



Government of the
Republic of Serbia

MAY 2011

7th NEWS ON SOCIAL INCLUSION LETTER AND POVERTY REDUCTION



Solidarity is one of the fundamental EU principles and represents an overall goal of all European societies. A more inclusive Europe is vital for the realization of EU objectives: sustainable economic growth, new and better jobs and higher social cohesion. EU leaders established the social inclusion process in order to contribute more efficiently to poverty eradication. The Government of Serbia has launched active participation in the social inclusion process to improve the quality of life its citizens. The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit has been established in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, assisting the Government and line ministries to develop and implement social inclusion and poverty reduction policies in a coordinated and effective manner.

BOŽIDAR DJELIĆ, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Social Inclusion: Solidarity Throughout Society and Opportunity for All

Serbia's membership in the European Union (EU) is a long-term goal shared by an overwhelming majority of the country. Our short-term goal is to gain EU membership candidate status by the end of 2011. The status of a candidate country entails numerous and sometimes demanding changes that need to be implemented in society. It will also signify the EU's recognition that the Republic of Serbia has become a better and more equitable society for all its citizens.

The Serbian Government intends to commence accession negotiations soon after obtaining candidate status and to continue the reforms that will lead Serbia to full-fledged EU membership. One of the obligations in the upcoming period will be to draft the Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum, a document that will set forth a plan for advancing social inclusion and poverty reduction until the moment Serbia has attained EU membership. To demonstrate that we are prepared for the task, the Government has prepared and adopted the First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction, taking account indicators and targets adopted by EU member states.

Over the past few years, the world has faced the most severe economic crisis since the Second World War. These years have also been Serbia's hardest years since the democratic changes in 2000. The crisis has had grave consequences both globally and domestically – rules that applied before the crisis have changed, and measures taken by member states have been upgraded and revised on an ongoing basis.

In response to the crisis and the need for a new development framework, the EU has adopted the Europe

2020 Strategy, defining EU development goals and lines of action until the year 2020. The Republic of Serbia has also responded, and through the Government's measures, managed to maintain financial stability, although poverty and unemployment growth trends have not left us unaffected. The First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction highlights the Government's commitment to adapting the reforms foreseen in the next three years to the new challenges imposed by the crisis as well as aligning our next steps with the Europe 2020 Strategy goals.

The crisis may not be an excuse for halting and slowing down reforms. We have passed many laws over the past three years that have made the Republic of Serbia a more equitable country. It is necessary to step up cooperation between all stakeholders in society in the coming stage of reform, and harmonise and coordinate individual measures implemented by various sectors. We need "sets of measures", rather than individual measures, in the fields of employment, education, social welfare, housing and other sectors, which will target excluded and impoverished citizens and, in particular, rural and underdeveloped areas of the country.

To combat social exclusion and poverty effectively, a strong partnership of all stakeholders is required – it is only through the partnership and joint action of all segments of society that we will be able to act upon the recommendations of the First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction. Our ultimate goal is for citizens themselves to feel that Serbia is a more equitable and better society for all.

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IVANA ĆIRKOVIĆ, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Improved Dialogue of the Government and Civil Society Organizations

In January 2011, the Government of the Republic of Serbia established the Office for Co-operation with Civil Society. After several years of advocacy by civil society organisations and with downright support and understanding on the part of Mr Djelić, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, an institutional mechanism was been established for supporting and promoting civil dialogue between the public administration institutions and the civil society organisations.

Civil dialogue entails institutionalised communication between civil society organisations and the government, consequential involvement of the civil society in decision-making processes and exchange of opinions and positions of equal partners in a constructive dialogue. This new me-

chanism is all the more significant for its definition of the civil society, which includes not only citizens' associations but also the media, trade unions and employers' organisations as social partners, as well as other essential social stakeholders participating in the ongoing reform processes and in the building of mutual trust in the processes of democratisation of institutions and society in general.

Despite the fact that certain public institutions have significantly improved their communication and co-operation with the non-profit sector over the last decade, the next step should be taken towards fully enabling the entire system to include all those voices that express the needs of the beneficiaries, articulate and advocate the interest of Serbian citizens.

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The significance and role of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society is reflected in the coordination of co-operation between government institutions and civil society organisations in the process of creating and establishing clear standards and procedures for inclusion of civil society organisations at all levels of the decision-making process.

The Office should support the civil society organisations in the processes of defining and implementing laws and policies, as well in monitoring the effectiveness of their implementation. In addition, the Office will strive to establish more elaborate criteria for transparent financing of civil society organisations from the public funds at the national and local levels. This will be one of the most important tasks within the mandate of the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, which will require limitless support of both decision makers and civil society organisations themselves, which have already gone a long way in understanding and monitoring the processes of planning and using the national budget funds. One of the definitely most interesting activities will be the possibility to partake in one of the EU programmes titled "Europe for Citizens",

where domestic civil society organisations, social partners, local self-governments and citizens will be guaranteed participation on equal terms with the other EU partners in this programme, aimed at implementing various activities in the fields such as employment, social cohesion, promotion of participation and democracy at the EU level, sustainable development, strengthening the European identity of citizens, co-operation and understanding among the Europeans and other.

The Office for Co-operation with Civil Society should play an active role in developing and implementing a platform for co-operation in the Western Balkans with a view to overall networking in the successful implementation of the political, social and economic reforms in the region.

For all the above processes to be possible and achievable, the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society should, above all, provide support to the government institutions in their efforts to further comprehend the significance of the civil society organisations and recognise them as an essential resource of human and social capital, as its active participation in the public life and promotion of democratic values ensure the creation of a better society for all.

Secondary Analyses of PISA Survey Data

"Social Sciences Research Staff Development Programme – Secondary Analyses of Data from PISA Survey" is a programme focused on understanding the factors affecting the quality and equity of education. Understanding of these factors is achieved through research of the new areas important for the creation of efficient education policy. The researchers are covering seven topics in the field of reading literacy, mathematics etc.

