

# The Fourteenth Programme Steering Committee Meeting

Niš, 25 March 2014

## Minutes





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## I AGENDA

1. Welcome and introductory speeches
2. Working part of the PSC meeting
3. Approval of the minutes of the previous Steering Committee meeting held in Nova Varoš
4. Presentation of the overview of EU PROGRES' results
5. Presentation of the findings and recommendations of the draft evaluation of the Programme, with discussion
6. Update on European PROGRES

## II MINUTES

### AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY SPEECHES

- **The Mayor of Niš, Zoran Perišić**, welcomed the guests and informed them that his City has just signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) regulating the opening of the EU info corner, which will promote the European values and provide citizens with information about the European Union (EU).
- **Branko Ružić, Minister without Portfolio Responsible for European Integration and the National IPA Coordinator** thanked the DEU and the Government of Switzerland for supporting the Programme, which would reduce differences between the South and South West Serbia and the rest of the country. He reflected on the multiplier effect of the Programme, with attraction of the commercial investments amounting to 30 million Euros and creation of hundreds of new jobs. The Programme has not only contributed to increased transparency and accountability of the local governments but has also assisted both the local authorities and the central Government in creation of more enabling business environment. Ružić confirmed that the implementation of the successor Programme that will provide assistance to 34 local self-governments (LSGs) would start in April 2014 and underlined the importance of inter-municipal cooperation. EU PROGRES has made a significant step forward but there are still problems to be addressed and this puts great responsibility in the hands of the local governments, in line with the EU *Acquis Communautaire*, concluded Ružić.
- **H.E. Michael Davenport, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia** highlighted that 25 LSGs have achieved significant results through support provided by the DEU, the Government of Serbia (GoS) and the Government of Switzerland and with its successful management by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). Out of more than 500 projects funded by the EU in Serbia, EU PROGRES fell among the most important and most comprehensive ones, since it contributed to development of the key spheres of life: economic development, infrastructure development, development of municipal services, health, gender equality, social development, education and culture. The significance of EU PROGRES is because it was focused on the local level. Even though this Programme is ending, this does not mark the end of DEU's assistance, as the follow-on programme will be contracted soon. The new Programme will build upon EU PROGRES and hopefully achieve greater results. Ambassador Davenport highlighted that the new Programme will be more demanding: the GoS will be responsible for implementation of a part of the activities, criteria for projects approval will be stricter, project identification and development will have to be improved, delays in



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implementation will not be tolerated, the LSGs will need to improve inter-municipal cooperation and the competition will be greater as there will be additional nine LSGs to existing 25. Finally, the Ambassador thanked the mayors and LSGs for successful cooperation to date, and extended thanks to the EU PROGRES team.

