



Government of the  
Republic of Serbia

NOVEMBER 2009

# 1. 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 ĐELIĆ, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATIONS A Better Life for All

Serbia has been on the path of European integration since 2000. Comprehensive reforms in all fields were launched then in order to adapt the systems of Serbia to the system operating in the European Union. However, the system change is not a goal per se. The end objective of all the efforts is to enhance the quality of life for all the citizens in Serbia.

This year, the citizens of Serbia will have the opportunity to witness some of the first concrete results of the European integration efforts, proving that the benefits outweigh these invested efforts.

As of this year, Serbia shall be using pre-accession funds worth almost EUR 200 million annually. These EU grant funds shall be used for vital reform projects conducive to the establishment of the rule of law and improvements in a number of areas, leading to further economic growth and development of Serbia.

The European Union has placed EUR 100 million grant budget support at Serbia's disposal, as well as a favorable loan worth EUR 200 million, to overcome the effects of the economic and financial crisis. Thus the EU family has proven to be one of the most significant strategic partners whose goal is to see further integration and progress achieved in Serbia.

The most significant news for most citizens is certainly the expected termination of the visa regime for Serbian citizens and entering the "white" Schengen list.

These seemingly small steps and small victories are to result in the improvement of life of each individual citizen of our country, in particular of the marginalized population. Although the number of the poor popula-

tion was reduced by half from 2003 to 2008, still more than 600,000 citizens live below the absolute poverty line. It is therefore important that Serbia takes more active participation in the social inclusion and poverty reduction process implemented at the level of EU member states. The process was defined in the Lisbon Strategy, setting the objectives at the level of EU until 2010 which include faster economic growth, fight against social exclusion and poverty reduction and environmental protection.

In order to ensure good coordination of the social inclusion process in the Republic of Serbia, the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit has been established within my Office by means of transforming the PRS Implementation Focal Point. The Unit shall provide support to the Government and line ministries to develop and implement social inclusion and poverty reduction policies in a coordinated and effective manner. The Unit shall also be informing the public and the European Commission on the integration progress of, based on the Laeken indicators used for reporting by EU member states. The process is being strongly supported, in addition to the EU, by the Swiss Confederation and the Kingdom of Norway.

As was the case with the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, this process shall involve all the stakeholders: the Government, the Parliament, local governments, international donors, civil society organizations, and the media. The development of Serbia and European integration of our country shall be meaningful only if the benefits thereof and the resulting welfare are used by all the citizens of Serbia.

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## ERWIN H. HOFER, SWISS AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA Swiss Support to Social Inclusion in Serbia and Increasing the Competitiveness of the Economy

The Swiss cooperation programme with Serbia has already been launched in 1991. The main goal of our new medium-term strategy 2010-13 is to support Serbia in her efforts towards European integration by contributing to improving social inclusion and increasing the competitiveness of the economy.

We are convinced that the social inclusion of all citizens of a country is a key condition for sustainable economic growth and political stability. Thus, the social inclusion process launched by the Serbian Government will be an important part of our joint work.

Social exclusion does not mean the same as poverty, it seeks to provide a broader view of deprivation and disadvantage. In fact, it is possible to be excluded without being poor. Exclusion may take the form of discrimination along a number of dimensions: gender, age, ethnicity, etc. Excluded social groups have a

reduced access to services and a limited participation in the labor market as well as in political life.

Nowadays, with the new situation after the global financial and economic crisis, the fight against poverty and social exclusion is more important than ever. Many vulnerable groups are strongly affected by the crisis and poverty rates are increasing again. Without clear policies to protect the marginalized people, the positive results of the past period of economic growth will be in vain.

What can and will be done in the project of supporting the social inclusion in Serbia? A) New policies will be developed in a participatory approach, utilizing expertise in government, universities and also in civil society. B) Broad consultations at central and at local level will be organized. C) Capacities will be built in the public administration to implement effective social inclusion strategies.

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## OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

**The Process of Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction**

Following the formal finalization of the PRS implementation process in March 2009, the Government has expressed willingness to promote and manage the transition process towards the social inclusion policies implemented at the level of EU as of 2000, when a framework was established to develop national strategies and coordinate policies between member states in areas of poverty and social exclusion.

The transition from the poverty reduction concept to the social inclusion concept has been driven by the commitment of the Government to finalize the European integration process and harmonize with EU policies aiming at a more effective social cohesion.

The Republic of Serbia has signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement and is to submit the request for EU membership. The Government is committed to meeting the requirements set by the EU at the Lisbon and Copenhagen summits regarding social inclusion, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as of the objectives set in the Poverty Reduction Strategy for Serbia. To achieve this, Serbia needs to update existing policies that only partially deal with social exclusion issues and develop a strategic framework that shall take into account the full scope of exclusion which is based on numerous social factors.

The Swiss Confederation and the Kingdom of Norway are providing support to the Government of the Republic of Serbia to enhance the social inclusion process in the Republic of Serbia. This support envisages the establishment of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration. The Unit shall be mandated to supervise the strengthening of the Government capacity to develop and implement social inclusion policies based on European good practices. Furthermore, the Unit shall provide support to the Deputy Prime Minister for European

Integration to coordinate, oversee and report on the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in the field of social inclusion.

