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# The Fourth Programme Steering Committee Meeting

Blace, 27 February 2015

Minutes

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## I. Agenda

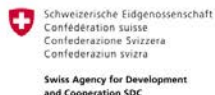
1. Welcome and introductory speeches
2. Presentation of Blace Municipality
3. Approval of the minutes of the Steering Committee meetings held in:
  - Aleksinac on 28 October 2014 and
  - Extraordinary meeting in Belgrade on 24 December 2014
4. Presentation of the First Quarterly Report 17 from September to 31 December 2014
5. Presentation of activities related to learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa
6. Presentation of requests for approval
  - List of projects for development of technical designs
  - Call for Proposals (CfP) for development of Detailed Regulation Plans (DRP)
7. Voting
8. Other business



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## Minutes

Agenda item 1

### Welcome and introductory speeches

**Ivan Burgić, Mayor of Blace Municipality** welcomed all participants and thanked European PROGRES for its continuous support and for organising two events in Blace, 2015 Calendar Promotion and the Programme Steering Committee Meeting.

**Branko Budimir, the Acting Assistant to the Director of the European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (SEIO) the Programme Steering Committee (PSC) chairman** invited the participants, especially the Local Self-Governments (LSGs), to discuss the implementation of the Programme and challenges they encounter so that solutions could be found jointly.

**Ana Stanković, Project Manager with the Delegation of the European Union (DEU)** reiterated European Union (EU) dedication to the development of the region but also expressed concern over the poor response to the Call for Proposals (CfP) for the Development of Main Designs for Local Infrastructure Projects, where only 530,000 Euros out of 1.7 million Euros available were allocated. Stanković invited the participants to openly discuss and suggest solutions to jointly overcome the causes behind the low number of applications and avoid similar results in the future. Stanković once again called on the municipalities to utilise the available funds as well as capacity building opportunities available through European PROGRES, primarily in order to strengthen their ability to properly fulfil their duties.

**Petar Vasilev, the National Programme Officer with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** asked the municipalities to be bolder in their planning and focus on long term projects. Good governance is the key of project sustainability and funds are likely to be available in the future, past European PROGRES, for those ventures that prove viable and useful.

**Nikola Veža, Advisor at the Department of Strategic Planning Department in the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure** reminded that progress will only come through active participation of LSGs and that the Ministry is there to provide technical and other support to unlock local potentials of each municipality.

**Graeme Tyndall, European PROGRES Programme Manager** reminded the participants that infrastructure remains, by far the most popular CfP category within the Programme even though other calls focussed on management of public finances and partnerships with civil societies would be equally beneficial and more strategic in the long run. As a part of good governance processes LSGs have responsibility to get more involved, raise their administrative capacities, become more competitive and thus contribute to the accession to the EU.

Agenda item 2

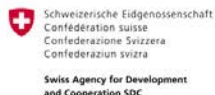
### Presentation of Blace Municipality



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**Gordana Kitanović, Head of Urbanism Department of Blace Municipality**, gave a brief overview of the history and potentials of the Municipality underlining investments in agriculture as the key development opportunity with 67% of land predisposed for fruit and produce growth. Kitanović praised cooperation with European PROGRES' predecessor, EU PROGRES, which included implementation of 12 projects that were focussed on strengthening LSG's capacities, development of technical documentation, and improvement of infrastructure.

Agenda item 3

### Approval of the minutes of the Programme Steering Committee meetings

The PSC unanimously approved the minutes of the two Steering meetings held in Aleksinac and Belgrade, on 28 October 2014 and 24 December 2014 respectively.

Agenda item 4

### Presentation of the Quarterly Report

**Marko Vujačić, European PROGRES National Programme Manager**, presented the First Quarterly Report covering the period from 17 September - 31 December 2014. Vujačić highlighted conduct of four CfPs and approval of the first series of projects for funding and then provided overview of progress achieved in four Programme's result areas.

**Budimir** invited the participants to comment the Programme achievements and asked if the frequency of CfPs overwhelms municipal capacities. Municipal representatives concurred that this has not been a deterrent to implementation so far.

**Saša Đorđević, the Mayor of Gadžin Han**, raised the issue of the time framework for the preparation of the main designs for infrastructural projects. Specifically, the technical designs currently developed, might not be ready in time for submission to the CfP for Local Infrastructure Projects managed by the Department for Contracting and Financing of EU Funded Programmes (CFCU) of the Ministry of Finance planned in March 2014. Đorđević also identified a possible overlap with the CfPs for Cross-border Cooperation.

