



PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Bela Palanka, 01 March 2016



Republic of Serbia



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I. Agenda

1. Welcome and introductory speeches
2. Presentation of the Municipality of Bela Palanka
3. Approval of the minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held in Novi Pazar on 3 November 2015
4. Update on key European PROGRES developments and highlights from the Quarterly Report 1 Oct – 31 Dec 2015
5. Presentation of results of the conducted Calls for Proposals (CfPs)
 - Introduction of international quality and food safety standards to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
 - Provision of Support for Protection of Geographic Indication
 - Provision of Support to Agricultural Producer Groups
6. Presentation of criteria for the new Calls for Proposals
 - The CfP for Local Infrastructure
 - The CfP for Enhancing Competitiveness through Creation of Jobs in the Private Sector
 - The CfP for Partnership projects of the Civil Society and the Local Self-governments (LSGs) through the Citizens Involvement Fund (second call)
 - The CfP for Implementation of Measures from the Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion at the Local Level
 - The CfP for Promoting Youth Employment with Business Start-ups Grants
 - The CfP for Supporting Local Gender Equality Mechanisms (GEMs) for Implementing Local Gender Equality Action Plans
7. Voting
8. Other business

II. Minutes

Agenda item 1

Welcome and introductory speeches

Goran Miljković, the Mayor of Bela Palanka welcomed the guests and after and commended European PROGRES and the international community for its continuous support without which smaller municipalities would not be able to achieve major development goals. After presenting the projects implemented with the European PROGRES support the Mayor concluded by reconfirming Bela Palanka was looking forward to further cooperation with the Programme.

Branko Budimir, the Acting Assistant to the Director of the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO) and the Programme Steering Committee Chairperson, after giving a short overview of agenda, alerted participants of the new opportunities which will be presented at the meeting and thanked the Delegation of European Union (DEU) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the quick response to the needs raised by the Programme municipalities.

Ana Stanković, the Project Manager in the Delegation of the European Union (DEU) noted that the Programme was already half-way into its implementation and has been responsive and flexible in order to optimise its effectiveness. The results of this approach are reflected in the new Calls for Proposals (CfPs) that will be presented today along with the results of transparent projects' selection in the previous Calls. The local self-governments (LSGs) have shown solid interest and dedication to the Programme's activities and it is crucial that this commitment to development and implementation does not falter during the election period.

Petar Vasilev, the National Programme Officer in the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commended Bela Palanka administration on its work within the Programme and especially for its implementation of the successful Cross Border projects. The SDC is especially focussed on the Good Governance (GG) aspect of each project which is why the upcoming CfPs in the area of Local Infrastructure and the Citizens' Involvement Fund will select only projects that integrated GG principles in their planning and implementation. European PROGRES was commended for efficient response to the migration crisis.

Graeme Tyndall, European PROGRES Programme Manager underlined that the PSC will be focussed on the agreed changes and that the LSGs will have several new opportunities for funding of various activities to consider.

Agenda item 2

Presentation of Bela Palanka municipality

A short movie on Bela Palanka presented the developments in the Municipality in the past four years including the efforts of European PROGRES and Cross Border projects funded by the European Union.

Agenda item 3

Approval of the minutes of the Programme Steering Committee meeting

The PSC unanimously approved the minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held in Novi Pazar on 3 November 2015.

Agenda item 4

Presentation of the Quarterly Report 1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015 and discussion

Graeme Tyndall confirmed that UNOPS reviewed the conduct of the Call for Geographical Information systems following the municipal officials' statements at the PSC in Novi Pazar that raised concerns that the internal information about the results of the Call may have been shared with the outside stakeholders. The statements were thoroughly investigated and no wrong doing was identified but a series of measures have been undertaken to fortify transparency in all Programme processes. The municipalities were invited to capitalise on the opportunities created in response to their voiced needs – the Calls predominantly aimed at opening new jobs through support to various sectors.

Branko Budimir confirmed that the transparency issue was addressed and findings of investigation presented to the PSC members. Systems are now in place to prevent similar problems in the future.

Marko Vujačić, European PROGRES National Programme Manager, presented the Quarterly Report covering the period from 1 October– 31 December 2015. The Programme currently implements 174 projects while 15 projects have been completed. Upcoming elections and post-election period were identified as a risk for the timely Programme implementation. In the near future the PSC will meet to agree on several issues, including utilisation of residual funds and the approach to integrating GG principles in the local infrastructural projects.