The Team shall be supporting the building of capacities on the central level to coordinate and monitor social inclusion policies; strengthening line ministries to develop, plan and implement social inclusion policies; strengthening the statistical system to monitor social inclu-

The Government adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in 2003 aiming to reduce poverty by half in Serbia by 2010. Although the number of the poor population in the Republic of Serbia was reduced by half in the period 2002 – 2007, there are still more than 500,000 citizens living below the absolute poverty line.

In light of the newly-emerging global economic crisis, adequate measures should be implemented so as to prevent an increase in the number of the poor and to prevent that the vulnerable population close to the poverty line fall below the line.

sion indicators and poverty trends; raising capacities on the local level to plan and implement relevant policies; building ownership over the process; strengthening active participation of the country in regional cooperation and preparatory activities for the development of the Social Inclusion Memorandum.

The social inclusion process shall be based on the knowledge and good practices of European countries, as well as the experiences of the Republic of Serbia collected during the development and implementation of national policies, including the relevant documents such as the National Program of Integration of the Republic of Serbia into the European Union and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Contact: Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit  
tel: 011 311 4798, sipru@gov.rs

**Research of Effects of the Financial Crisis in Serbia**

The global economic crisis has strongly affected Serbia, in particular in terms of the labor market and the capacities of the vulnerable population to fight its effects. The World Bank (Poverty Reduction and Human Development Economics Teams of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region) provide support to the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit in the Office of the Deputy prime Minister for European Integration to conduct research on the impact of the financial crisis.

The most important aspect of the analysis, which shall be conducted in cooperation with the Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies (CLDS), is an additional analysis of the Labor Force Survey data conducted by the Republic Statistical office in April 2008, and the data from the financial crisis module appended to the same Labor Force Survey.

In cooperation with the Ipsos Strategic Marketing agency, an additional qualitative analysis has been conducted in order to acquire general information on the impact of the crisis on specific vulnerable groups, which is not readily available based on the existing statistical data.

The findings of the analysis shall be used to develop recommendations for overcoming the effects of the financial crisis, which shall be represented to a wider public between December 2009 – February 2010.

ERWIN H. HOFER, SWISS AMBASSADOR TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**Swiss Support to Social Inclusion in Serbia and Increasing the Competitiveness of the Economy**

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We are very pleased that Serbia considers Switzerland as one of the competent partners to assist the Government in the process of transformation of the former Poverty Reduction Strategy into the Social Inclusion Program. Switzerland has been contributing to the preparatory process of this new project since July 2009. Our support for the implementation phase will last until December 2012.

Serbia will remain in the future a priority country for Swiss Cooperation with the Western Balkans. The main thematic areas are: economic development, rule of law and democracy, education and energy efficiency. Switzerland is convinced that supporting Serbia in her European integration process will further strengthen our very dense bilateral relations.

**OPEN SOCIETY FUND:****Support to Projects to Alleviate Consequences of the Crisis**

The Open Society Fund announced a call for support to projects contributing to alleviation of the social consequences of the financial crisis.

The projects should contribute to preservation of the existing and development of the new educational, health and other similar projects for children and youth from families affected by the crisis.

Advantage will be given to programmes providing direct support to citizens in exercising their rights or overcoming crisis-induced programmes.

Projects offering different forms of professional trainings and re-qualification courses for new employees or population difficult to employ will be eligible.

The projects should contribute to preservation of the existing scope of activities and employment in small and medium-size enterprises, educational and social institutions and the media.

The right to apply will also be given to projects responding to the most pressing needs of the young as well as those ensuring preservation of intensity and quality of cultural offer and preservation of independent editorial policies in the media and cultural institutions.

The right to participate in the call will also be given to state agencies and institutions, local self-governments and local institutions, NGOs, trade unions, professional, business and other associations of citizens.

Contact: Open Society Fund  
Knežinje Ljubice 14, Belgrade, Tel: 011 30 25 800  
www.fosserbia.org

## The New Law on the Foundations of the Education System Adopted

The New Law on the Foundations of the Education System was adopted on August 31, 2009. The Law establishes the foundations of pre-school, elementary and secondary education. The Law aims to enhance three overall education aspects: equity, efficiency and quality of education, and shall contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of Serbian citizens in the long run.

The Law introduces new measures facilitating equal rights to education, accessibility, quality and efficiency of education, equal access to all levels of education and horizontal mobility within the education system in Serbia.

The Law envisages higher inclusion of marginalized groups and children with developmental disabilities in the education system. The enrolment procedure has been changed to allow for affirmative action. The Law intro-

duces the teaching assistant, who provides assistance and additional support to children and students in line with their specific needs, as well as to teachers, pre-school teachers and expert associates aiming to improve their work with children and students in need of additional learning support.

The new Law introduces new measures aiming to improve the quality of teaching, better education standards, the socializing role of school, better quality of teaching and management in the education system, new mechanisms of cooperation with parents and student parliaments and more effective supervision over the education system.

The Law sets modern objectives and outcomes in line with the vision of education as a foundation for a "knowledge-based society". The Law insists on general competencies for life in contemporary society and develop-

ment of knowledge and skills for 21st century, as well as on professional competencies in line with occupational standards and requirements of modern economy, science and technology.