**Budimir** confirmed that the CFCU would announce the CfP for Infrastructural Projects in early March. The applicants will have 45 days for submission of the Concept Proposal for economic and social infrastructure projects. In the second phase, the LSGs will need to submit the full documentation by November 2015. Evaluation of proposals will be done in 2016, and taking into consideration the time needed for contracting and procurements, the works and utilisation of funds would start in 2017. Three and a half million Euros are available for this CfP. There will be no second infrastructure call and there will be no overlap with the Cross-border cooperation CfP.

**Ragmi Mustafa, the Mayor of Preševo** warned that planning infrastructure for 2017 risks the expiry of the existing building permits valid for two years only and possible change of the national construction related laws. Mustafa therefore suggested shortening the application procedures.

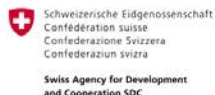
**Budimir** explained that utilisation of EU large fund investments are regulated by the European Commission Practical Guide (PRAG) procedures and thus cannot be changed.



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**Stanković** confirmed that the EU could not derogate from the set deadlines, as the process is also coordinated with other countries in the region. The final contracts will be signed for allocations between 300,000 and 500,000 Euros and European PROGRES will support the municipalities in preparation of the projects' documentation within the set timeframe. Better planning by municipalities will allow LSGs to prioritise needs and strategically apply for funding opportunities within and outside of European PROGRES.

**Petar Vasilev** added that SDC's primary focus is to strengthen the national and local administration. Bilateral help to Serbia is decreasing and re-focussing on larger scale projects. He encouraged LSGs to participate in the capacity building activities provided by European PROGRES, as this will equip them with the necessary skills to apply for these and other European funds in the future.

**Nenad Krstić, Mayor of Trgovište** noted that reserving 10% participation for several large, long-term infrastructure projects would freeze most of the municipal development funds for the two year application period. Further complications are anticipated if the participation funds for the CfP are reserved but the projects were not selected.

**Budimir** said that the co-funding will not be needed before 2016 but expressed apprehension that the municipalities are focussed on the single area of development. Reserving the resources obstructs application for different CfPs available. Thus, if the infrastructural projects are not selected for funding, this could result in absence of any municipal development. He noted that the CFCU together with European PROGRES will hold information sessions at least 21 day before the deadline for submission of concept notes, to clarify any issues regarding the details of the CfP and identify the need for the technical assistance that the Programme could possibly later address.

**Jasmina Ilić, European PROGRES Sector Manager for Infrastructure** added that some LSGs already have projects with complete technical documentation while several others are working on project development. Ilić confirmed that European PROGRES will provide support to municipalities from the first day of the announcement of the CfP.

**Šemsudin Kučević, Mayor of Tutin**, noted that the information workshops organised for previous CfPs were beneficial and invited the Programme to focus on strengthening local capacities and reforming local administration to equip LSGs to independently develop applications for different funds. Tutin has plans to establish the Project Centre and would appreciate Programme's support to fulfil this goal.

**Miroslav Miroslavljević, President of the Citizen Association "Omladinska inicijativa" from Blace** asked whether European PROGRES would work on strengthening the capacity of those civil society organisations whose projects were not selected for the Citizen Involvement Fund (CIF). **Vujačić** responded that the Programme would organise an event, prior to the second CIF CfP that should provide insight into the lessons learned from the first call and include relevant capacity building activities.

Agenda item 5

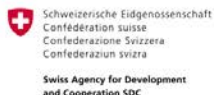
**Presentation of activities related to learning of Serbian as a non-mother tongue in Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa**



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**Milica Rodić, the Advisor to the Director of the Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa (CB)** gave an overview of learning Serbian as a non-mother tongue. The Feasibility Study, which was conducted in the three municipalities, shows that most ethnic Albanian school-aged children do not comprehend Serbian even though it is included as a part of the official elementary and secondary school curricula as the second language. The lack of qualified teaching staff was identified as one of the root problems and as a result the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Office for Promotion of Education, the Office for Advancing the Quality of Education and the CB prepared a series of activities to improve learning of Serbian in schools. The activities will be supported by European PROGRES, OSCE High Commissioner Office, OSCE Serbia and the United Kingdom Embassy.

