

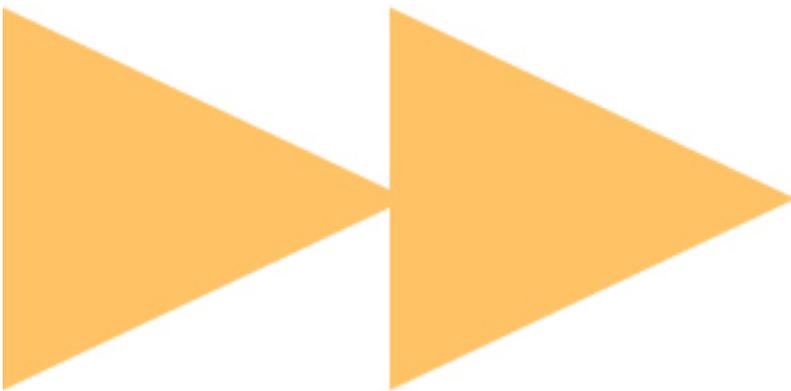


European Partnership with Municipalities Programme

# The Sixth EU PROGRES Steering Committee

Leskovac, 23 February 2012

## Minutes



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## I Agenda

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1. Welcome and introduction speeches
2. Approval of the minutes of the previous Steering Committee
3. Summary presentation of the Quarterly Report October-December 2011
4. Discussion overview of EU PROGRES implementation and future plans
5. Presentation of requests for funding commitments
6. Programming IPA 2013: potential continuation of EU PROGRES, presentation of draft outline of the project and discussion

## II Minutes

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### Agenda item 1: Welcome and introduction speeches

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Welcome from the host, Slobodan Kocić, **the Mayor of Leskovac**, who thanked all participants for coming to Leskovac and invited all stakeholders to efficiently work on the projects that will be supported by the Government, donors and EU PROGRES.

Welcome from the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO) Deputy Director and the **Chairman of the Programme Steering Committee (PSC)**, Ognjen Mirić, who announced that there would be discussions on new projects and those that are critical. Mirić announced that an outline of the draft programme within Programming IPA 2013 would be presented at the end of the meeting; adding that the priority is for the current Programme to function properly.

Andrew Headey, **from the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) to Serbia**, welcomed the participants adding that he was very pleased to be in Leskovac at the Programme Steering Committee highlighting that 2012 was crucial for the success of EU PROGRES. He added that EU PROGRES put high demands on the partners, but that by fulfilling their tasks, local self governments would be learning how to absorb donor funds. Further to this, Headey said that swifter reforms would surely be leading to European Union (EU) membership.

Petar Vasilev, from the **Swiss Cooperation Office**, thanked Leskovac for its hospitality and highlighted three important messages: 1) Second call for Citizens Involvement Fund projects as an opportunity for partnerships and engagement of all parties, 2) Good governance campaign which will enable wider public to familiarize itself with good governance principles and 3) mid-term evaluation which is a good opportunity for all partners to review achievements so far.

### Agenda item 2: Approval of the minutes of the previous Steering Committee

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The Programme Steering Committee voting members unanimously approved the minutes of the previous Steering Committee.

### Agenda item 3: Summary presentation of the Quarterly Report October-December 2011

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**Graeme Tyndall**, EU PROGRES Manager, thanked both Mayors of Leskovac for hosting the event and the Mayor of Trgovište for fully understanding that Programme activities and this meeting had to be conducted regardless of weather conditions and allowing the switch from Trgovište. Having assumed that the participants had read the Quarterly Report for October-December 2011, which has been in draft format on the Programme website for several weeks, Tyndall presented only the highlights of the period adding there had been advances but also some serious delays. Most of Citizens



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Involvement Fund (CIF) projects were completed, there had been good progress on gender awareness, Business Incubator Centres (BIC) in Prokuplje and Vranje and Citizens Advisory Services in Prokuplje and Žitorađa, the National Minority Councils and awareness of good governance as cross cutting issue Citizens Assistance Centres (CAC) equipment has been rolled out and grants for local tax administration offices have been prepared and ready to sign. Also, the Green Zone Project was announced to be starting once the weather improved.

