MOVING FORWARD

South and South West Serbia
...to reduce differences between richer and poorer parts of Serbia, and to enable local institutions in the South and South West Serbia to better use current and future investment funds from a range of sources
CONTENTS

05  FOREWORD
07  ABOUT THE PROGRAMME
08  PARTNERS
12  EU PROGRES IN NUMBERS
15  INVESTMENTS AND EMPLOYMENT
17  MUNICIPAL COMPETITIVENESS
19  EDUCATION
21  HEALTH
23  COMMUNAL SERVICES
25  SOCIAL INCLUSION
25  GOOD GOVERNANCE
27  SPORTS AND YOUTH
28  ENVIRONMENT
30  AGRICULTURE
33  GENDER EQUALITY
35  CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA
37  CULTURE
39  CAMPAIGNS, PROMOTION AND BRANDING
41  WHAT MADE A DIFFERENCE?
43  AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS
FOREWORD

It has been almost four years when a small enthusiastic, committed and knowledgeable team of domestic experts started to work on the implementation of an ambitious and a wide ranging development Programme in 25 municipalities in the South and South West Serbia. Although a bit more time will pass before we can fully measure and understand the impact of what has been achieved, just recently, one of our colleagues said: “EU PROGRES did something real in those municipalities.” And after many years working in development and project management of some less successful programmes, I dare say I agree.

Since mid 2010, EU PROGRES, with the financial support of the European Union, the Swiss and local and national governments, provided grants and technical assistance to local self-governments to implement 250 sub-projects. The work on capacity development of colleagues in municipalities, infrastructure projects, technical and planning documentation and improvements of local government services has been the core of this Programme. But we also supported our partners to implement dozens of small projects for the benefit of vulnerable populations. In implementation of the entire Programme we ensured to respect good governance principles and gender equality.

I am sure you will agree that effects are much more important than the number of projects. EU PROGRES enabled employment of 300 people. It complemented efforts of the national and local governments to attract several key commercial investments into the area. Using the technical designs developed with Programme’s support, the municipalities already secured funds for implementation of projects. Our initiatives contributed to better public services in education, health and communal affairs… and much more. When I met people with disabilities who got their first jobs thanks to EU PROGRES’ projects, when I witnessed the change in the quality of life of Roma families who got tap water in their homes, or when I learned that there were no waiting lists for enrolment of children in a kindergarten, when children attended school during harsh winter as their classrooms were finally warm thanks to a new heating system, I believe we did a good job together.

None of this would have been possible without strong partnerships: with the Government of Serbia and its ministerial representatives on the Steering Committee chaired and led by the European Integration Office which provided strong guidelines throughout Programme implementation; with the donors, the European Union and the Government of Switzerland, which in addition to providing funding remained supportive until the last day of the Programme; and above of all, with our partners in the field - local governments, civil society organisations, development practitioners or ordinary citizens.

The pages that follow will reveal only a small part of the work that was done. I think we achieved what we wanted. We did it together. It was a privilege to be a part of this Programme. I hope you will enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed working in this Programme.

Graeme Tyndall
Programme Manager
March 2014
The European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES was the largest area based development Programme in Serbia, which covered 25 municipalities in the South and South West of the country. From July 2010 until March 2014, it achieved significant results through high quality work within its four components:

**Good Governance:** created an environment in which decisions are taken through interaction of different stakeholders, accentuating participation, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and transparency. Along with the specific activities within the component, good governance was a cross-cutting theme underpinning the whole Programme.

**Municipal Management and Development Planning,** dedicated to improving foundations of local self-governments’ services and creating preconditions for investments, by supporting development of urban and spatial plans, modernization of Citizens’ Assistance Centres, establishing One Stop Shops and clusters, introducing programme budgeting and capital investment planning, as well as expanding databases of local Tax Administration offices.

**Social, Economic and Environment Infrastructure,** both on the local and inter-municipal level, which immediately produced visible results and improved the quality of life of the ordinary people in the South and the South West Serbia. The joint work of the Programme and the local self-governments on design of technical documentation resulted in attracting additional investments.

**Public Awareness and Branding** of the South and South West Serbia, in order to promote potentials, build a positive image of the area and raise public awareness of the socio-economic problems and the ways of resolving them.
The European Union is the biggest donor to Serbia and has provided more than 2.6 billion Euros over 13 years for the reforms in the rule of law, public administration, social development, environment and agriculture sectors. At the start of 2014, there were more than 600 projects for the overall benefit of the citizens of Serbia. The EU provides funds through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), which is being used to support the stabilisation and association process of the candidate countries and potential candidate countries.

The Government of Switzerland has been among the biggest bilateral donors to Serbia, with its aid exceeding 300,000 million Euros in the past two decades. The new Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017 focuses on three domains: improvement of governance, economic development and energy efficiency.
EU PROGRES’ budget was **20.6 million Euros**: 14.1 million Euros from the European Union, 2.9 million Euros from the Government of Switzerland, while the Government of Serbia co-funded the activities with **3.6 million Euros**.

**PARTNERS**

The **Government of Serbia** ministerial representatives took part in the Programme Steering Committee, but also provided financial resources for Programme activities. Twenty-five partner municipalities also made financial contributions for sub-projects. The Steering Committee was chaired and led by the European Integration Office (SEIO), which provided strong guidelines throughout EU PROGRES’ implementation.

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** in Serbia has been contributing to the efforts of the Government of Serbia to conduct challenging socio-economic reforms, to facilitate European integrations and to provide support to vulnerable and marginalised communities. UNOPS had been an assurance of apolitical and developmental approach in the Programme implementation.
“EU PROGRES enables municipalities to make stronger connections and discuss inter-municipal cooperation as well as the opportunities for joint projects in the areas of economy, culture, etc.”

Ljiljana Stojanović
Editor-in-Chief, JUGPress agency

“Through EU PROGRES, and working in a close partnership with the municipalities from South and South West, Switzerland supports Serbia to promote democracy and brings decision-making closer to the people.”

Isabel Perich
Country Director, Swiss Cooperation Office Serbia

“This Programme is significant for small and poor municipalities, municipalities in which only the European Union and the Government of Switzerland invest, through EU PROGRES.”

Zoran Antić
Mayor of Vranje

“The biggest accomplishment of EU PROGRES is giving hope to the citizens of Priboj that they are not alone. This Programme brings fundamental values of the EU closer to the citizens of 25 underdeveloped municipalities, as well as to those that are not included in the Programme, because the results and the benefits of the Programme are visible in the whole Serbia.”

Lazar Rvović
Mayor of Priboj
“Our big project EU PROGRES has achieved impressive results in the South and the South West Serbia, which only prove that the Delegation of the European Union is dedicated to improve the living conditions for the common people.”

Michael Davenport  
Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

“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. The EU is a strong and helpful partner in the European integration process that understands and addresses the needs of Serbian citizens.”

Vincent Degert  
Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia from 2009-2013

“EU PROGRES contributes especially to the efficient coordination between local self governments and ministries of the Government of Serbia to fulfil development plans of the cities and municipalities in the South and the South West Serbia.”

