricated houses, equipped for living, within For a Better Life project. All families are of refugees or forced migrants, whose members for years had lived in collective centres.

With the budget of €14,2 million, the project is one of the biggest in the field of assistance to refugees in Serbia: it is designed to provide grants to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees under the Readmission Agreement. Its aim is to provide successful integration and adequate living conditions to forced migrants who choose to stay in Serbia, and help ensure a sustainable return for those who wish to return to Kosovo\*. It should bring about closure of many of remaining collective centers (in August 2016 there were only 8 centres left, while in January 2013 there were 33).

The EU project is implemented in cooperation with the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and the Office for Kosovo of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, as well as the partners - Housing Centre, Danish Refugee Council, HELP and UNHCR.

In three years of project duration, several lines of activities aimed to help refugees and IDPs have been realised: agreements for the construction of housing facilities were signed with municipalities across Serbia; apartments and prefabricated houses were given to refugee and IDP families who for years, even decades, had lived in collective centers in Bela Palanka, Belgrade,



Avdulji family in the collective centre



Bujanovac, Kladovo, Kragujevac, Pančevo, Rača, Šabac and Vranje. The families who chose to return to Kosovo were ensured a sustainable return: they were provided with assistance in solving administrative issues through information sessions held at their place of return; many families were provided with the equipment they need to start their own business in agriculture and other fields. In total, 220 families were assisted in their return to Kosovo; 110 families received individual return support packages, while 13 groups of returnees with 28 members received grants to start their own businesses. Additional 13 groups comprising of 42 members were trained on business development plans.



Ceremony of opening of prefabricated houses in Kladovo, May 2015

Their stories differ very much, but yet they have one thing in common: quest for a better life.

Slavisa Milikovic returned to Srbobran, Kosovo, with his family of three; he is a member of a group of returnees “Osojane” that received start-up business grant in the value of €50,000. The group’s main activity is farming, and the funds were used for agricultural machinery – two tractors, planters, disc harrows, corn pickers and wheat harvesters were acquired. The machines were delivered in August 2015, after six months of training and mentoring in order to help the group register their company and start their own business.

“When I say that this is tremendous support that changed our lives, I am speaking not only on behalf of my family, but of all the families... We plan to invest the money we made from selling wheat and corn into more farm equipment and expand our business”, says Slavisa.



Sardan Avdulji in front of the new family house

The municipalities of Arilje, Batočina, Bojnik, Kula, Ruma, Sombor, Topola, Vranje and Vrbas actively participated in integrating the families: they helped the families procure construction materials and equipment, supported their economic empowerment and helped them with the shipping and assembly of prefabricated homes. Economic empowerment for Jelena Milošević (57), a refugee from Sarajevo who lives in Arilje, meant receiving a business start-up assistance package which enabled her to open and run her own accountancy company.

*\*This designation is without prejudice on the position of status and is in line with UNSC Resolution 1244 and opinion of ICJ on the Kosovo declaration of independence..*

## RESULTS

- Prefabricated houses provided and equipped for 189 families
- Apartments provided and equipped for 191 families
- 110 families received assistance packages to help their return to Kosovo
- 10 start-up businesses were launched
- 220 families were given the economic stability they need for a sustainable return to Kosovo
- Professional training was provided for 13 returnee groups with 42 participants
- 13 returnee groups with 28 members received grants for equipment they need to start or expand their businesses
- 10 start-up businesses launched
- Collective centres closed.



# PALLIATIVE CARE MODEL INTRODUCED THANKS TO THE EU

PROJECT TITLE:

**Development of Palliative Care Services in the Republic Of Serbia**



SECTOR:  
**Health**



PROJECT VALUE:  
**€3.3 million**



INSTRUMENT:  
**IPA 2010**



BENEFICIARIES:  
**Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia**



DURATION:  
**March 2011 – November 2014**



Photo: [www.palliativecareserbia.com](http://www.palliativecareserbia.com)

As of January 2014, patients suffering from incurable diseases in the area of Cacak are taken care of by a doctor and seven nurses (or technicians) who work in the Department of Palliative Care, a ward of Cacak General Hospital. Dr. Danka Dragicevic and colleagues are dedicated to patients and their families 24 hours a day. Doors depicting open arms and butterflies are always open to families; their loved ones receive around the clock care. Those are the patients suffering from severe chronic progressive diseases accompanied by chronic pain, cancer and patients with neurological diseases. It does not have to be and usually there are not directly dying patients, but they share the diagnosis of a terminal disease. Care of patients in this difficult period and care for dying patients and families during the period of mourning – are also part of palliative care.

World Health Organisation defines palliative care as “an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual”.

In Serbia, palliative care was only randomly organised in hospitals and clinical centres, so the care of terminally ill patients was put mainly on the family. The worrying trend of the rise in mortality due to incurable diseases (both malignant and non-malignant) was another reason to launch the project “Development of Palliative Care Services in the Republic of Serbia” in March 2011 with aim to support Government of Serbia in its efforts to develop palliative care service in line with National Strategy for Palliative Care and international good practice. The over-riding principle was that access to relief of pain and palliative care is a basic human right.

The Department of Palliative Care of Cacak General Hospital has been established and equipped through this project. Along with it, 14 more palliative care units throughout Serbia were opened and equipped, while medical staff attended specially tailored trainings. More than 1,200 health and social care workers have been trained to provide palliative care services. The project also helped in introducing palliative care as a subject in medical schools, health colleges and Faculty of Political Sciences (department of Social Policy and Social Work) curricula.