Some of the vital challenges for the system are: insufficiently used human capital and potential of able-bodied population; excessive expenditures on account of social programs and social protection of the unemployed, in comparison to expenditures on account of human capital development and activation of able-bodied population; low employability of the population. As the impact of education policies is inevitably slow and shall be visible in the long run, the accumulated challenges should be tackled promptly.

Contact: Ministry of Education  
011/3636-489  
e-mail: kabinet@mp.gov.rs

### MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL POLICY Government has Adopted the Social Safety Plan

The Government has adopted the social safety plan aiming to protect the legal rights of employees, maintain jobs and facilitate dialogue between employees and employers.

Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković said that the Government made a decision to effect pension and disability insurance for employees of state and privatized enterprises, thus enabling them to overcome gaps in the length of service.

The package entails the settling of contributions on account of health insurance. The system of regulations are to be amended to enable a regular settlement of regulations.

The Government made a decision on providing one-off assistance for the most disadvantaged workers who did not receive wages for a longer period of time, as well as on reprogramming electricity debts.

The Minister of Labor and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić said that the adopted plan shall enable workers to connect the length of service for the period between January 1, 2004 and June 30, 2009.

Ljajić said that the measure relating to health insurance for employees whose contributions were not settled would enable them to certify the health care booklet in 2009 which would call for additional RSD 40 million.

He said that one-off assistance of RSD 5,000 shall be provided to workers who did not receive their salary for at least three months, and that there would be relief for paying electricity bills.

Contact: Government of the Republic of Serbia  
tel: 011 3617 719, [www.srbija.gov.rs](http://www.srbija.gov.rs)  
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy  
tel: 011 3112 916, [www.minrzs.gov.rs](http://www.minrzs.gov.rs)

### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF SERBIA: "Metalac" and "Obuća Pavle" Winners of the CSR Award

The company "Metalac" from Gornji Milanovac is a winner of the 2008 National Award for Corporate Social Responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia in the category of large companies. Obuća Pavle from Bela Palanka received the award in the category of small and medium-size companies.

"Metalac" was awarded for the project of purification of technological waste waters, while Obuća Pavle received it for its project "Faster to a Job by Stepping in Pavle Footware".

Shortlisted for the award were also RTV B92, Soko Štark, Meser tehnogas. All finalists received certificates and the first three companies received a sculpture and a possibility to use the CSR logo on all their products.

Contact: Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, Belgrade  
Email: kabinet@pks.rs, [www.pks.rs](http://www.pks.rs)

### SERBIA FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND EXPORT PROMOTION AGENCY Call for Cash Grants

Serbia Foreign Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SIEPA) announced a second public call for cash grants in 2009 for financing activities contributing to exports increase.

Local companies dealing with production of finished and semi-finished products or provision of software development, design or planning for exports are eligible to apply.

The SIEPA grants fund totals RSD 26,000,000 and the companies may apply for funding of one or more activities. Individual activities are funded up to a maximum RSD 200,000 except for testing, certification and re-certification of products and quality management systems and individual participation on international commercial fairs abroad. A single company may be eligible for a grant up to RSD 1 million.

The companies will have the right to compensation of up to 50% of the costs of activities.

Contact: Serbia Foreign Investment and Exports Promotion Agency (SIEPA)  
Tel: 011 3398 550, [www.siepa.gov.rs/site/sr/home](http://www.siepa.gov.rs/site/sr/home)

### USAID: Cooperation Agreements with 14 Municipalities

USAID Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Programme (SCOPEs) signed Agreements on Cooperation with 14 municipalities with the aim of improving the emergency situation management system as well as for strengthening youth entrepreneurship.

Agreements were signed with the municipalities of Babušnica, Bela Palanka, Čičevac, Dimitrovgrad, Gadžin Han, Knjaževac, Niš municipalities of Pantelej and Palilula, Paraćin, Piro, Surdulica, Trstenik, Varvarin and Žitorađa.

Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Programme aims to support development of sustainable and systematic access to emergency management at a local level and assists municipalities in raising the level of preparedness for emergency response.

So far more than 670 representatives of emergency management teams from 50 municipalities completed the training in the disciplines such as methodology of planning, vulnerability assessment and risk management.

USAIDs Serbia Contingency Planning and Economic Security Programme targets young people aged 15-30 with a view to advancing their skills and knowledge and making it easier for them to find employment or be more successful as owners of their own companies.

Many high school and university students in Serbia are unable to acquire practical skills required by the labour market in regular schooling and thus the USAID SCOPEs enables them to acquire the knowledge requested by employers through the program Junior Achievement and other educational programmes.

80 Serbian municipalities are planned to take part in the programme.  
Contact: US Agency for International Development, Belgrade  
<http://serbia.usaid.gov>

## “Strengthening Local Governments in Serbia”

Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and the Council of Europe signed the Memorandum of Cooperation in October on the implementation of the program entitled “Strengthening Local Governments in Serbia, Phase II”.

The Memorandum was signed by Minister for Public Administration and Local Government Milan Marković, State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance Slobodan Ilić, President of the SCTM Nenad Milenković and Director of Democratic Institutions at the Council of Europe Hilderik Shapseld.

The main goals of the second phase of the Project are the consolidation of the existing institutional and legal framework, promotion of fiscal decentralization, coordination of the decentralization strategy and stronger participation of citizens at the local level. The implementation of the program worth EUR 2.2 million was launched in April and shall continue in the following three years.