Ognjen Mirić  
Deputy Director of the European Integration Office of the Republic of Serbia from 2010-2014

“This programme tackles the key issues for the South and South West of Serbia, such as economic recovery, infrastructure and good governance, and helps create much needed perspectives for the youth. Through its competitive selection process only solid and convincing projects are funded. We are proud to support this programme, together with our partners from the EU and the Serbian Government.”

Jean-Daniel Ruch  
Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Serbia
255 projects in total

- 12 inter-municipal projects
- 24 projects improving gender equality and participation of women
- 9 promotional and branding projects
- 6 projects supporting entrepreneurship and clustering
- 33 planning documents designed
- 71 civil society organisations projects
- 18 projects for improvement of municipal administration
- 12 other projects
Technical assistance

- Participatory budgeting conducted in 14 municipalities
- One Stop Shops established in Leskovac, Novi Pazar, Vranje and Ivanjica
- Capital Investment Plans and Programme Budgeting introduced in Nova Varoš, Vladičin Han, Vlasotince, Medveda and Raška
- QMS ISO 9001 and EMS ISO 14001 introduced in Novi Pazar, Bujanovac, Ivanjica, Prokuplje and Surdulica
- Foreign direct investment plans developed in Ivanjica, Leskovac, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje and Vranje

Key surveys, researches and publications

- The Citizens’ Satisfaction Survey, December 2010 and December 2013
- Analysis of Budget Practices, December 2012
- Obstacles to Infrastructure Development, 2013
- The Baseline Competitiveness Study, February 2014
- Skills Gap Analysis, February 2014
- Making Good Governance Tangible, March 2014
- Good Governance - Vertical Dimension, March 2014

Surveys, studies and publications are available on www.euprogres.org
Roma entrepreneur Dragica Mihajlović (54) lost her job in the local carpet factory in the early nineties. Through Virtual Business Incubator project Dragica received two new loom machines and one sawing machine and started her own family business. The project helped other 11 people register their own company and open 24 sustainable jobs. The range of businesses was wide - printing, production of PVC joinery, souvenirs, hairdressing, butchery, fitness, recycling, car mechanics, fast food, video production, game arena and Internet café. Previously, through “Business Incubation for Returnees’ project, eight permanent employments were created when two Business Incubator Centre tenants received grants to purchase equipment and start pellet and furniture production. The total value of both business incubation projects was 143,490 Euros.
INVESTMENTS AND EMPLOYMENT

The Programme has complemented actions of the national and local governments to create a more friendly business environment in the South and the South West Serbia. With one million Euros invested into 41 projects related to the development of industrial zones, planning documentation and entrepreneurship, EU PROGRES contributed to commercial investments of at least 30 million Euros, facilitated employment of 300 people, and created the basis for opening of 3,000 jobs in the next one to five years.

Development of detailed regulation plans and a part of technical designs for the Industrial Zone in Vranje has been part of efforts to attract investments by Italian shoe manufacturer Geox and furniture producer Ditre Italia. Geox will invest 15.8 million Euros and open 1,250 jobs. The first 120 people have been employed, while the construction of factory has started. Geox investment should trigger arrival of several sub-contractors that should open additional 500 jobs. Ditre Italia also signed a contract with the Government of Serbia to invest into the Industrial Zone, estimated at 13.4 million Euros, and it will create 400 jobs.

The construction of the communal infrastructure within Leskovac Green Zone is another EU PROGRES’ project with major potential for economic development. The Zone covers 100 hectares, of which 42 are equipped with water, electricity and sewage and hence ready for new investors, primarily the ones working on the storage, processing and distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables. In response to the public call announced by the City towards the end of 2013, four agribusiness companies expressed interest to invest 51 million Euros and create 850 jobs. These investments could create value chain, which will generate regular and stable business for more than 4,000 agricultural producers.

By supporting the reconstruction of Medveda wood processing factory "Jablanica eko", the Programme facilitated investment of a Slovenian donor and the Municipality into machinery worth 820,000 Euros and opening of 42 jobs. The new factory will indirectly create business for approximately 200 local wood suppliers.

Three projects implemented in partnership with the Vranje Business Incubator Centre supported entrepreneurship among vulnerable groups. The interventions enabled registration of 26 new businesses and creation of 41 jobs for Roma, women and youth. Some of the newly registered enterprises created room for business expansion. For example, privately owned recycling yards in Bujanovac and Vladičin Han benefitted more than hundred people who collect secondary raw materials.

EU PROGRES also facilitated establishment of three clusters, gathering 67 entities, of which 50 are small and medium enterprises: South Serbia Fruit, Radan Mountain Tourism and Agro-Pešter. The clusters should enable its members to improve business processes, introduce innovations, develop joint marketing approaches and thus win (new) markets and increase profits.

Finally, the Programme enabled opening of about 100 jobs through infrastructure and civil society organisations projects. After the reconstruction of Ivanjica, Raška and Tutin kindergartens 56 people were employed, while the equipment for the carpentry workshop of the Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Raška facilitated temporary employment of 30 young people.
EU PROGRES’ support to Ivanjica has been diverse, with assistance provided in the areas of the foreign direct investment planning, OSS establishment, QMS and EMS certification and development of urban plans. Pure good governance reform in Ivanjica resulted in the changes of the Municipal Statute and in the Assembly Rules of Procedures. New regulatory paragraphs were developed and inserted into documents such as job descriptions and systematizations, pertaining to planning, reporting, evaluation, coordination with the Assembly and communication of the results. All this will improve municipal efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability.
EU PROGRES provided comprehensive support to local governments contributing to their improved effectiveness and efficiency, increased capacities and better service provision, and ultimately increased transparency and accountability. More than 1.4 million Euros were invested through projects supporting strategic planning, service delivery and policy reform.

The development of the strategic plans covered the areas of foreign direct investment, capital investment, programme budgeting and urban planning. Over 5,800 hectares of the construction land were covered with 33 planning documents, regulating industrial zones, tourism development areas, communal infrastructure, legalization of informal settlements and cross-border cooperation. This technical documentation should increase absorption capacity of municipalities by 40 million Euros.

Through the capital investment planning process, Medveda, Vlasotince, Vladičin Han, Raška and Nova Varoš defined over 110 projects valued more than 100 million Euros. For the first time, the five local governments introduced programme budgeting approach. While the programme budgeting will enhance the control of spending, and facilitate planning of finances for capital, multi-year projects, capital investment planning provides insight, especially to investors, into the most important development projects in a particular municipality.

Through construction and equipping of three and modernization of nine Citizens’ Assistance Centres (CAC), efficiency of service delivery has immensely improved. What once took days to obtain a document, now is executed in a matter of minutes. Furthermore, the services provided in an open customer oriented environment enhance transparency and reduce corruption practices. In Raška, the CAC services were expanded into four local community offices. As a result, 8,000 citizens didn’t have to travel between eight and 30 kilometres. For them, this intervention approximately saved 18,240 Euros of travel costs.

Just as the CACs provide the services for citizens in one place, the establishment of One Stop Shops (OSS) created a single point of contact in Vranje, Leskovac, Ivanjica and Novi Pazar, where businesses and investors can also obtain necessary construction permits and other information in one place. The local administrations customised their systematization acts, created protocols for internal organization of work, signed agreements with the relevant public utility companies, developed job descriptions and thus, de facto, established comprehensive institutional mechanism for delivery of quality services.