The EU has granted €3.5 million for the project, spent on education in the field of palliative care and establishment of specialised palliative care services, procurement of vehicles for primary health care centres, home care teams, and medical equipment for palliative care units to be established in general hospitals and clinical hospital centres. Ministry of Health has financed reconstruction of premises in health institutions which later became palliative care units.

In Zrenjanin, patients and their families have only words of praise for staff of palliative care unit: they are given support from the moment they are diagnosed with a severe disease up to the moment of intense sadness when a family is saying their last goodbye.

Patients at this Unit are looked after by one doctor and five nurses. The Unit replaced former surgical ward of the Zrenjanin hospital in September 2012, covering an area of 440sq meters (eight beds for patients, a day care unit and family space). Occupancy at the Unit ranges from 90 to 100%, whereas roughly 95% of all patients suffer from cancer. R.J., a middle-aged man from Vojvodina suffers from a life limiting disease. Only few days after admittance, he said he felt much better: every day he was visited by family members who spent time with him and watched World Cup matches on television in his room.

“In some cases, when the patient in question is ill for a long time, if he fulfils the required preconditions, we admit him/her to the Unit so that we can give the caregivers who are constantly carrying the burden of caring for a severely ill patient a respite and a chance to recover so that they can continue taking care of patients when he/she returns home. And this is certainly most beneficial. On staff, we have a psychologist, a physician and a physiotherapist, as well as a social worker and priest who come upon invitation,” says Dr Nedeljka Boskov, Head of Extended Treatment Unit and Oncology Department.

In Cacak, Dr Dragicevic in the General Hospitals’ Department for Palliative Care shares her experience after first several months of work: “People think that this is a place to come to die, but this is not award for dying. We help patients when their



Photo: Room in Palliative care unit in Zrenjanin General hospital



Photos: www.bolnica.org.rs

condition worsens. They spend a few days with us, which means a lot to their families. Patients are satisfied with the care they receive. The nurses feed them, take them outside, hold their hand if necessary all night long. It’s hard not to get attached to these patients, but that’s life”. Her patient, 54-year old S.K. suffering from lung cancer, after six days spent in the Department briefly say that he was brought bck to life: „I did not even know that this department existed... I wish that such service existed in the whole of Serbia“.. ■

## RESULTS

- Model of palliative care developed, together with a set of accompanying documents: standards, guidelines and instruments for palliative care in clinical practice
- 15 palliative care units opened across Serbia
- Palliative care introduced as a subject in teaching process
- Organised education on palliative care for more than 1,200 health and social care workers
- 54 vehicles donated to primary health care centres in 52 towns
- Amended Law on Health Care which enables establishment of Palliative care centres, sent to the Parliament
- Increased availability of essential medications for palliative care patients



# AIR QUALITY MONITORING ACROSS SERBIA

## PROJECT TITLE:

**Supply of Equipment for Air Quality Monitoring; Twinning Assistance for Implementation of an Air Quality Management System**



## SECTOR:

**Environment Protection**



## PROJECT VALUE:

**€6 million**



## INSTRUMENT:

**CARDS 2006,  
IPA 2007-2012**



## BENEFICIARIES:

**Serbian Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection**



## DURATION:

**2009 – 2012**

Serbia has air quality problems similar to those of other industrialized countries notably in the cities and in centres of economic activity with high pollution potential. The energy industry, steel smelters and traffic but also the significant burning of fossil fuel and wood in private homes contribute to poor air quality in almost all of Serbia's agglomerations – with negative impact on public health and environment. To improve the situation Serbia decided to introduce EU air quality standards into its legislation and develop the capacity to achieve these standards over time. This required to enhance the legal and institutional framework for ambient air quality protection/management, support Serbia's first air quality assessment, develop action plans for cleaner air in selected agglomerations and strengthen capacity at central and local level with regards to their implementation/enforcement. Pre-requisite for this work was the set - up of a country wide network of **air quality monitoring stations**, which has been done with EU funds.

EU assistance provided **€6 million** for capacity building notably through Twinning with EU member state institutions and significant investment in Serbia's Air Quality Monitoring Infrastructure.

The main impulse to the establishment of national automatic monitoring of air quality in Serbia was the CARDS project "Supply of equipment for air quality monitoring stations, Serbia". Preparatory activities and much of the project was carried out in period 2008-2010, and was completed 2011.

The project enabled supply of the equipment for air quality monitoring, technical assistance for development of the strategy for environmental protection, strengthening of the administrative capacities for management of air quality, supply and installation of 28 automatic air quality monitoring stations and associated laboratory equipment. These supplies formed the backbone of a national automatic ambient air quality monitoring network managed by the SEPA. With data generated amongst other by the new network Serbia's first preliminary air quality assessment has been produced in 2011. The subsequent zoning of all of Serbia allowed distinguishing between areas where air quality is good, where is poor and where measures for air quality improvement are required.

Measuring points of 28 air quality measuring stations (AQM) were established in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Bor, Pancevo, Kikinda, Sremska



Photos: [www.sepa.org.rs](http://www.sepa.org.rs)



Mitrovica, Sabac, Loznica, Obrenovac, Smederevo, Kostolac, Valjvo, Yajecar, Kragujevac, Paracin, Cacak, Uzice, Kraljevo, Krusevac, Kamenicki Vis, Kopaonik and Vranje. Additional 12 stations were provided later, by the then Fund for the protection of environment.