Following a brief presentation of the Quarterly Report, EU PROGRES Manager went through the list of critical infrastructure projects and gave a brief overall summary highlighting the following:

- Late calendar of implementation and payment of the co-funding
- Late public procurement processes
- Most of the grant agreements have been extended
- Organizational structures were missing in projects
- Sustainability was questionable
- Main concern - many of the partners do not fulfil their contractual obligations
- Regional projects well behind
- Weather delays.

**Ognjen Mirić** suggested that the Steering Committee should go through each delayed project and discuss individual difficulties so as to decide whether to wait until problems were resolved or reallocate funds.

**Biljana Kerić**, EU PROGRES CIF Administrator, gave an overall summary of the CIF projects which were on the list of critical projects: **Youths for Youths (Novi Pazar)** and **Digital System for Providing Support to Sjenica Citizens (CSO Flores, Sjenica)** saying that the problems in the implementation within these projects would soon be resolved (the latest delays were late due to weather but this is the latest problem in a long list of delays).

**Ana Stanković** from the DEU, stated that we needed to put deadlines for the completion of the activities which had been delayed and develop a method of reporting on those.

**Conclusion:** As far as the three CIF projects were concerned, the agreement was for them to be completed by the following Project Steering Committee in April.

**Tutin Kindergarten reconstruction** was also on the list of critical projects mainly due to the slow public procurement processes and the ability to so far raise only 50% of volunteered and contracted co-funding.

**Conclusion:** The tender would be advertised by the end of the week and the contractor should be expected to start works at the beginning of April. Tutin representative did not explain how the co-funding would be raised.

Concern for the **Medveđa improvement of wood-processing industry project** was also expressed by the EU PROGRES and the Mayor of Medveđa stated that there were some misunderstandings. Namely, he said that nothing changed in relation to construction works and that with their partners they were in the process of defining whether the factory would produce pellet or briquette. He added that he had an elaborate with him to show that their partners from Slovenia were not giving up on the project. The Mayor explained that he was away from the municipality when EU PROGRES visited Medveđa and that the grant manager of the project did not have sufficient information on the project activities.



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**Conclusion:** EU PROGRES should meet the Mayor and Grant Implementation Team (GIT) and inform the Steering Committee on the status on the project by 2 March.

**Plan of identification of sanitary protection zones granted to Bujanovac** was also on the critical list, as Dobrivoje Stančić explained the latest delay was in the preparation of the advance payment for the contractor, Engineering Faculty in Belgrade. Fazila Azemović stated that she was in constant communication with the Faculty but since the procedure was new to them it took time to explain and obtain the correct documents. When asked for the deadline, she said that the problem would surely be resolved in seven days.

**Conclusion:** EU PROGRES should follow up on this project activity and report to the Steering Committee by next Friday.

**The Detailed Regulation Plan** project was also late in **Blace** but it was stated by the municipality that the initial problems had been resolved and that the tender has been announced – EU PROGRES to verify in a follow-up. Later Blace representatives approached the PSC Chairperson requesting an extension of time to develop a new project to use up their allocation under Result 6, Activity 6.1 (Toplica District allocations).

The Chairperson suggested that Blace had until the next PSC in April to produce a local project for approval or have the funding reallocated.

The project in **Crna Trava** on the **establishment of an efficient sewage system** was on the list of critical projects not due to the inefficiency of the municipality but due to problems related to lack of harmonization of the planning documents with the neighbouring municipality of Vlasotince. As the potential problem was raised by the Mayor of Vlasotince at the previous Steering Committee meeting, EU PROGRES conducted all needed analysis of the documents from both municipalities. The EU PROGRES Manager stated that the problem was a classic case of uncoordinated planning documentation between LSGs and that EU PROGRES did not want to cancel the project but would review the options to see if a solution could be found and perhaps to include Vlasotince as well.

**Conclusion:** EU PROGRES **should** work further on the process of harmonization of the planning documentation and include Vlasotince if feasible – potential amendment should be made to this project. Report back at the next PSC.

**Raška** on **the development of technical documentation for the recycling yard** was also listed as critical as it has been delayed for many months– it was reported that all of the preparatory works have been completed but that there waiting for the approval of the Ministry. **Miloš Panjković**, from the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Mining and Environment offered the support from the Ministry related to Raška and Crna Trava. Graeme Tyndall added that also other very important inter-municipal projects depended on the support from the Ministry.

Ognjen Mirić recommended a separate meeting to be held on regional projects.