As a result of the support to eleven local Tax Administration Offices, 17,000 people were added to the databases, which created a total increase of invoices issued to taxpayers of 645,119 Euros. At the same time, the increase in paid property tax was, on average, almost 25%.

EU PROGRES supported introduction of Quality Management (ISO 9001) and Environmental Management Standards (ISO 14001) in Novi Pazar, Ivanjica, Bujanovac, Prokuplje and Surdulica, to improve efficiency and effectiveness of municipal services and functions of municipal administrations. In practice, the certification should bring greatest benefits to the citizens of the five local governments by enabling easier access to services, faster response time, and transparency and accountability.
The construction of the Elementary School “Radoje Domanović” was the first completed infrastructure project, funded by EU PROGRES with 100,000 Euros, with the City of Leskovac contributing additional 50,000 Euros. The school was accredited in the summer 2012, 15 pupils were enrolled in preschool education and 45 in primary for 2013-2014 school year.

“The future rests on the youth, this is also a pledge for a better life of the community,” former DEU Ambassador to Serbia Vincent Degert said at the opening of the School.

More than 400 Roma and Serbian children from schools in Leskovac were included in educational workshops and multi ethnic activities promoting tolerance and multi-cultural cooperation.

“When I grow up, I’ll be a doctor. I will help people get better. I will cure old people. But in order to become a doctor, I must study a lot” eleven-year old Nejžla said.
More than 1.4 million Euros were invested to support 48 projects within the education sector, which benefited 12,600 children. Four kindergartens were reconstructed, one new school was built and four were renovated; the Programme also funded development of four technical designs that create conditions for new infrastructure investments into education, while 17 partnership projects between civil society organisations and local self governments improved different aspects of schooling.

Primarily, enrolment of 431 additional children was made possible in kindergartens in Ivanjica, Raška and Tutin. In Raška, for example, the "waiting list" for admission ceased to exist. New employments were created: Ivanjica and Raška kindergartens employed 43 people. In parallel with the construction, EU PROGRES facilitated adoption of amended rulebooks on children admission in three kindergartens, which now include positive discrimination of children from vulnerable groups.

While reconstructing the objects, EU PROGRES boosted energy efficiency: the new heating systems in schools and kindergartens only during winter 2012-2013 made cumulative savings of over 60,000 Euros. The replacement of external joinery in Preševo, the largest elementary school in Serbia, improved education conditions for 2,500 pupils, while the school made savings of 8,000 Euros during the heating season. In Novi Pazar Gymnasium, there were no shortening of classes thanks to the new boilers. The expenses in the City budget were reduced six times per heating season. In Vladičin Han kindergarten, the costs for heating were reduced by 20% in the first year after the reconstruction. The Elementary School "Raška" conducted environmental awareness campaign, purchased recycling bins and around 900 pupils were educated on primary separation of solid waste.

Four main designs were developed for kindergartens and schools in Blace, Vranje, and Novi Pazar. The development of technical documentation already facilitated investments. For example, Caritas completed the reconstruction of the Elementary School "Dositej Obradović" in Vranje, worth 85,000 Euros, while using documentation developed through EU PROGRES.

New sewing machines were delivered to Novi Pazar School for Textile and Design and two classrooms were renovated to enable establishing of the Vocational Training Programme for textile and footwear industry. The School prepared new curricula and permission for the new vocational training from the Ministry of Education is in the final stage of approval.

The quality of vocational education for approximately 467 high school students increased.

Creative thinking of high school students and enhancing knowledge in the field of anti-discrimination, cultural diversity, Europe and environment was boosted through participation in the EU PROGRES’ Calendar competition. Over four years, the interest in the contest grew and the quality of works built up.

The Programme participates in the work of Stakeholders’ Committee for the Bujanovac Department of the Subotica Faculty of Economics of the University of Novi Sad and supports partners to create conditions for the construction of the building for this high education institution.
The reopening of the Maternity Ward in Preševo has been the top priority of the Government of Serbia for the South of the country. After 24 years, 400 women from Preševo and the area can annually give birth at their hometown instead of travelling to Vranje, Gnjilane, Priština, Skopje or Kumanovo. The equipment provided by EU PROGRES for surgical-maternity ward, kitchen and office appliances, gynaecological examination room, neonatology care and sterilization block directly improves health care for women from Bujanovac and Preševo.

This project has been a great example of good partnership between the Government, donors and the municipality. The Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveda, the Ministry of Health and the Municipality of Preševo funded the construction works with 923,000 Euros. EU PROGRES contributed with 255,000 Euros for the medical equipment, along 130,000 Euros from the Coordination Body.
HEALTH

The basis for improved health services were set in the entire Programme area by renovation of health care facilities, provision of equipment and educational and awareness raising campaigns, through projects whose value exceeded 727,000 Euros.

With the new equipment for the Health Centres in Nova Varoš, Leskovac and Surdulica, citizens have better access to screenings and health prevention. In Nova Varoš the number of dental examinations of school children, from October-December 2013, increased by 137% from the average in the same quarter in 2011, while the number of examinations with the new ultra-sound in the last quarter of 2013 equalled the number of all examinations during 2011. The new X-Ray machine delivered to Leskovac Health Centre can perform two additional tests – endoscopy and colonoscopy – while the number of exams should increase by 25%. Equipment for early detection and treatment of pulmonary diseases was delivered to the Special Hospital in Surdulica, thus increasing its capacity by 40%.

EU PROGRES supported Serbia’s strategic efforts to improve women’s health by procuring equipment worth about 150,000 Euros to the medical centres in Prokuplje, Blace, Kuršumlija, Žitorađa, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Ivanjica and Prijepolje. Toplica municipalities also benefited from other small infrastructure projects. The new modern medical laboratory in Kuršumlija can perform around 115,000 analyses annually. After the construction of a plateau outside the Health Centre Prokuplje, 69 new parking spaces were created, which decreased traffic congestions in front of the building and contributed to safer transport of patients. Similarly, in Blace, an emergency entrance annex to the Medical Centre was constructed, which reduced the time needed for the transportation of patients from the ambulance car to the medical office from four minutes to one.

Following the old saying that “prevention is the best cure”, a series of educational and awareness raising activities took place with the Programme support. A public awareness campaign on women health “Find the Time” marked the European Cervical Cancer Week with public events in Vranje, Preševo and Bujanovac. As a result of a campaign in Priboj, 1,800 women took mammography screening, which is 90% from the total number of the planned check-ups for the year. A similar campaign in Sjenica resulted in the increased number of preventive check-ups among women by around 35%.

There were other small projects, partnerships between civil society organisations and local self governments, which facilitated access of Roma to health protection, or helped this vulnerable group exercise their rights in getting access to health protection.

11 MEDICAL CENTRES SUPPORTED WITH NEW EQUIPMENT

727,000 € FOR IMPROVED HEALTH CARE

255,000 € FOR MATERNITY WARD IN PREŠEVO
The new modern water tank truck that was delivered to Novi Pazar’s Public Utility Company “Čistoća”, delivers potable water to the reservoir in the Blaževo settlement also constructed with EU PROGRES’ support. Previously, the Programme prepared the main design for water supply in the settlement with around 50 households of domicile Roma and internally displaced persons from Kosovo. The water tank truck is also used to supply other parts of the City with water and for cleaning the streets.