As SEPA director Milos Zivkovic summed up, "The European Union funded the setting up 28 automatic stations, mobile and laboratory calibration and a series of very costly analytical instruments for the National Laboratory as a supplement to the full completion of the system. Twelve stations were purchased by the Fund for Environmental Protection and from donations. This is the densest and best-established system in the whole Balkans".

National Automatic Air Quality Monitoring Network, managed by the SEPA, provides reliable data for the assessment of ambient air quality in accordance with national and EU legislation. It is based on common methods and criteria which ensure that the information collected on air pollution is sufficiently representative and comparable across Serbia. Standardized measurement technique and unique equipment for all measuring stations are used for collecting data. Calibration Laboratory is essential part of data quality assurance chain. First time ever, all those made possible for Serbian citizens to follow data on air quality in their places of residence, in the real time. At the strategic level, Air Quality Plans were adopted for three "pilot" towns and cities – Bor, Novi Sad and Belgrade.

The Air Quality Plan for the agglomeration of Bor adopted in 2013 was the first such plan developed and approved in Serbia. The Copper Smelter in Bor had been recognized as the primary source

of high levels of the pollutant sulfur dioxide in the air. To address the problem, a new smelter had to be built; the concentration of sulphur dioxide in ambient air in Bor is expected to be reduced by 90% compared to current levels.

"One of the main results of the EU assistance was preparation of three pilot air quality plans for agglomerations Belgrade, Novi Sad and Bor. Having in mind that AQ plans are relatively new tool of Policy and Planning in the field of air protection in the Republic of Serbia that shall be used in zones and agglomerations with poor (category III) air quality, this activity was very useful for Republic of Serbia", said **Duška Radojičić, advisor in the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection.**

"Introducing EU recognized methods of measuring air quality parameters required the training of local experts for their use and analysis of measurement results. The capacity-building projects funded by the EU provided that SEPA experts along with representatives of local governments learn the correct procedures for measurement, control, processing and analysis of results of measurements in order to obtain valid assessment of air quality at the level of the Republic", said **Tihomir Popovic, Head of the SEPA Air Quality Control Department.**

**This strategic investment at the level of the regulator is flanked by investments in excess of €100 million in direct air pollution abatement in the energy sector and energy efficiency measures.** Other EU funded programmes like those investing in industrial pollution prevention and control (IPPC) and regional waste management centres also have a direct impact on reducing air pollution. ■

## RESULTS

- Legal and institutional framework for ambient air quality protection/ management enhanced
- Serbian citizens have now real time online information and thus full transparency of air quality across Serbia. The current air quality monitoring system also allows for early warning in case of exceedences of limit values of air pollutants, including in case of industrial accidents.
- The division of Serbia into air quality zones and agglomerations and their characterization enables Air Quality Assessment and Air Quality Management in line with the requirements of EU standards as transposed in the Serbian Law on Air Protection.
- Citizens living in agglomerations with air quality problems benefit from the implementation of air quality plans.
- The institutional capacity built at the Serbia Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) to assess, monitor and report on ambient air quality in compliance with EU standards instills citizens' trust in the credibility of data important for their well-being and thus trust into a critical state institution.



# HOW THE EU FUNDS “QUANTUM LEAPS” IN SERBIA

PROJECT TITLE:  
**BioSense Institute**



SECTORS:  
**Research and  
Development**



PROJECT VALUE:  
**More than €10  
million through  
14 FP7 projects  
realized**



INSTRUMENT:  
**FP7 - Seventh  
Framework  
Programme for  
Research and  
Development;  
HORIZON 2020  
programme**



DURATION:  
**2007-2015**



BioSense Institute building, Novi Sad

European funding changed our lives here in BioSense. We now have 50 young people, 30 out of which have PhD degrees, who would otherwise all be abroad if it weren't for EU funding." This is how Professor Vesna Crnojevic-Bengin, Director for research at the BioSense Institute in Novi Sad, describes the impact EU projects had on this institution.

The Institute, located in a modern central building of the University of Novi Sad, hires 50 researchers striving to introduce advanced information technologies in agriculture, food safety, ecology and environmental protection. It kicked off in 2006 as BioSense Centre, founded by "a group of researchers, enthusiastic scientists at the Faculty of Technical Sciences – electronic engineers and telecommunications experts. In the beginning, there were only three of us; this was one among many organisational units of the Faculty. We believed that the knowledge we had should be put to community use and, naturally, since we are based in Vojvodina, we focused on the application of our knowledge in agriculture," says Professor Crnojevic-Bengin.

To date, through European Union projects BioSense has received more than €10 million in grants and became an internationally recognised institute and by far the most successful Serbian participant in the FP7 Programme, with as many as 14 FP7 and 10 Horizon 2020 projects implemented. Its Director for research describes this journey through "three quantum leaps."

The first EU project - AgroSense which has at the same time been the first Serbian project in the FP7 Programme (Seventh Framework Programme for Re-

search and Development), enabled the first quantum leap. The project was worth €1 million: equipment, staff and networking and dissemination each received a third of the money. According to Crnojevic-Bengin, networking has been extremely important, so as a result of the first project and the networking within it, all of the other EU projects followed.