**Dobrivoje Stančić** and Dragan **Mladenović** presented the **new concepts on activities 2.5, 3.2 and 1.5**, with Ognjen Mirić adding that the cross-border cooperation with Bulgaria was also very important. He added that about 257 project proposals were received.

**Tyndall** added that we should look at the process of changing activities with the PSC approval being the first step in the process. The process ends with final contractual approval to later come from the DEU and the SDC after a formal submission by UNOPS.

**Ana Stanković** said that the DEU agreed with the amendments if they were more suitable to the current needs but those would constantly need to be explained and discussed.



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**Urhan Shaipi**, the Head of Preševo LED office, commented that the presented concept of activities suited more to bigger municipalities than smaller ones and said that more support should be offered to LTAs because of non updated databases and lack of modern equipment (note: grant contracts for LTA equipment are presently being issued after a thorough assessment of needs).

Since there were no more comments on the re-conceptualization, the Project Steering Committee went on to discuss the Criteria of the Second Call for Proposals for the Citizens Involvement Fund projects.

#### **Agenda item 4: Discussion overview of EU PROGRES implementation/future plans**

**Biljana Kerić** presented the draft criteria for the CIF call and started the discussion on the timeline of the call in view of the coming elections.

**Conclusion:** Following the discussion, it was decided that the call for proposal should be advertised as soon as possible regardless of the coming elections. Also, Mirić added that at the contracting stage, all failed CIF applicants needed to receive an explanation on the reasons for rejection, not only to be given an opportunity to review the scoring but also to organize an educational/training session on the main reasons for rejection of project proposals.

Following **Dejan Drobñjak's** presentation of the second Advocacy Campaign under the working name - "**Bringing Europe Closer**", a discussion on the name of the campaign and its implementation in view of the marking of other important days and elections took place. Mirić suggested that within the campaign, "Europe Day" (in May) should take place in South and South West Serbia adding that we should try to avoid suits but include real life stories aiming at improving the visibility of European Union since the majority of population think that Japan and Russia are the biggest donors in Serbia. The Campaign should be finalised after the EU decision on Serbia accession is known.

**Milorad Mladenović**, Leskovac Mayor's Assistant, suggested that greater impact in this area would be achieved with the provision of buses or bulldozers with EU labels than printed materials and publications which are used by the EU in many cases.

Further to this discussion, EU PROGRES Manager announced Programme's mid-term evaluation. He stated that the evaluation would provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to reflect on the previous work which would be very beneficial for future activities. It was agreed to finalise the Terms of Reference (ToR) and advertise early in March.

#### **Agenda item 5: Presentation of requests for funding commitments**

The EU PROGRES suggested the following projects for funding :

1. Technical documentation for the regional landfill Meteris, up to 125,000 EUR
2. Technical documentation for the Transfer Station in Preševo, up to 22,500 EUR
3. Technical documentation for the Transfer Station in Sjenica, up to 31,500 EUR
4. Support to the regional fruit production in Pčinja, up to 289,000 EUR
5. Annexing of an entrance for the emergency service in Blace, up to 14,010 EUR
6. Regulation of the Stražava River in Prokuplje, up to 96,026 UEUR
7. Construction of the Dairy Market in Žitorađa, up to 79,319 EUR
8. Integral package for three NMCs

#### **Discussions and decision on items 1 and 2**

**Urhan Shaipi**, Head of Preševo LED office commented on items 1 and 2 saying that Preševo had identified three locations for the transfer station, which had ownership problems, and that the municipality would need help in the resolution of the problem. Shaipi also suggested that the project



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should be renamed into “Technical documentation of the regional landfill Meteris and the two transfer stations in Bujanovac and Preševo”. Reflecting on the previous bad experience with the water supply regional project, he concluded that regional projects could only be implemented in good coordination and cooperation. In previous meetings with the Mayor of Preševo and other staff, Shaipi was informed that it was agreed that a basic feasibility study of the three locations needed to be completed. The template for this was given to the Mayor and guarantees of EU PROGRES support as necessary.

**Miloš Panjković** offered support from the Ministry on resolution of ownership issues in relation to the transfer station in Preševo.