The programme is implemented by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration/Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Ministry of Education and Science and the Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

Contact: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, www.inkluzija.gov.rs

CONFERENCE: Social Policy Coordination

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit organised the conference "Social Policy Coordination in the Context of EU 2020", in cooperation with the European Commission – Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, supported by the Directorate-General for Enlargement.

As Mr Božidar Djelić, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, presented the "First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction", he announced that the next step in the integration process, after being granted the status of EU candidate country, will be the development of the Joint Inclusion Memorandum, a document outlining Serbia's plan to promote the social inclusion and poverty reduction process.

The objectives and measures of the EU 2020 Strategy were presented at the conference, as well as the European "Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion". The priority goals of the EU 2020 Strategy are to ensure that employment rate of women and men aged 20–64 is 75 percent, that three percent of GDP is invested in research and development, that the rate of early school-leavers drops under 10 percent and that 40 percent of the population attains a higher education degree.

Contact: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, www.inkluzija.gov.rs

First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Adopted

The Government adopted the First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2008–2010 at its session on March 17, 2011.

The First National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia covers: an overview of the legal, strategic and institutional frameworks relevant to social inclusion and poverty reduction processes, an analysis of the current status in the relevant fields, an overview of measures taken, conclusions and challenges, as well as lines of action in the forthcoming period.

The preparation of the Report was a joint activity of line ministries and other executive authorities, the National Assembly, local self-governments, civil society organisations, international partners, scientific and research institutions, social partners and the expert community. In an effort to enable all stakeholders to contribute to the preparation of the Report, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit conducted a comprehensive consultation process to achieve a national consensus on the main findings and priority fields of action presented in this Report.

The Report is available on the webpage of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit: www.inkluzija.gov.rs

Poverty Trends in Serbia from 2008 – 2010

The scope of poverty in the Republic of Serbia from 2008 – 2010 increased. A total of 9.2% population were considered poor in 2010 (living below the absolute poverty line), because their consumption per consumer unit on average was lower than the poverty line (RSD 8,544 per month per consumer unit). The number of the poor increased from 6.9% in 2009 in comparison to 9.2% in 2010, whereas it increased by 0.8% in 2008 in comparison to 2009.

Rural population is more vulnerable to poverty (13.6%) than urban population (5.7%).

The percentage of the poor is higher than the average among five-member households (11.7%), and it is the highest among households with six or more members (16.4%).

The percentage of the poor is higher among households whose head did not finish primary education (14.2%), finished only primary school (12.7%), or is unemployed (17.9%) or inactive (17.1%).

Poverty in the Republic of Serbia has been calculated since 2006, based on the Household Budget Survey (income and consumption, durable goods, demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the household, etc), which has been conducted since 2003 in line with international standards and recommendations.

Poverty trends analysis relies on the consumption of the household as a measure of the living standards of the population, due to its stability, comprehensiveness and harmonization over a long period.

Contact: Republic Statistical Office, www.stat.gov.rs

On-line Course on Social Inclusion

An on-line course on social inclusion is available on www.inkluzijakurs.info.

The course is aimed at enabling the development of various participants' knowledge of and competences in social inclusion, thus contributing to more successful harmonisation of the institutional framework, policies and practical work in the area of poverty reduction and social inclusion with the EU standards.

The course has been developed by the "SeConS" Development Initiative Group for the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit.

The course is free of charge and comprises seven knowledge modules. It is intended for decision-makers, civil servants, representatives of central and local governments and institutions, non-governmental organisations, students, professional communities and the widest interested public.

Contact: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit
Tel: 011 311 46 05, www.inkluzija.gov.rs

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: Innovation against Social Exclusion

The European Commission has encouraged civil society and social entrepreneurs to participate in the new initiative promoting fresh approaches in public service delivery.

The distinctive feature of social innovativeness is reflected in finding creative solutions and modalities of satisfying social needs, which are not adequately addressed either in the market or in the public sector. The solutions are focused on the socially vulnerable groups through activities of charity organisations, associations and social entrepreneurs.

One of the principal goals of this initiative is to develop an interactive web-based database to allow all stakeholders to learn about various ways of providing public services, practiced in other countries.

Social economy employs 11 million people in Europe. Source: www.euractiv.rs

EC: National Roma Integration Strategies an Urgent Issue

The European Commission has put forward a framework for national Roma integration strategies, which has defined four common goals for the EU member states: education, employment, healthcare and housing for the Roma.

Each EU country will individually direct its programmes and mobilise the necessary funds. The national strategies will be submitted to the European Commission by the end of 2011, and they will be published in April next year during the "Roma week". Their implementation will be followed up each subsequent year.

Between 10 and 12 million Roma persons currently live in Europe, out of which roughly 6 million live in the EU member states. While the overall European average is higher than 97 percent, only 42 percent of the Roma children complete their primary school.

Life expectancy of Roma persons is typically 10 years shorter than the European average, while the share of poor Roma people in overall Roma population is about 75 percent.

The solution to the problem of the Roma population and the existence of adequate national programmes is also important for the Balkan nations aspiring to enter the EU. Contact: www.ec.europa.eu

Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

The Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

The Convention opens the possibility of formulating a Europe-wide regulatory framework for the protection of women against all forms of violence and for the prevention, prosecution and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence. At the same time, it also establishes the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of its provisions.

Women Do More Unpaid Work

A new OECD working paper, titled "Cooking, Caring and Volunteering: Unpaid Work Around the World", reveals that women on average spend about 148 minutes more time on unpaid work than men.

Unpaid work is considered to be the work done by both men and women in addition to their regular paid employment, such as routine housework, gardening, etc.

Women in Denmark spend one hour more than men on such tasks, whereas in India women put in up to five hours more.

A process aimed at finding a way to recognise unpaid work as far as possible is currently underway. Contact: www.oecd.org

European Parliament Ratifies SAA

The European Parliament has ratified the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and Serbia. The resolution on SAA ratification was adopted in the European Parliament by show of hands, whereas the resolution on Serbia's integration process was adopted by 612 votes to 38, with 28 abstentions. For SAA to come into force, it must also be ratified by all EU member states individually.

