European Values on EU PROGRES 2013 Calendar

- Samra Šabanović, a student of the Novi Pazar Leather and Textile Design Secondary School, Maida Turković, a student of the Priboj High School, and Justina Vidosavljević, a student of the “Stevan Jakovljević” High School in Vlasotince, are the winners of the art competition for the 2013 Calendar of the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme EU PROGRES on the topic “Welcome to My Europe”. EU PROGRES Manager Graeme Tyndall, representative of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia Ana Stanković and academic painter and Novi Pazar University Professor Ervin Ćatović today presented the prizes – a laptop, tablet PCs and digital cameras to the 12 best students. The Medveđa Secondary School “Nikola Tesla” was declared the best school at this year’s competition.

Awards Acknowledge Programme Success

- The European Partnership with Municipalities Programme - EU PROGRES won five more acclaimed awards this fall. Late last month, the Programme, funded by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland, was awarded the November Prize of the Raška Municipality for its contribution to the progress and development of this municipality. The City of Leskovac showed its appreciation to EU PROGRES for the 15 development projects by awarding it the October Medal. The Programme is also very proud of the public acknowledgement it received from Trgovište on the municipality’s Liberation Day, 15 September, and the Thank You Certificates it received from Vlasotince and Lebane.
Clusters are a business venture, and when viewed as such, the answer to the question “why” is quite simple – “to improve one’s business operations”.

In these stormy waters of global economy, the waves of which have been sweeping over countries such as Serbia, which has been in transition for more than two decades now, there are a few catch words economic analysts, consultants, managers, and, as of recently, politicians as well, have been reiterating so often that they have almost acquired the character of a mantra: competitiveness, innovation, strategic partnership and cluster. The text below is devoted to the last word - cluster.

Practice has brutally proven that mere verbal support and repetition, no matter how widespread and chanted in unison, cannot improve business conditions, create a new value, a new product, a new service or a new job, or open a new market. This is possible only if the resources, potentials and problems are properly identified, if the priorities are set and programmes designed, programmes which will have the capacity to make the greatest impact on economic reality. That capacity can be created precisely through clusters.

“A cluster is a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities.”

– Michael Porter, Harvard School of Business Professor

From a Red Collar to Citizen Participation – A Successful Community Office

When Šefadil Spahić became the President of Community Office IV in 2009, he found only an old typewriter on the premises. He would try to type something. The key would jam. And so it would take him two hours at a time to write a short memo. “Then the ribbon runs out, then I turn it upside down, and red letters come out. I pull out the jammed keys, clutching the collar of my shirt anxiously... and at the end of the day – I find my collar is red.”

With support of the European Union and the Government of Switzerland, through European Partnership with Municipalities Programme EU PROGRES, five Community Offices from the area of Novi Pazar were equipped. Office furniture, material and computer equipment were purchased.

“Ever since we have the new equipment, the quality of work has significantly improved. We can write, print out and file each request. Access to Internet enables us to check the town budget at any time and exchange information with our colleagues and the town administration,” Spahić says. “In our Local Community Council 30% of the members are women. We work in a transparent and accountable manner in order to improve the socio-economic position of all our citizens.”

The aim of the project implemented in partnership between Novi Pazar Assembly and the Sandžak Human Rights and Liberties Committee was to improve the work of the Council of Local Communities, but also to encourage citizen participation in the local community. Public debates and meetings were held about infrastructural issues, monitoring budget implementation, improvement of social needs and similar issues.
Reaching up to thousands of people from Ivanjica and Novi Pazar through Kuršumlija, Blace and Prokuplje all the way to Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo, education, activation, advocacy, setting up new practices and hundreds of media reports, all of this contributed to making good governance buzz words in 2012.

The year which started with the emergency situation due to heavy snow, continued in feverish election atmosphere and was marked with the economic crisis, perhaps was not the best one for running the good governance campaign. But it was certainly the right time to ask – what can be done better?

"Eraser that removes barriers between citizens and government is the true symbol of good governance and it should motivate and encourage all of us to take proactive approach," said an administrative official in Vlasotince Municipality, when asked about the campaign.

Under the motto "I wish... because I live here" local administrations, civil society, students, businesses and media were rethinking application of good governance principles in their own communities. Through 13 public events and dozens of working meetings with all stakeholders, joint conclusions were reached in relation to the need to foster consultative processes in decision-making, to increase transparency of the work of administration, secure equality and to create better environment for investments.

Principles of accountability, transparency, public participation, efficiency and equality, as pillars of good governance, were conveyed to the public not just through promotional materials, media and debates but also through fostering communication with citizens and provision of information. Doors were opened in municipalities and procedures for scheduling meetings with municipal officials were set. Mechanisms to follow officials’ performance on case-by-case basis were established. Local population welcomed the introduction of nametags for employees in the Citizens’ Assistance Centres. Budgets were planned with citizens, who voiced their priorities for 2013. The municipal websites became more accessible, increasing the content related to information of public importance.

“It is particularly interesting for people from rural areas, and might be one of the best projects introduced in municipality, because if someone came by bus to Blace to finish something, it is very important to get that work done" - Dobrica Milosavljević, president of Local Community Office Draginje, Municipality of Blace.

At the beginning of campaign local governments recognized lack of public interest and not enough understanding of good governance within the administration as two biggest obstacles for implementation of this concept. Now, after the campaign has been implemented, we can say that at least those two obstacles are beaten. Still, there is a lot of work ahead. The municipalities should be supported further in introducing good governance, by developing procedures to remove obstacles and to be able to respect the principles of accountability, transparency, participation, efficiency and non-discrimination in practice.
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.

Good Governance

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.

EU PROGRES Overall Budget is 18.1 million EUR

European Union 14.1 million EUR
Gov. of Switzerland 2.5 million EUR
Serbian Govern. 1.5 million EUR