The First Anniversary in Novi Pazar

PROGRES, a development programme funded by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland, marked its first anniversary by a series of activities to present the results it has achieved to the public. During the central event, which rallied the representatives of the local self-governments and civil society, Programme Manager Graeme Tyndall said: “The European Union and the Government of Switzerland have earmarked around 1.6 million Euros via PROGRES over the past year to support projects aimed at improving the lives of the people living in South West Serbia...”

Second Call for Infrastructure Projects Closed

The second public call for funding local infrastructure projects in 25 municipalities in South and South-West Serbia, advertised by the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – PROGRES, was closed on 1 August. Sixteen local infrastructure project proposals were prepared and submitted by municipalities during the call. The European Union and the Government of Switzerland have earmarked half a million Euros to fund projects selected as the best ones among the ones submitted within this call. The value of an individual project may not exceed 100,000 Euros and the successful municipalities will have to contribute to their implementation with at least 10 percent of the project value.
Achieving good governance in Switzerland lasted several decades and is still an ongoing process.

Today, it is widely recognized that sustainable development can only be achieved with good governance. The principles of good governance are closely associated with the way public institutions manage their resources and how they provide services efficiently, free of abuse or discrimination.

Poverty and corruption are often rooted in the failure of governments to comply with sound public affairs management criteria. Good governance is also about citizens having the possibility to hold decision makers accountable for their actions and to enhance citizen’s participation in public and political life.

Two centuries ago, Switzerland was among the poorest countries of Europe faced with a population outflow and certain social conflicts. Today, it has a prosperous society with a high living standard. Achieving good governance in my own country lasted several decades and is still an ongoing process. Our intention is to share with Serbia some of our experiences and good practices. Through our cooperation programs we are not bringing pre-fabricated solutions, but we are supplying decision-makers with information on possible choices to be made by themselves.

Erwin H. Hofer
Swiss Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia

European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – PROGRES, opened the art competition for high school students from 25 municipalities in South and South-West Serbia, with the theme “Serbia – Embrace of Civilisations”. The competition supporting young artistic talents is organised with the aim to promote cultural, ethnic, traditional and religious differences as Serbian and European values.

Twelve works that selected as best on the competition will decorate the PROGRESS calendar pages for 2012, and their authors will be rewarded with video and still cameras. Three best rated schools will receive school equipment at the value of 200,000 dinars. The competition will close on 10 November 2011, and the winners will be announced and the calendar promoted at the awarding ceremony in mid-December.

This year’s theme for the competition represents the message behind this year’s UN Week in Serbia, which will be organised in October. When determining the theme, the starting point was the fact that Serbia, during its history had often faced internal and external migrations and influences from different cultures. Numerous diversities make Serbia representative of the whole world. As a place of contact between different civilisations and one of the most important crossroads in Europe, Serbia has become the place of embrace, where it accepted other civilisations and they accepted Serbia.

Knowing that art has the power to present differences in a positive way, PROGRES wishes to give the opportunity to the participants of this art competition to present the exquisite cultural, ethnic and religious variety as the wealth of the citizens of Serbia and Europe.

The competition deadline is 10 November 2011.

> whole article
Vranje is the economic, administrative, educational and cultural centre of the Pičnijski District. It stretches over 860 square kilometres. It includes 105 settlements and 32 local communities. It is situated at 480 meters above sea level.

The town of Vranje lies on the crossroads of traffic arteries of remarkable international importance (Corridor E-10). The motorway and railroad line Budapest-Belgrade-Skopje-Athens pass Vranje at a distance of 3 kilometres, connecting Serbia with the neighbouring Macedonia, and also Central Europe with the Balkans.

History

Vranje is mentioned for the first time in written documents in 1093 in the book Alexiad by Anna Komnene, a Greek woman of Empyrealian descent. Writing about the rule of her father, Emperor Alexios I Komnenos of Byzantium, she wrote that the Grand Prince of Rascia, Vukan, marched to Vranje and conquered it. King Milutin annexed Vranje to Medieval Serbia in 1282 when he came to throne, and Vranje became the centre of the district.

Monuments

The rich history left the town with a wealth of cultural and historical monuments such as: Markovo kale, remnants of a Medieval fortification on Antic foundations; St Nicolas’ Church; old Turkish bath Hamam, built at the close of the 17th century and is now a gallery; Pasha’s konak consisted of Selamluk, at the moment used as a museum building, and Haremluk, at the moment used as a national restaurant; and House Museum of Bora Stankovic.

Bora Stankovic

The writer Bora Stankovic (1876-1927) is one of the most important representatives of realism in Serbian literature and his entire work is dedicated to Vranje. In his works he used the Vranje dialect, because of which he was constantly criticised by many scholars from the West who would say that his works were “illiterate and oriental”. He wrote the first modern Serbian novel “Impure Blood”, lyric drama “Kostana” and several short stories. The works of Bora Stankovic are characterised by regionalism, looking at the past, love towards the warmth of patriarchal life and aversion to modern society. He portrayed the upper classes he belonged to and loved with criticism and reality. He described in great detail the economic and moral decline of the people from the old times. He judged the patriarchal, society and ruling class moral, the laws of which each individual had to submit. He particularly presented the specific position of women, who at that time did not have the freedom to express their emotions and feelings, they were subordinate to men and did not have the opportunity to choose their own destinies. In his works terrible tragedies take place behind the walls of proud wealthy homes.

Events

Traditionally, a number of cultural events take place in Vranje. Old Days, Bora’s Week and Bora’s Theatre Days have in the recent years become festivals with notable and significant reputation on the Serbian and regional cultural maps.
**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.

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The Programme is funded by the European Union, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia, aiming to assist municipalities in the South and South West Serbia.

**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 million
- **Switzerland**: €2.5 million
- **Serbia**: €1.5 million

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**we are planning to...**

- Open offices for Citizens’ Advisory Services in Prokuplje and Žitorađa
- Start works on local infrastructure projects
- Start setting up One Stop Shops in two selected municipalities
- Finalise selection of local infrastructure projects within the second call
- Fund improvement of local tax administration
- Organise three seminars about branding in December
- Organise art competition on topic "Serbia - Embracing Civilisations"

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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.