Another vehicle, for sewage system in Novi Pazar, enabled adequate maintaining of waste-water and should reduce spillage of rainwater and sewage. More than 90,000 people and local 450 companies live in a healthier environment.
COMMUNAL SERVICES

More than 1.9 million Euros were invested to support 34 communal infrastructure projects, which contributed to improved living conditions of 150,000 people and created favourable business environment for more than 800 local companies.

The construction works on the dairy markets in Bojnik and Žitorađa and the green market in Kuršumlija provided adequate sanitary conditions for products’ sale. In Bojnik, the Public Utility Company (PUC) increased income by 15% during 2013, following the reconstruction of the market and adoption of the Decision on the Market Rules and the Use of Stands.

Ten water supply projects contributed to upgrading of water supply systems and improved delivery of drinking water. The connection to water supply network in Roma settlements Jelašnica (Surdulica), Čoška (Vranje) and Blažević (Novi Pazar) made direct positive change for 2,400 Roma. In Trgovište settlement Novo Selo, the construction of the main water pipeline and booster station doubled water inflow and provided stable water supply for 600 people.

Possibly the largest impact was seen in Sjenica, where the replacement of the pumping system in the water station Suho Polje, provided regular supplies to 2,500 households from higher parts of the municipality. The project also brought savings to the Public Utility Company (PUC) “Vrela” of up to 6,000 Euros per month. These savings increased to 8,000 Euros after the replacement of the old asbestos pipes, another EU PROGRES’ funded project.

Combined, these two projects contributed to 30% increase in the water flow, which meets the town’s needs. The Municipality of Sjenica adopted a Decision to use 80% of the saved funds for further improvement of the water supply network and 20% for subsidies. Thanks to this, the Municipality covers the costs of water for more than 100 socially vulnerable households.

Six main designs were developed for water supply systems, river regulation and sewage collectors in Trgovište, Ivanjica, Raška, Tutin, Novi Pazar and Vranje. The development of technical documentation already facilitated investments. For example, the Ministry for Regional Development and Local Self Government provided 25,000 Euros for the construction of 2.8 km of sewage collectors’ system in Tutin, while using the documentation developed through EU PROGRES.

The Programme delivered one modern water tank truck and one modern truck for pumping out sewerage pipes to Novi Pazar, and two waste collection trucks to Bosilegrad and Trgovište. Procurement of the vehicles increased the technical capacities of public utility companies which are now able to deliver faster and better-quality services to the citizens.

The regulation of 12% of the Straževačka River flow through Prokuplje prevents flooding. This was especially important for 600 pupils and 250 Roma who were often infected by jaundice that occurred because of floods. It is expected that registered cases of jaundice will be reduced to minimal level in two years after the intervention.

Eight partnership projects between local governments and civil society organisations created small but useful improvement of communal infrastructure. In Nova Varoš, two public drinking fountains were reconstructed while on the Pešter Highland, the Inter Municipal Union of Agricultural Associations established service for water finding in rural areas. So far, 25 water sources were identified and ten farmers already dug wells and have new water resources.
Three projects provided water for settlements inhabited by 800 Roma. In Vranje, the works on the construction of the primary supply pipeline in Ćoška brought fresh water to some 30 households, while in Surdulica village Jelašnica, 400 Roma accessed fresh water. After development of the main design, the Programme supported the construction of the water supply system in Novi Pazar’s Blaževo settlement with 50 households of domicile Roma and internally displaced persons from Kosovo.
One of the main differences of EU PROGRES, compared to other similar initiatives, is a strong strive to make a long-lasting impact to a community and contribution to opening up of new perspectives for further socio-economic development.

Formally looking, the Programme had two cross-cutting aspects that were observed throughout its numerous activities – good governance and gender equality. However, it also initiated and implemented projects that were specifically addressing the existing social exclusion issues.

To that end, the Programme employed two main tools: Citizens’ Advisory Services (CAS) and Citizens’ Involvement Fund (CIF). Both were designed mainly to focus on the needs and the rights of the vulnerable groups, such as physically or mentally challenged, unemployed, elderly, Roma and women. For example, the CAS gave an opportunity to 3,000 socially excluded people to claim their basic rights, such as medical insurance, pension or child support, to mention but a few. Simply - they became visible in the eyes of the law. More than 1,800 people with disabilities and elderly received support through 23 CIF projects.

The assistance to the challenging position of the local Roma community was versatile: three infrastructure projects provided clean water to 800 Roma; 13 partnership projects between civil society organisations and local self governments facilitated access of some 1,200 Roma to education, employment and health protection, reducing social distance towards Roma and preserving cultural heritage of this community. A Roma entrepreneurship project enabled employment of 29 people. Detailed Regulation Plan for Mala Guba in Prokuplje essentially creates conditions for legalisation and infrastructure development of a settlement inhabited by 220 Roma.

EU PROGRES is one of few development programmes in Serbia that had good governance concepts and principles embedded in all its activities. It was not easy: we worked diligently with the Swiss experts to integrate good governance concepts, accountability, transparency, participation, non-discrimination and efficiency, into a wide range of EU PROGRES’ socio-economic projects. This meant transferring good governance from a conceptual level into the living practices that could show tangible results to the local self-governments and the citizens.

How did we do it? Considering that a large portion of EU PROGRES’ budget was allocated for the infrastructure projects, in parallel with the construction, we worked closely with the municipalities to help them identify aspects of a particular project that needed to be addressed.

As a result, the municipalities, with EU PROGRES’ support, adopted or revised over 30 local policies and regulations, each and every enhancing one of the good governance principles. These policies and regulations will enhance sustainability and impact of infrastructure project(s); they will ensure that part of (public) affairs is better organised; and, most importantly, citizens’ interests and rights will be better addressed. And this is not abstract but very real, the most real issue of all.
The construction of the first Sports Hall in Surdulica created adequate conditions for sports and recreational activities for the entire population of the municipality. There are about 480 active athletes, boxers, football, basketball, volleyball and karate players who now have indoor training facility. In addition, the Sports Hall is used for practice and physical education of pupils, sports events for women's clubs, and gives appropriate access to people with disabilities.

This project is in line with the Sports Development Strategy in Serbia, as well as with Surdulica Sustainable Development Strategy. The total value of the project was 320,000 Euros, while the EU and the Swiss Government, through EU PROGRES provided 100,000 Euros.

Five key infrastructure projects, worth almost 400,000 Euros, directly benefitted sportsmen and sports-women and young population of Surdulica, Žitorađa, Kuršumlija, Novi Pazar and Priboj. There were 15 other small projects, worth over 130,000 Euros, implemented in partnership of municipalities and civil society organisations, that supported youth initiatives - environmental education, inclusion of vulnerable groups and trainings on writing project proposals.

In Novi Pazar deficiencies in the original technical design meant that the Sports Hall “Pendik” didn’t have heating, which made it almost unusable during the wintertime. EU PROGRES installed a boiler-room and distribution network for heating and ventilation. This put “Pendik” into full functionality for organising sports matches and practices, fairs and exhibitions. In Žitorađa, the construction of stands and supporting facilities on the Stadium improved the conditions for recreational activities for children and youth and at the same time contributed to the growth in the number of visitors by 60%. The number of sports events increased by 52% in the first year after the construction. Ten sports clubs use Kuršumlija Sports Hall. The work on ventilation and fire protection systems, as well as on the landscaping around the Hall improved technical and safety conditions and provided conditions for proper functioning of this facility.