Special Representative of the Council of Europe in Serbia Constantin Yerocestopoulos said since 2001, when the Council of Europe opened their Belgrade office, EUR 12 million have been invested in various programmes. Yerocestopoulos welcomed Serbia’s ratification of the European Charter on Local Self-Government.

Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government Milan Marković said that a new law on local elections is being prepared, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and other partners, as well as laws on the State Election Commission and electorate list.

State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance Slobodan Ilić said that the Government plans to adopt laws on public property and amendments to the Law on Public Debt by the end of the year, adding that a draft law on restitution is also being prepared together with the Council of Europe.

## 143 Projects for 40 Most Vulnerable Serbian Municipalities

The Sustainable Development Office and the National Investments Plan have supported the implementation of 143 projects in 40 poorest municipalities with RSD 2 billion.

On the occasion of completion of the first phase of the program “Development of Infrastructure in 40 Most Underdeveloped Municipalities in Serbia” Verica Kalanović, Minister for NIP said that almost 800,000 citizens live in these municipalities, 46% of whom drink water from wells that are not tested, 85% of them do not have sewage and almost 70% of the roads in these municipalities are inadequate.

The first phase provided for the analysis of the current situation and the aim is to create conditions for balanced regional development through the project implementation. The ratio between the most developed and most underdeveloped municipalities is 1:15.

105 projects deal with improvement of communal and road infrastructure. New roads, water supply and sewage systems, schools, kindergartens etc will be built in the most underdeveloped municipalities.

The second phase of the programme entailing project implementation started in April. Of 143 projects, 107 action plans were developed. 67 thereof were adopted.

The third phase will be completed by end year when the achieved positive impact will be taken stock of.

The municipalities for the project were selected according to the data of the Republic Statistics Office and include: Babušnica, Bela Palanka, Blace, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Krupanj, Plandište, Tutin and others.

Contact: Ministry for National Investment Plan, tel: 011 3617 583  
[www.mnip.gov.rs](http://www.mnip.gov.rs)

## Employment for 2000 Workers in the Next Three Years

The German company Leoni signed an Agreement with the Privatization Agency on purchase of the factory Fiaz from Prokuplje which is undergoing liquidation. EUR 15 million investment and employment of 2000 workers over the next three years is planned. The Government of Serbia shall provide incentives amounting to EUR 5000 per newly employed worker, through the Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency.

One of the major obstacles during the negotiations was that the location is contaminated with asbestos, a consequence of obsolete production technology of the factory in Prokuplje. USAID Municipality Economic Development Support Program helped resolve this environmental protection problem through providing expert and technical support and recommendations on the basis of which the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Urban Planning invested some EUR 300,000 into the process of terrain decontamination.

Contact: MEGA, The Urban Institute Serbia, Tel: 011 2071 954  
Leoni Wiring Systems Southeast, Prokuplje, [www.leoni.com](http://www.leoni.com)  
US Agency for International Development (USAID), <http://www.usaid.gov>  
Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SIEPA)  
Tel: 011 3398 550, [www.siepa.gov.rs/site/sr/home](http://www.siepa.gov.rs/site/sr/home)

## Italian Loan for Small and Medium-Size Enterprises In Serbia

Diana Dragutinović, Minister of Finance and Amando Varrichio, Ambassador of Italy in Serbia signed a EUR 30 million Loan Agreement to be used for small, medium-size and communal enterprises in Serbia.

The Agreement is related to implementation of the program “Loan for assistance to small and medium-size enterprises through national banking sector and support to local development through public communal companies”

The aim of the loan is promotion of private sector development in Serbia and improvement of the quality of public communal companies’ services. The option of the loan is 13 years, repayment period is 8 years with a 5-year grace period and the interest rate amounts to 0.35%.

The loans to businesses will be approved through four commercial banks: Komercijalna banka, UniCredit, Banka Intesa and Privredna banka. The interest rate is 4.5% and the loans will range from RSD 50,000 – 1 million for small and medium-size enterprises and from RSD 150,000 – 2 million for public utility companies.

This loan was approved after the success of the loan Italy earlier approved to Serbia in 2004 that amounted to EUR 33.25 million. With over EUR 200 million that Italy approved to Serbia since 2000, Italy is one of the top donor countries.

Contact: Ministry of Finance, Tel: 011 3614-007  
[www.mfin.gov.rs](http://www.mfin.gov.rs)

## The First 100 Superfluous Regulations Abolished

The Government of Serbia abolished the first 100 unnecessary regulations obstructing business activities of industry.

The process of drafting a list of regulations in Serbia began in February 2009. A total of 6000 regulations were listed at the republican level in addition to 3300 international regulations, laws, by-laws, decrees and rulebooks. Of these some 2000 regulations affect the economy and their analysis is ongoing.

Following collection of proposals, recommendations will be drawn up that the Government of Serbia should adopt by 15 December in line with the Strategy of Regulatory Reform.

The objective of the Strategy is to reduce by minimum 25% the operating costs in the economy. So far, some 350 regulations were identified which have no justification and which should be cancelled.

At the initiative of the Unit for Implementation of Comprehensive Reform of Regulations, the Government of Serbia adopted a conclusion that, as of 01 January 2010, the companies will be submitting financial reports to the Agency for Register of Companies only.