**Nebojša Nikolić**, from the USAID SLED programme, added that although the cluster which was formed within their programme covered Vranje, Preševo, Bujanovac and Vladičin Han, the regional waste management plan USAID was supporting could include all Pčinja District municipalities. His estimates were that by end of the March the contract would have been signed and implementation of the preparation of the plan would start.

**Surdulica Mayor’s Assistant, Dragan Micić**, commented that the presented project was half-regional because there was no mention of Trgovište, Surdulica and Vladičin Han.

**Tyndall** replied that should the project be approved, a stakeholder’s conference would be organized to prepare a plan of activities for further development of the regional project in question.

**Boban Stanković**, Vranje Mayor’s Assistant added that the project was very important but would be fully functional with the establishment of a recycling centre.

Following the discussion, **the decision** of the Project Steering Committee was **for the project to be on standby** and the final decision to be made in ten days time by which more information and details would be collected in contacts with relevant municipalities.

Regarding support to NMC, item 8, Ana Stanković from the DEU stated that the approval of equipment and furniture for the Albanian National Minority Council (ANMC), for the premises that yet need to be reconstructed, was **an exception** and should be linked to the successful completion of the ANMC Action Plan and their reconstruction of the facility. Similarly sentiments were expressed with the secondment of a staff member to the Office for Minority and Human Rights (OMHR) and the joint project supporting the Roma, Bulgarian and Albanian.

The DEU is looking for the OMHR, donors, LSG and other stakeholders to develop integrated capacity building support to NMCs instead of EU PROGRES equipping premises and providing various other stand-alone initiatives.

## Voting

At the end of the discussion related to requests for funding, the Programme Steering Committee members voted as follows:

- The Quarterly Report October-December 2011 was adopted integrally
- Items 3-8 of the funding requests were fully adopted
- Items 1-2 of the funding requests: The final decision on projects regarding Meteris Landfill and Preševo Transfer Station would be made in ten days
- ToR for mid-term evaluation needed to be further improved, comments provided and advertised in early March
- SDC would additionally reconfirm the concept of the 1.5 Activity after a further review (note; done and approved in the following days)
- Gender equality campaign was adopted.

## Any other business



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**Darko Tomić**, the Mayor of Trgovište thanked EU PROGRES for the granted projects saying that there were very important for his municipality. He used the opportunity to ask the Project Steering Committee for approval of additional construction to the municipal building with respect of the CAC construction works. The Committee replied that the Mayor should prepare all relevant documentation and submit it to the PSC for discussion and review.

The Mayor's Assistant from Novi Pazar, **Faruk Suljević**, enquired about a project from which was on reserve list. The EU PROGRES replied that once the municipalities lift up the implementation rate, especially when all infrastructure procurements are completed, the Programme could make an estimate on the remaining funds, and inform PSC project proponents accordingly, with recommendations.

#### **Agenda item 6. Programming IPA 2013, potential continuation of EU PROGRES, presentation of draft outline of the project and discussion**

**Branko Budimir** gave a presentation of an outline of a project within IPA 2013 funding with special emphasis to obtaining comments and recommendations from participants that would be included in the project preparation.

PBILD Deputy Programme Manager, **Tatjana Strahinjić Nikolić**, requested that SEIO coordinated with UNDP, which had already held discussions with the DEU, especially in view of the preparation of PBILD2 Programme Document for IPA 2013 that proposed some similar results and activities. **Mirić** suggested that the IPA 2013 is actually under the ownership of the Government, which would coordinate consultations and programme development as this was only its responsibility.

Leskovac Education Centre **Violeta Nikolić** reinforced the importance of having a strong social component in the project.

It was explained that the role of EU PROGRES was clearly defined as one to help facilitate discussions, collect inputs and minute the consultations with the 25 LSGs and other local stakeholders. **Mirić** stated that process was just beginning and that the final result areas, activities, programme name, programme area, contract modality (and hence appointing implementing partner) etc. would be cleared up and agreed as consultations at the local and national level proceed.

Further, any queries could be sent to Branko Budimir at his email: [bbudimir@seio.gov.rs](mailto:bbudimir@seio.gov.rs).

EU PROGRES would also contact all LSG and other key local stakeholders for views and ideas and to arrange consultation workshops.

Finally, as previously agreed the next Project Steering Committee would be hosted by Trgovište in April 2012.



