



ALEKSANDRA JOVIĆ, TEAM MANAGER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S POVERTY
REDUCTION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FOCAL POINT

With New Plans in 2007

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in Serbia is a medium-term development framework aimed at reducing the key forms of poverty by creating material and other prerequisites and by providing opportunities to each person to provide the basic subsistence for themselves and their families.

The PRS offers an analysis of causes, characteristics and profile of poverty in Serbia, as well as main strategic guidelines for eliminating them in the coming years. The Government of Serbia is committed to economic growth and development, for which reason the PRS activities are geared towards economic development and growth, prevention of emergence of new poverty and care for the traditionally poor groups.

The final PRS document was adopted on October 16, 2003, whereas on February 17, 2005 the Government authorized the Deputy Prime Minister to regularly inform the Government on the Strategy implementation process, in cooperation with the PRS Implementation Focal Point.

On July 12, 2006, the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Deputy Prime Minister's Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point organized the Inter-ministerial Conference on Poverty Reduction in order to announce which recommendations laid out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia the Government and the Ministries are planning to realize in the year to come. The Conference focused on the activities planned for the most important sectors which affect poverty and plans that are expected to contribute to poverty reduction in the immediate future: education, healthcare, economic development, agriculture, and rural development. The aim of the Conference was to emphasize the priorities that will require allocation of sufficient funds from the Budget of the Republic, as well as from international donors resources.

Specifically speaking, the priorities of the ministries for 2007 which were conveyed at the Conference were related to plans for including all children in the education system, how to provide access to healthcare services for the entire population, how to assist redundant workers through additional training and encourage them to take advantage of opportunities for economic development and new employment, as well as to provide social protection to those who cannot use these opportunities and who need social assistance.

The main conclusions of the Conference relate to the need to intensify the cooperation of all partners in the implementation of plans and finding solutions to common challenges through cross-sector approach. Cooperation in developing Yearly Operational Plans (YOP) in line ministries is a step towards joint efforts on poverty reduction in Serbia.

As of September 2006, the PRS Implementation Focal Point shall initiate thematic cross-sector meetings with the aim of identifying obstacles and challenges in the PRS implementation process, as well as the means for their overcoming.

The Conference emphasized the significance of the implementation of PRS recommendations at the local

level through development and implementation of local development strategies, as well as the need for more intensive cooperation and information sharing between the national and local levels. Municipalities require support in the development of planning capacities, provision of resources, and promotion of a harmonized donor and institutional approach to initiatives at the local level. Creation of parallel mechanisms and bodies should be avoided and good practices should be promoted with an emphasis on small and underdeveloped municipalities which are in need of additional assistance. Presentations of the institutions that participated in the Conference may be downloaded at the PRS website www.prsp.sr.gov.yu.

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PRS IMPLEMENTATION FOCAL POINT

Review of Funding Opportunities

The PRS Implementation Focal Point, together with domestic and international partners who take part in the PRS implementation process, has prepared a review of domestic and international resources aimed at dealing with the problem of low awareness and which should provide coherently an overview of resources put at disposal to municipalities, NGO, SMEs and entrepreneurs.

The Review aims at facilitating the usage of various financing opportunities available for institutions and organizations in Serbia, and which should enable the abovementioned partners to get involved more actively into the implementation of PRS-set measures. The Review shall be updated every two months with ongoing and planned competitions and shall be distributed to a large number of beneficiaries through NGO, SCTM and ministries networks.

The Review may be downloaded at www.prsp.sr.gov.yu

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MINISTRY OF LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS: SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FUND

Competition for Social Protection Improvement Projects

The Social Innovations Fund programme, run by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Affairs, has sent an invitation to all interested organizations to submit projects in the social protection area. Funds amounting to EUR 900,000, with European Union funds through the European Agency for Reconstruction, have been provided for financing these projects. The Government of the Republic of Serbia has provided additional CSD 60,000,000 from the budget. The program is being implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The priorities of the third competition open by Social Innovations Fund have been divided into two groups:

1. Establishing links with institutions transformation programme which is being implemented by the Ministry, i.e. development of social protection services which support the transformation of institutions for housing beneficiaries, and
2. Developing other innovative social protection services in the local community.

The target groups of the competition have been listed by importance: children without parental care, children with development problems, children with behavioral problems, adults with disabilities, elderly persons, members of marginalized groups, victims of violence, children and youths with high-risk behavior, adults and elderly at risk of entering the social protection system.

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POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FOCAL POINT**

With New Plans in 2007

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In the previous period, numerous mechanisms have been created at the central and local level, which are to enable a more efficient implementation of PRS-set recommendations, as well as other priority strategic documents. Thanks to the methodology of the Joint Project, PRS recommendations have been integrated in plans of ministries for the next year in an organized manner.