- **H.E. Jean-Daniel Ruch, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Serbia**, reflected on the EU PROGRES as one of the flagship programmes in Serbia. The programme has done a lot to improve the living conditions in the South and South-West Serbia, and has delivered many measurable results. Ambassador Ruch underlined the importance of the Programme's contribution to urban and infrastructure development, capital investments and the economic activity. In partner municipalities, procedures are more efficient, decision making more participatory and the regulations increasingly consider vulnerable groups, such as minorities, rural population, women and youth, said the Swiss Ambassador. He also reflected on the vertical component of EU PROGRES and its ability to enhance interaction between the LSGs and the national institutions. Many discussions at the PSC meetings led to resolution of concrete problems of the LSGs, such as the ones in the field of property or permits. In addition, the national institutions and the ministries have proactively participated in activities, which were developed jointly with the LSGs, therefore the Programme, became an excellent platform for removing obstacles for local development and improving the capacities, including the management capacities, of the less developed municipalities. The Government of Switzerland will provide continued support to implementation of the European PROGRES which will bring the citizens of South, South-East and South-West Serbia even closer to Europe, by reducing the economic disparities, standardizing services for the citizens and the private sector, and making the good governance approach durable and sustainable. The Swiss support to the new programme is a part of the new Cooperation Strategy, which was launched six weeks ago, under which its assistance to Serbia has increased by some 20%. This Ambassador Ruch reminded of the Swiss assistance since 2005, with more than half a billion Swiss Francs invested in Serbia and has encouraged contact with diaspora groups. He concluded with expressing thanks to the EU PROGRES team, Programme Manager Graeme Tyndall and his deputy Marko Vujačić.
- **Danijela Nenadić, Director of the Coordination Body of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the Municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa**, praised the accessibility of the EU PROGRES team, as it was open in communication, available for regular consultations, followed the needs of the beneficiaries, and respected the suggestions. The Coordination Body (CB) is also grateful to the PSC members for their excellent cooperation and a constructive problem solving approach. Nenadić underlined that the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO) has been committed in planning and coordinating activities on behalf of the GoS. From the perspective of the CB the activities implemented in the three municipalities within its mandate are significant. A standing example of this is the Maternity Ward project in Preševo, also the efforts put in obtaining permanent facilities for the University of Subotica' Faculty of Economy Department in Bujanovac and opening of the Pellet Plant in Medveđa, which now has more than 30 employees and has potential for creating additional jobs in the future. Nenadić expressed strong support for the efforts of the donors to continue to provide assistance to the region through the follow-on programme.
- **The Mayor of Medveđa, Slobodan Drašković**, followed-up on the remark about the Pellet Plant and underlined that 35 employees of the new factory will be able to live from their work, sustain their families and stay in the municipality. He thanked the donors, the CB and EU PROGRES for



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making this possible. Drašković also expressed enthusiasm for the new programme and handed over a Certificate of Appreciation from the Municipality of Medveđa to EU PROGRES' Programme Manager, Graeme Tyndall.

- **Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Self-Government, Jelena Spasić**, thanked the mayors for active and regular participation in the PSC meetings and remained hopeful that the mayors would continue to be engaged in the follow-up programme. Spasić would like to see EU PROGRES replicated in other areas of Serbia as it was dealing with big problems in a simple way, and because it was designed to address the needs of smaller and less developed LSGs but also the needs of those more developed.
- **EU PROGRES' Programme Manager, Graeme Tyndall**, thanked the Mayor of Medveđa for the Certificate of Appreciation and remarked that the Pellet Factory project was not easy for implementation but eventually produced results. Tyndall thanked the PSC, the Ambassadors of the EU and of Switzerland and the colleagues, Ana Stanković and Petar Vasilev, the two outstanding people that the Programme dealt with on a regular basis. Tyndall extended special thanks to the mayors, acknowledging the hardships of being in politics, and commended their leadership. He remarked that politics need to be put aside from development, in order to properly plan the European PROGRES, which will surely lead to even far stronger results. Tyndall concluded that the art of leadership does not only relate to managers but also to staff of a project, and expressed appreciation to EU PROGRES staff.
- **The Mayor of Raška, Jovan Čorbić**, thanked the EU PROGRES team on behalf of the citizens of Raška, for jointly implemented projects, and highlighted the kindergarten project which represents foundation for the future as it will enable the children of Raška to learn about humanity and cooperation. This project, like the others, will contribute to people coming to LSGs as opposed to leaving them.

## AGENDA ITEM 2: WORKING PART OF THE PSC

- **Ana Ilić, Deputy Director of the SEIO**, confirmed that the Programme's budget has been fully utilized and provided inputs on SEIO's future activities in projects implemented through IPA funds and bilateral contracts with some 20 development partners who will continue to provide support to Serbia at both central and local levels. The SEIO's challenge is to improve its strategic planning system, operational planning system and project development to contribute to effectiveness of the donor assistance and increase absorption of the funds. Ilić also underlined the importance of sustainability of projects and their integration into the system, and highlighted the importance of the EU PROGRES evaluation in this context. The cooperation with donors maximized the effects of the Programme.
- **Isabel Perich, Director of Cooperation, Swiss Cooperation Office Serbia**, highlighted three lessons learned during Programme's implementation: (1) From the perspective of the Government of Switzerland, EU PROGRES and the partner municipalities have been successful in mainstreaming good governance (GG) at the local level through activities, and even though GG takes time, an approach that brings visible results in short and medium term has been opted for: it is shown that governments' improvements are feasible in small steps; combining GG expertise with infrastructure projects, ensures sustainability of Programme investments; this led to more systemic reform of the LSGs. (2) EU PROGRES has produced tangible results in the field of gender