Branko Budimir reminded participants that EU PROGRES, European PROGRES predecessor, dealt with challenges regarding investment dynamics and asked if similar issues existed or were anticipated in this Programme due to the upcoming elections. Safety measures and quick reactions to issues prevent prolonged implementation delays.

Marko Vujačić noted that the Programme was experiencing minor delays and was responding adequately for the time being. Three activities will have to be modified to meet the set expectations.

Dimitrije Paunović, Mayor of Nova Varoš commended the efforts to enforce transparency and asked how the two major infrastructure projects in Novi Pazar and Vranje selected for investments at the previous PSC were identified.

Branko Budimir explained that during the inception period of the Programme, the need for small and large scale infrastructural projects was differentiated. At the time all LSGs were informed that the larger infrastructural projects, those that have regional impact, will be selected through the Single Project Pipeline ("*Jedinstveni pregled infrastrukturnih projekata*"), which is a list of strategically selected, ready for investment, infrastructural projects identified by the Government of Serbia. Unfortunately this list still does not contain any projects ready for financing from the Programme's areas of intervention. Considering this, the PSC agreed, in consultations with the relevant ministries, to select projects with prepared documentation and large regional impact i.e. positively affecting over 200,000 citizens from socio – economic domain. In addition to regional impact, the selected project implementation had to be feasible within the Programme's life cycle otherwise funding would not be utilised. This led to

selection of Vranje and Novi Pazar projects. The Government of Serbia is currently revising Single Project Pipeline list to include only large infrastructural projects to be implemented in the three years period.

Agenda item 5

Presentation of Results of the Conducted Calls for Proposals

European PROGRES Programme Associate for Business Development, Mladen Cvetanović presented results of three European PROGRES Competitiveness Sector's Calls for Proposals.

5.1 Introduction of International Quality and Food Safety Standards for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

The projects for the introduction or re-certification of international quality standards by 22 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises will be funded with 78,000 Euros. The introduction of international food quality and safety standards, such as ISO 9001, HALAL, HACCP, ISO 22000 et al, creates potential for business and export growth and improvement of the quality of goods and services in the Programme area.

5.2 Provision of Support for Protection of Geographic Origin

Four projects for branding of four agricultural products through the registration of their protected geographic origin, in order to boost their recognisability, improve their marketing and promote the areas where they are produced, will be funded with 44,000 Euros.

Branko Budimir noted that five strong projects applied for funds under the Call for Geographic Origin. However funding allocated for the activity was only sufficient for four projects. Thus the selected project were invited to scrutinise their budgets to allow for savings. The saved funds would in turn be used to finance the fifth applied project.

5.3 Provision of support to Agricultural Producer Groups (APGs)

Through the Programme 80,000 Euros worth of support will be extended to 32 agricultural cooperatives and associations for capacity building activities - training and a study visit to European Union (EU) country while the most successful participants will have the opportunity to develop and submit project proposals enabling them to introduce innovations and expand their market reach.

Agenda item 6

Presentation of criteria for the new Calls for Proposals

6.1 Open Call for Proposals for Local Infrastructure Projects

The National Programme Manager, Marko Vujačić presented the Public Call for Local Infrastructural projects which will allocate 1.5 million Euros towards priority local infrastructure projects that create favourable business environment. The highest total value per project is 200,000 Euros including 10-49% LSG co-financing, while the equipment can be up to 30% of the submitted project value. Each municipality can submit maximum two applications. Vujačić reminded potential applicants that only the projects that can be completed timely – within six to 12 months will be considered, due to the

Programme's lifespan. Projects being considered for funding through the Department for Contracting and Financing of the EU Funded Programmes (CFCU) are not eligible for participation in this call.

Branko Budimir added that the project proposals can be considered only if they have appropriate technical documentation and the licences that will remain valid throughout the duration of implementation and reminded the LSGs that the full applications for the CFCU Call should be submitted by the end of March.