The PRS Implementation Focal Point has, within the PRS implementation project supported by the Department for International Development of the UK, offered various kinds of support to its partners. Capacities of key ministries have been strengthened by engaging PRS experts who deal with integrating PRS recommendations into plans of ministries, by developing new laws envisaged by the PRS and mobilizing donor resources for programmes implementing the PRS. The Poverty Reduction Committee of the National Assembly has been provided assistance of the PRS advisor who assists MPs in monitoring and commenting laws in the domain of the PRS. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities has received support for establishing the Network of Small and Underdeveloped Municipalities and creation of programme which shall serve for financing the development and implementation of strategic plans starting already from the beginning of the year.

Consultations with civil society organizations are under way in order to define satisfactory mechanisms for their intensified engagement in the PRS implementation and cooperation with the Focal Point. In order to facilitate access to available funds for all partners, the Review of Funding Opportunities has been published. International donors continue with supporting the PRS implementation, and it is particularly significant to recognize the importance of the implementation by the European Commission which envisages resources for its implementation through the new financial mechanism (IPA).

Next it is necessary to step up the linking and harmonization of a larger number of activities and partners from the national and local level. The preparation of the Newsletter before you is a part of our efforts to provide as many stakeholders as possible with relevant information on activities linked to the PRS implementation. We would like to invite you to send us information on your activities and projects relating to the PRS implementation in order to improve the information sharing with all partners taking part in the process.

The Deputy Prime Minister's PRS Implementation Focal Point shall organize the Second National Conference on Poverty Reduction, where all the partners involved in the implementation of the PRS will be given the opportunity to discuss methods of improving cooperation and its outcomes. Better outcomes imply the improvement of the quality of life for all the citizens of Serbia.

**MINISTRY OF LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS:
SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FUND**

Competition for Social Protection Improvement Projects

Continued from page 1

Applicants must be registered domestic citizen associations (non-governmental organizations); public social protection services (centers for social work, institutions for housing beneficiaries and other social protection institutions); other local and regional public services; private and public companies; private contractors; local self-government authorities, all seated in Serbia. All interested organizations must apply as a consortium.

Interested organizations should submit their project proposals by September 22, 2006. Project proposals are to be sent in sealed envelopes to the Social Innovations Fund, 11000 Belgrade, Terazije 41/II,

exclusively by registered mail. For more information visit

<http://www.sif.minrzs.sr.gov.yu/>

Objectives of the Social Innovations Fund are: increasing the quality and accessibility of social protection services; promoting partnerships between the public and non-governmental sector in outlining and providing social protection services; reducing vulnerability, social exclusion and poverty among the target groups, as well as promoting their capacities; involvement in developing sustainable services which are conceived as participative and aimed at the needs of the beneficiaries, focusing on the promotion of available local resources.

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA:

Joint Project - Towards the More Efficient Implementation of Reforms

In 2006 the Government of Serbia continued with the implementation of the Joint Project - Towards the More Efficient Implementation of Reforms. The basic goal of the project is to establish a unified system for planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting within the Serbian public administration, as one of the mechanisms aimed at a more efficient implementation of reform initiatives within the Government.

The basic principle of the Government, which is implemented in the case of the Joint Project, is a systemic introduction of a new planning methodology, where ministries clearly define their objectives, priorities and programmes in Yearly Operational Plans that will contribute to the achievement of objectives included in the two main strategic Serbia's development documents (the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Serbia's National Strategy for the EU Accession).

As part of the project, more than 150 civil servants have successfully completed the training for the implementation of the new planning methodology. Based on the knowledge and experience gained in the previous year, the selected ministries have started the second cycle of annu-

al planning. Compared to 2005 when the project included the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Services, this year the project has also involved the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Capital Investments.

The yearly plans of the ministries, which comply with the new methodology of objective-based planning, are in their final phase of completion. As of this year, the plans will serve as a basis for requesting and allocating government funds according to the programmatic budget classification and in accordance with the instructions issued by the Ministry of Finance for the 2007 budget preparation, which will be "tested" by some of the Ministries involved in the Joint Project.

In addition to line ministries, the Joint Project is implemented by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point, the Serbian European Integration Office, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of International Economic Relations, the General Secretariat of the Government, and the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

NATIONAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Projects in Line with PRS Recommendations

The Government and the Ministry of Finance have initiated the drafting of the National Investment Plan, aimed at increasing the efficiency of utilizing the surplus privatization revenue this year and in the following years, as well as loans from international financial institutions (World Bank, EBRD, EIB) and EU pre-accession funds, which will be made available to Serbia following the signing of the Agreement on Stabilization and Association with the EU.