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equality, actively contributing to implementation of the National Gender Action Plan. She mentioned twelve established gender councils in the partner municipalities, an extensive gender equality campaign implemented and recorded increase in participation of women in local assemblies - 29% of all local councillors. (3) Perhaps the most important is that EU PROGRES created successful partnerships with the GoS, the DEU and the Swiss Government. The national ownership of the Programme is very strong, and this is measured by considerable national contribution, as well as the commitment of the line ministries to continue to work together. At the same time, EU PROGRES has been an excellent platform for partner municipalities to engage in a facilitated dialogue with the line ministries, and thus showing a strong ownership of mayors. The platform allowed the stakeholders to successfully deal with impediments to local development, therefore many outstanding issues could be resolved in a very efficient way. Perich concluded that EU PROGRES brought progress to 25 LSGs in the South and South-West Serbia and the Swiss Government would remain engaged and support the partner municipalities. She complemented the EU PROGRES team for implementing the Programme in a very challenging environment, as well as the SEIO and the DEU.

- **Tyndall** remarked on the importance of consultations for designing a programme, such were the consultations that EU PROGRES conducted with the municipalities in 2013, upon SEIO's encouragement. He highlighted that once the contract is signed with the EU and if signed with the Swiss, a series of workshops and reflections on the lessons learned will be conducted. Tyndall also extended gratitude to the SEIO and Ognjen Mirić who had chaired the PSC meetings, while showing tremendous support to EU PROGRES, as well as Branko Budimir and Ana Ilić who work at the national level but still find time to work with us at the local level. The PSC is a link between the local and the national level, and all details should be defined and resolved during the inception period, Tyndall concluded.
- **Ilić** assured the participants that SEIO will try to keep up the high standards set by Ognjen Mirić and confirmed the importance of the inception period, as mentioned by Tyndall.

### AGENDA ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN NOVA VAROŠ

- The PSC voting members unanimously approved the minutes of the previous EU PROGRES Steering Committee held in Nova Varoš on 20 November 2013.

### AGENDA ITEM 4: PRESENTATION OF THE OVERVIEW OF EU PROGRES' RESULTS

- **EU PROGRES Deputy Programme Manager, Marko Vujačić**, presented Programme's key achievements. Vujačić said that EU PROGRES, with strong engagement of LSGs, civil society, and other development partners successfully implemented projects in the field of local and inter-municipal infrastructure, technical and planning documentation, municipal services, entrepreneurship and clusters, branding and promotion, while initiatives implemented with civil society organisations benefited primarily vulnerable. In total, 255 projects were implemented, while the Programme also provided technical assistance for establishment of One Stop Shops, introduction of capital investment plans and programme budgeting, conduct of participatory budgeting and much more. EU PROGRES has also conducted several researches, such as the ones on citizens' satisfaction or municipal competitiveness, and published several publications that promote good governance and provide recommendations for more efficient infrastructure



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development. He concluded that, despite the fact that numerous challenges remain South and South Serbia with EU PROGRES' support are moving forward.