The adaptation and furnishing of the Youth Centre in Priboj creates conditions for organizing lectures, vocational trainings, cultural and arts programmes, individual counselling, various promotions, presentations, and exhibitions for more than 5,100 young people. It also improves the institutional framework for affirmation of young people and their inclusion in building of civic society.

Five key infrastructure projects, worth almost 400,000 Euros, directly benefitted sportsmen and sports-women and young population of Surdulica, Žitorađa, Kuršumlija, Novi Pazar and Priboj. There were 15 other small projects, worth over 130,000 Euros, implemented in partnership of municipalities and civil society organisations, that supported youth initiatives - environmental education, inclusion of vulnerable groups and trainings on writing project proposals.

In Novi Pazar deficiencies in the original technical design meant that the Sports Hall “Pendik” didn’t have heating, which made it almost unusable during the wintertime. EU PROGRES installed a boiler-room and distribution network for heating and ventilation. This put “Pendik” into full functionality for organising sports matches and practices, fairs and exhibitions. In Žitorađa, the construction of stands and supporting facilities on the Stadium improved the conditions for recreational activities for children and youth and at the same time contributed to the growth in the number of visitors by 60%. The number of sports events increased by 52% in the first year after the construction. Ten sports clubs use Kuršumlija Sports Hall. The work on ventilation and fire protection systems, as well as on the landscaping around the Hall improved technical and safety conditions and provided conditions for proper functioning of this facility.

The adaptation and furnishing of the Youth Centre in Priboj creates conditions for organizing lectures, vocational trainings, cultural and arts programmes, individual counselling, various promotions, presentations, and exhibitions for more than 5,100 young people. It also improves the institutional framework for affirmation of young people and their inclusion in building of civic society.

The construction of the first Sports Hall in Surdulica created adequate conditions for sports and recreational activities for the entire population of the municipality. There are about 480 active athletes, boxers, football, basketball, volleyball and karate players who now have indoor training facility. In addition, the Sports Hall is used for practice and physical education of pupils, sports events for women’s clubs, and gives appropriate access to people with disabilities.

This project is in line with the Sports Development Strategy in Serbia, as well as with Surdulica Sustainable Development Strategy. The total value of the project was 320,000 Euros, while the EU and the Swiss Government, through EU PROGRES provided 100,000 Euros.
Environmental protection was among high priorities for the Programme. EU PROGRES worked on 48 projects, worth 2,396,950 Euros, that directly tackled environmental issues. Out of that number 19 were inter-municipal and local infrastructure projects, worth more than 1.75 million Euros. All work was guided by the national strategies regulating solid waste and waste-water management.

The work on solid waste management included the construction of the Recycling Centre in Nova Varoš and provision of containers to four municipalities in the South West Serbia. In Bosilegrad, the territory covered by municipal waste collection increased to 50%, while in Trgovište to 80%, following the purchase of the communal waste collection trucks.

EU PROGRES also supported implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plans by funding design of technical documentation for two landfills, three recycling centres and one transfer station, as well as design of documentation for re-cultivation of an old landfill. Seventeen general and detailed regulation plans, i.e. 53% of all urban planning documents that were developed with EU PROGRES’ support, included the preparation of Strategic Environment Impact Analysis (SEIA). These documents set limitations for future construction in

With EU PROGRES’ support, Nova Varoš, Priboj, Prijepolje and Sjenica, formed a company that is responsible for the solid waste management in the region – the LLC “Banjica”. The Programme also funded development of the main design for the landfill, which will enable the LLC Banjica to seek funding for the construction. The four municipalities allocated funds in their budgets for the functioning of the LLC Banjica, second year in a row, which guarantees the sustainability of the action. The works on the access road to the Landfill are already contracted from these funds and will start in spring 2014.

Within work on the integrative waste management solution in the area, the Programme supported establishment of a recycling centre in Nova Varoš. The centre became operational in 2013 and in the first six months it collected and separated 18,346 kg of paper; 1,446 kg of PET; 2,538 kg of PVC and 50m³ of various metals. Selected materials were sold and earned the Centre a total of 349,390 Dinars.
Environmental protection was among high priorities for the Programme. EU PROGRES worked on 48 projects, worth 2,396,950 Euros, that directly tackled environmental issues. Out of that number 19 were inter-municipal and local infrastructure projects, worth more than 1.75 million Euros. All work was guided by the national strategies regulating solid waste and waste-water management.

The work on solid waste management included the construction of the Recycling Centre in Nova Varoš and provision of containers to four municipalities in the South West Serbia. In Bosilegrad, the territory covered by municipal waste collection increased to 50%, while in Trgovište to 80%, following the purchase of the communal waste collection trucks. EU PROGRES also supported implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plans by funding design of technical documentation for two landfills, three recycling centres and one transfer station, as well as design of documentation for re-cultivation of an old landfill. Seventeen general and detailed regulation plans, i.e. 53% of all urban planning documents that were developed with EU PROGRES’ support, included the preparation of Strategic Environment Impact Analysis (SEIA). These documents set limitations for future construction in order to ensure the environment is not endangered.

Waste water management has been an important part of the Programme’s efforts. Technical documentation was developed for the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) for Kopaonik, while in addition to preparation of documentation, WWTPs were constructed in Crna Trava and Trgovište. Effluent metres were provided to four Pčinja municipalities, enabling measurement of waste-water quantities and providing inputs for further infrastructure development in this field. EU PROGRES supported major flood protection project for Novi Pazar that will prevent frequent damaging of buildings, roads and agricultural land, which only in 2011 was almost two million Euros.

The results of several municipal projects will also have impact on environment: installation of bio-fuel boilers in Prijepolje and of heating system in Novi Pazar Gymnasium, replacement of joinery in Preševo School and Vladičin Han kindergarten enhanced energy efficiency of these buildings. Only those four projects contributed to savings of about 62,000 Euros in electricity bills and fuel per heating season.

The Programme also supported the introduction of the Environmental Management System ISO 14001:2004, in parallel with the Quality Management System ISO 9001:2008, in five municipalities, verifying that the local self governments are aware of the environmental management importance.

Furthermore EU PROGRES invested efforts to promote awareness of environmental issues. The last of the three Programme public awareness campaigns “Where Is Your Threshold of Responsibility?” was designed to promote environmental accountability of each citizen, and increase knowledge about recycling and energy efficiency. Different actions of the campaign saw participation of 1,700 people, campaigns’ key messages were transmitted through 152 media reports and there were 27,000 unique visitors registered on the campaign website. In two clean-up actions of illegal dumpsites, in Vranje and Prokuplje, the citizens collected 80 cubic metres of waste in several hours.