SAA was signed in 2008. The EU member states commenced the ratification process in June 2010. So far, the Agreement has been ratified by thirteen countries.

Contact: Government of the Republic of Serbia, tel: 011 3617 719, www.srbija.gov.rs

Unemployment in EU Two Times Lower in Comparison to Serbia

The unemployment rate in EU was 9.5% in March, indicating a slight reduction in unemployment in comparison to the same month previous year, when it totaled 9.7%, said the EC in April 2011. Unemployment in Serbia is twice as high.

Following Spain (20.7%), Lithuania and Latvia are the most vulnerable EU states in this respect, with rates slightly above 17%. The lowest unemployment rate is in the Netherlands – 4.2%, Austria – 4.3% and Luxemburg – 4.5%. Unemployment is below the European average in the largest European economy – Germany – 6.4%.

In countries that are the closest to Serbia regarding their GDP – Bulgaria and Romania – unemployment rates total 11.4% and 7.4%. The unemployment rate in Serbia was 19.2% according to the Labor Force Survey as of October 2010 – 18.3% for men and 20.4% for women. Therefore, the unemployment rate in Serbia is twice as high as the European average, whereas the rate is higher only in Spain of all the EU countries.

Unemployment in EU is higher than in the USA (8.8%) and Japan (4.6%).

Source: www.euractiv.rs

A Million Euros from EU for Southern Serbia

Municipalities in the South of Serbia are given the possibility to apply for EU assistance under PROGRESS, with the budget of EUR 1 million. The EU will support all high-quality municipal infrastructure development programmes, as well as social programmes depending on the needs of the local communities.

The municipalities in the Toplički District – Prokuplje, Kuršumlija, Žitorađa and Blace have announced that they would apply together for EU assistance to build homes for children with special needs.

Contact: EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia, tel: 011 30 83 200,

www.europa.org.rs

EU Population Ageing

The Third Demography Report states that the Europeans live increasingly longer and healthier lives.

The fertility rate has increased from 1.45 to 1.6 children per woman, but – for the population to be self-sustaining – a replacement fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman is required. Life expectancy has been increasing at the rate of two or three months every year, thus contributing to population ageing.

Europe's population growth has been fuelled by and large by the increased immigration. By 2060, the proportion of migrants and their descendants will double.

Contact: www.europa.org.rs

Government Develops Projects Financed from International Assistance

The Government of the Republic of Serbia has developed projects which should be funded by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance – IPA 2012, as well as projects financed by bilateral donors. The Government also implements the projects launched in the previous year. The value of IPA 2011 totals EUR 190 million, and the grants under IPA amounted to EUR 253.2 million in 2010.

The total funds allocated to Serbia in the form of development assistance and grants over the past decade amounted to approximately EUR 6.2 billion.

Contact: Government of the Republic of Serbia, www.srbija.gov.rs

EP: Support to the Proposal for European Statute for Mutuals, Associations and Foundations

The European Alliance for the Statute of the European Association (EASEA) welcomes the European Parliament's decision to support the adoption of the Statute.

The Statute will provide institutional recognition of the engagement and activism of millions of citizens and, at the same time, facilitate free and voluntary networking and gathering between individuals and associations throughout Europe.

A regulation on the European Statutes would enable simplifying processes such as administrative costs, registration in another country, burden of proof imposed on associations from one member state seeking to become established in another member state, as well as issues concerning the drawing of funds on a cross-border basis within the EU. Contact: www.europeanmovement.eu

Social Welfare Law Adopted

The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has passed the Law on Social Welfare, which foresees increasing the number of social welfare beneficiaries, awarding higher pecuniary assistance to the poorest and developing social welfare services at the local level. Implementation of the Law will result in increasing the number of social welfare beneficiaries by 40 to 60 percent, i.e. by at least 80,000.

Higher benefits and more beneficiaries will mean increasing budgetary allocations by about 70 percent. A total of RSD 2.7 billion has been earmarked in the national budget for the implementation of the Law.

Multi-person households, households without able-bodied members and single parents will be awarded higher pecuniary benefits.

The Law also foresees developing local-level services, for which purpose municipalities and cities will be granted targeted budget funding, namely for establishing day care centres for chil-

dren with developmental impairments, retirement homes and home care assistance services.

An increase in funding is also foreseen for the existing social welfare beneficiaries. Social welfare institutions may also be established by individuals, subject to prior licensing and regular service quality control.

The Law also foresees further development and promotion of foster care, in order that as many children without parental care as possible leave institutional care. Under the new Law on Social Welfare, if one of the parents does not work and cares for a child who is a beneficiary of the increased allowance for another person's care and assistance for over 15 years, he/she will be eligible for a special pecuniary benefit in the amount of minimum pension upon attaining regular retirement age pursuant to legislation governing the pension system.

Contact: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
tel: 011 3112 916, www.minrz.s.gov.rs

Comments on Draft Strategy for Civil Society Development of Belgrade

Having opened the public debate on the Draft Strategy for Civil Society Development in the City of Belgrade, the Agency for European Integration and Cooperation with Associations invited all interested parties to submit their proposals and comments on the Draft Strategy and thus contribute to improving this strategic document. Until May 6, it was possible to send comments by e-mail or post them on the Agency's Facebook page www.facebook.com/agencija.eu.

The Strategy provides a basis for cooperation between the City and civil society as an advocate of inhabitants' interests, a knowledge resource or a provider of services that the City is not able or authorised to provide.

BCIF COMPETITION: Projects Aimed at Improving Local Communities

The Balkan Community Initiative Fund (BCIF) has announced a competition for the Active Communities programme, aimed at improving and developing local communities through promotion of citizens' active involvement in solving problems.

Proposals should pertain to the local community, stimulate active involvement of citizens and bring about overall welfare to the local community through utilising local resources.