## AGENDA ITEM 5: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DRAFT EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME, WITH DISCUSSION

- **Chrisoula Petritsi, Evaluation Team Leader** presented the preliminary findings of the final evaluation whose objective was to focus on what could be done better in the future programme. Besides the five Development Co-operation evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability), assessment included: dissemination of good governance principles as a cross-cutting theme; visibility of the Programme; satisfaction of the horizontal principles (social inclusion, environment, human rights etc.), the cost-benefit analysis and the implementation of the mid-term evaluation recommendations. The findings conclude that the Programme is highly relevant to the area, with good geographic and thematic distribution, however with a slight under-representation of the economic development actions considering needs. The Programme has demonstrated high degree of effectiveness, especially with respect to the immediate outcomes and was quite satisfactory with respect to the results. The Evaluation Team believes that efficiency is the strongest suit of the Programme, with an exceptional degree of organizational, management and time efficiency. The findings on impact vary, as it is difficult to capture still and the time distance is needed to fully observe it. Likewise, the results vary in respect to sustainability. The most sustainable intervention is the support to local tax administrations as many other interventions will need additional resources to be maintained. The findings on the good governance principles are positive as are with horizontal principles (gender equality, social inclusion and human rights). Petritsi commented on exceptionally good record on environment protection through soft and hard projects, and complemented the achieved visibility at the local level, but has recommended stronger focus on visibility at the central level. The cost benefit analysis shows that the highest added value the Programme brought was place-based development (opposite to sector-based approach) and a highly effective implementation structure. Two approaches can be taken: reduce the cost of operations leaving more money for projects or by expanding the scope of the projects (i.e. improve business development component in One Stop Shops). Petritsi presented preliminary recommendations: increase focus on local economic development and job creation; implement a project preparation facility, thus be able to select more important projects; use smaller set of indicators, focus on results' indicators rather than output indicators; provide continued support to complementary projects (related to clusters, projects targeting vulnerable groups etc.) in order to ensure impacts and sustainability; conduct an impact assessment study two years after the Programme ends in order to capture the real impact; use the capacity building component in order to introduce systemic changes; add the elderly as the target group; increase visibility at the central level; and use public opinion surveys with caution.
- **Dragiša Mijačić, Evaluation Team Member**, added that from the perspective of the evaluator who was involved in conducting PRO Programme evaluation, EU PROGRES mid-term evaluation and the current evaluation, there is visible progress for LSGs but also for the Programme staff. The change between the capacities existing in 2008 and the ones today are visibly positive, as confirmed at the conducted interviews.
- **Ilić** summarized that the preliminary report is positive and that some of the recommendations are already incorporated into the European PROGRES. She also supported the idea to reduce the



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number of indicators and to focus more on developing relevant projects, rather than supporting the ones which are technically more ready. She added that the Ministry of Finance is working on a by-law defining the criteria for the capital investment projects, which can help with this issue.

- **Biljana Stanković**, the **Director of the Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinja Districts**, stated that 13 LSGs in this Centre have adopted a decision to establish a system of sectorial working groups to facilitate implementation of the follow-on Programme. This mechanism will help address the technical development of priority projects.

## AGENDA ITEM 6: UPDATE ON EUROPEAN PROGRES

- **Branko Budimir**, the **Head of the Sector for Planning, Programming, Monitoring and Reporting on EU Funds and Development Aid at SEIO**, followed-up on the remarks given by the Minister Ružić and the Ambassador Davenport on European PROGRES. The Programme will last 42 months, with a total value of 24.6 million Euros. Defining the Programme's content took into account previous discussions at the PSC meetings, interviews with the LSGs and other stakeholders. Budmir confirmed that the preliminary evaluation findings were in line with what the new Programme envisages. The Programme will have four result areas, resembling the structure of EU PROGRES, with good governance as a cross-cutting theme. However, the model of implementation is changing, with amplified role of the GoS' institutions. Budmir concluded by inviting the stakeholders to be proactive and start preparing priority projects.
- **Spasić** reminded that from 2015 the programme budgeting will be legally required and this is an ideal opportunity to combine the support provided by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and European PROGRES.
- **Ilić** closed the meeting by extending gratitude to donors, the PSC members, EU PROGRES' team, mayors and other participants.