Serbia will in this way obtain a National Investment Plan for a six-year period, with a detailed plan being adopted for the period 2006 through 2008, and indicative sector plans for the period 2009 through 2011. Priority projects and recommendations from the National Strategy for the EU Accession and the Poverty Reduction Strategy will be given precedence in the adoption of the Plan.

The presentation of NIP sector plans is under way.

www.mfin.sr.gov.yu

BELGRADE CITY HALL

Competition for Projects in the Area of Social, Child, and Veteran and Disability Protection

The Social and Child Protection Secretariat announced a competition for projects in the area of social, child, and veteran and disability protection. The competition was open to public and non-governmental organizations that have been active in the City for at least three years.

The Secretariat will finance projects or parts of projects with funds of up to CSD 400,000, and the projects shall be realized by December 31, 2006. 38 of 142 submitted projects were selected. Competition results may be seen at www.beograd.org.yu



MICRO-DEVELOPMENT FUND: Employment of Refugees and Displaced Persons

The Micro-Development Fund (MDF) is an organization that contributes to employment and self-employment of the unemployed in Serbia through loan programs and vocational training. The aim of the Fund, which was founded in 2001 by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), is the promotion of the social and economic standard of the economically active and impoverished population in Serbia. The MDF focuses on refugees and displaced persons, as well as the local population with good business ideas, actively taking part in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Cooperation with the PRS Implementation Focal Point is related to new employment opportunities. The section of the Strategy on employment issues emphasizes in particular the obligation to create a legal framework for the operation of micro-loan institutions, bearing in mind their significance for impoverished entrepreneurs.

The MDF carries out the following activities:

1. Micro-loan program: micro-loans are intended for starting up or developing small business operation in the domain of production, craftsmanship, services, trade, agriculture or animal husbandry. The MDF activities cover the Central and South-East Serbia through two regional offices in Užice and Niš, with a number of field offices (Čačak, Kraljevo, Nova Varoš, Čajetina, Novi Pazar, Vrnjačka Banja, Jagodina, Krugujevac, Kruševac, and Leskovac).

The MDF revolving loan funds were established using funds from previous donations by UNHCR, DSI, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as later donations, such as the donation by Italian organization Tavolo Trentino, intend-

ed for crediting agriculture and tourism in the Kraljevo municipality.

2. Program of vocational training: The MDF carries out a program of vocational training in cooperation with local educational institutions. The vocational training and additional training of displaced persons from Kosovo is financed from the UNHCR donation. The new project titled Support for Promoting Living Conditions of Refugees and Displaced Persons, financed by EAR, represents part of this program, the MDF and the Danish Refugee Council taking part in vocational training and approval of grants. The municipalities covered by this project are: Vršac, Petrovaradin, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Bajina Bašta, and the focus is on helping refugees leave collective centers.

8,017 loans totaling EUR 10,139,134 have been approved since the founding of the MDF in 2001 until the end of April 2006, with 18.5% accounting for start-up loans creating or maintaining 5,057 cases of self-employment. The average credit amount was EUR 1,319, while women made for 42% of the clients. The largest number of loans was granted in the areas of services, trade and animal husbandry, the largest number being in Niš and Kraljevo.

207 trainings and 19 curriculum trainings were held in 8 municipalities in 2005, covering 29 different vocations. The evaluation of the vocational training program showed that 61% of the course-takers got employed in less than 6 months, while 31% of the users of the vocational training program also received MDF loans.

www.mdf.org.yu
or e-mail: office@mdf.org.yu
tel/fax: 011/344 6815, 245 1240

SIEPA: New Financial Assistance Programme for Exporters

SIEPA has initiated a programme of financial assistance to domestic enterprises. The overall budget of CSD 100 million is financed from the budget of the Republic, and resources shall be granted to companies by means of public competition. The amount that may be approved to a company ranges from CSD 250,000 to CSD 2,500,000. The competition shall be open from July 21 to September 19, 2006 and shall be announced in daily papers, electronic media and other means of communication.

The grants are primarily intended for successful small and medium-sized enterprises producing and providing export-oriented goods and services, which currently do not have a majority market share abroad and which possess potential and good business projects to achieve this.

Submitted applications shall be publicly opened on September 26, and the deadline for submitting requirements for funds is December 12, 2006. Interested applicants may download applications and other documentation from the website of the Agency (www.siepa.sr.gov.yu) or personally in the Agency premises.

SIEPA finalized the implementation of the Programme of EU Financial Assistance to the Development of Export Marketing of Serbian Companies last year, which served as a model for the assistance programme. 192 applications were collected in 6 competitions, 98 of which fulfilled conditions stipulated by the EU. The prevailing activities of approved projects were: introduction of the quality system, visits to foreign markets, development of promotional materials and participation at international economic fairs.