Proposals should address environmental protection, children and youth, citizen involvement in decision-making processes, and inclusion of vulnerable groups, etc. The competition remains open throughout 2011.

Contact: BCIF, tel: 011 26 22 511, www.bcif.org

AWC: For Poverty Reduction: Gender Equality and Accountable Government

There is a considerable gap between national and municipal budget funds spent on men and women, according to research carried out by seven women's civil society organisations aiming to enhance Government of Serbia's accountability and bring about more efficient expenditure of public funds by introducing gender budgeting.

The analysis was published in "Poverty Reduction: Civil Society and Accountable Government", as part of the eponymous project implemented by Peščanik, Fenomena Women's Initiative, DamaD Cultural Centre, Osvit Roma Women's Association, Svetionik, Užice Women's Centre and Autonomous Women's Centre.

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Institute for Sustainable Communities with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Observatory on Violence against Women

The Autonomous Women's Centre and the Network for European Women's Lobby Serbia launched an initiative to establish an independent expert body for monitoring violence against women – the Observatory on Violence against Women.

At the conference held in Belgrade on April 21, 2011, EWL activities, national observatory models of Denmark and Ireland, and experiences of Croatia and Serbia were presented, and representatives of independent national authorities for human rights protection spoke about their roles in the monitoring and implementation of laws.

Representatives of women's NGOs concluded that it was necessary to form an operational working group that will build a platform for establishing the Observatory by the end of September 2011.

Contact: AWC, tel: 011 2687 190, www.womenngo.org.rs

Time Limit for Re-registration of Associations Expired

Associations that failed to align their legal instruments with the provisions of the Law on Associations by April 22 will be removed from the Register kept by the Serbian Business Registers Agency. Removal from the Registry results in loss of legal personality.

Contact: SBRA
Tel: 011 20 23 350
www.apr.gov.rs

SOS Hotline for Persons with Disabilities

The Novi Sad based organisation for protecting the rights of and providing support to persons with disabilities *Iz kruga* has upgraded the operation of its SOS hotline, the only violence and discrimination hotline serving persons with disabilities.

The Telenor Foundation has donated the technology, as a result of which the organisation now has comprehensive databases and is able

to keep records of calls and data on all SOS hotline clients.

The organisation *Iz kruga* provides psychological and legal assistance, as well as assistance in the sphere of social policy. A lawyer processes an average of 50 cases each month, while a psychologist has up to 15 clients each day.

Contact: *Iz kruga*
Tel: 066 447 040, www.izkruga.org

UN: Housing Assistance

By June, 21 refugee and IDP families in the territory of Pčinjski and Jablanički districts will receive housing assistance packages as part of the UN Peacebuilding & Inclusive Local Development (PBLID) programme.

Grants amounting to RSD 620,000 for purchasing rural homes anywhere in Serbia will be awarded to 11 families residing in refugee centres. At the same time, 10 packages of building materials worth EUR 4,000 each will be distributed for home extension or modification purposes, available also for those living in private accommodation.

A total of 40 "pick-up" packages worth RSD 160,000 for leaving refugee centres is also finished.

The realisation of the programme was launched in October 2009 in Southern Serbia and 34 families have managed to resolve permanently the issue of the "roof over their head".

Grants for purchasing rural households have thus far been granted to 13 families with 53 members, and the packages of building material has been received by 21 families with 104 members.

Refugees and IDPs will be receiving free legal assistance from the Praxis organization until June 2011 for obtaining identification documents and resolving property issues.

The call for applications was open until May 5, 2011.

Contact: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia
Tel: 011 20 40 400, www.undp.rs

A Different View of Belgrade

The project Belgrade: Another Gaze is dedicated to an interpretation of the city from the viewpoint of marginalised groups.

Alternative guides introduce locals and tourists to Belgrade spots off the beaten tourist track and present popular sights in a different way. The city is viewed as a place with real problems – inaccessible streets, institutions and cultural heritage sites – and also as space with potential.

Tours with alternative guides are part of Belgrade's official tourist offer, with participation of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Ethnographic Museum.

This globally unique project is implemented by the Belgrade-based Centre for International Studies of Art, supported by the Telenor Foundation, City of Belgrade and Tourist Organisation of Belgrade.

Contact: Centre for International Studies of Art, tel: 011 24 03 315
www.outsideproject.org

Roma and Marginalised Groups' Inclusion through Education

The objective of the Joint Programme for Roma and Marginalised Groups Inclusion through Education is to ensure that all children are able to complete primary education. This objective is in line with the Millennium Development Goal 2 – achieve universal primary education by 2015.

The Joint Programme encompasses two components. The objective of Component 1 – Support to Roma and Marginalised Children in Education – is to ensure inclusion of Roma and marginalised children in the educational system. The Programme is being implemented in 30 Red Cross branches in cities and municipalities; last year, it covered 1137 children.

Since 2002, 3034 children and 1697 parents have been involved in the Programme on a regular basis, and 724 children have been enrolled in primary school since the launch of the Programme.

Support to Children and Youth with Disabilities is Programme Component 2, aimed at the inclusion of children with disabilities. In 2011, the Programme is being implemented by 28 Red Cross branches in cities and municipalities and covers a total of 690 children and 379 parents.

The Programme has been implemented by the Red Cross of Serbia since 2002.
Contact: Red Cross of Serbia
Tel: 011 30 32 125 ext. 105, www.redcross.org.rs

Support for Child Protection Projects

The City Secretariat for Child Protection announced a call for proposals, inviting applications from civil society and non-governmental organizations for award of funds to projects in the area of child protection. The projects were required to address aspects of child protection and improvement of educational work with preschool children that are not covered by the binding Minimum Programme of Educational Work and, in particular, protection of children belonging to vulnerable and underprivileged social groups.

The call for proposals was closed on April 6 and its aim was to support sustainable projects whose proposed contents offer innovation or enhancement of existing programmes.