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## List of Participants

Nr.	Name	Organisation	Position
1.	Andrew Headey	The Delegation of the European Union	First Counsellor – Head of Section - Operations
2.	Ognjen Mirić	Serbian European Integration Office	Deputy Director
3.	Ana Stanković	The Delegation of the European Union	Project Manager – Operations Section
4.	Petar Vasilev	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	National Programme Officer
5.	Branko Budimir	Serbian European Integration Office	Head of group for socio economic cohesion
6.	Aleksandar Radosavljević	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration and Local Self Government	Special Advisor
7.	Miloš Panjković	Ministry of Environment, "Let's Clean up Serbia" campaign	Director
8.	Vitimir Mihajlović	Roma National Minority Council	President RNMC and MP
9.	Milica Rodić	Coordination Body	Advisor to Director
10.	Slobodan Kocić	City of Leskovac	Mayor
11.	Faruk Suljević	City of Novi Pazar	Mayor Assistant
12.	Milomir Zorić	Ivanjica Municipality	Deputy Mayor
13.	Radenko Cvetić	Raška Municipality	Mayor
14.	Hazbo Mujović	Sjenica Municipality	Deputy Mayor
15.	Bajram Aljović	Tutin Municipality	Head of Economy Department
16.	Milivoje Ralić	Blace Municipality	Mayor
17.	Gordana Kitanović	Blace Municipality	Grant Manager
18.	Nikola Bulajić	Prokuplje Municipality	Executive Council member
19.	Zoran Dimitrijević	Prokuplje Municipality	Mayor Assistant
20.	Sunčica Nestorović	Kuršumlija Municipality	Grant Manager
21.	Urhan Šaiپی	Preševo Municipality	LED Office
22.	Goran Stojković	Žitorađa Municipality	Mayor
23.	Bojan Milčev	Žitorađa Municipality	Local Economic Development Office
24.	Milorad Mladenović	City of Leskovac	Mayor Assistant
25.	Saša Dodić	Bojnik Municipality	Coordinator
26.	Ivica Arandžević	Bojnik Municipality	Coordinator
27.	Nenad Zagorac	Lebane Municipality	Mayor
28.	Slobodan Drašković	Medveđa Municipality	Mayor
29.	Dragan Micić	Surdulica Municipality	Mayor Assistant
30.	Dejan Nikolić	Vladičin Han Municipality	Mayor Assistant
31.	Vatroslav Slavković	Crna Trava Municipality	LED office
32.	Boban Stanković	City of Vranje	Mayor Assistant
33.	Fazila Azemović	Bujanovac Municipality	LED Manager
34.	Darko Tomić	Trgovište Municipality	Mayor
35.	Budimir Mihajlović	Pčinja District	Head of District
36.	Biljana Stanković	Centre for the Development of	Director

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		Jablanica and Pčinja Districts	
37.	Ragmi Mustafi	Albanian National Minority Council	Associate in ANMC
38.	Saša Stevanović	Trgovište Municipality	Mayor Assistant
39.	Violeta Stanković	Education Centre Leskovac	Programme Manager
40.	Jelena Višić	Generator Vranje	Director of NGO Generator
41.	Ljiljana Stojanović	JUGPress	Journalist
42.	Remer Lane	Verdant Resources	Consultant
43.	Bratislav Stamenković	DAI USAID Agribusiness Programme	Agribusiness project development officer
44.	Aleksandar Ilijenko	USAID	USAID Novi Pazar office
45.	Nebojša Nikolić	USAID	USAID Nis Office
46.	Armend Aliu	USAID	USAID Vranje Office
47.	Regina Hehir	Deloitte Consulting	Senior Manager
48.	Michael Brown	Deloitte Consulting	
49.	Armend Aliu	PBILD	Coordinator
50.	Graeme Tyndall	EU PROGRES	Programme Manager
51.	Dušan Čukić	EU PROGRES	Technical Programme Specialist
52.	Dobrivoje Stančić	EU PROGRES	Component 2 Manager
53.	Dragan Mladenović	EU PROGRES	Component 1 Manager
54.	Dejan Drobnjak	EU PROGRES	Component 4 Manager
55.	Nermin Hasanović	EU PROGRES	Head of South West Serbia Office
56.	Radule Ristović	EU PROGRES	Senior Coordinator South Serbia
57.	Milan Kolašinac	EU PROGRES	Programme Engineer

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