Tel: 011 3398 545; 3398 550

Fax: 011 3398 814

www.siepa.sr.gov.yu

CIVIC INITIATIVES: Active Job Seeking

800 youth from the territory of Belgrade shall be trained for active job search by end February 2007 within the project Strengthening Capacities of Youth for Developing Job Seeking Skills and Motivation. Seminars are intended for youth aged 19 to 30 registered with the National Employment Service in Belgrade and who seek jobs for the first time, and who have acquired III or IV level of qualifications. The participation of women is particularly encouraged. The total of 40 seminars shall be organized (5 seminars with 20 participants a month). The training model has given excellent results in the region and worldwide. Each seminar is followed by Open Doors - a chance for the youth to meet their trainers twice a month, exchange experience and gain additional support. Seminars are to start on August 15, and are implemented by Civic Initiatives.

Applications for the seminar may be submitted by e-mail: tanjias@gradjanske.org; tel: 011/ 2625-942, 2623-980, 2632-694

PUBLIC DEBATE: Draft Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities

The roundtable on employment of persons with disabilities was organized on June 22 2006 by the Committee for Labour, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Poverty Reduction Committee of the Parliament of Serbia. The roundtable presented an opportunity for in-depth consideration of all relevant issues for stimulating employment of persons with disabilities, so as to introduce representatives of legislative authority with the problem. The Secretary General of the Centre for Independent Life of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia mr Damjan Tatic prepared a situation analysis and a review of legislative and normative solutions on employment of persons with disabilities for the purpose of the roundtable. World Bank data indicate that only 13% of people with disabilities are employed in Serbia, whereas 25,000 unemployed persons with disabilities are registered with the National Employment Service. The Poverty Reduction Strategy for Serbia identifies persons with disabilities as one of the

social groups which is most vulnerable in regard to poverty - around 70% find themselves at the very poverty line or below the line.

The following preconditions for raising the employment rate of persons with disabilities were emphasized: collection of relevant socio-economic data, accessibility of the working place and wider environment, access to information and communication, integrative education systems and capacities for personal assistance.

The roundtable assessed positively the Draft Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities which envisages mandatory quota for employing persons with disabilities for employers with more than 20 employees, stimulation measures for employers, establishment of the Fund for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

The roundtable held in the National Assembly of Serbia was attended by the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Predrag Markovic, representa-

tives of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs and the State Secretary of the Ministry Vesna Piperski-Tucakov, as well as the representatives of the PRS Implementation Focal Point, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Union of Associations for Assisting Mentally Challenged Persons, the Association of Visually-Impaired Persons, the Association of Paraplegic Persons, the Assembly of the Union of Employers of Serbia, the Union of Independent Labour Unions of Serbia, the Association of Enterprises for Professional Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities of the Union of Dystrophic Persons of Serbia, the Association of Students with Disabilities, the Nezavisnost Trade union Confederation, the Institute for Economic and Social Research and the Sector for Legal Operations of the Republic Fund for Pension and Disability Insurance.

The organization of the roundtable was helped by OSCE, UNDP and the Deputy Prime Minister's PRS Implementation Focal Point.



SCTM: Support to Local Development in Small and Underdeveloped Municipalities

The Support to Local Development in Small and Underdeveloped Municipalities project aims to provide support to municipalities to join the process of implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy at the level of the local community, and to create a network of small and underdeveloped municipalities as part of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM). The project is being implemented by the SCTM in cooperation with the Deputy Prime Minister's Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point, the International Management Group (IMG), and the Center for Liberal and Democratic Studies (CLDS).

The Project Steering Committee has chosen 10 municipalities out of the 40 municipalities that were invited to take part in the project (based on the following criteria: population less than 25,000, GDP per capita, geographic position, and ongoing and planned donor programs): Dimitrovgrad, Mali Zvornik, Gadžin Han, Golubac, Knić, Lapovo, Alibunar, Babušnica, Bela Palanka and Sremski Karlovci. The Managing Board consists of representatives of the PRS Implementation Focal Point, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Economy, the Social Innovations Fund, IMG, and SCTM, which also chairs the Committee. In addition to the training, technical assistance and strategic planning for improvement of the situation in the area of social welfare, the ten selected small and underdeveloped municipalities will also receive financing for the implementation of selected poverty reduction activities. Each of the chosen municipalities will receive EUR 10,000 for the realization of one priority poverty reduction activity. The project is financed by the Kingdom of Norway.

The pilot municipalities will represent the core of the network of small and underdeveloped municipalities, which the SCTM aims to establish with support from the Deputy Prime Minister's PRS Implementation Focal Point. This network will represent the mechanism for representation and lobbying of small and underdeveloped municipalities, and will facilitate access of the municipalities to domestic and foreign funds, and encourage them to exchange positive experiences with other municipalities, for the purpose of reducing poverty.