Contact: City Secretariat for Child Protection, tel: 011 33 09 092,
www.beograd.rs

Call for Studies in Romani

The college for vocational studies of teachers "Mihailo Palov" in Vršac, delivering teaching in Romani, put forward the conditions for the enrollment of students in the first year of studies in 2011/12.

The aim of the call and the Information Booklet is to have as many Roma students as possible enroll the studies.
Contact: College for Vocational Studies Mihailo Palov, Vršac, www.uskolavrsac.edu.rs

Further Education for 4000 Adults

As part of the Second Chance project, 4000 people over 15 years of age who have not completed primary education and have no qualifications will have an opportunity to attend education and improve their employment prospects. Project objective is to offer one more chance to the unemployed to complete primary education and acquire vocational skills within the public educational system.

The reason for launching the project is the fact that one third of the Serbian population has not completed secondary education and more than one quarter has not attained any vocational qualifications. In selecting project beneficiaries, priority will be given to the Roma, women, rural population and laid-off workers.

The EU has provided a grant of EUR 4 million for the project.
Contact: Ministry of Education and Science
Tel: 011 36 16 489, www.mp.gov.rs

Improvement of Pre-school Education

As part of the project Improvement of Preschool Education, fifteen municipalities have received donations in equipment needed to provide better services. The project idea is to improve conditions for preschool education of children, in particular those belonging to vulnerable groups, by enhancing the quality of preschool programmes offered and by increasing preschool institutions' capacities, in an effort to contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction.

Požarevac and Kostolac have received buses

– mobile kindergartens, the municipalities of Tutin, Kruševac, Leskovac, Ruma, Užice and Šabac have been given prefabricated modular structures, while Gadžin Han, Beočin, Arandelovac, Ražanj, Mali Zvornik, Surdulica, Bela Palanka and Petrovac na Mlavi have got new vans.

This three-year project is worth EUR 5 million, of which EUR 3.75 million have been provided from IPA, while the national contribution amounts to EUR 1.25 million.

Contact: Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS) project, www.dils.gov.rs

Twenty Years of Tempus Programme in Serbia

A two-day conference was held in Belgrade to mark 20 years of the EU-funded Tempus programme. The conference was attended by 250 high-ranking representatives of the 27 EU member states and 28 partner states and territories. Conference participants spoke about the effects of Tempus on higher education systems in their respective countries and its contribution to regional and international cooperation.

Contact: Tempus office in Serbia, tel: 011 344 33 42,
www.tempus.ac.rs

Grants for 42 Municipalities for Education Inclusion of the Roma

The project of education inclusion of Roma children will be implemented in 42 Serbian municipalities, conducted by the Ministry of Education and Science, DILS, REF and the Education Inclusion of Roma.

An official award ceremony was held in end April in Belgrade for municipalities which were selected out of the 56 applied Roma education inclusion projects.

The municipalities whose projects were not accepted in this stage will have an opportunity to compete once again for DILS funds after advancing their proposals. The projects shall cover 12 thousand Roma children aged up to 19.

The total project value is EUR 2 million and/or every municipality shall be granted EUR 35 thousand for their implementation.

Grants shall be invested in strengthening institutions (e.g. inter-sector committees) and the establishment of new mechanisms (the development of action plans for Roma education inclusion etc).

The Town of Valjevo has been selected as one of the 42 applicants. The project Education – A Bridge of Understanding in Valjevo 2011/2012 foresees: visits to Roma communities and dissemination of information on education, support to Roma preschool and school children in purchasing textbooks and school supplies, extended day care services for preschool and school children, day trips and excursions, sports competitions, exhibitions, panel discussions on Roma tradition and culture and visits to the towns of Sombor and Apatin.

Contact: DILS, tel: 011 36 06 421, www.dils.gov.rs

Sixty Roma Mediators Carried Out 60,000 Visits

Since the launch of the project *Povezivanje* (Connecting), more than 60 Roma health mediators have carried out 60,353 visits, recorded 19,869 Roma people, facilitated personal identity documents and health insurance cards for 3,368 people, had 4,766 children and adults vaccinated and organised health checks for 514 pregnant women and recent mothers.

The Connecting project was launched by Telenor in April 2010 in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF to facilitate health mediators' communication and discharge of duties.

As part of the Ministry of Health's campaign, health mediators make regular visits in 50 Serbian towns and cities, aiming to improve Roma people's health and quality of life.

Connecting has provided training for mediators, and their field work has been made easier by the donated equipment – mobile phones, special rate plans and lap-top computers with special software.
Contact: Ministry of Health, tel: 011 36 13 734
www.zdravlje.gov.rs

Training as the Basis of Palliative Care

In line with the Palliative Care Strategy and Action Plan, training in this form of healthcare is delivered at three levels: the basic level – for general practitioners, nurses, social workers, psychologists, priests and volunteers; the intermediate level – for specialists in secondary healthcare; the advanced level – for teams of specialists who will deliver training at the other two levels.

Training entails developing skills of communicating with patients/their families, mak-

ing decisions based on ethical principles and needs of the patients and their families, managing symptoms, managing the end stage of illness and caring for dying patients, as well as continued care for families and their needs in the grieving period. The training also covers psychosocial, psycho-emotional and spiritual support to patients/families.

Contact: Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS) project, tel: 011 36 06 421
www.dils.gov.rs

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, MINING AND SPATIAL PLANNING

Environmental Social Responsibility

Companies are among the key players in the sphere of sustainable development, environmental protection and alleviation of the consequences of climatic changes, and the state is ready for all forms of cooperation with everyone, stated Ivica Radović, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning at the CSR Forum, the second international conference on corporate social responsibility organised by the Forum of Business Leaders and "SMart kolektiv" in mid-April.

The concept of green economy may generate new employment. Employment for some 10,000 persons is planned in the recycling industry only. The Ministry advocates for introduction of environmental social responsibility that would allow for implementation of energy efficiency, use of renewable sources of energy and adequate waste reduction and management.

