The diversity of projects supported through EU PROGRES show the depth of EU’s involvement in supporting Serbian reforms and our commitment to helping Serbian population live a better life. EU is a strong and helpful partner in the European integration process that understands and addresses the needs of Serbian citizens.

Vincent Degert
EU Ambassador to Serbia

2.4 Million EUR for Development Projects

The European Partnership with Municipalities Programme - EU PROGRES Steering Committee approved funding worth 2.4 million EUR for 40 municipal planning, infrastructure and branding projects at its seventh meeting held in Trgovište today. The participants in the meeting, representatives of the relevant ministries, donors, municipalities participating in the Programme, development agencies and civil society, were apprised of the results EU PROGRES achieved from 1 January to 31 March 2012 and discussed the projects the implementation of which was assessed as critical. The meeting was hosted by Trgovište Mayor Mr. Darko Tomić. The Steering Committee was chaired by Deputy Director of the Serbian EU Integration Office Ognjen Mirić.

Leskovac Gets New School

Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Ambassador Vincent Degert and Leskovac Mayor Slobodan Kocić today opened a new primary school in the village of Kumarevo at Leskovac in the presence of around one hundred villagers. Thanking the residents of Kumarevo for their warm hospitality, Ambassador Degert said: “The construction of this school is very important, above all for the children who will attend class in better conditions. And, since the future rests on the youth, this is also a pledge for a better life of the community. The European Union is currently supporting over seven hundred projects across Serbia, which are to improve the conditions for education, infrastructure, and contribute to economic development and opening of new jobs.”

Happy Roma Day – Bahtalo Romano dive
Free Legal Aid for Žitorađa Residents
Free Legal Aid for Prokuplje Residents and Promotion of a National Minority Councils’ Joint Project
509,855 Euros for Local and Inter-Municipal Projects in South and South West Serbia

for more news visit www.euprogress.org
This shows the potential of South and South West Serbia – firstly in the domestic market, but also in the international market for several tourism destinations and natural produce

South and South-West Serbian municipalities presented 16 proposals for the branding of their areas and produce at a seminar held on Mt. Kopaonik on 29 and 30 March with the support of the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES.

According to Mr. Tom Buncle, the Managing Director of the British company Yellow Railroad specialising in branding and providing consultancy support to EU PROGRES, the quality of the applications and their presentations was very high. “Everyone put an enormous amount of effort into preparing their branding submissions, as well as energy and creativity in presenting them. This shows the potential of South and South West Serbia – firstly in the domestic market, but also in the international market for several tourism destinations and natural produce. A major opportunity for many municipalities with similar appeals lies in working together through a “clustering” approach to achieve synergy and greater market impact,” Mr. Buncle said.

This workshop enabled close cooperation among representatives of municipalities regardless of what region they come from.

Good governance, for starters, means that public administration operates driven by public interest, through compliance with laws and execution of its own decisions

European Partnership with Municipalities Programme - EU PROGRES started a campaign “I want... because I live here” with a public debate held in Novi Pazar on April 12. The goal of the campaign and the programme is to promote good governance principles in 25 municipalities in the South and South West Serbia. This is the first debate in a series of numerous activities within a six-month campaign.

The crowded Assembly Hall of the Cultural Centre was greeted by Hajrudin Hajrovic, representative of City Administration and Graeme Tyndall, EU PROGRES Manager, who explained why good governance was a topic pervading all other activities of this development programme. “Good governance, for starters, means that public administration operates driven by public interest, through compliance with laws and execution of its own decisions. Unfortunately, in our work we also meet with other practices”, said Mr Tyndall.

Besides promotion of good governance principles and their importance for the socio-economic development, the goal of the debate was to familiarize the citizens with their rights, with administration’s responsibilities and obligations, as well as the ways for all of them to contribute to local policy development.
Bosilegrad, April 2012 – Almost every tomato in Lila Mitova’s garden weighs at least half a kilo. Lila proudly shows us her seedlings and says that, one year ago, weed grew in place of the long neat aisles. She is the representative of one of the 25 Roma families that provided their families with seasonal jobs and food through a project of the NGO Optimist and the Bosilegrad Municipality, with the support of the European Union and the Government of Switzerland.

“They called us from the Social Work Centre one day and said that the Gardeners project had been launched. You can get potato, bean, beetroot, onion, zucchini, carrot seeds and tomato, cabbage, paprika and cucumber seedlings. My husband and I applied immediately. We have five daughters and life is not easy,” says Lila. “They let us plant a field for free, they gave us the machines and the fertilisers and here are the results,” Lila smiles, looking at her budding tomatoes.

During the eight-month project, 117 direct beneficiaries advanced their knowledge of farming, learned about sowing, irrigating, weeding, fertilising and protecting the plants. They have thus helped revitalise the village, while, on the other hand, the residents of Bosilegrad again recalled how difficult life is for the Roma and got the opportunity to demonstrate their solidarity. And, what is particularly important, most of the project implementers, 22 out of 25, were women.

Around 400 Roma live in Bosilegrad. Like elsewhere in Serbia, their status is enviable. Poverty, rural life and lack of education exacerbate their suspicions and mistrust of the majority population. “When we were looking for unfarmed land on which vegetables could be grown, people told us that our efforts were in vain, that the Roma had enough, that they were lazy and did not want to work. Some even would not let the Roma work their land, saying that they would insult their ancestors if they did,” Kirilov says.

But the situation has been changing, step by step. A panel discussion rallying the representatives of the Municipality, Social Work Centre, schools, health institutions and media was held at the end of the Gardeners project and they agreed to start working on an Action Plan for Roma. The association Optimist had already secured funding for continuing the project, for buying the greenhouses and providing logistic support to the vegetable growers.

“This is one of the projects implemented through the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES Citizens Involvement Fund, which demonstrated how the joint efforts of the entire community can bring about changes and make life easier for those in dire straits. It promoted agriculture in an area where a lot of the fertile land is not farmed; it improved the income generating opportunities of the most vulnerable parts of the population; and, in the long term, it launched an initiative to address the Roma issue in Bosilegrad. Finally, the local organisation’s commitment to motivate a large number of stakeholders and genuinely contribute to the development of its municipality should serve as motivation for all of us,” said EU PROGRES Manager Graeme Tyndall.
We are planning to...

► Select projects to be funded from Citizens Involvement Fund second call
► Start work on:
  • Designing the planning documentation for and updating the cadastre-geodetic layers in 14 municipalities
  • Establishing the Mt. Radan tourism, the Pester Agriculture and the Fruit clusters
  • Designing plans for attracting foreign direct investments in Vranje, Leskovac, Novi Pazar, Prokuplje and Prijepolje
  • Establishing One Stop Shops in Leskovac and Vranje
► Prepare:
  • 10 infrastructure projects
  • 7 technical design projects
  • 7 branding projects
  • A new promotion campaign for raising public awareness of European values
► Organise two study tours on programme budgeting
► Introduce quality management standards in 5 municipalities

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