6.2 Enhancing Competitiveness through Creation of Jobs in the Private Sector

Sector Manager for Competitiveness, Olivera Kostić presented the Call for Proposals - Enhancing Competitiveness through Creation of Jobs in the Private Sector. The Call predicts increased employability through enhancing productivity of Small and Micro Enterprises. The amount available is 250,000 Euros i.e. maximum 25,000 Euros for a Small Enterprise or 15,000 Euros for an Entrepreneur or a Micro Enterprise. Grant recipients will cost share at least 30% of cash or in-kind contribution while each project must demonstrate contribution to wider community through corporate social responsibility actions. Micro Enterprises and Entrepreneurs will be obligated to employ one while Small Enterprises will have to employ two more staff for at least a year.

European PROGRES Good Governance Advisor, Dragan Mladenović presented two Calls for Proposals implemented through the Programme:

6.3 Citizens' Involvement Fund (CIF): the Second Call

The second Citizens' Involvement Fund Call for Proposals will disburse 345,000 Euros i.e. 15,000 Euros per projects to be implemented through partnerships of civil society organisations and local self-governments. The projects are focussed on empowerment and employment of the most vulnerable groups.

6.4 Supporting Roma Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Piloting Measures For Roma Social Inclusion

The Call for Proposals to support Roma Social Inclusion is focussed on empowering Roma CSOs to implement the new Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016 -2025 together with the local Roma communities. Approximately 150,000 Euros i.e. 10,000 Euros per project will be allocated in a two staged process – assessment of organisations and training needs and subsequent capacity development followed by full Project development and implementation.

Nenad Tairović, the National Minority Council of the Roma National Minority Vice-president acknowledged that European PROGRES has been responsive to the previously raised needs and commended the Programme's efforts to address the provision of health and education services to the most vulnerable Roma communities. However, an issue of the low employment rate of the educated Roma people i.e. over 5,000 college graduates and the equivalent number of active students, also needs to be addressed.

Graeme Tyndall, agreed that advocacy on Roma employment is necessary and will be a part of the existing initiative within the Programme. Once the national Strategy is adopted UNOPS Human Rights

experts will be tasked with monitoring and supporting its implementation with a strategic goal of national horizontal and vertical integration.

Dragan Mladenović noted that CIF CfP is a good modality for addressing issues such as employment or general integration of the most vulnerable groups. Answering the question posed by **Branko Budimir** about what defines a Roma organisation, it was clarified that these were organisations that stemmed from Roma minority, worked with the Roma community on different local development issues and were a member of the Roma Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Association. The Programme will ensure that those CSOs who have a long term experience in working with Roma on Roma issues are also eligible to apply.

Nenad Tairović argued that many of these CSOs who do not stem from Roma community had only a minor impact at best and requested the PSC to scrutinise the call by including Roma representatives in the selection process recommending **Osman Balić, the President of the Standing Conference of Roma Association (SKRUG)** as a qualified candidate. Balić disagreed with the principle of the CSOs exclusion on the basis of ethnicity.

Branko Budimir agreed that Roma representatives could participate as an observer in the project evaluation process.

The Sector Manager for Good Governance and Social Inclusion Ana Mladenović, presented two Calls for Proposals implemented through the Programme:

6.5 Promoting Youth Self-Employment

The Call for Proposals in support of Youth Self-Employment intended to support start-ups, manufacturing and food processing ideas for engagement of unemployed, young people (18-30 years of age). The support entails allocation of 180,000 Euros t i.e. up to 10,000 Euros per project through provision of necessary equipment. This is also a two phased process that will initially train potential beneficiaries in the project proposal writing.

6.6 Call for Proposals for Support to Local Gender Equality Mechanisms (GEMs)

Call for Proposals for Support to Local Gender Equality Mechanisms from 34 municipalities in South East and South West of Serbia will support activities adopted, updated and validated by the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality. One GEM may apply with more than one project, but only one grant may be awarded. Two or more GEMs may cluster and apply with one project on the topic of mutual interest.