The initiative calls on the companies to commit to motivating their employees, providers and business partners to preservation of environment. Contact: Forum of Business Leaders of Serbia, tel: 011 244 00 96, www.fpl.rs

Expert Assistance to 12 Social Enterprises

Having been selected at the call for proposals entitled "Programme of Expert Support to Social Corporate Responsibility Promotion", 12 companies will be receiving a 7-month support to their operation.

The enterprises selected are: Eko BaG, Živimo zajedno, Pirotex triko d.o.o, Naša kuća, Studio, Etno forum, Lice ulice, Klub žena Hera, Lak žica d.o.o, Teledom savez Srbije, Sosina kujna i Ženski centar.

The support includes expert assistance in the areas of planning, marketing, marketing of goods and finances. The value of support per enterprise is estimated at USD 1,950.

Every candidate will be receiving adequate consultant support of the experts from the relevant domains. The call is part of the project "Employment and Migration of Youth" funded by the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) and the Government of Serbia. The programme is implemented by Smart kolektiv.

Contact: SMart Kolektiv, tel: 011 24 40 096

www.smartkolektiv.org

Draft Company Law for Easier Business-Doing

The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development held a public reading of the Draft Company Law, the Draft Law on Consensual Financial Restructuring of Companies and the Draft law on Control of Goods Made of Precious Metals in the Parliament of Serbia on 10 May.

The Draft Company Law is a systemic act, aligned with the EU regulations and the Law on Capital Market. It fills the gaps identified by the experts and the industry over the past six years of implementation of the existing law, but introduces new solutions that will simplify the operation of companies in Serbia.

One of the problems identified is the relationship between the majority and minority shareholders in companies. Therefore, this law introduces solutions providing for more protection to small shareholders. Contact: www.merr.gov.rs

Mark "Fair Product" Presented

The Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, the Regional Chamber of Commerce Zrenjanin and the Association of Companies for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (UIPS) organised a promotion and award of the Certificate on UIPS Mark. The Intellectual Property Institute has recognized the collective mark "Fair Product" of UIPS to be placed on goods and services of companies for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

The trademark "Fair product" ensures equal business conditions for companies for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. This will raise their economic power and create conditions for new employment. The introduction should also stimulate the improvement of quality of goods and services.

Contact: UIPS – Association of Companies for Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities
Tel: 011 616 90 01

EXHIBITION OPENED IN CZKD, BELGRADE

Waste Collectors

The exhibition "City Miners", opened at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination in end April 2011, is dedicated to waste collectors in Serbia. Some 8,000 workers, young and poorly paid for the most part, work in this new branch of industry. Waste collectors are among the poorest citizens in Serbia, and their average life expectancy is 46.

The newly founded Republic Trade Union of Waste Collectors was presented at the opening of the exhibition. The requests of the Trade Union, the chairman of which is Saban Salijevec, refer to improved controls of the state and the local government bodies as well as to inclusion of waste collectors into the controls and decision-making processes.

The authors of the exhibition are Dragan Kujundžić and Samir Delić.
Contact: www.iscserbia.org

AWARDS OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL:

"Business in the Service of the Community"

The competition for the best social business plans "Business in the Service of the Community", organized by the British Council, proclaimed the most successful companies "Ecobag" of Miodrag Nedeljković (sewing of different products from the plastic films discarded in media campaigns), "Give Me Cotton Diapers" of Sonja Dakić (production of diapers from ecological materials) and "Lola Entrepreneurship" of Dragana Arsenović that has been employing persons with disabilities for the past 14 years. The winners will participate at the largest social entrepreneurship fair in London. Erste Bank donated RSD 200,000 to the organization "Karitas Šabac" the representative of which – Mirosljub Nikolić presented the idea "Laundry" – a laundry employing women from vulnerable social groups.

Contact: British Council, www.britishcouncil.org/sr

„Strawberry Tree“ Winner of the Sustainable Development Week

„Strawberry energy“ – a team of nine Belgrade University students – won the EC competition „Sustainable Development Week“ in Brussels with their invention, a public solar mobile telephone charger „Strawberry Tree“.

„Strawberry Tree“ is made of stainless steel. 16 chargers are installed into it, suitable for all kinds of mobile telephones. The only thing that the users need to do is to select the adequate charger and press the button.

Contact: „Strawberry Energy“
www.senergy.rs

PHOTO NEWS

The SWIFT Initiative has been working to address the key areas of employment, health, education, social services and personal documents in Roma populations. In December 2010, this first SWIFT waste recycling centre was inaugurated, by the Deputy Prime Minister and Norwegian Ambassador. The centre started work in February 2011 and is an enormous success, providing free recyclable waste collection, cleaning services, office and house relocation and archive disposal.

The SWIFT Initiative plans to expand through EU funds and the support of the Government.

SWIFT has been developed by WHO and funded by the Norwegian Government, while IOM, UNOPS and WHO, together with the Roma Community, Municipality of Zvezdara, City of Belgrade, Governmental Bodies and Offices have been a part of realising this project.

Contact: SWIFT, tel: 011 342 25 52, www.swift.rs

SWIFT Initiative: For a Healthier Tomorrow



Surplus in Exchange with CEFTA Countries

Serbia generated a USD 1.36 billion surplus in exchange with the CEFTA countries in 2010. This is mostly the result of export of agricultural products.

According to the data of the Republic Statistical Office, Serbia has exported grains, different kinds of drinks, iron and steel into the CEFTA countries last year. It imported electricity, iron and steel, mineral coal and ferrous metals as well as vegetable and fruit. Serbian exports in that period amounted to USD 2.81, and the exports amounted to USD 1.45 billion. The coverage of imports by exports amounted to 193.8 %.

In 2009, Serbia generated a surplus in trade exchange with the CEFTA countries amounting to USD 1.37 billion which was mostly the result of exports of agricultural products.

Measured by the total share in Serbian exports, the CEFTA market is second only to the EU market.