"We have received equipment, our returnees from abroad came to work with us, whereas our experts travelled abroad and we have suddenly realised the benefits brought by European approach to researching and their attitude toward science, because research is both individual and group process." As one of the important things, she mentions the support provided by the University and Provincial authorities.

The second "quantum leap" has also been made thanks to EU grant, also via FP7 Programme: through the InnoSense project, in 2013 they received €3 million to strengthen BioSense centre. These funds were used to establish laboratories, unique in the region and some even in Europe, covering six scientific areas – nano technology, microelectronics, remote sensing, big data, mechatronics, agrorobotics... hiring 50 people, fully pursuing the main idea behind the Institute: to apply IT in agriculture. BioSense thus acts to synergistically develop two sectors, which, rated by some, have the most potential in Serbia: IT and agriculture. Through researches focused on precision agriculture, but also through a specially designed programme of knowledge transfer from research to the agricultural sector, BioSense supports the development of sustainable agriculture in the region.



Within the Institute's group for nano and microelectronics, scientists are working on sensors that will be "so small and cheap that would be disposable", measuring and sending various data on the condition of crops and soil.

"One of the main challenges in agriculture is the variability of soil and several technologies have to be combined to make a maximum use of it. To obtain information and advise farmers what to do to be sustainable, you have to gather the data opportunistically, from various sources: satellites, drones, sensors in the soil, on plants... Such a system, which we are currently developing at the Institute, will equip the farmers but also the government with a tool to get the valuable real-time information on the crop conditions and structure, to predict the yield, and also the price of certain crops. On the other hand, bringing IT into agriculture makes it more appealing to young people: we foresee the new generation of farmers with tablets, well acquainted with IT, and capable of sustaining themselves and their families from working on the land," says Professor Crnojevic-Bengin.

BioSense has also established the first Living Laboratory for precision agriculture (and the first living laboratory of any kind in Serbia) which includes relevant domestic SMEs, companies, farmers, decision makers and other beneficiaries, with the aim to align BioSense research with their specific needs. Through EU project FRACTALS, BioSense enabled 13 Serbian SMEs to receive grants worth €1,7 million, for the development of innovative products applying "Future Internet" in agriculture.

As a result of successful EU projects, in April 2015 a new independent legal entity was formed – the BioSense Institute. In the competition of nearly 200 research institutions from across Europe, BioSense won project ANTARES within the most prestigious Horizon 2020 Teaming call, which aims to evolve BioSense Institute into a European Centre of Excellence (CoE) for advanced technologies in sustainable agriculture. ANTARES foresees "the third quantum leap" of BioSense: the planned investment of € 28 million will allow the Institute to evolve into the focal point of research in the region and one of the leading European scientific institutions which will contribute to swifter economic growth of the country. A total of nine centres are foreseen at the European level, with BioSense being the only non-EU institution.



"The Teaming call required that independent decision making is implemented in European Centers of Excellence. The success of ANTARES project was the clear signal to our government to establish the BioSense Institute and strengthen our focus in multidisciplinary research. We have won ANTARES Phase 1, which provided us with €500,000 to develop a detailed business plan for the future. We have teamed up with DLO from the Netherlands, the leading European institute for applied and market-driven research in the agrifood sector will secure that the know-how and experience of the highest European standards are transplanted to Serbia. ANTARES builds upon the complementary expertise of BioSense and DLO: the synergetic combination of ICT and agricultural knowledge will strengthen the competitive positions of both institutions and provide answers to challenges that go far beyond borders of any single country."

BioSense is now awaiting for the results of ANTARES Phase 2, where European Commission makes the decision whether it would become European Centre of Excellence. Since the Commission insists on the cooperation with national institutions, the Government of Serbia has secured a €14 million investment into research infrastructure of the new European Center of Excellence.

"EU funding should create jobs for another 100 researchers. ANTARES is a smart investment, as it will simultaneously help Serbia to bridge the gaps with Europe through research and innovation, while at the same time it will contribute to safe and adequate food for future generations of Europeans. We are very optimistic about this," says Institute's Director for research. The decision, likely to be another quantum leap for BioSense, but for Serbia as well, is expected to be made in late 2016. ■

## RESULTS

- Research institute in Novi Sad, established and equipped
- 50 researchers employed
- Research and innovation in the field of IT for agriculture and bio systems



# WE ARE HERE TOGETHER – COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT TO ROMA CITIZENS

PROJECT TITLE:

**We are Here Together – European Support for Roma Inclusion**



SECTOR:

**Social Inclusion**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€4,8 million**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2012**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Republic of Serbia**



DURATION:

**June 2013 –  
June 2015**



Training of pedagogical assistants.  
Photo: OSCE/Milan Obradovic

While I did not have an ID, it was as if I did not exist in this world". Valjbona Šaciri is a Roma woman who needed three years and six different procedures to obtain personal identification document. Speaking at a panel dedicated to improving living conditions of Roma community, held in Belgrade in November 2015, Valjbona said that her life has been much easier ever since she obtained the ID and health security document. Her children have also been registered, and they now can go to school or to see a doctor without any problems. She is among almost 500 Roma citizens who received legal assistance and obtained personal documents within the project "We Are Here Together".