Agenda item 7

Voting

The PSC unanimously approved the following:

- The Quarterly Report for 1 October– 31 December 2015
- Requests for the approval of the results of the conducted calls
 - Introduction of international quality and food safety standards to SMEs – recommended 22 applications in the amount up to 78,495 Euros
 - Provision of support for protection of geographic origin – recommended four applications in the amount up to 44,472 Euros, fifth conditionally

- Provision of support to agricultural producer groups– 32 applications
- Request for approval of criteria for new Calls for Proposals
 - The CFP for Local Infrastructure – up to 1,500,000 Euros
 - The CFP for Enhancing Competitiveness through Creation of Jobs in the Private Sector – 250,000 Euros
 - The CFP for partnership projects of the civil society and the local self-governments through the Citizens Involvement Fund – up to 345,000 Euros
 - The CFP for Implementation of Measures from the Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion at the Local Level – up to 150,000 Euros
 - The CFP for Promotion Youth Employment with Business Start-up Grants– up to 180,000 Euros
 - The CFP for Supporting Local GEMs for Implementing Local Gender Equality Action Plans – up to 75,000 Euros

Agenda item 8

AOB

Graeme Tyndall invited the LSGs to announced events: GG workshop, Solid Wood Furniture Roundtable and thanked all for the achievements of the Programme so far simultaneously encouraging all, and especially the representatives of the vulnerable groups to take advantage of the provided opportunities.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS			
European PROGRES Steering Committee Bela Palanka, 01 March 2016			
Organisation		Name	Position
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS			
1.	European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia - SEIO	Branko Budimir	Acting Assistant to the Director
2.	The Department for Contracting and Financing of the EU Funded Programmes (CFCU) of the Government of Serbia's Ministry of Finance	Biljana Jezdić	Head of Division for Tender Preparation and Project and Contract Management
3.	Ministry of Economy	Miona Popović Majkić	Head of Group for Planning of IPA Projects
4.	Government of Serbia Coordination Body for the municipalities of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa	Jelena Čolić	Deputy Director of the Coordination Body's Office
		Rahim Salihi	Local Coordinator
5.	Standing Conference of Towns and municipalities	Aleksandar Marinković	Group Manager for IPA Human Resources Operative Programme
6.	European Union Delegation to the Republic of Serbia	Ana Stanković	Project Manager
7.	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Petar Vasilev	National Programme Officer
Host			
8.	Municipality of Bela Palanka	Goran Miljković	Mayor
9.		Vladan Videnović	Mayor's Cabinet
10.		Biljana Milenković	Project Team Member
MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES			

Municipality		Name	Position
11.	Aleksinac	Danijela Petković	Assistant Mayor/LED Office
		Uroš Veličković	Associate in LED Office
		Jovana Stojilović	Public Relations
12.	Babušnica	Jelena Milenović	Programme contact person
13.	Bojnik	Boban Petrović	Assistant to the Mayor
14.		Saša Dodić	Municipal Associate
15.	Doljevac	Neda Jovanović	LED Associate
16.	Gadžin Han	Dragan Mijalković	Assistant to the Mayor
17.		Marija Cvetković	Municipal Council Member
18.	Ivanjica	Milomir Zorić	Mayor
19.		Milka Kaplanović	LED Office
20.	Kuršumlija	Sunčica Nestorović	LED Office
21.	Lebane	Marjan Stanković	Head of LED office
22.		Martin Stanković	IT Engineer
23.	Medveđa	Dejan Simić	Head of LED Office
24.	Merošina	Nataša Andrejević	Associate in LED Office
25.		Maja Milosavljević	Municipal Associate
26.	Nova Varoš	Dimitrije Paunović	Mayor
27.	Novi Pazar	Fevzija Murović	City Council Member
28.	Prokuplje	Miroljub Paunović	Mayor
29.		Maja Bašić	Municipal Council Member
30.	Preševo	Ardian Aliu	Assistant to the Mayor
31.	Raška	Ivan Vuković	Deputy Mayor
32.	Svrljig	Jelena Radojković	Assistant to the Mayor
33.	Surdulica	Ankica Žegarac Milenković	Economic Development Office Associate
34.	Trgovište	Nenad Krstić	Mayor
35.	Tutin	Šemsudin Kučević	Mayor
36.	Vlasotince	Zoran Todorović	Mayor
37.		Marinko Đorđević	LED Coordinator
38.	Žitorađa	Siniša Ilić	Mayor
NGO			
Organisation		Name	Position
39.	LIGA Roma SKRUG	Osman Balić	Chairman
40.	The National Minority Council of the Roma National Minority Vice-president	Nenad Tairović	Chairman
41.	Timok Club	Snežana Pavković	President
42.	CA "Lužnica Handicrafts-ŽEC Centre"	Karolina Stamenković	President