Tel: 011/ 3323 446; www.skgo.org

MINISTRY OF FINANCE: Law on Financing Local Self-Governments

The Minister of Finance Mladjan Dinkia presented the Draft Law on Financing Local Self-Governments, which aims to achieve a more balanced municipal development. The law provides for "fiscal decentralization by transferring the largest budget funds to the poorest municipalities, at the expense of wealthier municipalities in the Republic."

According to the new legislation, 99 poorest municipalities in Serbia will receive greater funding, 44 municipalities will remain at the present level of budget funding, while the income of towns will be cut down. Funds totaling CSD 2.2 billion will be taken from the budgets of four towns and transferred to the accounts of 99 municipalities in Serbia, out of this year's total transfer of CSD 15.4 billion. The greatest funds will be withdrawn from the funding for Belgrade and Novi Sad.

The legislation will allow for predictable local budget planning, since the annual transfer amounting to 1.7% of the GDP will be guaranteed. The total transfer sum for the next year is to exceed CSD 27.7 billion, based on the 6.5% annual GDP growth.

The law also stipulates the founding of a commission for the financing of local self-governments, which would be made up of six representatives of the Serbian Government and five representatives of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. Income taxes will be the source of revenues for local self-governments, which will set the tax rate, with the amount not exceeding the limit laid down by the Law on Property Tax. The draft law also provides for the introduction of a maximum limit to communal taxes, which are to number 16 at the local level.

The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities assisted the preparation of the Draft Law on Financing Local Self-Governments, which is expected to come into effect on January 1, 2007.

The Law was adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia on July 14, 2006.

SCTM AND GTZ: Modernization of Public Utilities in Municipalities in Serbia

Representatives of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and the German Organization of Technical Cooperation (GTZ) have signed a contract aimed at improving water supply and energy efficiency, as well as solid waste management and creating an ecologically clean environment in municipalities in Serbia.

The total value of 14 projects for 14 selected municipalities within the Modernization of Public Utilities programme amounts to EUR 515,000, with GTZ contributing EUR 285,000, with the remainder being financed from the municipal budgets. This is the third year that the SCTM has been implementing the project with GTZ, and this year more than 40 municipalities applied.

Funds for improving water supply have been allocated to the Čičevac, Kuršumljija, Ljubovija and Majdanpek municipalities, while funds for improving energy efficiency will be granted to Dimitrovgrad, Mali Crnić, Nova Varoš and Žagubica. In the

Aleksandrovac, Golubac, Ljig, Osečina, Sokobanja and Trgovište municipalities the waste problem will be resolved using funds from this program. Around EUR 235,000 has been provided for these 14 municipalities, and contracts will be signed with two more municipalities that are to be chosen.

The signing of donation contracts between the municipalities and the GTZ is presently under way. The municipalities will receive donations that will cover up to 50% of the planned investment, with a maximum of EUR 25,000 per project. This includes the support of experts, who will assist the municipalities in concrete planning and technical implementation of the project.

The contracts are of great significance for small municipalities with low capacities to improve their infrastructure. The Project represents the continuation of investments in the infrastructure of these municipalities, where EUR 440,000 was invested in 24 projects in 2004 and 2005.

Local Action Plans for Children in 14 More Municipalities

Local action plans for children will be prepared in 14 more municipalities in Serbia: Kanjiža, Senta, Valjevo, Koceljeva, Užice, Kruševac, Lebane, Bela Palanka, Prokuplje, Vranje, Prijepolje, Priboj, Nova Varoš, and Ljubovija. The local action plans (LAPs) are being prepared with support from the Serbian Government, UNICEF and the municipalities. The LAPs are strategic documents that define the guidelines and priorities for development until 2010, particularly focusing on the poorest population, children and families on the margins of society. The LAPs are drafted based on the National Action Plan for Children in Serbia, which was adopted in February 2004. The plans are based on the national Poverty Reduction Strategy, and aim to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The process of drafting, implementing and monitoring the implementation of the Local Action Plans includes direct active participation of the public and private sector, entire communities, as well as the children. The municipalities will examine the position of children and families within their territories, and draft concrete plans aimed at using local resources to aid children.

Local action plans already exist in three municipalities in Serbia - Kragujevac, Sjenica and Pirot. Their experiences in project implementation have been included in manuals that will help other municipalities as a basis for planning actions for children.