In spite of numerous efforts to improve the status of Roma, their community remains one of the most vulnerable in the country, which is manifested by their extreme poverty and their hindered access to rights and services. Project We Are Here Together - European Support for Roma Inclusion was created with the aim to combine resources on the ground, coordinate relevant services and institutions and

work efficiently in several key areas for the Roma status. In implementation since June 2013, the project was funded by the EU and implemented by OSCE Mission to Serbia in cooperation with Office for Human and Minority Rights, relevant ministries, Serbian European Integration Office, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit and NGOs Praxis and Roma Education Fund.

Since its beginning, the project has supported the implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia in following areas: access to fundamental rights, citizen participation, education, health and social care, adequate housing and creation of new jobs

In order to enhance inclusion in a comprehensive way, the project helped introduction of Joint Mobile Teams for Roma Inclusion, as working bodies of local self-governments. Their main activity is to visit the Roma settlements and provide assistance to Roma families and individuals. Mobile Teams were officially established in March 2014 and since then they operate in 20 pilot towns/municipalities



Vehicles for the mobile teams for the inclusion of Roma  
Photo: Milan Obradovic/OSCE

(Bela Palanka, Bojnik, Bujanovac, Koceljeva, Knjazevac, Kovin, Kragujevac, Krusevac, Leskovac, Novi Sad, Odzaci, Palilula, Pancevo, Prokuplje, Smederevo, Sombor, Valjevo, Vranje, Zitoradja and Zvezdara). Each team has five members: Municipal Roma Coordinator, Roma Health Mediator, Pedagogical Assistant and experts from the Centre for Social Work and Employment Service.

Mobile teams are assisting the Roma population to exercise their rights such as getting legal documents, health care, assistance in education and in search for a job. As a support in their work, 20 field vehicles have been distributed to towns/municipalities in September 2014.

Slavko Jovanovic, Roma coordinator in Belgrade municipality Zvezdara, says that "Mobile Team's tasks are to help Roma to be included in the life of local community, to help them in regards with health issues, social problems, etc". At their satisfaction, final beneficiaries – Roma citizens, list what positive changes they saw. Sinisa Konstantin from the village of Bavaniste, near Kovin, says he is satisfied with the cooperation with MobileTeam, whose support brought electricity, packages of social care, food etc. to the residents of the settlement.

Education is also on the list: "One of the most important results of our work is establishing of mechanism for following assiduousness of Roma school kids", says Djulijeta Sulic, Roma Mobile Team coordinator in Smederevo. Her colleague, Milena Jovanovic who is member of similar team in Kovin, stresses that scope of her work includes "enabling to all Roma in a community to have health card, primary school kids to be examined prior to enrolling, etc".

Thanks to Mobile Teams work, 1,300 Roma kids have been enrolled in preschool education facilities. To support education, 1,000 Roma high school students received EU-sponsored scholarships: one of them, Željka Fan from Zabalj, says that high school students want a college degree, which is why the scholarships are so important to students and their parents.

Another important component was mapping of 13 informal settlements and developing urban development plans in 11 out of 20 pilot towns/municipalities. To boost employment among Roma population, 31 Roma civil society organisations and four networks were supported, as well as 18 selected businesses with potential to employ Roma received support in the form of equipment or trainings, which resulted in employing of 62 Roma. ■

## RESULTS

- There have been more than **969 administrative and judicial procedures** initiated in order for Roma to obtain personal document and legal assistance, and get included in health care, education and social care systems. So far, 469 requests have been resolved.
- **Mobile teams for Roma inclusion**, apart from the assistance provided in the enrolment of 1,300 children in pre-school institutions, also work on the ground and assist individuals and entire families.
- **In the first mentor-monitored training cycle** aimed at Roma and civil society organisations (CSOs) dealing with Roma inclusion, 31 OCDs and four networks took part.
- School year of 2014/2015 saw the provision of **monthly scholarships for 525 Roma students**, as well as mentor and peer support. Training and licensing of 191 pedagogical assistants have been supported as well.
- Following the situation analysis in 20 pilot towns/municipalities, priority list is being prepared for the creation of infrastructure projects. 583 substandard Roma settlements have been mapped.
- 18 selected businesses with potential to employ Roma received support in the form of equipment, mentoring and training, which resulted in employment of 65 Roma men and women.



# EU ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: SAFE PLACE SERBIA

PROJECT TITLE:

**EU Assistance to Refugees and Migrants**



SECTOR:

**Social policy**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€7.000.000**



INSTRUMENT:

**European Commission's special measure**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Commissariat for Refugees and Migration; Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy; Ministry of Interior**



DURATION:

**November 2015 – November 2016**

Ibrahim Ishan, 19 years old, came from Accra (Ghana) to Serbia about year ago. From Ghana he went to Niger then to Libya, Lebanon, Turkey and Bulgaria and finally came to Serbia, where he decided to stay. He didn't have to pay any smugglers on the way. He lives modestly in reception camp in Krnjaca; in January 2015, he started working for Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. He thinks everything is great in Serbia, he loves his job – working with a lot of people who are coming from different countries, cultures, mindsets. He says that helping them makes him happy. Ibrahim is trying to learn Serbian and he applied for asylum; he strongly believes Serbia is the country for him, because of state of being comfortable that he has found here. He is amazed by big-hearted people surrounding him, he likes the way people in Serbia are treating refugees and the others. Also, he doesn't want to leave his football team: he plays for Youth Football Club Belgrade which brought him a very famous nickname – Maradona.