Contact: Government of Serbia, tel: 011 3617 719, www.srbija.gov.rs

National Rural Development Programme 2011-2013 Adopted

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the National Rural Development Plan 2011–2013 that stipulates for incentives of support to priority sectors – grains and industrial plants, meat and milk, fruit, vine and vegetables. The incentives should contribute to the achievement of three strategic objectives: sustainable improvement of agricultural and food production sectors, improvement of food safety, veterinarian and phytosanitary standards and environmental protection standards, sustainable development of rural economy and rural areas.

In development of incentives and call for proposals, the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management has taken special care of female population, farmers who work in difficult conditions, as well as those under 40. All the measures are in line with the EU model and this is the first multi-annual document dealing with rural development incentives.

Contact: Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management
Tel: 011 2607 960, www.minpolj.gov.rs

Serbia Applies for Organic Products Exports Permit into EU

Serbia has applied for the list of countries the organic products of which may be sold in the EU. The Ministry of Agriculture has issued 8 approvals to organizations for certification of organic produce in 2011. These certificates suffice for the Serbian market, but in order for the companies to export to the EU, an EU-approved certificate is required.

Two companies from Serbia – OCS and Evrocert – have been trained in certification within the framework of the SlovakAid project. They should issue export certificates in cooperation with a certification company from Slovakia.

Organic production requires strict control of use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides and antibiotics as well as a total prohibition of use of genetically modified organisms. According to the information of the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management, organic food is produced on 4,500 hectares in Serbia.

The register of the Ministry, developed on the basis of data provided by certification companies, lists 77 producers. The law on Organic Production, aligned with the EU regulations, came into effect in Serbia in 2011.

Contact: Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management, tel: 011 2607 960, www.minpolj.gov.rs

Guide through EU Agricultural Policy

The European Movement in Serbia published a "Guide through EU Policies – Agriculture" explaining the EU agricultural policy and listing reforms and measures to be implemented in the pre-accession period. One of the measures to enable drawing of funds for rural development is establishment of an Agency for Payments in Agriculture that the EU funds would be directed through. One of these funds is IPARD – a new EU pre-accession instrument 2007–2013. IPARD is the fifth component of IPA Programme – Rural Development – and it is aimed at improving the sector of agriculture. The publication of the Guide was supported by the Slovakian Agency - SlovakAid.

Contact: European Movement in Serbia, tel: 011 3640 174
www.emins.org

Support to Organic Production in South Serbia

The objective of the project "Support to Organic Production in South Serbia" is to support organic production and food-processing sector and make it more competitive on the local market, thereby contributing to new job creation in South Serbia. The project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency. The concept and the planned activities were designed in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management. The project will be implemented by the Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinj Districts with the planned budget of EUR 775,000.

Contact: Centre for Development of Jablanica and Pčinj Districts
tel: 016 233 441, www.centarzarazvoj.org

Serbian Chamber of Commerce become Member of the EEN

The Serbian Chamber of Commerce became a member of the European Entrepreneurship network (EEN). EEN network is an EU project aimed at supporting companies through establishment of business links and cooperation, transfer of technologies, information about the available EU programmes that the Serbian companies may take part in, as well as education in sector policies and EU acquis.

EEN network includes some 600 partner organizations and institutions such as chambers of commerce, agencies and institutes supporting the companies in improving and innovating their operation through partnerships, awareness raising and expert assistance.

The network can assist in establishing contacts in 40 countries and with 83 consortiums.

The consortium implementing the EEN network project in Serbia is: National Regional Development Agency – NARR, SIEPA, universities in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis, the Institute Mihailo Pupin and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce.

Contact: Serbian Chamber of Commerce
Tel: 011 3300 900, www.pks.rs

PUBLIC WORKS: Employment for More than 5,000 Persons

The National Employment Service approved 434 public works projects to employ 5,211 persons. RSD 700 million were earmarked from the 2011 budget of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development.

Most of the public works – 57% thereof – will be conducted in underdeveloped municipalities such as Zitorađa, Blace, Trgoviste, Varvarin and Bujanovac. Most of the projects – 169 of them – were approved for social, humanitarian and cultural activities. 1,673 will be employed. 2,223 persons will be employed in implementation of 165 environmental protection programmes.

Also, 1,315 citizens will take part in infrastructure construction, through 100 projects.

The employees on public works will be receiving monthly salaries depending on the level of education: RSD 17,600 for the first and the second level, RSD 20,000 for fifth and sixth and RSD 22,000 for the seventh level of education.

1,133 applications amounting to RSD 3 billion took part in the call for proposals for public works this year.

The unemployed citizens are engaged for a 6-month period, and the advantage is given to Roma, refugees, IDPs, persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed, persons over the age of 45, women and the vulnerable.

Contact: National Employment Service
tel: 011 29 29 800, www.nsz.gov.rs

NARR: Mentoring for 150 Entrepreneurs and Enterprises

The National Regional Development Agency, in cooperation with the regional agencies, has invited small and medium-size enterprises and enterprises to register for provision of mentoring service. 150 entrepreneurs and enterprises will be selected to receive 50 hours of free mentoring by end November 2011.

Mentoring is a process of support to companies in emergency response.

The National Agency has standardized mentoring as a service within the implementation of the project "Institutionalization of mentoring as a service for SMEs". The project is funded by the Government of Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Contact: National Regional Development Agency – Office in Belgrade, tel: 011 20 60 888
www.narr.gov.rs

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: MINISTRY OF CULTURE,
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

EUR 115 Million for ICT projects

The Digital Agenda Administration of the Ministry of Culture, Communication and Information Society has invited Serbian companies to take part in the project for development of information and telecommunication technologies in the total value of EUR 115 million funded by the EU. Information on the call for proposals is available at: www.digitalnaagenda.gov.rs/projekti.

Seven companies from Serbia took part in this call for proposals for the first time last year. Four projects were approved.

