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 UNOPS

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The Introduction Programme Steering Committee Meeting

Belgrade, 24 September 2014



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I AGENDA:

1. Introduction
2. Consideration of the Terms of Reference for the Programme Steering Committee
3. Brief presentation of the ongoing progress and announcement of the first actions
 - Launch of Citizens' Involvement Fund Call for Proposal
 - Conduct of Local Government Assessment
 - Launch of Local Tax Administration Call for Proposals
 - Update on the construction of the building for the Bujanovac Faculty Department
 - Provisional support to the Cross-border Programme Serbia-Montenegro 2007-13
4. Announcement of the Inception Workshop and the next Steering Committee

II MINUTES:

AGENDA ITEM 1: INTRODUCTION: EXPECTATIONS OF AND PRIORITIES FOR EUROPEAN PROGRES

- **Branko Budimir, the Head of the Department for Planning, Programming, Monitoring and Reporting on EU Funds and Development Aid of the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO)** chaired the meeting, welcomed the Programme Steering Committee (PSC) members, and thanked all those who contributed to the development of European PROGRES.
- **Richard Masa, the Head of Section-Operations 3 with Delegation of European Union** underlined his experience in working with municipalities. He said that work on municipal level was crucial for project preparation but that implementation and continuous communication with the beneficiaries was a key to sustainable development. Masa said that shortcuts in planning and implementation should be avoided, as this has previously led to deterioration.
- **Petar Vasilev, the National Programme Officer with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** underlined that the SDC continues to focus on supporting good governance especially related to service provision on the municipal level. The SDC would like to see stakeholders, and in particular local decision makers, build upon lessons learned from the previous Programme, while good practices should be replicated both inside and outside European PROGRES. Vasilev expressed interest to work closely with the Central Finance and Contracting Unit of the Ministry of Finance (CFCU) on this. Supporting strategic infrastructure projects, social inclusion of the most vulnerable and women empowerment also rank high on the SDC agenda.



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- **Graeme Tyndall, European PROGRES Programme Manager**, reminded the members of the PSC that both the Programme's name and its principle i.e. European Partnerships with Municipalities, remain the same in the new cycle.

Reflecting on the Inception Period he concluded that European PROGRES was not significantly delayed by the Flood Response activities. However, major weaknesses in gender and human rights mechanisms were identified and these issues should be prominent on the PSC. While the Inception Report will mirror the observations made over the Inception period, the Inception Workshop scheduled for 14 and 15 October should serve as a good forum to feed any necessary changes into the existing Programme Log Frame.

Programme continues to work through partnership and grant methodology, with UNOPS as implementing partner. The main difference in this cycle is that the relevant government bodies led by the CFCU will head the strategic planning and implementation of nine million (Euros) grant scheme. Full involvement of the PSC was crucial to Programme's success.

AGENDA ITEM 2: CONSIDERATION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE

- **Branko Budimir** proceeded to discuss operational protocols of the PSC. The Committee consists of nine institutions including government offices, implementing partners and donors. It serves to discuss and take decisions relevant to individual projects. Although the Committee meets quarterly, preparatory meetings take place in the areas of intervention to consult with the representatives of the local self-governance on the relevant issues. The PSC decisions will be taken, whenever possible, by consensus while will retain the right to reject a project that does not meet the set criteria.

The submission procedure for the PSC remains the same i.e. full documentation should be submitted ten to seven days before the PSC meeting. Once full documentation is received it will take up to ten days for its revision, followed by a revision meeting with local self-governments.

Location wise, the preparation for the PSC takes place in Belgrade while the General Committee meetings will be taking place in the selected European PROGRES municipalities. Municipal Mayors suggest the location respecting the rule to alternate between the South East and the South West to ensure equal coverage.

Depending on the project structure there might be opportunities to invite civil society organizations and other development stakeholders to participate in the PSC.

AGENDA ITEM 3: BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE ONGOING PROGRESS AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST ACTIONS

Branko Budimir, briefed the PSC on the changes in the Programme structure. The Programme will be covering 34 municipalities of the South East and the South West Serbia where context is complex. He explained that the new approach would engage the Ministry of Finance, the CFCU



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and the SEIO in identifying partners, through call for proposals, for minor infrastructural projects. He reflected on the challenge to synchronize activities that are complementary but have different models of implementation and underlined the need to consider ways of integration of good governance principles into project planning. A strong coordination mechanism will be in place to ensure internal communication of all partners.

Marko Vujačić, the National Programme Manager of European PROGRES gave a brief background of the Programme. European PROGRES should reach 930,000 beneficiaries through strengthened local governance and capacities, increased competitiveness of local economy, enhanced social inclusion, and increased public awareness of European integration.

- **LAUNCH OF CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT FUND CALL FOR PROPOSAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSESSMENT**

Dragan Mladenović, European PROGRES Manager of Good Governance and Social Inclusions Sector presented the criteria for Call for Proposal for Citizens' Involvement Fund (CIF) which provides financial support to support partnership projects of civil society organisations and local self-governments. Citizens' Involvement Fund will be announced by the end of September and civil society organisations will be invited to the CIF workshops to better understand prepositions of potential involvement.

He also announced that the Programme would conduct assessment of governance capacities in all 34 municipalities. The assessment findings will inform the selection of no less than five municipalities to undergo institutional reforms. The assessment will also show the gaps in the work of the local governments and enable them to design interventions that could introduce improvements.