E-mail: Belgrade@unicef.org

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER'S PRS IMPLEMENTATION FOCAL POINT COMPETITION: Local Initiatives

The Deputy Prime Minister's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Implementation Focal Point has launched a programme titled PRS Implementation - Local Initiatives. The goal of the programme is to establish and strengthen coalitions, partnerships and networks at the local level as a contribution to the PRS implementation. The competition is open for the Programme Management Unit (PMU) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Team. The programme shall encompass 10 projects proposed by non-government organizations in partnership with local authorities, labour unions, economic entities and other partners who shall work jointly with the aim of promoting and supporting the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy at the local level.

All citizen associations and/or non-government organizations are eligible to compete for PMU, which have had at least 5 years of experience of working on similar projects and which have capacities to manage and administer similar projects. Interested organizations should submit their applications by August 28, 2006 at 4PM. Detailed information on the programme and application conditions may be found on www.prsp.sr.gov.yu.

The Local Initiatives programme, totalling EUR 200,000, is financed by resources provided by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom intended for the Government of Serbia to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.



ROUNDTABLE:

Status of Women in the Labour Market

The regional report of the SEONET network: Position of Women on the Labour Market: Compliance of Gender Equality Standards with European Union Principle for Serbia in 2005 was prepared by the Glas Razlike. The report encompasses analyses from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, and compares the internal legislation and legal practice with the European Union standards for gender equality. The given analysis frame includes the regulation of labour market, social protection and security. The other EU legal standards on improving the position of women are part of the so-called soft or non-binding law. The main EU categories of gender equality are: equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, equal treatment, protection of pregnant women and mothers that have recently given birth, and protection of self-employed persons.

The report intended for the Serbian public is an extended version and also includes information on violence against women, poverty, the position of Roma women, etc.

The key recommendations in the Report, whose implementation would reduce gender discrimination, are:

- adoption of a new Constitution, gender equality and antidiscrimination legislation;
 - introduction of mechanisms for preventing gender discrimination; providing free legal aid; transferring the burden of responsibility "to the defendant from the plaintiff" in civil court;
 - training unions on gender equality and involvement in securing the principle of equality, including gender equality (such a position of the unions would be accompanied by a new General Collective Contract);
 - training for institutions that implement and/or monitor antidiscrimination policy;
 - realization of public communication about the basis of gender equality in the EU;
 - harmonization of the employment strategy with the needs of women with disabilities, female members of minorities (particularly Roma women), women over the age of 50, as well as women from rural environments.
- glas.razlike@sbb.co.yu, tel: 011/3065 918

PEACE SCHOOL, KRAGUJEVAC
Regional Youth
Employment Center

The Peace School NGO from Kragujevac has started implementing the project of establishing a Regional Youth Employment Center, whose activities will be in accordance with the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Integration Plan for the Socio-Economic Development of Šumadija and Pomoravlje 2005-2008. The project envisages training and contemporary skills necessary for a first employment of the youth. The center will help youths with advice on active job searching and will provide contacts with the private and public sector.

Job Searching Clubs

The Leskovac branch office of the National Employment Service has opened a Job Club. This is a project of the National Employment Agency branch offices in Leskovac and Vranje that has been approved by the European Union. It is being implemented by the European Agency for Reconstruction, as part of the Regional Socio-Economic Development Programme. The project complies with the priorities of the Regional Operational Plan for Southern Serbia, which has been signed by the mayors of all thirteen municipalities.

Obtaining Qualifications

As of September 2006, 275 members of the Roma ethnic group will be given the opportunity to complete the seventh and eighth grade in one year, and receive training for tailors, masons, bakers, cooks, waiters, beauticians or painters. The pilot project, run by the Ministry of Education, will last two years, and if it yields satisfactory results, it will include other adult citizens of Serbia without qualification, who represent one third of the unemployed. 600 Roma aged 15 to 35, half of them being women, are expected to take part in the project in the next two years. They will be placed in 11 classes in 10 schools. The programme is free of charge.

Center for Sustainable
Development
of Southern Serbia

The Education Center in Leskovac, in cooperation with the non-governmental organization ABC from Vranje and the Initiatives from Prokuplje, has initiated the founding of the Center for Sustainable Development of Southern Serbia. The founding assembly was held on May 15, 2006, in Leskovac. The idea to found such a center arose from the need to support the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy at the district and regional level. The Center for Sustainable Development of Southern Serbia will act within the context of the European Charter on Regional Cooperation and European Union Integration Cross-Border Programmes, and in accordance with the needs of the private, public and civil sector in this region.

The founding initiators invited representatives of commercial and public institutions, and the civil sector from 17 municipalities in Toplica, Pčinj and Jablanica districts to assist in the creation of this institution with their knowledge and material resources. The Center will support commercial entities, local self-governments and public companies in all activities that are significant for communal development: development of strategic and project documentation, education, coordination of inter-municipality, district and regional plans, as well as mediation in efficient communication with public institutions and international partners.