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### III LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Name	Institution/Organisation	Function
<b>PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE VOTING MEMBERS</b>			
1.	Branko Ružić	Government of Serbia	Minister without Portfolio for European Integrations
2.	Michael Davenport	DEU	Ambassador, Head of DEU
3.	Jean-Daniel Ruch	Embassy of Switzerland	Ambassador
4.	Ana Ilić	European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	Deputy Director
5.	Ana Stanković	DEU	Project Manager
6.	Branko Budimir	European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia	Head of Sector for Planning, Programming, Monitoring and Reporting on EU Funds and Development Aid
7.	Isabel Perich	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	Director
8.	Petar Vasilev	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	National Programme Officer
9.			
10.	Janičije Jeremić	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy	State Secretary
11.	Jelena Spasić	Ministry of Regional Development and Local Self-Government	Assistant to the Minister
12.	Danijela Nenadić	Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa	Director
13.	Aleksandra Vučetić	Ministry of Economy	Head of the Legislative Framework and Business Environment Improvement Group
14.	Nataša Šimšić	Ministry of Finance	Assistant to the Minister
<b>PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS</b>			
15.	Zoran Perišić	City of Niš	Mayor
16.	Hazbo Mujović	Municipality of Sjenica	Mayor
17.	Slobodan Drašković	Municipality of Medveđa	Mayor
18.	Milomir Zorić	Municipality of Ivanjica	Mayor
19.	Slobodan Vidojević	Municipality of Brus	Mayor
20.	Nenad Krstić	Municipality of Trgovište	Mayor
21.	Saša Stamenković	Municipality of Babušnica	Mayor
22.	Emir Hasimbegović	Municipality of Prijepolje	Mayor
23.	Jovan Čorbić	Municipality of Raška	Mayor
24.	Radoje Krstović	Municipality of Blace	Mayor

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25.	Nagip Arifi	Municipality of Bujanovac	Mayor
26.	Zoran Todorović	Municipality of Vlasotince	Mayor
27.	Goran Miljković	Municipality of Bela Palanka	Mayor
28.	Radoljub Vidić	Municipality of Kuršumljija	Mayor
29.	Ragmi Mustafa	Municipality of Preševo	Mayor
30.	Goran Mladenović	Municipality of Vladičin Han	Mayor
31.	Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano	UN Serbia	Resident Coordinator
32.	Borka Jeremić	UNRCO	UN Coordination Specialist
33.	Asya Varbanova	UN Women	Head of United Nations Entity
34.	Jovan Protić	International Labour Organization	National Coordinator
35.	Dejan Simić	Municipality of Medveđa	Head of LED office
36.	Marinko Đorđević	Municipality of Vlasotince	LED office
37.	Gordana Kitanović	Municipality of Blace	Grant Manager
38.	Predrag Cvetković	Optimus	Coordinator
39.	Dragana Jevtović	Tanjug News Agency	Journalist
40.	Srđan Draškić	Municipality of Medveđa	LED office
41.	Saša Dodić	Municipality of Bojnik	LED office
42.	Saša Vasilić	Municipality of Priboj	Head of the Assembly
43.	Dragan Vasić	Tanjug	Journalist
44.	Dragoljub Miljojković	VPC Morava - Srbijavode	Director
45.	Maida Jusufović	Municipality of Sjenica	LED office
46.	Chrisoula Petritsi	Evaluation Team	Leader of the Evaluation Team
47.	Predrag Nikolić	Municipality of Merošina	
48.	Faruk Suljević	City of Novi Pazar	Assistant to Mayor
49.	Dragan Jovanović	Municipality of Aleksinac	Head of General Affairs Department
50.	Esad Halić	Municipality of Tutin	LED office
51.	Aleksandar Marinović	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities	Exchange 4 Component 1 Manager
52.	Živko Stoilov	Municipality of Bosilegrad	LED Office
53.	Biljana Stanković	Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinja Districts	Director
54.	Miloš Džikić	City of Vranje	BIC Vranje
55.	Danijela Ivanković	TV Zona Plus	Editor
56.	Eric Manton	OSCE	South Serbia Coordinator
57.	Miloš Colić	Municipality of Blace	Youth Office Coordinator
58.	Fazila Azemović	Municipality of Bujanovac	LED office
59.	Jelena Marjanović	Coordination body	Assistant to the Director
60.	Toma Todorović	Politika newspaper	Journalist
61.	Vitomir Mihajlović	Roma National Minority Council	Chairman