- **LAUNCH OF LOCAL TAX ADMINISTRATION CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

Olivera Kostić, European PROGRES Manager of Competitiveness Sector, presented the draft Call for provision of support for improvement of local taxpayers' database. The activity will be announced at the end of September and will be ongoing for 12 months. The municipalities that benefited from this kind of support through predecessor programme – EU PROGRES - will be eligible to apply for further improvements.

Ivan Milivojević, Standing Conference of Town and Municipalities pointed out that it was necessary to ensure coordination as several projects supported similar activities. Kostić confirmed that the application form will include request to municipalities to declare if they have previously, or are currently, participating in similar activity. She also said there was an ongoing coordination with organisations working on the same issues in place to avoid overlaps.

Saša Lukić, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, underlined that Exchange 4 Programme will continue its operation with significantly larger funds starting from



April-May 2015 and will focus on Asset Management as well as the Programme Budgeting issues. Possibilities for further funding of public sector projects have been discussed with the Swiss Government and Lukić stressed the importance of coordination to avoid duplication of efforts.

- **UPDATE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING FOR THE BUJANOVAC FACULTY DEPARTMENT**

Milica Rodić, Advisor to the Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa (CB) Director gave a short background on the Bujanovac Faculty Department. She confirmed that land allocation for construction issue continues to plague the project. Legal procedures regarding the land ownership are expected to be resolved by the end of October at the latest. Once Bujanovac Municipality is the legal land owner, the conditions will be created for immediate permit issuance. This will allow UNOPS to commence its construction project.

CB has substituted some RSD 20 million for 2014 to support construction, however it cannot directly sign a contract with construction company. The only legal solution is to transfer these funds directly to Municipality. Request for this was sent to Ministry of Finance but the final decision will be made only after the rebalance of the budget is completed.

Marko Vujačić reiterated that European PROGRES is committed to provide support in building of the Bujanovac Faculty Department facilities once all legal requirements for the commencement of construction, are in place. UNOPS has already completed the tender for engagement of contractor and is ready to start construction works.

Graeme Tyndall reminded that resolving existing issues as well as planning forward on how the project contributes to the development of the Municipality and the region. He invited the PSC members to think about how to make this project most effective and what kind of financial support would such project require in the future. Tyndall suggested that the Coordination Body should be thinking of economic packages i.e. providing employment to graduates of the Faculty in cooperation with the local businesses.

Branko Budimir agreed with this, commented on the long implementation period of this project and importance of resolving outstanding issues.

- **PROVISIONAL SUPPORT TO THE CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMME SERBIA-MONTENEGRO 2007-13**

Marko Vujačić said that the European PROGRES planned to provide provisional support to the Cross-border Programme Serbia-Montenegro 2007-13. The support will enable conduct of the third public call for financial assistance through CBC Programme that would benefit, among other, European PROGRES municipalities in the South West. Provision of support was compatible with the Programme Document, specifically with the Activity 2.2. Budget for the project will be up to 42,000 Euros.

Branko Budimir supported the project and added that he anticipated continuation of the good cross border cooperation. The operation plan with both Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro is being prepared, but the thematic priorities have already been identified and they are in line with the existing Programme.

There were no further comments and grant to support implementation of the proposal would be developed in October.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INCEPTION WORKSHOP AND THE NEXT STEERING COMMITTEE

- **Marko Vujačić** announced that the inception workshop, slightly delayed by the team’s engagement in the flood response, would take place 14-15 October 2014. The main goal of this workshop is to confirm the relevance of European PROGRES but also to validate the activities and identify possible areas that require adjustments to the Programme and subsequently to the Programme Documents.

The focus will be placed on the review of activities and logical framework as well as discussion with all relevant stakeholders about the future work and realisation of the set goals.

The next PSC is tentatively scheduled for the last week of October 2014.

III LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Name	Institution/Organisation	Function
1.	Branko Budimir	Serbian EU Integration Office	Head of Unit for Planning of EU Funds and Development Assistance and Coordination of Programmes in the Area of Economic and Social Cohesion
2.	Brankica Jovanović	Serbian EU Integration Office	Head of Group for Implementing and Monitoring Implementation of EU-Funded Projects at Serbian European Integration Office
3.	Richard Masa	Operations 3	Head of Section



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4.	George Papagiannis	Delegation of the European Union, Operations	Programme Manager
5.	Ana Stanković	Delegation of the European Union	Project Manager
6.	Petar Vasilev	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	National Programme Officer
7.	Milica Rodić	Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa	Adviser to the Director
8.	Silvija Radinović	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	Group Manager for IPA Human Resources Operative Programme
9.	Ivan Milivojević	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities	Assistant to General Manger
10.	Nina Zelić	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government	Ministry Representative, Department for European Integration
11.	Staša Lukić	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government	Ministry Representative, Department for European Integration
12.	Jasminka Peruničić	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Development	Senior Advisor
13.	Graeme Tyndall	European PROGRES	Programme Manager
14.	Marko Vujačić	European PROGRES	National Programme Manager
15.	Dušan Čukić	European PROGRES	Technical Programme Advisor



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16.	Olivera Kostić	European PROGRES	Manager of Competitiveness Sector
17.	Dragan Mladenović	European PROGRES	Manager of Good Governance and Social Inclusions Sector