The representatives of industry have submitted more than 500 proposals for revocation of regulation impeding their business activities and creating unnecessary costs. The Unit for Implementation of Comprehensive Reform of Regulations employs 18 lawyers and economists. The drafting of the list of regulations and analysis of their justification involved some 300 civil servants and more than 2000 businessmen.

Contact: Comprehensive Reform of Regulations  
Tel: 011 2855 042, Email: [office@srp.gov.rs](mailto:office@srp.gov.rs), [www.srp.gov.rs](http://www.srp.gov.rs)

## District Development Agency Jug Founded

A District Development Agency Jug was founded in Niš. Twenty founders: eleven municipalities from the territory of Nišava, Pirot and Toplice districts, three companies and six civil society organizations signed a contract on establishment of the first development agency in line with the new Law on Regional Development of the Republic of Serbia.

The aim of the Agency Jug is to support sustainable development of Nišava, Pirot and Toplice districts, contribute to strengthening of local economies and increase of foreign investments, ensure support to EU integrations through strengthening of local institutions and companies and to establish and improve cooperation with similar institutions from Serbia, the region or the European Union.

The city of Niš provided business space to the District Development Agency Jug where the seat of the agency will be with offices in Toplice and Pirot districts.

## Youth Employment Fund

The activities of the Youth Employment Fund were launched in October 2009 within the project entitled Support for National Efforts to Promote Youth Employment and Migration Management. The budget of the Fund totals RSD 3.8 million and shall be allocated for training and employment of youth without qualifications, persons with disabilities, young Roma, returnees in the readmission process, refugees and displaced persons.

The program is implemented by four United Nations agencies (International Labor Organization, UN Development Program, UN Children's Fund and International Organization for Migration) in cooperation with national and local partners.

At the press conference on the launch of the program, Assistant Minister of Economy and Regional Development in charge of employment Ljiljana Dzuver said that 3,000 youth below 30 shall be given an opportunity to find jobs through training, subsidized contributions, probation and self-employment. The UN Resident Coordinator William Infante said on this occasion that the Fund was established in the eve of the UN Week, which was dedicated this year to youth in the sense of supporting create a new generation of leaders who shall contribute to the development of Serbia and its future.

The Director of the Fund Danica Vasiljević said that the candidates shall, during three to six months of training, receive RSD 9,360 per month. She added that employers shall also have benefits and that self-employing youth shall receive RSD 130,000, while advantage shall be given to groups.

The program shall be implemented in municipalities of three regions – South Bačka, Belgrade and Pčinj regions and shall provide support to young unemployed persons. Additional funds of the Italian Government and the Fund for Open Society shall enable the involvement of youth from five other regions, with administrative centers in Subotica, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Požarevac and Novi Pazar.

The Ambassador of Spain in Belgrade Ignacio de Palacio Espagna commended the efforts of the Government of Serbia in the youth employment process, and said that professional orientation is an important instrument in the process.

The program is financed by the MCR Realization Fund of the Government of Spain and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, totaling RSD 8 million.

### SEVERANCE TO A JOB

## More than 2000 Persons Employed

More than 2000 persons dismissed as technological surplus in the transition period, obtained new jobs through the programme "Severance to a Job" over the past two and a half years.

The Programme "Severance to a job" was launched in 2007 with a view to supporting re-employment of employees laid off during the transition period either as technological surplus or through payment of severance packages totaling up to EUR 3,000. It was developed by the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the UN Development Programme.

The funds for the project were provided by the Austrian Development Agency and the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The project was jointly implemented by the National Employment Service and the UNDP project team who provided expert assistance.

The idea was for the surplus employees to invest a part of their severance packages, while other funds were ensured from the budget of the project and amount to RSD 130,000 for self-employment, RSD 80,000 for new employment and RSD 100,000 for employees whose last employment contract ended through liquidation of a company.

The project was most successful in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Užice, Vranje, Niš and Kruševac.

Contact: Ministry of Economy and Regional Development  
[www.merr.gov.rs](http://www.merr.gov.rs)

UNDP, [www.undp.org.rs](http://www.undp.org.rs)

## Sixth Annual Assembly of the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations

The Sixth Annual Assembly of the Federation of Nongovernmental Organizations (FENS) took place on October 17 and 18 in Belgrade. On this occasion the co-chairman of FENS, Miljenko Dereta, on behalf of FENS presented with commendations Božidar Đelić, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Milan Marković, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, and the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction for improvement of cooperation between the governmental and nongovernmental sectors, as well as contribution in designing the Law on Associations.

"In the budget for 2010 are foreseen funds for forming an office for relations between the Government and civil sector", said Božidar Đelić, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration. The new era in cooperation between the civil sector and the State is also proved by passing this summer the Law on Associations, which was waited for nine years.

"The new law on Associations, new method of financing the nongovernmental sector and the future Law on Funds and Endowments (prepared by the Ministry of Culture) are moments that will enable better joint work", added Đe-

lić. He also clarified that the new method of arranging State financing of NGOs will set transparent criteria for acquisition of funds, in which way, too, it will be clear what amount of money is allocated to the civil sector and to what organizations exactly. Đelić remarked that from EU pre-accession funds only for the civil sector will be allocated two to five percents.