**Budimir** has underlined that the key subject of all development projects is sustainability and that in this case strong commitment from all stakeholders is necessary to achieve the set goals.

**Jonuz Musliu, the President of the Albanian National Minority Council (ANMC)** acknowledged that the issues identified in the Study exist and that the current way of learning the language is ineffective. Musliu said that reciprocity is important and Serbian speakers should also have the opportunity to learn Albanian. Additionally procurement of new, updated high school books in Albanian language is noted as a higher priority than the second language initiative.

**Rodić** responded that the intervention is in line with the national laws which oblige the citizens to speak the country's official language. Courses are also organised for the teachers who will be obligated to know both languages in order to work in the three municipalities. Further discussion on the production of curriculum books should be initiated by the ANMC with the CB outside the PSC.

**Nagip Arifi, the Mayor of Bujanovac** in principle agreed to the need for language courses but noted that modality should be different and training staff and teachers should be selected locally rather than brought in from outside the three municipalities.

Agenda item 6

## Presentation of requests for approval:

- **List of projects for development of technical designs**

**Jasmina Ilić** presented the results and recommendations of the CfP. European PROGRES recommended funding of 40 out of 53 proposals submitted by 28 municipalities, in the total amount of 538,000 Euros.

The projects focussed on designs for social rather than economic infrastructure. The Programme initially determined that unresolved property issues remain the major obstacle to development of higher impact projects. Ilić confirmed that only a third of allocated funding for this CfP would be utilised.

**Budimir** asked the participants to discuss the reasons behind the low utilisation of available CfP funds for the infrastructure projects that were previously requested by the municipalities. Another



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round of CfP for these activities is uncertain while this kind of outputs jeopardise larger scale infrastructure funding.

**Osman Balić** from the Roma League suggested that the remaining funds from the CfP should be redirected towards legalisation of some 500 long-term illegal Roma settlements situated in urban city centres and issue of which remains unresolved in both legal and physical sense.

**Milorad Nikolić** from **Trgovište Local Economic Development (LED) Agency** and **Nagip Arifi, the Mayor of Bujanovac** identified the obscure administration as one of the obstacles to obtaining location permits and substantiated this claim with concrete examples.

**Hazbo Mujović, Mayor of Sjenica Municipality**, supported by other Mayors, discussed how different stakeholders on the local level, including public utility, legal, health and enforcement structures abuse their powers and obstruct development due to daily power struggle. The lack of both vertical and horizontal coordination between the various government or LSG bodies was also underlined.

**Budimir** noted that European PROGRES preparation lasted for two years and even when taking the unforeseen circumstances into account, the time was sufficient.

**Kučević** concluded strengthening the LSGs capacity for planning and implementation is precondition for municipalities to deliver.

**Nagip Arifi, Saša Đorđević and Hazbo Mujović** gave examples of how vaguely defined ownership issues are hindering implementation. They also indicated that there are conflicting regulations and competencies, which is also an obstacle for development of projects.

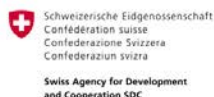
**Budimir** noted that the new Law on Planning and Construction, whose implementation will start in March 2015, will define competencies and procedures that will facilitate resolving ownership issues. LSGs should focus on solving these issues before exploring possibility of the second round of the CfP for the main designs and ensure that the donors understand the complexities of the current situation.

**Vasilev** added that the SDC pays special attention to developing principles of good governance even though the process takes time. He encouraged municipalities to continuously and openly discuss problems with the European PROGRES as it is the channel to raise them to higher levels.

- **Call for Proposals (CfP) for development of Detailed Regulation Plans (DRP)**

**Viktor Veljović, European PROGRES Spatial Planner**, presented criteria of the CfP for Development of Detailed Regulation Plans (DRP). The total budget for allocation is 280,000 Euros and maximal award per municipality is 15,000 Euros, with minimal municipal participation of 10%. The projects should focus on land size under 60h and last no longer than 18 months. The CfP will be advertised on 5 March and closed on 7 April 2015.

**Mujović** asked if the set land size limitation of maximum 60 ha per application is flexible. The PSC members concluded that since the Call included the limitation on Programme's funding, as well as



that LSGs co-funding can be higher than 10%, there was no need to have the limitation on the land surface. It was agreed to remove this stipulation from the Call.