Finally, on a small scale, seven environmental projects were supported through the Citizens’ Involvement Fund, in partnerships between the local self-governments and the civil society organisations. In Leskovac, the so-called “turbolators” for three boilers on the heating plant were replaced and directly reduced CO₂ emissions. In Novi Pazar a picnic area in Golija Mountain was arranged, enabling organisation of series of environmental lectures. The most popular sport and tourist destination in Novi Pazar “Borići” with the trail for running, located in the old pine forest, was revived. Primary waste separation system in the biggest elementary school in Raška with around 1,000 pupils was established. In Prešev, green area and plants within the schoolyard in Elementary School “Ibrah im Kelmendi” are protected and the trash containers installed, while pupils marked the Earth Day within the action organized by the then Ministry of Environment Protection. As a result of a mini project in Toplica District, four composters were installed in the High School in Blace while public places in Prokuplje, Žitorađa and Blace were cleaned.
EU PROGRES invested 950,000 Euros to support three regional projects in the field of agriculture, establishment of two agricultural clusters, and several small scale interventions contributing to rural development.

In the South West, the Programme allocated 255,690 Euros for the establishment of the Regional Centre for Development of Agriculture on the Pešter Plateau and supported writing of the Centre’s feasibility study, construction of the facility and procurement of agricultural machinery. The Centre will provide laboratory testing, cattle registration, machinery renting, education and advising, and thus will directly benefit more than 200 agricultural producers in Sjenica, Novi Pazar and Tutin. The project is an example of multiple donor support to enhance the results: the Government of the Czech Republic delivered the equipment for the Centre’s Laboratory as well as the lacto freezers for the farmers, the Office for Sustainable Development of Underdeveloped Areas funded a part of the construction and equipment, while each municipality contributes to annual running costs. The consultations with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management were crucial in aligning the project with the national legal regulations.

In the Pčinja District, EU PROGRES funded a project worth 257,700 Euros
whose direct result was improvement of fruit producers’ capacities on modern techniques of fruit production by 30%, while the number of trees in the Pčinja District increased by 12.5%. The educational-training orchard, covering one hectare, was established and 202,247 fruit seedlings were distributed to all 373 registered individuals. The agriculture equipment was delivered to Vladičin Han, the municipality in charge of management of the orchard.

The construction of the communal infrastructure within Leskovac Green Zone, in the value of 338,772 Euros, is likely the project that has the most significant potential to accelerate the rural development of the South Serbia. The Zone covers 100 hectares, of which 42 are equipped with water, electricity and sewage and hence ready for new investors, primarily the ones working on the production, storage and distribution of green produce and food. This site has a potential to absorb major investments, it should benefit over 4,000 agricultural producers from the area and enable opening of over 1,000 jobs in the coming years. The significance of the Zone may potentially expand beyond Serbia’s borders, knowing that the agricultural producers and processors from other countries expressed interest to invest in the Zone.

Support was extended to two clusters which will aid agricultural development: the Agro Cluster in Pešter, gathering 26 dairy producers and business supporting institutions from Novi Pazar, Sjenica and Tutin, and the South Serbia Fruit Cluster in Leskovac gathered 12 fruit processors and business supporting institutions. After the B2B event “Meet the Buyer” organized by the Pešter Agro Cluster, increased turnover of 6,000 Euros was reported.

One of the crucial aspects for both inter-municipal projects was the establishment of project organisation - founding documents, management system, job systematizations, business models and financial plans - in line with the good governance principles.

EU PROGRES worked closely with stakeholders to ensure sustainability of its efforts. Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica allocated three million Dinars each for the work of the Regional Centre for Development of Agriculture in 2014. Vladičin Han Municipality provided 14,000 Euros from its budget for the work of the educational-training orchard in 2014.

Four small partnership projects between civil society organisations and municipalities improved different aspects of agriculture. In Bosilegrad, for example, support was extended to Roma and other families from vulnerable groups to start agriculture production for their own needs but also as a source of generating family income. Service for water finding in rural areas was established in Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica, where 25 water sources were identified and ten farmer households already dug wells. Another small project created conditions for rural economic development and increased capacity for strategic planning: through production of a study “Analysis of Rural-Economic Situation in the Pčinja District” and through creation of ID cards for 15 villages.

Finally, development of several branding plans identified the products, provided accurate information about their market position and helped improve knowledge of agricultural producers on marketing management. In the South West Serbia, the Market Survey and Research of Pešter products was conducted and served as the basis for development of the Marketing and Branding Plan of Pešter products. In Leskovac, the focus of the branding project was the best use of sour cherry, while the Toplica project focussed on the plum.
It took only two months of EU PROGRES' intensive work with the committed Coordination Team in Nova Varoš, to make possibly the biggest step towards creating the institutional preconditions for the improvement of the position of women in a local community. From a municipality that didn’t have either a local body or financial capacities, Nova Varoš became the first municipality that had a comprehensive approach to working on the gender agenda: established GEM, developed Local Plan and funding for its implementation, as well as commitment to respect the European Charter.

"Attitudes and behaviour towards gender are acquired and may change with circumstances. The fact is that gender equality is in the interest of both men and women and society as a whole. This is why the Gender Equality Council of the Nova Varoš Municipality will continue striving to ensure gender equality in all walks of life, both public and private." Danijela Topalović, Chairwoman of Nova Varoš GEM
There are almost equal number of women and men in the South and South West Serbia. And yet, there is no reciprocity when it comes to gender equality in the public sphere. In 2010, when the Programme started, only 18% of local councillors were women, while median level of representation of women in local public organizations and institutions was around 26%. Following 2011 elections, the number of women in local parliaments rose to almost 30%, which is the minimum prescribed by the Law. Though it would be pompous to claim that this result can be solely attributed to the Programme, EU PROGRES undoubtedly played an important role in raising awareness of the local population of the gender equality agenda.

Primarily, by establishing local gender equality mechanisms (GEMs) in all 12 municipalities, the Programme set up institutional precondition for advancing the equality of men and women in those communities. Nine municipalities adopted the European Charter on Equality of Men and Women in Local Life and an equal number prepared local action plans (LAPs) that were endorsed by the municipal assemblies. Nine adopted budget lines for gender related activities. Taking only these indicators into account, the Programme exceeded its planned results.

Twenty-four projects prepared by local GEMs, all identified as priority in the municipal LAPs, were supported. The effects of seven projects supported through the first call, were already visible in the field of improvement of women and youth health, prevention of violence, economic empowerment and improvement of political representation. In Priboj, campaign to educate the public on the importance of improvement of women’s health resulted in 1,800 women taking mammography screening, which is 90% from the total number of planned check-ups. A similar campaign in Sjenica led to around 35% increase in the number of preventive check-ups among women. Nova Varoš GEM organised campaign to tackle gender-based violence. By the end of the campaign, the local Centre for Social Work received eight complaints against domestic violence. In previous years, no such cases were recorded.

Based on the Programme’s results, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) allocated additional 402,850 Euros for actions that would contribute to strengthening of institutional framework and of relevant capacities of key local actors in all 25 municipalities, but also that were in support of the national strategies and action plans.

Individually, the most significant project supported through this additional grant, is the provision of equipment for Preševo Maternity Ward, worth 255,000 Euros. This intervention has been the top priority of the Government of Serbia for the South and created conditions for the reopening of the Ward after 24 years. It is estimated that 400 women from Preševo and the area will give birth annually at the Ward instead of travelling to nearby cities. Other eight medical centres also received necessary equipment. The provision of equipment went hand in hand with the public awareness campaign on women health, “Find the Time”, whose first three public events kicked off in Vranje, Preševo and Bujanovac within the European Cervical Cancer Week.