In one year, around 600,000 refugees and migrants from Asian and African countries have passed Serbia. Ibrahim belongs to a minority of them who seeks asylum in Serbia, but is not the only one praising Serbian treatment of refugees and

migrants. From the beginning of the refugee crisis, the European Union was very much involved in efforts of Serbian authorities and of civil society to help refugees and migrants that entered the country.

To help Serbia cope with the unprecedented refugee flows, the European Union has allocated a €7 million aid package, which comes from a special measure adopted by the European Commission. The funds are being used to support Serbia's national and local authorities and institutions in increasing their operational capabilities and the capacity to coordinate the assistance. Furthermore, the funds will be used for improving reception capacities in the country by reconstruction existing buildings or constructing new refugee centers across Serbia.

Under the project, the European Union will donate equipment and supplies for the Ministry of Interior and Commissariat for Refugees and Migration to help Serbia deliver the necessary services to refugees. In cooperation with the Commissariat, Labour and Interior Ministries, ASB, HELP and Danish Refuge Council, activities are implemented in 7 municipalities: Belgrade, Bosilegrad, Dimitrograd, Pirot, Preševo, Subotica, Šid.



Ibrahim Ishan in the Asylum Centre in Krnjaca. Photo: Jovan Zivanovic/ASB



Photos: Three kilometer long column of refugees, among them Anisa Mahmud Samid (Serbia - FYR Macedonia border) Photo: DRC (Danish Refugee Council)

Six months after the start of the project, there are visible results: Asylum Center in Krnjaca has been renovated, as well as three facilities within Transit asylum Centre in Bosilegrad. The procedure for renovation of asylum centres in Pirot, Dimitrovgrad and Banja Koviljaca has started.

Accommodation capacity of the Reception Centre in Presevo has been expanded by providing 300 additional beds. With this donation, Commissariat for Refugees and Ministry of Interior were given the necessary support to overcome the migrant crisis and to prepare for new challenges at the border crossing with FYR Macedonia. According to Slobodan Savovic, deputy director of the Reception Centre in Presevo, the number of migrants has increased at the end of July, and during one day only the Centre has accepted 152 persons.

In total, 348 bulk beds were purchased and distributed to reception/asylum centres; meals, medical and social assistance were provided on a daily basis to refugees and migrants. About 250 local staffers were employed in centres throughout Serbia.

Their work has been registered in many stories of migrants and refugees, such is the story of Anisa:

Anisa Mahmud Samid fled war-torn Syria together with two daughters. The journey itself is something a 41-year old Anisa reluctantly talks about; she just says it's something she wants to forget and that traveling from Syria to FYR of Macedonia depleted family resources, so they have arrived in Serbia with no money and hungry.

Upon arrival to Serbia, the family was registered and temporarily accommodated and in One Stop Center in Presevo managed by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. They were able to rest and to receive food and dry winter clothes from Commissariat staff engaged through the EU Funded Project "European Union Assistance to refugees and migrants in Serbia". The family was also supported by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) staff working in the EU funded Child Friendly Space in Presevo, Serbia that DRC is operating as a partner of UNICEF.

Before leaving center and continuing their journey to Germany which is their final destination, Anisa expressed her gratitude to the people of Serbia for all the compassion and understanding.

## RESULTS

- Asylum Centre in Krnjaca has been renovated, as well as three facilities within Transit asylum Centre in Bosilegrad
- 348 bulk beds were purchased
- Procedure for renovation of asylum centres in Pirot, Dimitrovgrad and Banja Koviljaca has been started.
- Meals, medical and social assistance were provided on a daily basis to refugees and migrants.



Child Friendly Space, Presevo, Serbia Photo: DRC (Danish Refugee Council)



# LESS CASES OF RABIES IN WILD ANIMALS

PROJECT TITLE:

**Support to the Control and Eradication of Classical Swine Fever and Rabies in Serbia**



SECTOR:

**Agriculture**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€20 million**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Veterinary Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection**



DURATION:

**2008 – ongoing**

Rabies remains a health hazard across the Western Balkans. In Serbia, approximately 200 cases of rabies in animals were confirmed each year between 2000 and 2010, mostly among the red fox population, but also among other animals, including domestic ones such as cats and dogs. A multi-year program initiated by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) has the objective to eradicate rabies from the wildlife in all Western Balkans countries and, in that way, eliminate the risk this dangerous disease presents for the health humans.

The long-term goal is the eradication of animal diseases which will improve the health of our citizens, but will have a positive impact on the economy by improving export of live animals and agricultural products.

In Serbia, the programme started in 2011 and already brought the rabies virus in the wildlife close to eradication with only 3 cases of rabies in animals confirmed in 2014 and 2 cases in 2015. The programme is simultaneously implemented in other countries of the region as well since rabies is a trans-boundary disease.

The programme foresees at least five year duration in order to orally vaccinate every fox in the country against rabies. To achieve this goal, the European Union is working side by side with the Ministry of Agriculture and veterinary institutes in Kraljevo, Novi Sad and Belgrade. The vaccination is done by distributing the vaccines enclosed in baits which entice the mammals, in particular foxes. Most of these baits are being dropped by small airplanes. Campaigns for aerial distribution of vaccine baits cover the entire territory of Serbia apart from settlements, rivers, and lakes. The campaigns are conducted twice a year, in spring and autumn; the latest one was implemented in June 2016 and that was 12th in a row.