**Branko Budimir** concluded that although both CfPs for Local Infrastructure and Planning Documentation will be advertised at the same time the municipalities responded that this would not be an issue.

Agenda item 7

## Voting

The PSC unanimously approved the following:

- Minutes from the Steering Committee meetings held in Aleksinac on 28 October and Belgrade on 24 December 2014
- First Quarterly Report 17 from September to 31 December 2014
- Funding of 40 projects for the development of technical designs, with European PROGRES contribution in the amount up to 538,000 Euros
- CfP for the development of Detailed Regulation Plans.<sup>1</sup>

Branko Budimir informed the meeting participants that the core PSC members, including the representatives of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and the CFCU of the Ministry of Finance attended the preparatory PSC in Belgrade held on 26 March 2015 and agreed with the above noted requests for approvals.

Agenda item 8

## Other business

No other business was discussed.

## List of participants

Steering Committee Members			
#	Name	Title	Institution/Organisation
1.	Branko Budimir	Acting Assistant to the Director	European Integration Office
2.	Ana Stanković	Project Manager	Delegation of the European Union
3.	Petar Vasilev	National Programme Officer	Swiss Agency for Development and
4.	Milica Rodić	Advisor to the Director	Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa
5.	Jelena Marjanović	Assistant to the Director	Coordination Body for Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa

<sup>1</sup> The stipulation on the maximum size of land cover by the project will be removed in the final CfP document as agreed by the PSC





6.	Nikola Veža	Advisor in the Department of Strategic Planning Department	Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure
7.	Aleksandar Marinković	Group Manager for IPA Human Resources Operative Programme	Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities
8.	Graeme Tyndall	Programme Manager	European PROGRES

Participants			
#	Name	Title	Municipality
1.	Saša Stamenković	Mayor	Babušnica
2.	Ivan Burgić	Municipality of Blace	Mayor of Blace
3.	Jelena Milenović	Head of Urbanism Department of Blace	Babušnica
4.	Dragan Živković	Deputy Mayor	Bela Palanka
5.	Biljana Milenković	Head of Project team	Bela Palanka
6.	Aca Jovanović	Deputy Mayor	Bojnik
7.	Saša Dodić	Head of Local Economic Development Office	Bojnik
8.	Dejan Cvetković	Director of Directorate for Construction	Bojnik
9.	Slobodan Vidojević	Mayor	Brus
10.	Radovan Stajić	Assistant to the Mayor	Brus
11.	Nagip Arifi	Mayor	Bujanovac
12.	Shukri Zmeri	ANMC Executive Board President	Bujanovac
13.	Jonuz Musliu	ANMC President	Bujanovac
14.	Goran Ljubić	Mayor	Doljevac
15.	Miloš Vukotić	Deputy Mayor	Doljevac
16.	Neda Jovanović	LED Associate	Doljevac
17.	Saša Đorđević	Mayor	Gadžin Han
18.	Milomir Zorić	Mayor	Ivanjica
19.	Radoljub Vidić	Mayor	Kuršumlija
20.	Marjan Stanković	Local Economic Development Office	Lebane
21.	Milan Milenković	Deputy Mayor	Leskovac
22.	Zoran Đorđević	Chief of Cabinet	Leskovac
23.	Dragiša Petrović	Mayor	Medveđa
24.	Dejan Simić	Head of Local Development Office	Medveđa
25.	Fevzija Murić	Assistant to the Mayor	Novi Pazar
26.	Elvir Hamidović	Municipal Urbanist	Novi Pazar
27.	Ragmi Mustafa	Mayor	Preševo
28.	Lazar Rvović	Mayor	Priboj
29.	Aleksandar Simonović	Member of Municipal Assembly	Prokuplje
30.	Mirjana Bjeletić	Municipal staff	Prokuplje
31.	Hazbo Mujović	Mayor	Sienica
32.	Ankica Žegarac Milenković	Head of Local Economic Development Office	Surdulica
33.	Nenad Krstić	Mayor	Trgovište
34.	Dragan Jovanović	Director	Trgovište
35.	Miroslav Mirosavljević	President of CSO Omladinska Inicijativa	Blace
36.	Šemsudin Kučević	Mayor	Tutin
<b>NGOs and RDAs</b>			
1.	Slaviša Mikanović	President Toplica Voće (Toplica Fruit)	
2.	Osman Balić	President Liga Roma (Roma Legue)	
<b>European PROGRES Staff members</b>			