Participants in the Center's founding assembly included representatives of the PRS Implementation Focal Point, the Team for Developing the Serbian Sustainable Development Strategy, the Ministry of International Economic Relations, SIEPA, and the Ekonomist magazine, as well as representatives of commercial sector, banks, NGOs and media from the Jablanica, Pčinj and Toplica districts, and the Leskovac Municipality Development Fund. Center for Sustainable Development of Southern Serbia, Stojana Ljubića bb, 16000 Leskovac (Office of the Education Center - Leskovac) tel/fax: 016/ 215 413

Local Employment Councils

Local Employment Councils, which are to take over part of the responsibilities for resolving the issue of unemployment, have been founded in 75 municipalities.

At a meeting focusing on the establishment of local councils held on June 12 2006, the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs Slobodan Lalović explained that the founding of this body is part of the decentralization process in Serbia. The councils will play a significant role in programmes that will be carried out by the Ministry, such as Using Severance Pay for Employment, as part of which people that are left without a job in the transition process can use their severance pay to provide new work for themselves. 140,000 people were affected by the transition measures in 2005, and it is expected that this year the figure will be even higher. In addition to these measures, the influx of direct foreign investments into the country is crucial for reducing the Serbian unemployment rate.

Amendments to the Law on Employment have been announced, applying to the oldest workers that were laid off in the transition and restructuring process, and who are facing poor employment prospects.

WEST BALKANS DEVELOPMENT MARKETPLACE: World Bank Grants

At the closing ceremony of the West Balkans Development Marketplace 2006, the World Bank declared 21 winners who will receive grants worth over USD 700,000 for the best innovative projects aimed at increasing employment in the formal sector in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro. As part of the same program the World Bank, in association with Civic Initiatives, a citizen organization for democracy and civic education, has organized a conference titled "Create the World You Live In" which addressed key challenges and opportunities for employing youths in the region. The West Balkans Development Marketplace was open in all the participating countries from the end of November 2005 to January 30, 2006. There were more than 1,500 project applications for the competition. The committees, which were made up of experts from all the participating

countries, chose 10 finalists from each country, and the World Bank chose another five finalists based on their merits and potentials.

During the final event, the Innovation Day held at Media Center in Belgrade, 55 finalists competed for donations amounting to around USD 35,000, per project.

The winners of the Developmental Ideas Fair 2006 from Serbia were SZR Čendić Mlekara dairy, the Lazarevac City Municipality, the TERRA'S Organization for Organic Food, SZR FASADA, FRITECH d.o.o, O.M.A. ECPD, and Mile Djurić.

The Fair was supported by the Department for International Development of the UK, the Netherlands Embassy in Albania, the Commercial Bank from Macedonia, Delta Holding and the Fund for Open Society in Serbia, the Fund for Open Society from Albania, as well as Media Center, RTS, Politika, B92 and Novosti, as the media sponsors of the event.



MINISTRY OF HEALTH: Selected Projects for Preserving and Improving Health of the Roma Population

The Ministry of Health issued a public invitation in June for lending support for projects aimed at preserving and promoting the health of the Roma population within the Roma Decade, based on the Action Plan for the Health of the Roma adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The Ministry of Health was among the first to earmark funds for the implementation of these projects, with an overall of 93 projects submitted from the whole of Serbia.

The committee for evaluating and selecting the projects was established at the level of the Ministry, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Health (including the Assistant Minister), Roma Office of the Human and Minority Rights Service of the Republic of Serbia, PRS Implementation Focal Point, as well as representatives of international partners having experience with Roma NGO sector.

The Committee selected 31 projects for financing at the first stage, and they relate to the improvement of reproductive health of Roma women (examinations, early diagnosis

of malignant diseases, sexually transmitted and other diseases), prevention of cardiovascular and diabetes and other mass non-contagious diseases of adult Roma, improvement of dental health and teeth of Roma children, inoculation of children who have not been vaccinated so far or have not been registered with health institutions and treatment of parasite and contagious diseases, as well as sanitary procedures in Roma settlements and control of water and food. Other projects have not been rejected, but they were set a deadline until August 28 to define better the effects on the health of the Roma.

According to the competition conditions, health institutes at the territory of the Republic were eligible to submit projects, together with the Roma NGO, in order to create a better integration of the Roma and higher access to health services, and projects whose activities had well defined and practical effects on the health of the Roma had the advantage.