The EU has also funded scientific equipment, disease-surveillance systems, and a dozen cooling vehicles for the task. The project Beneficiary is the Veterinary Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment Protection, while the area covered encompasses the territory of Serbia. The value of the EU funded programme for eradication of animal diseases including rabies since 2008 has reached €20 million.

With the EU donations, centers for highly dangerous infectious diseases of animals in all veterinary institutes in Kraljevo, Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis have been equipped. The centers serve for rapid response in case some infectious disease appears in the territory of Serbia

“With this donation, we created a laboratory for rabies, which is modernly equipped and we have participated in the training of employees. This equipment is important for the better quality of work of the Institute and the work on the eradication of rabies. With a programme of continuous training, the readiness level was raised so as to be able to react at most within six hours from the time of receiving the order”, said Zoran Debeljak, Director of the Specialized Veterinary Institute “Kraljevo” (2013).



According to Dr. Slobodan Stanojevic, technical director of the Institute of Veterinary Medicine of Serbia in Belgrade, the Institute has received substantial equipment and supplies through the EU-funded programme: "Equipping the Institute is significant for several reasons. It is a national reference laboratory and with the additional equipment we have significantly increased the diagnostic capabilities of our laboratories and increased the level of safety in our laboratories. Now we can implement diagnostic procedures more quickly and efficiently, we have achieved greater confidence in the accuracy of test results, we have introduced novelties in research and we document the results and examination flow with more ease," considers Dr. Stanojevic.

As a result, representatives of Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection were able to say that rabies in Serbia was under the successful control and that eradication was on the way.

In September 2015, opening the national conference "Serbia a step away from eradication of rabies", State Secretary at the Ministry Danilo Golubovic stressed that for the second consecutive year the country kept the record low in registered cases of rabies in wild animals, thanks to preventive measures implemented with the help and support from the European Union.

Serbia will be formally considered a rabies free country two years after the last confirmed case of rabies; such a status will mark a significant improvement in protection of public health. ■



## RESULTS

- The number of cases of rabies in wild animals in Serbia significantly reduced
- Reference laboratories in Serbia equipped with sophisticated machines
- Programme of continuous training of veterinary specialist organised
- Safer environment for animals leads to better conditions for agriculture



# ELECTRICITY GRID GETS ITS OWN SOUTH STREAM

PROJECT TITLE:

**Construction of Substation 400/110 kV Vranje-4 & Leskovac-2**



PROJECT VALUE:

**€21 million (EU Contribution €15,500,000)**



INSTRUMENT:

**IPA 2010**



BENEFICIARIES:

**Elektromreza Srbije**



DURATION:

**December 2012 – August 2014**



In the Vranje area, electricity supply is both insufficient and unreliable as it consists of two very long and old overhead lines (OHLs 110 kV). In this region of South-east Serbia, there has been an increase in population accompanied by an increase in local demand for electricity which is met by local distribution facilities (x/0,4 kV level). If the region's local industries are to expand and future economic investment promoted, adequate power supply is an absolute necessity. In addition, further increases in electricity demand is anticipated when Corridor X is finalised (Salzburg-Ljubljana-Zagreb-Belograd-Nis-Skopje-Thessaloniki, particularly when the "C" branch from Nis to Sofia is included).

That was the reason the European Union financially supported a project of construction of a substation in Vranje. "Construction of Substation 400/110 kV Vranje-4 & Leskovac-2" project is only one of numerous projects which EU supported in Serbian energy sector and the biggest one in the south of the country.

The project is worth €20.5 million and it encompassed the construction of SS (substation) Vranje 4 with its unraveling lines and expansion of the existing TS Leskovac 2. The funds invested by do-

nations from the European Union, from to the IPA 2010 programme, amounted to €15 million, including the acquisition of the power transformer and equipment for installation in existing 400/220/110 kV Leskovac 2; Public Company Elektromreza Srbije (EMS) has invested €5.5 million of its own funds.

The first phase of the project, consisting of design, construction and delivery of equipment, was financed by European Union with €15million, in the form of donations to the Republic of Serbia and with EMS as the end user.

The second phase – installation of the equipment supplied and the construction of the connection to high voltage network, was funded by the EMS.

In only two years (December 2012 - December 2014), the project has been finished and, after obtaining technical permissions, the substation, located in Donja Trebesinja village near Leskovac, was opened.

Opening ceremony, held beginning of February 2015, was a big event for Leskovac, as well as for the EU and EMS:



“Elektromreza Srbije has managed to complete, in due time, this capital project whose construction, commissioning and connecting to the interconnection line TS Nis 2 - 2 TS Leskovac - FYR Macedonian border, enables us to provide a long term solution for the safe and efficient supply of Southeast Serbia with electricity. In addition, the EMS's substation Vranje 4 will set the basis for faster economic development of this part of Serbia and the citizens get a better chance for quality of life and new jobs”, said on the occasion General Manager of EMS Nikola Petrovic.

In addition to reliable electricity supply in South Eastern Serbia, the construction of a new substation in Vranje and its connection to the 400 and 110 kV network contributes to reduction of losses of the transmission network in this part of the country; at the same time the power grid in Vranje and its surroundings receive quality and safe power transformation with the highest voltage level.

Like other projects which the EU has financed and implemented in Serbia, the construction of substation Vranje should be viewed in the context of a much broader support which the European Union has given and continues to give to the power sector in Serbia.