Speaking about the role of civil society, Đelić said that it is "huge", not only because of the control of Government's activities but also because it can more easily reach needs of every individual and subsequently channel them to the competent bodies. The importance of the civil sector has been increasing because today, unlike in 1990s, a large number of citizens, establishment and elite share the same values.

The Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Milan Marković, spoke highly of cooperation with the civil sector in the course of many-year work on the Law on Associations. He stated that through the Law on Associations, which he evaluated as "truly exceptionally good", citizens obtained the right framework for association and the starting point for cooperation with the Government of Serbia.

### EUROPEAN MOVEMENT IN SERBIA: The Portal

## "Civil Society of Serbia Proposes" Launched

The European Movement in Serbia launched an internet portal "Civil Society of Serbia Proposes". The portal ([www.cdspredlaze.org.rs](http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs)) aims to enable as many as possible civil society organisations (CSOs) to contribute to the reforms processes by prioritizing problems in their surroundings and proposing solutions thereto with a view to accelerating the process of Serbia's integration into the EU.

"Civil Society of Serbia Proposes" is part of a bigger project entitled "Local Government and Civil Society in the Process of Programming and Designing the EU Pre-Accession Assistance to Serbia 2009-2013".

The project was developed by the European Movement in Serbia and supported by the Institute for Sustainable Communities within the framework of the program Initiative of Civil Society Public Advocacy.

Contact: European Movement in Serbia, [www.emins.org](http://www.emins.org), [www.cdspredlaze.org.rs](http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs)  
Institute for Sustainable Communities, <http://www.iscserbia.org/serbian>

### INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

## Call for Project Proposals

The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) called on the civil society organizations (CSO) to submit project proposals in three areas: accountability and transparency of authorities, social and economic rights and environmental protection.

The aim of the ISC call for proposals is to support the work of CSOs dealing with problems of citizens, support creative activities, promote CSOs not based in Belgrade to take part in the call, support initiatives entailing strong citizenship participation, bridge the gap between the reform policies at the national level and problems of citizens at the local level.

ISC is implementing a five-year programme, the value of which is USD 14 million. The aim thereof is capacity building of the civil society organisations to influence public life, supervision of the executive and conducting public advocacy campaigns on a series of reform issues.

The Initiative of Public Advocacy of Civil Society (CSAI) helps the citizens take responsibility for shaping the society by increasing their participation in all aspects of public life.

The project is implemented thanks to the support of the American people through the program of the USAID.

Contact: Institute for Sustainable Communities

Phone: 011 3830 960, email: [isc@iscserbia.org](mailto:isc@iscserbia.org), <http://www.iscserbia.org/serbian>

US Agency for International Development (USAID), Belgrade

Tel: 011 306 4675, <http://serbia.usaid.gov>

**MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT****Competition for Start-Up Loans**

The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, Development Fund and the Agency for SME Development and Entrepreneurship announced a competition for mortgage-free loans for beginners and for start-up loans for entrepreneurs. RSD 4 billion have been earmarked.

The advantage will be given to entrepreneurs under 25 who have attended self-employment trainings and the companies the founders of which are under 40.

The lowest mortgage-free loan approved amounts to RSD 500,000 and the highest RSD 1,3 million, with the 1% annual interest rate and repayment period of 3-5 years with one year grace period.

The maximum loans for companies amounted to RSD 2,5 million and they required mortgage in the same value as the loan. The assessment is that these loans could generate 9000 new jobs.

3783 companies and 12,365 employees were employed through loans totalling RSD 4.7 billion approved in the past three years.

Start-up loans are one of anti-recession measures implemented by the Government of Serbia.

Contact: Ministry of Economy and Regional Development

[www.merr.gov.rs](http://www.merr.gov.rs)

Fund for Development of the Republic of Serbia

[www.fondzarazvoj.gov.rs](http://www.fondzarazvoj.gov.rs)

Agency for SME and Entrepreneurship Development

[www.sme.gov.rs](http://www.sme.gov.rs)

**SKGO: Local Self-Government Fair**

The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SKGO) and the Municipality of New Belgrade organized the Local Self-Government Fair from November 3-5, 2009 at the Sport Hall in New Belgrade.

The Fair was an opportunity to present activities of local self-governments in the Republic of Serbia to domestic and foreign companies – potential investors, as well as donor organizations and other guests from the country and from abroad. Besides presenting their economic and organizational potential, towns and municipalities had the opportunity to present good practices in the work of local authorities. In the scope of the event were organized round tables, panels and thematic events that made possible exchange of opinions, making suggestions and setting forth concrete initiatives to representatives of ministries of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities and donor organizations active in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

The City of Belgrade was also presented at the Fair, and the Agency for Cooperation with Nongovernmental Organizations and European Harmonization took part in the presentation as well.

**MIRKO CVETKOVIĆ, PRIME MINISTER OF SERBIA**

**RSD 340 Million for Soup Kitchens**

Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković has launched an initiative aiming to resolve the issue of soup kitchen operations. He suggested that funds be allocated for the Red Cross totaling RSD 340 million per annum, as well as additional funds as subsidies for all parties donating food to the Red Cross, who are VAT payers. Thus the state shall subsidize the VAT payment for entities donating food to soup kitchens.

