Projects improve quality of life in South and South West Serbia

Over 40% of the projects implemented within EU PROGRES have been successfully completed during the third quarter of 2012, and they all resulted in improved quality of life of the citizens in 25 municipalities in South and South West Serbia: doubled dentist and ultrasound examinations provided during the first six months that new equipment in Nova Varoš is being used in relation to the whole of last year; 48% of the population in Bosilegrad has been included in waste collection, which is 18% more than before the truck was purchased; in Prijepolje, 20% savings for heating are expected after the installation of new boilers; while the contribution for infrastructural projects for only seven municipalities exceeds the 30 million dinars provided for in the contracts.

The First Dairy Market in Bojnik

The new buildings of the dairy market and market administration in Bojnik, built with the European Union and the Swiss Government support through European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES, were ceremonially opened by Jean-Luc Oesch, the Swiss Embassy Deputy Head of Mission in Serbia and Ivan Stojanović, the Mayor of Bojnik, with the presence of Graeme Tyndall, EU PROGRES Manager. This South Serbian municipality thus received its first planned market facility for the sale of dairy products.

“This project was not just about the construction of buildings, but also about the ways the market will be managed, which contributes to adherence to good governance principles”, said deputy Ambassador Oesch.

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Never forget: you are fighting for someone's rights, against discrimination. Because rights are not earned, they are owned.

Do you want to fight for the rights of those whose voices are not heard and who are pushed to the margins of society? Do you believe you have the power to change the world around you? Do you think that social justice can be attained? Your answer is yes, but you don't know where to begin? Read this short text and move to action!

What is advocacy? In short, it is all the activities that can help achieve goals – it applies to public policy, decision making in political, economic or social systems and institutions. Through this process each of us can lead to societal changes, to achieve fair and democratic power balance and in this way bring about systemic equality and justice and bring positive change to the quality of life in the community.

How to address advocacy efforts? Always address them to a person, never an institution! Find out which institution is responsible for your problem or advocacy topic. Find the person who has the power to make some steps. Take into account the enemies – who could sabotage you in your efforts, what are their strengths and weaknesses, what are the risks of opposing them?

Two Jubilees During "Plum Days": Tenth Birthday and the Record of 100,000 Visitors

“Plum Days”, the cultural and agricultural event, celebrated two jubilees this year: its tenth anniversary and the record number of 100,000 visitors. The organisers of the Festival estimate that Blace had 100,000 visitors during four days who enjoyed good pop and folk concerts, as well as plum products. Numerous lectures on modern trends in fruit production and meetings of the producers prove that the organizers think strategically about development of this Toplica municipality. Blace municipality is the home of the highest number of plum trees per inhabitant in Serbia – two million trees of this fruit’s different varieties are planted on some 5,000 acres of land.

“We are grateful to the European Union and the Government of Switzerland who supported the Festival through the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES, and made our event recognisable by investing 30,000 Euro in its branding”, said Radoje Krstović, Mayor of Blace, during the opening ceremony.

“The EU PROGRES cooperation with Blace municipality resulted in support to this important meeting of fruit producers and entrepreneurs, with an aim to promote plum as a recognisable trademark of Blace and Toplica District.”, said Graeme Tyndall, EU PROGRES Manager, at the grand opening of the Festival.
In the summer of 2012, Mursel Bakić, formerly employed in the ‘Raška’ textile factory in Tutin, offered his kidney for sale to pay for electricity, feed his family and afford schooling of his children.

“I did not owe a smidgeon of the amount for electricity compared to what the State owed me, and they said they would cut if I didn’t pay. Me and my wife have been on unpaid leave since 1995 and although I have a court verdict that the factory should pay me more than four million dinars, my case ended ad acta”, Mursel said, adding: “My wife is sick, we do not have the right to welfare and we do not meet the requirements for retirement because of the contributions the factory did not pay...”

Alija Zulji is registered in the state statistics as an internally displaced person. He came from Prizren to Novi Pazar 12 years ago. Each time he needed personal documents he would go to Kruševac where registers from his hometown are kept.

“I leave Novi Pazar at 6 AM. I get off the bus in Kraljevo, and take a second bus to Kruševac. I usually get there during their break and then I wait. There are no (direct) buses to Novi Pazar before 4 PM, so then I get onto another bus in Kraljevo and get home around 7 PM. It takes me 13 hours to travel 240 kilometres. I have no income and every round trip costs at least three thousand dinars”, Zulji said. “Sometimes it happens that they spell my name wrong and then I have to hit the road again”.

Both Mursel and Alija are registered users of the Citizens Advisory Service (CAS) that has been operational in Novi Pazar since 2011, supported by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland through the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme EU PROGRES.

Projects funded through EU PROGRES

- 14 Other projects
- 12 Local tax administration support
- 3 Citizens Assistance Centre establishment
- 63 Partnerships of civil society and local self-government
- 31 Municipal infrastructure
- 24 Technical documentation
- 4 Branding and marketing projects
- 29 Planning documentation

This graph shows projects contracted by the end of October 2012. It does not cover technical support provided by EU PROGRES and some specific interventions, such as direct provision of IT equipment to municipalities.
Good Governance

We are supporting the municipalities in improving their adherence to the principles of accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in their work and in increasing civil participation in decision-making and are thus creating important prerequisites for sustainable development.

Municipal Management and Development Planning

We are endeavouring to improve the quality of services municipalities provide their citizens and businesses and providing professional support to the design of planning documentation. We are sure that the effects of our endeavours will be long-term, because municipal staff are acquiring knowledge they will need for the further development of the municipalities after the Programme is completed as well.

Infrastructure

We are taking part in the funding and implementation of municipal and inter-municipal infrastructure projects – which immediately produce visible results and improve the quality of life; we are working together with the local self-governments on the design of technical documentation requisite for attracting additional investments.

Public Awareness and Branding of Areas

Departing from the fact that positive communication facilitates faster and easier changes, the activities we are conducting within this Component simultaneously promote the potentials and build a positive image of South and South West Serbia, and raise public awareness of the socio-economic problems and the ways of resolving them.

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.

We are planning to...

► Start
  • works on Pešter Development Centre building
  • campaign to promote European values

► Open
  • tourist info-centre in Blace
  • rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities in Leskovac

► Complete
  • construction of a water-supply system in Ćoška settlement in Vranje
  • reconstruction of the national library in Vlasotince
  • reconstruction of “Termovent” factory in Medveđa
  • construction of kindergarten “Veselo detinjstvo” in Raška and equipping of kindergarten “Bukovica” in Ivanjica
  • main design for: Banjica Landfill, reconstruction and upgrade of the Children health care centre in Leskovac, infrastructure for special training of the children and youth with disabilities Vlasotince, re-cultivation of the dumpsite “Kremikovo” in Bosilegrad

► Promote EU PROGRES 2013 Calendar
► Publish “Obstacles to Infrastructure Development” publication