The call for proposals is implemented within the framework of the ICT Policy Support Programme – ICT PSP, one of the three special programmes within the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation in the period 2007 -2013. Serbia acceded to ICT PSP in October 2009 through signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the EU.

Contact: Digital Agenda Administration
tel: 011 2020 111, www.digitalnaagenda.gov.rs

EU Invests EUR 10.5 Million into Digitalization

The European Union will invest more than EUR 10 million of grant funds for digitalization of Serbia.

More than EUR 12 million will be invested into construction of a network of transmitters, of which more than EUR 10 million in grants to be provided by the EU. Of these, EUR 8 million will be spent on purchase of equipment and some EUR 2.5 million for consultancy services.

The costs of digitalization in Serbia could range between EUR 20 to 50 million, and the digitalization of broadcasting programmes could be completed by 4 April 2012. This network will cover about 95% of the territory of Serbia and the programme will be broadcast by the Public Company "Emisiona tehnika i veze".

Contact: www.europa.eu

CALENDAR of Important Dates

MAY

01 May	International Workers' Day
03 May	World Press Freedom Day
09 May	Europe Day
15 May	International Day of the Family
21 May	World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

JUNE

01 June	International Children's Day
04 June	International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression
12 June	World Day against Child Labour
15 June	World Food Day
20 June	World Refugee Day
21 June	World Peace Day
26 June	International Day of Support for Torture Victims and International Day against Drug Abuse

A System to Assist Persons with Hearing Impairments in "Kolarac"

The Endowment of Ilija M. Kolarac disposes of an induction system for the amplification of speech and sound, helping persons with hearing impairments better hear a sound source. The system amplifies the source of sound but does not disturb other listeners. The implementation of audio description is planned in the National

Theatre to assist the blind and the persons with sight impairments to follow theatre performances via simultaneous interpretation. The objective of these two Telenor Foundation-funded projects is to help persons with disabilities satisfy their need for culture and arts.

Contact: Telenor fondacija www.telenor.co.rs

Fifth International Film Festival Adapted for the Visually Impaired

The fifth international film festival adapted for the visually impaired was held in Belgrade 28 April – 1 May 2011. Free showings of the presented films will continue in the cinema of the Association of Blind Persons "Homer", in Cara Uroša 34 Street, Belgrade.

The Association of Blind Persons "Homer" launched a project to adapt and synchronise films for persons with sight impairments in 2005. No one in the region is adapting films for the blind, so more than 20 films adapted to date represents a significant step in making the best films available to the blind and the persons with sight impairments.

In cooperation with the cinemas, the Association seeks to introduce regular monthly showings of adapted films in large cities of Serbia, and the region. To date, projections were organized in Vršac, Novi Sad, Subotica, Užice and Podgorica.

Audio Recording of 80 Books

To date, 80 books have been recorded in audio form for blind students and students with sight impairments. The project "Let Everyone Read" was launched in order to improve the conditions for study for all the students suffering from sight impairment. The objective is to record, in audio form, as many textbooks as possible and thus form an "audio library" to be used by the blind students and the students with sight impairments.

The project was launched by the Association of Students with Disabilities, Novi Sad. The audio library is used by the blind students and the students with sight impairments of the University of Belgrade. The partner on this project is Telenor Foundation.

Contact: Pravni fakultet, Novi Sad
tel: 021 485 30 78, www.nsusi.org

Institute for Informatics and Internet, Recipient of the DIS Plaque

The Serbian Society for Informatics presented the plaque for excellent achievements in informatics to the Republic Institute for Informatics and Internet, for their project "eGovernment Portal – Improvement and Development of Functionality".

The other winners of 2011 DIS plaques are the Administration for Joint Affairs of Provincial Bodies – Sector for IT, dr Dragan Ivanović and Informatika a.d.

Special DIS plaques on the occasion of 50th anniversary of digital IT in Serbia were presented to the Institute Mihajlo Pupin, Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade and Electronic Industry in Niš.

Contact: DIS, www.dis.org.rs

Digitalization of 158 Health Centres and 45 Hospitals

EUR 1.2 million have been earmarked within the project of the Ministry of Health "Development of Improved Local Services" – DILS for software for all 158 health centres. Each health centres was allocated EUR 7,600 for software allowing integration into the national information system. Also, 1,800 remote medical centres and dispensaries will be networked with their central offices.

During the year, IT equipment was procured for 45 hospitals in Serbia of which 20 within the project of the Ministry of Health funded from the World Bank loan as well as 25 through the EU-funded projects.

The process of introduction of IT system into the hospitals in Serbia has already started through digitalization of the four pilot hospitals in Valjevo, Zrenjanin, Vranje and Kraljevo.

The objective is to establish an integrated health information system that will allow accessibility of health data to all the participants in the health care system.

Contact: Project "Development of Improved Local Services" – DILS, tel: 011 36 06 421
www.dils.gov.rs

Ministry of Health, Tel: 011 36 13 734, www.zdravlje.gov.rs

NALED: Legal Reforms Not Decisive Enough

As the National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) reports, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted only 13 laws in the first quarter of 2011, including those referring to the inauguration of the new cabinet and the loans taken by Serbia.

NALED argues that legal reforms have lacked decisiveness. Nine out of 75 recommendations from NALED's Grey Book have been imple-

mented since 2008. Out of 340 recommendations identified by the Comprehensive Regulatory Reform (CRR) Unit, 93 have been implemented since 2009, and out of 38 recommendations of the National Competitiveness Council 10 have been implemented over the last 15 months.

Contact: NALED, tel: 011 33 47 634
www.naled-serbia.org

News about Social Protection on the Website of the Provincial Institute

The Provincial Social Protection Institute has launched a section "News from the Social Protection System" on its website. This section aims to enable institutions and organisations promote their work, inform the beneficiaries about the rights and services in the system as well as to assist local governments in informing their citizens of the new and available services at the local level.

Contact: Provincial Social Protection Institute, Novi Sad, tel: 021 425 854, www.pzsz.gov.rs

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