Furthermore, nine business start-up grants were awarded to women entrepreneurs, dealing with a variety of businesses: from crafts and artisan manufacturing shops, through agriculture production and bookkeeping services, to dental centre. This intervention created nine jobs, with a solid perspective to create more in the foreseeable future.

Finally, through an extensive outreach programme on gender-based discrimination by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (CPE), both the institutional capacity of this organisation was enhanced and women’s access to rights in South and South West Serbia was improved.
Two projects implemented in Bosilegrad demonstrated how the joint efforts of the entire community could make life easier for people from vulnerable groups. In the first, the owners gave their unfarmed land for free use to 25 Roma families, with more than 110 members. In cooperation with the municipal institutions, the civil society organisation Optimist provided seedlings, knowledge on farming and farming machines. During the second project, ten most disadvantaged Roma, Bulgarian and Serbian families received support to grow strawberries in greenhouses.
CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

Working with the civil society organisations (CSOs) and empowering them to be the partner of choice for municipalities, but also to endure in their role of watchdogs – and to remind the local administrations to be accountable, efficient and to respect the rule of law, was one of the areas where EU PROGRES achieved remarkable results. This was done through 66 small projects, financed with 530,000 Euros during two calls for proposals of the Citizens’ Involvement Fund (CIF), all of which were realised in partnerships between civil society organizations and local government institutions. Along with 16,500 direct beneficiaries, it is estimated that the number of indirect beneficiaries exceeded 600,000.

Through these small projects, Programme enabled permanent employment for 15 people and temporary jobs and occasional income for 83 people. Only in Raška, the opening of a carpentry workshop and training of people generated cyclical temporary employments for 30 people with disabilities. Four people with disabilities in Vranje got permanent employment after the purchase of copy machine and opening of a kiosk for photocopying.

Several services were established or improved through CIF: weekend programme for children with disabilities and their families in Ivanjica, water finding service and club for elderly people in Novi Pazar, assistance and care of elderly people at their homes in Priboj, children’s sports and cultural centre in Tutin, tourist info centre in Sur dulica, cleaning public utility service in Preševo, mini rehabilitation centre in Leskovac, a youth centre in Prijepolje.

Four municipalities, Preševo, Žitorađa, Prokuplje and Novi Pazar, provided free legal aid to their citizens, in cooperation with the CSOs, while participatory budgetary hearings were organised in twelve municipalities - Vranje, Leskovac, Kuršumlija, Bojnik, Sur dulica, Žitorađa, Medveda, Novi Pazar, Raška, Sjenica, Prijepolje and Nova Varoš.

In several municipalities CIF projects responded to the needs of around 1,200 Roma in education, achieving rights to health care and social benefits, economic empowerment, and preservation of cultural heritage and improvement of life conditions.

Along with improvement of living in the local communities, CIF projects were highly important in terms of capacity building of the civil society organisations themselves. The efficiency and accountability of the organisations grew and other donors started to observe that CSOs became “more reliable partners”. Furthermore, the partnerships between municipalities and the CSOs continued, even when the implementation of CIF projects finished. For example in Vladičin Han the local government continued to support the Association of Roma Intellectuals in organisation of additional classes for Roma children, while in Lebane the municipality funds two gender equality projects related to health prevention and gender sensitive budgeting.

EU PROGRES also supported small, independent media, through three small projects. Radio Sto Plus’ project “EU Funds – What’s in It For Me?” through seven radio shows reached about 7,500 people, emphasizing donor support to the development of the South West Serbia and underlining the European values. The daily newspaper Danas, in its supplement Sandžak Danas, published 13 articles on gender equality to increase awareness on importance of gender equality and impact on higher involvement of women in decision-making.
The reconstruction of the Homeland Museum in Priboj, and building of an open amphitheatre was funded with 100,000 Euros. The building can now host a standing exhibition of the diversity and rich cultural and historical heritage of this part of Serbia.

“The European Union’s support for cultural projects is very important for Priboj, because they can give an impetus to the economic development of this region. The Homeland Museum has artefacts that are over 7,000 years old and that many people may find interesting,” the Mayor of Priboj, Lazar Rvović, said.
There were three large infrastructure projects that contributed to preservation of cultural and historical heritage: the reconstruction of Priboj Homeland Museum, the restoration of the library in Vlasotince, and preparation of the technical documentation for the reconstruction of the Vranje National Theatre.

"Gigina kuća", that has been housing Vlasotince library for 101 years, and one third of its book fund, were burned during a fire in 2008. The restoration, which had been done in stages, was only completed after EU PROGRES provided support. Vranje National Theatre was burnt in 2012. Thanks to EU PROGRES' assistance for preparation of technical documentation, the City managed to raise more than 260,000 Euros to reconstruct the building.

"Together towards inter-culturalism" project was based on partnership between three National Minority Councils (NMCs): the Albanian, Bulgarian and Roma. The project supported intercultural dialogue and strengthening trust and cooperation among young people from different ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds. Other institutional support included provision of furniture and equipment for the new offices of the Albanian National Minority Council in Bujanovac, enhancing the working conditions on promoting and advancing the national identity of the Albanian community.

The EU PROGRES role in organisation of Children Creativity Festival FEDES in November 2012 and in spring 2014 was fundamental, as the Festival could not have happened otherwise due to the cuts in municipal budget. The event enabled elementary school children from the Toplica District to show their talents in drawing, painting, writing, singing, instrument playing and folklore. The Programme also assisted organisation of five local festivals in summer 2013, which were visited by over 146,500 people: Blace Plum Festival, Raška Holy Festivity, Priboj Lim Fest, Kuršumlija Summer Festival and "Nušićijada" in Ivanjica.

Small community initiatives that promoted diversity and richness of cultures in the South and South West Serbia were also sponsored: annual celebrations of the World Roma Day, Bosilegrad International Folklore Festival, "Pazarska Sofra" - a manifestation that through traditional music, costumes and delicacies promoted multiculturalism and tolerance, Prijepolje Multimedia Festival of Cultural Diversity “We and Others” that premiered a film produced by young Bosniaks and Serbs about uniqueness and connections between the two cultures.

Finally, some branding projects also included events that focused on local cultures and traditions. For example, Novi Pazar Way of Living was presented to audiences in Subotica, Leskovac, Vranje, Kragujevac, Novi Sad, Niš and Kraljevo. The media that visited the City published articles recommending Novi Pazar as a great place, with many activities, from diverse historic monuments to great food, wonderful people and youth, to great fun at night.
The campaign “Europe That is You”, helped in raising awareness and understanding of the EU pre-accession process in 25 municipalities of the South and the South West Serbia. About 600 representatives of media, municipal administrations, agriculture producers and business community, high-school pupils, students, were directly involved in the campaign activities and thus were introduced to the relevant subjects related to the European values, and Serbia’s EU integration process. For most people personally involved in the activities, the campaign has fortified their positive attitude toward Serbian EU integration process.