“We must not allow that soup kitchens are left without meals for the most underprivileged citizens”, said Prime Minister Cvetković who held a meeting in November with Minister of Labor and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić and Minister of Finance Diana Dragutinović and instructed the ministries to allocate additional budget funds in 2010 to provide necessary food products for soup kitchen beneficiaries.

There are 68 soup kitchens operational in Serbia in the organization of the Red Cross, including Belgrade which provides funds from its budget for the soup kitchens. Soup kitchens have 30,230 beneficiaries and 5,900 more in Belgrade, accounting for 36,130 beneficiaries in total.

**Working Center “Little Bees” in the Elderly Institute**

Assistant Minister of Labor and Social Policy Vladimir Pešić opened the production-working center in the “Little Bees” Kragujevac Care Institute for Adults, first of its kind in Serbia.

Indicating that the Ministry of Labor shall be assisting other similar institutes in Serbia, which are accommodating some 3,000 beneficiaries, to open production-working centers, Pešić said that the facility in Kragujevac is worth RSD six million, a half of which was provided by the Ministry.

The Director of the Kragujevac institute Suzana Perović said that there are four workshops – locksmith, joinery, cardboard and upholstery – in the center.

She added that the Institute would be opening an educational center for its beneficiaries next year which should, in line with the adopted Law on Employment of Persons with Disabilities, enable them to get a job.

**UNHCR: USD 700,000 Assistance to Local Action Plans**

12 Serbian municipalities received support amounting to USD 700,000 within the framework of the programme “Support to Local Action Plans”.

The funds are awarded to the municipalities of Alibunar, Zaječar, Kragujevac, Kruševac, Kula, Medveđa, Nova Crnja, New Belgrade, Pančevo, Pečinci, Ruma and Smederevo and will be spent for purchase of 37 village houses, procurement of 59 building material kits, 17 agricultural development programmes and 34 vocational training and capacity building projects. The criteria for awards included a mandatory minimum 5% participation of the local authorities.

Contact: UNHCR Office in Belgrade, [www.unhcr.org.rs](http://www.unhcr.org.rs)

**EC AND UNHCR: Regional Support to Marginalized Communities**

The second phase of the regional project of the European Commission and UNHCR “Social Inclusion: Regional Support to Marginalized Communities” was launched in Serbia in October 2009 and it will last 18 months. The European Commission and UNHCR have earmarked a total of EUR 352,000 for the implementation of this phase of the project.

This time the focus will be on eight municipalities in Belgrade, and on awareness raising on the significance of civil registration and personal documents in ten municipalities throughout Serbia that were not included in the first phase of the project “Social Inclusion and Access to Human Rights of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in the Western Balkans”.

The first phase of the project lasted from February until the end of July 2009. During that phase, PRAXIS mobile teams have visited 76 Roma settlements in 20 Serbian municipalities. As result, more than 1,100 people received approximately 2,300 personal documents. PRAXIS also initiated 198 subsequent registration procedures and request for subsequent registration into birth registries for 160 persons of which 100 procedures were successfully completed by end September, while 85 procedures are ongoing.

In addition to Serbia, the project is implemented also in BiH, Montenegro, Kosovo, Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Contact: UNHCR Office in Belgrade, [www.unhcr.org.rs](http://www.unhcr.org.rs)

European Commission in Serbia, [www.delscg.ec.europa.eu](http://www.delscg.ec.europa.eu)

PRAXIS, Tel: 011 3444 486, [www.praxis.org.rs](http://www.praxis.org.rs)

**Start-Up Centre in Zvezdara Opened**

The Start-Up Centre for citizens of the Belgrade Municipality of Zvezdara who wish to start-up their own business or are beginners in business operations, has started to work in the premises of the Municipality of Zvezdara.

The Centre renders all kinds of information and professional assistance, as well as training for improvement of knowledge and skills necessary for business.

Contact: Municipality of Zvezdara, [www.zvezdara.org.rs](http://www.zvezdara.org.rs)

**Identification, Instruction and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking**

NGO ATINA, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Serbia, organized a two-day seminar on Mount Zlatar on “Setting Mechanism for Identification, Instruction and Protection of Human Trafficking Victims” in September 2009.

The aim of the seminar was to create local mechanisms for instructing victims of human trafficking, as well as for creating local campaigns, for the purpose of raising awareness of the problem and mobilization of all relevant institutions and citizens in suppressing human trafficking.

At the seminar part took representatives of the Combat against human trafficking, Ministry of Internal Affairs, representatives of the judiciary, Public Prosecutor’s Office, centres for social work, secondary schools, municipal administration, Police administration, and nongovernmental sector from Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Tutin, Prijepolje, Priboj and Nova Varoš.

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY  
AND WATER MANAGEMENT****The National Assembly  
of Serbia adopted 15 Laws  
Related to Agriculture**

The National Assembly of Serbia adopted 15 laws related to agriculture that regulate the area as a whole.

The adopted are the Law on Food Safety, Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, Law on Public Warehouses, Law on Animal Husbandry, Law on Plants Health, Law on Means for the Protection of Plants, Law on Means for Nutrition of Plants and Soil Improvers, Law on Fruit Brandy, Law on Wine, Law on Ethanol, Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Forest Reproductive Material, Law on Genetically Modified Organisms, Law on the Protection of Plant Varieties Improvers, Changes and Amendments to the Law on Agricultural Land.