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62.	Dejan Nikolić	Municipality of Vladičin Han	Project Coordinator
63.	Milan Vučković	Municipality of Vladičin Han	LED office
64.	Dragan Milutinović	Municipality of Knjaževac	LED office
65.	Milka Kaplanović	Municipality of Ivanjica	LED office
66.	Bajram Aljović	Municipality of Tutin	LED Office
67.	Jelena Milenović	Municipality of Babušnica	Project Team
68.	Biljana Nikolić	Centre for Democratic Action Lebane	Director
69.	Ivana Anđelkić	Blic newspaper	Journalist
70.	Kalina Marković Ilić	Ministry of Finance CFCU	Head of Tender Preparation and Contract Management Division
71.	Marija Cvetković	Municipality of Gadžin Han	Municipal Councillor
72.	Miroslav Milosavljević	Youth Initiative Blace	Coordinator
73.	Ivana Stošić	Business Incubator Centre Vranje	Director
74.	Ivan Andrić	Business Incubator Centre Vranje	Coordinator
75.	Bojan Tojaga	ALER Leskovac	Director
76.	Biljana Ljubisavljević	Privredni pregled	Journalist
77.	Dragan Micić	Municipality of Surdulica	Mayor's Assistant
78.	Dragiša Mijačić	Evaluation Team	Evaluation Team Member
79.	Stevan Manasijević	RTV Belle Amie	Journalist
80.	Mladen Velojić	Media Centre Niš	Director
81.	Nenad Arsić	ALER Leskovac	Director's Advisor for EU Affairs
82.	Gradimir Nikolić	NGTIM production company	Director
83.	Jovica Marković	PUC Land Development Merošina	Director
84.	Howard Ockman	USAID SLDP	Chief of Party
85.	Ivan Petković	RRA JUG	Head of the Sector for Infrastructure and Sustainable Development
86.	Miloš Paunković	Roma National Minority Council	Deputy Chairman
87.	Srđan Perić	Municipality of Lebane	Mayor's Assistant
88.	Vesela Curković	INTER	Associate
89.	Dragan Živković	Municipality of Bela Palanka	Deputy Mayor
90.	Maja Mitić Nikolić	Agrozem	General Manager
91.	Dragoljub Stevanović	City of Vranje	Deputy Mayor
92.	Damir Stojanović	Municipality of Gadžin Han	Mayor's Assistant
93.	Mikica Vasilev	Municipality of Bosilegrad	LED Office
94.	Zoran Petrov	Bulgarian National Minority Council	Chairman
95.	Tatjana Savić Gavrilović	Agrozem	Coordinator
96.	Marija Rosić	Translator	Translator

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99.	Marko Vujačić	EU PROGRES	Deputy Programme Manager
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103.	Jasmina Ilić	EU PROGRES	Component 3 Manager
104.	Dejan Drobnjak	EU PROGRES	Component 4 Manager
105.	Dobrivoje Stančić	EU PROGRES	Management Advisor
106.	Olivera Kostić	EU PROGRES	Component 2 Acting Manager
107.	Nermin Hasanović	EU PROGRES	Head of South West Serbia Office
108.	Milan Kolašinac	EU PROGRES	Engineer
109.	Ivan Mladenović	EU PROGRES	Engineer
110.	Radule Ristović	EU PROGRES	Senior Coordinator
111.	Ivana Todorović	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
112.	Bojan Marčić	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
113.	Evgjenije Islami	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
114.	Boris Zlatanov	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
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120.	Danica Pavlović	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
121.	Slobodan Derikonjić	EU PROGRES	Coordinator
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