The Programme supported Blace Plum Festival in 2012, during its tenth anniversary when the Festival attracted a record number of 100,000 visitors. This was an increase of 40 per cent compared to 2011. The Programme’s influence on the local government to avoid drinking contest and promote safe driving, resulted in no negative media reports about the event. The project also equipped the Tourist Information Centre in Blace, while a database of all participants of the lectures on maintaining an orchard, a new website and a refreshed visual identity guarantee more successful organisation of the event in the future.
CAMPAIGNS,
PROMOTION AND
BRANDING

One of the key obstacles to sustainable development is negative image of the most Programme municipalities. The Programme tried to address this by preparing nine image-building and branding projects, and by increasing the municipal capacities to promote their own potentials.

Three projects contributed directly to promotion of products and investment in areas with the greatest capacity for the regional economic development. The "Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan for Zlatibor/Zlatar" and the "Marketing and Branding Plan for Pešter Products", set the basic grounds for further strengthening of regional competitiveness in the national and international markets. A publication produced in four languages (English, Italian, German and Serbian) and a smartphone application within the branding project in Vranje contributed to promotion of the image of the City as investment-friendly environment.

Projects also contributed to the increase of tourism potentials by improving tourism infrastructure and the overall tourism offer on the mountains Golija and Zlatar and the Vlasina Lake. A sunbathing platform creates a recognisable picture of the Vlasina Lake, essential for branding of any tourism destination, while a 56 kilometres long walking trail and two bird watching points on Zlatar and the outdoor furniture on Golija create more versatile offer for domestic and foreign tourists. Furthermore, the brochure "Golija Lakes Myths and Legends" presents the three lakes in a unique way.

Promotion of agriculture potentials in Jablanica and Toplica Districts through support to the Cherry Festival in Leskovac and the Plum Days in Blace increased awareness of the two products that could provide significant economic impact. Both events, besides the entertainment, featured a series of educational workshops, which pointed to diversity of possibilities for utilization of sour cherry and plum. This included the use of cherry stone as a renewable source of energy.

The project that promoted the City of Novi Pazar through a caravan tour across the country and hosting of the most influential media representatives impacted on stronger cooperation with seven other cities throughout Serbia and creation of an image of Novi Pazar as a city of youth and rich tradition.

Further to branding efforts, the Programme implemented four public awareness and advocacy campaigns that addressed concrete societal issues: good governance through campaign "I Want Because I Live Here", European values through "Europe That is You", environmental protection through "Where is Your Threshold of Responsibility?" and reproductive health through campaign "Find the Time". Municipalities, regional development agencies, tourism organisations, relevant governmental organisations and other non-profit entities participated in all promotional activities.
EU PROGRES

LINKING INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE

GOOD GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

FUNDS

MUNICIPALITY

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

CONSTRUCTION WORKS

ENHANCED MUNICIPAL CAPACITY FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT

NEW KINDERGARTEN

REGULATION ENSURING NON-DISCRIMINATORY ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN

ADVISORY AND MONITORING
WHAT MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Any project that would tackle unemployment, improve local infrastructure, contribute to investment opportunities, enhance municipal management or promote image of an area, would certainly change, for the better, living conditions. Just so, EU PROGRES made a positive contribution in the South and the South West Serbia. But, how was EU PROGRES different from other projects? In which way did it add value to those already visible improvements?

EU PROGRES fully respected the national ownership over the Programme, understanding this is a foundation for capacity building and sustainability. First, continuous efforts were put to ensure that national stakeholders are consulted and have a significant role throughout the execution. Furthermore, activities facilitated implementation of Serbia’s strategies and legislation, i.e. contributed to the overall reforms, especially the ones needed for integration into the European Union. For example, the technical support that the Programme provided to municipalities to develop general and detailed regulation plans, prescribed by the Law on Planning and Construction or provision of medical equipment that improved women’s health, identified as one of the priorities in the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Women and Promotion of Gender Equality.

Finally, 87% of projects were executed through grant methodology, which gives the grantees ownership over implementation, while EU PROGRES maintained monitoring and advisory role.

Introduction of good governance, its concept and principles in the work of the local governments has been another notable EU PROGRES’ feature. This endeavour didn’t remain superfluous, self-serving exercise, but a set of meaningful, carefully planned and executed activities within and tightly related to the Programme activities, designed to initiate a positive change. Our unique approach is best described when we explain how we linked infrastructure and good governance. For example, when we built a new kindergarten, we also helped the municipality to define regulations that would prevent discrimination during children’s enrolment and established a mechanism that allowed parents to provide feedback on kindergarten’s performance. What did these regulations achieve? We created foundation for enhanced equality and citizens’ participation – more concretely, better functioning of the kindergarten.

EU PROGRES had offices in Novi Pazar and Prokuplje and a sub-office in Vranje. We believe this was a special quality in our approach – only in everyday communication with our partners and citizens we could understand their needs. EU PROGRES’ team of about 30 people, originated mainly from the South and South West Serbia. We are proud that the domestic experts and knowledge played a key role in the implementation of the Programme.

Finally, EU PROGRES has been implemented in a challenging and complex environment. It was not easy, at any time, but we got the job done. And we implemented a lot of concrete, tangible and real projects.
In 2011, EU PROGRES was ranked among UNOPS’ four best projects in the world, having been shortlisted among 1,000 projects from more than 80 countries. This was a significant acknowledgment for the Programme, its importance and quality, particularly having in mind that other three finalists worked in extremely difficult and challenging conditions - in Afghanistan, Honduras and South Sudan.
For its support to contribution to the local development and appreciation of efforts to improve living conditions in the South and South West Serbia, the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – EU PROGRES received certificates and awards from 13 local self governments:

Leskovac  Vranje
Vlasotince  Lebane
Trgovište  Bojnik
Bujanovac  Ivanjica
Sjenica   Nova Varoš
Ţiţoţrađa    Tutin
Raška

Public institutions and civil society organisations also appreciated the Programme’s approach in development activities:

• Office for Sustainable Development of Underdeveloped Areas under the Minister without Portfolio

• Albanian National Minority Council

• Bosniak National Minority Council

• The Alliance of Roma Societies of Serbia

• Kindergartens “Veselo detinjstvo” Raška and “Habiba Stočević” Tutin

• Civil society organisations “Flores” Sjenica and Association of Persons with Paraplegia Vranje

• Organization Committees of International Folklore Festival Bosilegrad, Children’s Creativity Festival FEDES Prokuplje and Raška Spiritual Ceremony

• Public Library “Desanka Maksimović” Vlasotince

• Health Centre Kuršumlija

• Culture Centre “Vučje” Leskovac

• Basketball Club “BSK Junior” Bujanovac
UNOPS Serbia Project Centre
Šumatovačka 59
11 000 Belgrade
+381 (0)11 243 57 03

EU PROGRES office in Prokuplje
Timočka 4
18 400 Prokuplje
+381 (0)27 333 125

EU PROGRES office in Novi Pazar
Kragujevačka 1
36 300 Novi Pazar
+381 (0)20 337 300

EU PROGRES office in Vranje
Kneza Miloša 52
17 500 Vranje
+381 (0)17 405 544

www.eu-progres.org
The Programme was funded by the European Union, the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Serbia and was implemented by UNOPS, in partnership with 25 municipalities of the South and South West Serbia.

www.euprogres.org