More detailed information on selected projects may be found at the website of the Ministry of Health: www.zdravlje.sr.gov.yu/

AUTONOMOUS WOMEN'S CENTER: Protection against Family Violence

The Autonomous Women's Center through the Programme of Developing Good Practices in the Area of Protection against Family Violence (harmonized with the PRS) has since 2002 continuously been developing a model of coordinated action of the local community for solving the problem of family violence in 16 Belgrade municipalities. The model includes building a joint reference action framework for all services in the community, as well as the development of practical procedures, joint planning of protection measures, standard exchange of information and efficient communication between services. Informing the public, monitoring and evaluation of effects in order to establish advantages and disadvantages of the model are an integral part of activities.

The establishment of efficient models of protection against family violence at the local level is closely linked to legislative changes and strategic documents regulating the area. The education of participants from social work centres, prosecutor's office and courts are monitored by concrete actions of knowledge application, carefully implemented and monitored. The programme has developed capacities of participants at the local level for solving

complex problems and has influenced the change of professional role by stimulating individual responsibilities and initiatives. For the first time registries on violence and interventions have been introduced, as well as procedure protocols. Conferences for solving concrete violence cases have been organized, gathering representatives of all relevant services in the community for assessing the situation and development of protection measures plan.

Representatives of institutions from more than 20 municipalities in Serbia have expressed interest in the Programme, and during 2005/06 basic trainings have been implemented in 8 Vojvodina municipalities. The Programme has won its regional acclaim - at the invitation of women organizations and social work centres, a presentation of the model was held in Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Croatia. Information on the model has been sent to associates in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The Autonomous Women's Center shall in the forthcoming period expand and formalize the model of coordinated community activity. dobre_prakse@azc.org.yu, tel: 011/2687 190 www.womenngo.org.yu

Government Adopted the Draft Law on Associations

The Government of Serbia ratified the Draft Law on Associations on June 1, 2006. The Draft Law on Associations introduces liberalization in the sector, and it regulates fully the manner of their operation and financing. The adoption of the law is envisaged by the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and its adoption represents an obligation of our country in regard to the membership in the Council of Europe.

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Zoran Loncar said that the draft law introduces full liberalization in regard to founding associations, so that an association may register at least three

citizens, remarking that the system used until now based on applications, and not approvals, is retained. The deadline for entering associations into registry is 30 days from the day of application, and the ban on association's activities shall lie with the Supreme Court of Serbia.

The regulation regulates for the first time the operation of foreign associations on our territory, as well as the control of their financial operations, meaning that in future all NGO have to abide by financial regulations, which apply for all other legal entities in the country.

The Draft Law on Associations has been submitted to the Parliament for adoption.

PRS Advisor in the National Assembly

The Parliament Poverty Reduction Committee has engaged, with support of the PRS Implementation Focal Point, an Advisor for supporting the Poverty Reduction Committee and other Committees of the Parliament to get involved more actively in the PRS implementation process. Within the implementation of activities related to the PRS implementation, the PRS Advisor shall provide the Poverty Reduction Committee with direct advisory support during the review of draft laws and by-laws, lobbying for individual laws having impact on poverty reduction, monitoring the process of budget adoption and allocation of resources, as well as during the process of monitoring and evaluating the PRS implementation process. The assignment of the Advisor envisages the provision and ensuring additional legal and other expertise, as well as the close cooperation with the Office of the National Assembly for Harmonization with EU Regulations, etc. The aim of the initiative is a more active and efficient involvement of MPs in the PRS implementation process, as well as partnership building between Parliament Committees and other partner institutions and organizations which take part in the PRS implementation (local authorities, NGO, international donors).

Cooperation of UNDP and Parliament Poverty Reduction Committee

The Sector for Poverty Reduction and Economic Development of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) support the work of Parliament Committees whose legislative activities are linked to poverty issues and the status of most vulnerable groups of population. UNDP has supported the work of the Poverty Reduction Committee through a series of activities, with EU financial support through the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR): support for municipalities of Banat and Southern Serbia that were flooded in spring 2005, preparation of economic development projects; cooperation has been established with four Committees: the Committee for Labour, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Committee for Education, the Committee for Local Self-Government and the Committee for Agriculture. The project titled "Inclusion of Civil Society in Processes Linked to Poverty Policy" whose aim is strengthening the role of Parliament Committees in fight against poverty in Serbia.

In 2006 UNDP continued support to Parliament Committees through three-year long expansion of work and continuation of cooperation with the four Parliament Committees. The cooperation encompasses: training of MPs to gain expert knowledge on poverty issues, expertise for analyzing prepared legislation and work innovations, organization of public debates with the participation of civil society in poverty-related topics. The public hearing system is a parliamentary practise in most EU countries.

The Parliament and its Committees have different benefits from public hearings. They represent a forum for exchanging ideas, as well as the way of informing MPs, expert services of the Parliament and the public on issues dealt with by the Parliament.

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