Since 2001, through a number of projects to this sector, the EU has donated around €555 million,

primarily in emergency repairs and works, then in power plants, mines, repairs and modernization of transmission networks. “Serbia has the potential to be a major player on the regional electricity market and through these projects the EU helps Serbia to achieve that objective”, the Head of EU Delegation to Serbia Michael Davenport stressed at the opening ceremony.

Vranje substation is connected to the high-voltage power line Nis-Leskovac-Macedonia, whose construction was also funded by the European Union with €28,5 million. In addition, the station is built according to the highest technical and technological standards and meets the most stringent zoning and environmental requirements.

This project is part of the southern Serbia electricity development network which will provide improved and reliable power supplies for the region. It will facilitate economic development in southern Serbia by providing power access for investments and economic activities along Corridor 10.

With these investments, the 4 hydro power plants at Vrla (parts of Vlasina system) will be at optimum capacity and efficiency. Their locations (geographical and electrical) are at a midpoint between Leskovac and Vranje, so both facilities have equally favourable impact on the production regime of Hydro Power Plant Vrla. ■

## RESULTS

- Project contributed to energy security in South Serbia
- Improved stability of electricity supply of Vranje
- Extended capacity of the electricity infrastructure in Leskovac



Photos: www.ems.rs



# EUROPEAN UNION INFO OFFICES IN SERBIA

The European Union Information Centre in Belgrade and Info Points in Novi Sad and Nis offer all relevant information about the European Union, its history, institutions and functioning, as well as EU-Serbia relations. Primary role of the offices is to improve general knowledge about EU's activities in Serbia, provide information about EU's assistance and information about the process of European integration. EU info offices offer information about EU youth programmes, educational programmes, as well as research and innovation support programmes. The EU Info Centre in Belgrade and two Info Points are places where citizens may obtain information on the European Union and participate in various events in the area of culture and education. Answers are offered on the spot, via telephone or e-mail. ■



## EU INFO POINT NOVI SAD



**eu** info point Novi Sad European Union Info Point (EU Info Point) Novi Sad is the place where citizens can obtain accurate and relevant information about the European Union, its institutions, programmes and funds, as well as about opportunities offered to Serbia and its citizens during the accession process. It is instituted in September 2014, but as May of 2015, citizens of Vojvodina have a chance to visit EU Info Point in its new premises in down town Novi Sad. Premises intended for citizens serve as the meeting point of all campaigns and celebrations of important dates, such as the celebration of European Day of Languages. EU Info Point's goal is to bring together and connect people interested in European integration process, as well as to promote diversity and intercultural cooperation within the Province, home of over 25 national minorities. ■

## EU INFO POINT NIS



**eu** info point Niš European Union Info Point Nis is the place where residents of the largest city in South East Serbia and other towns in the region can obtain information in relation to the European Union. As of September 2014, EU Info Point is at service of citizens, to whom it has already presented its activities through several actions. Citizens of Nis have had a chance to support or take part in "In Town Without my Car", organised within European Mobility Week, one of the many great activities implemented by EU Info Point aimed at citizens in this part of Serbia. This will act as a meeting place during other campaigns and celebrations of important European and international dates. EU Info Point Nis will assist in networking of civil society organisations dealing with European Union, youth organisations, as well as other stakeholders from Nis and its neighbouring cities involved in the process of European integration. ■

**For more information:****Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia**

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# EUROPEAN UNION INFORMATION CENTRE

As of May 2011, the EU Information Centre, located in Dom omladine Beograda, is a place where citizens can find information about the EU and participate in various cultural events. The mission of the EU Info Centre is to offer answers, on site, by phone or e-mail, to EU related questions and help in finding information and guidelines for access to EU projects, programmes and funds. The Centre aims to improve general awareness on the EU accession process and to bring European Union closer to Serbian citizens as well as to answer all their queries concerning the EU, its history and functioning. ■



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## Working hours

Monday – Friday: 10:00–19:00  
Saturday: 10:00–15:00



## EU INFO CENTRE REALISES ITS MISSION BY:

- organising debates on European values, policies and functioning of the EU institutions (e.g. simulation of European parliament session)
- developing partnerships with organisations and institutions active in Serbia's European integration process
- bringing Serbian citizens closer to perspectives inherent to the EU accession process.



## ASK US

At the EU Info Centre you can find answers to all your questions related to the EU: from the history of the Union to the latest changes in EU legislation. Also, we are here to offer you help when searching information about EU-funded projects and programmes. You can ask us directly at the Centre or via e-mail: [info@euinfo.rs](mailto:info@euinfo.rs). The information you obtain are adapted to Serbian perspective and the needs of Serbian citizens as the EU Info Centre strives to get closer to citizens and what they really want to know.

## VISIT US

The Centre is open for group visits; it organises seminars, workshops, debates and other events on EU integration issues, as well as cultural events and art exhibitions. The Centre is accessible to all citizens of Serbia: all you need is to announce a group visit in advance via e-mail or by phone.

## LIBRARY DATABASE

Almost 2000 publications and books (in Serbian and English) are at your disposal: fact sheets, booklets, brochures about the EU, its policies, enlargement, relations between Serbia and the Union, etc. All sorts of publications are available either in hard copy if you visit the Centre, or in electronic format available for download from the following web-sites: [www.euinfo.rs](http://www.euinfo.rs), [www.europa.rs](http://www.europa.rs) and [www.eubookshop.eu](http://www.eubookshop.eu).

# GROWING UP

