40 Projects for the South and South West Approved

PROGRES, through the Citizens’ Involvement Fund, supported implementation of 40 projects in the South and South West Serbia. All projects are the result of partnership between the civil society organisations and local self-governments. The European Union and the Government of Switzerland will provide 335,000 EUR for the approved projects. Grant contracts have been officially handed over at the ceremonies organized in Novi Pazar and Leskovac.

CeSID: Hands Full with Work for the Local Community

The European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – PROGRES and the Center for Free Elections and Democracy - CeSID presented findings of the Survey Citizens Satisfaction with Life in Local Communities, that was carried out in 25 municipalities of South and South West of Serbia during the past two months. “Citizens showed low level of trust in local institutions and expressed high expectations from authorities regarding improvement of local economy and the standard of living”, said Đorđe Vuković, the CeSID Director, summarizing the survey findings at today’s presentation.

Municipalities Receive Assistance in Preparing Planning Documentation
Municipalities Prepare Infrastructure Project Proposals
Best Young Artists Awarded Laptops

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A society that is without the voice and vision of women is not less feminine. It is less human.

The legal framework of gender equality was declaratively and formally completed in Serbia by the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality. Serbia in the meantime ratified or signed all international documents stipulating the development and promotion of the human rights of women and anti-discriminatory practices, adopted strategies and action plans, established mechanisms. The legal grounds are in place, the legal obligation is unquestionable, and all we now need is clear political will at all decision-making levels to move from declarative and formal equality to real equality. The latter also entails sharing responsibility for the overall situation in the community.

This deliberation was directly prompted by the fact that good governance is one of the four areas of the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – PROGRES, implemented in 25 municipalities in South and South-West Serbia. Good governance is inconceivable without good governance of human resources. Advancing the status of women in society and the development of the principles of gender equality and equal chances in all areas of public and private life is a developmental issue and it reflects the degree in which civilisation’s achievements and European values are integrated in a democratic society...

There is no development without an efficient and effective public administration

The ultimate goal of all policy, on the local as well as the national level, is to create a system enabling citizens to have a normal life, that is, providing conditions for a life of dignity everyone deserves. The shortest way to achieve this goal is to create realistic and sustainable jobs.

In order to achieve this goal, certain assumptions are necessary. Firstly, this requires people with vision, but equally importantly, the dedication of people who truly wish to participate in teamwork and who started working on realising this vision. A certain level of knowledge, courage and honesty go without saying. The biggest breaks to development can be found where there is corruption and opportunism among decision makers.

Public administration reform is certainly one of the key, if not the most important assumption for reaching the mentioned goal. There is no development without an efficient and effective public administration which provides cheap, fast and high quality services. It should have an entrepreneurship approach, be a service to the people and the economy.

Unfortunately, public administration reform also presents the most painful spot in the work of every leader. However, things can and must improve. I will try by giving an example of my town to shortly describe the situation we found and what is being done to improve it, believing that the example of Leskovac is more or less pragmatic for Serbia too...
The foundations of the Yeni Bazaar, i.e. Novi Pazar, were laid by the Turks in 1461 at the confluence of the Jošanica and Raška rivers, at Pazariste, an old Dubrovnik colony. Its founder was Isa-bey Isaković, the Turkish military leader who founded Sarajevo, Skopje and Šabac.

**Geography**
The Municipality of Novi Pazar covers the area of 742 km² and is located at the altitude of 495 metres. The city is surrounded by mountains Golija, Rogozna, as well as the Pešter Plateau. The river Raška, flowing through the Novi Pazar plain, has five tributaries forming a star: Sebečevska, Ljudska, Jošanica, Banjska and Deževska rivers.

**The City of Youth**
According to the 2002 official census, 85,996 people live in Novi Pazar, although data coming from local public institutions suggest a population of approximately 125,000 people out of which 49% is youth making it the most important resource of Novi Pazar.

**Economy**
Even at the time of its foundation, Novi Pazar was an important economic centre. The year of 1990 saw the beginning of a rapid development of private entrepreneurship. In the previous decade Novi Pazar experienced a slow economic collapse. On the other hand, scientists have found Deževska river valley to be exceptionally favourable for the growing of apples, its features matching those of California.

**Cultural Heritage and Sites**
Petrova church (Peter’s church), built in the 9th or 10th century, represents one of the oldest monuments of medieval Serbia. Đurđevi Stupovi from the 12th century, the foundation of Stefan Nemanja, and the Sopoćani Monastery from the 13th century, with frescos which represent extraordinary achievements not only of medieval Serbia, but also of Byzantium art of that time, are also cultural-historic monuments of exceptional significance. Altun-alem mosque is one of the most beautiful buildings of Islamic architecture in south-west Serbia. The Lejlek Mosque, Isa-bey hamam and the old fortress are real jewels of Islamic architecture in Novi Pazar.

Novi Pazar’s landmark is the Watchtower, part of the central city fort with three massive bastions from the Ottoman era, within which is now located city’s central park.

The city is the host of the “Old Town” music festival, aimed towards promotion of young music talents.
Good Governance
Providing support to municipalities to enhance the respect of principles of accountability, transparency and efficiency in their work and to increase citizens’ participation in the decision making.

Municipal Management and Development Planning
Working on improvement of the quality of services that municipalities provide to their citizens and business community, and providing expert assistance for preparation of planning documents.

Infrastructure
Co-financing implementation of municipal and intermunicipal infrastructure projects, and providing support to local self-governments for the development of technical documentation.

Public Awareness and Branding of Areas
Promoting the potentials of South and South West Serbia and raising public awareness of socio economic challenges and ways to tackle them.

European Partnership with Municipalities Programme
The European Partnership with Municipalities – PROGRES, is a €18.1 million Programme of the European Union, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia, aiming to assist municipalities in the South and South West Serbia.

European Union 14.1 mil. EUR
Swiss Government 2.5 mil. EUR
Serbian Government 1.5 mil. EUR

we are planning to ...
- Start work on the establishment of three new Citizen’s Assistance Centres
- Support the development of general regulation plans for six municipalities
- Establish the Citizens’ Advisory Service in four municipalities
- Select municipal infrastructure projects for funding
- Launch public call for provision of support in the field of branding
- Prepare and start implementing campaign to promote good governance

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The Programme is funded by the European Union, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia and it is implemented by the UNOPS, in partnership with 25 municipalities of the South and South West Serbia.