Adoption of this Law will provide farmers with the opportunity to make their own choice when to sell their goods, and they will be able to obtain short-term credits by using their goods as collateral.

The Law on Agriculture and Rural Development is the overarching law for the entire agriculture – aims of agriculture policy, types of incentives, estate registry, recording and reporting in agriculture, integrated agricultural information system.

Laws related to the agricultural area were proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. These laws were designed by harmonizing the needs of producers with the needs of harmonization of our legal system with the European legislation.

Contact: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Tel: 011 2607 960  
e-mail: [office@minpolj.gov.rs](mailto:office@minpolj.gov.rs)  
[www.minpolj.sr.gov.yu](http://www.minpolj.sr.gov.yu)

**MINISTRY OF ECONOMY:  
Crediting Rural Tourism**

The Ministry of Economy and Regional Development granted six contracts on credit to rural households in the total amount of RSD 53.5 million, intended for development of accommodation and catering capacities.

Credits were granted for building and reconstruction of rural households in Arandjelovac, Leskovac, Kalna, Crni Vrh (Black Summit), Bački Petrovac and Belgrade.

The Decree stipulates the minimum credit amount to be two million Dinars, except for rural households, where the census is lower and amounts to RSD 500,000. The condition is own participation in the project with a minimum of 50 percent.

The Government granted these credits for the period of five years, one year grace period and interest rate of one percent per year.

**GOVERNMENT OF SERBIA: Decrees  
on the Use of Incentives**

The Government of Serbia has adopted five decrees on the use of incentives in 2009, proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management.

Adopted were decrees on the use of incentives for increasing production and parent plantations of strawberries, increasing production and parent plantations of fruits, wine grape and hops, subsidies to producers of agricultural and food stuff, support to rural development through investment in broadening and improvement of economic activities of rural population, and the Decree on Changes and Amendments to the Decree on Conditions and Method of the Use of Means for Regression of Raw Materials for Field and Vegetable Crops Production.

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER MANAGEMENT****“Sustainable Tourism in the Function  
of Rural Development” Signed**

The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Saša Dragin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Regional Development, Mladan Dinkić, UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia, and Ambassador of Spain, Inigo de Palacio Espana, signed a joint programme document “Sustainable Tourism in the Function of Rural Development”.

On the occasion of the document signing, Dragin said that the project “Sustainable Tourism in the Function of Rural Development” would improve rural tourism in the area of South Banat, Lower Danube Area, Central Serbia and Eastern Serbia, but at the national level as well.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management recognized rural tourism as one of the rural economy activities that will be supported through rural development programmes in the coming period as well, in the view of the development of rural areas and improvement of the life quality in villages.

The project implementation should initiate this year and last till April 2012.

National partners in this project are the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the Tourist Organization of Serbia. Besides, the programme will be implemented in partnership with other key actors, among which the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Education, Chamber of Commerce of Serbia and the Institute for the Protection of Nature.

The project “Sustainable Tourism in the Function of Rural Development” is financed with resources from a special Spanish Fund for Achievement of the Millennium Development Aims, made available to the Government of Serbia in cooperation with the UN system.

This is the third project in Serbia to be implemented owing to this new aspect of multilateral cooperation.

Contact: Embassy of Spain

<http://www.maec.es/Subwebs/Embajadas/belgrado/se/home/Paginas/Home.aspx>

Tourist Organization of Serbia:

[www.serbia-tourism.org](http://www.serbia-tourism.org)

**Test Census of Agriculture**

A Test Census of Agriculture will be conducted from December 1 to 15, 2009, and should serve as the basis for selection of the most appropriate methodological and organizational solutions for conducting the regular Census of Agriculture.

The Census of Agriculture planned for 2011 will be the base for providing information important for creation of agricultural policy, as well as for the EU accession process.

On its path to the EU accession, agriculture of Serbia is getting adjusted to a number of regulations and standards prescribed by EU, encompassed by a set of laws, rules and procedures. For the purpose of monitoring the process of adjustment and of evaluating the level of harmonization, it is necessary to introduce numerous statistical indicators in the agricultural statistics. The prerequisite for a successful evaluation of adjustment is to conduct an overall Census of Agriculture.

The last comprehensive Census of Agriculture was conducted in 1960.

The Census data will enable a review of the state of affairs in agriculture at the national, local and household levels, which will be harmonized with international standards and will serve, together with the Census of Agriculture, as the cornerstone of the agricultural statistics system.

The Census of Agriculture is prepared, organized and conducted by the Republic Statistical Office, with the necessary assistance by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Contact: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Tel: 011 2412 922

[www.stat.gov.rs](http://www.stat.gov.rs)

**2.6 Million Euro Loan to Agriculture**

A total of EUR 2,615,981.84 was approved in long-term loans subsidized by the Ministry of Agriculture at the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and within the framework of credit support to this sector.

Most of the long-term loans thus far were approved by ProCredit Bank AD Belgrade (65) amounting to EUR 2,048,284.84. Additional five long-term loans were approved by Hypo Alpe Adria Bank in the amount of EUR 243,017.00 and Meridian Bank-Credit Agricole (one loan) in the amount of EUR 57.230.00.

With respect to short-term loans, to date eight banks approved 1206 loans totalling RSD 3336,306,645.65. Agricultural loans subsidized by the Ministry of Agriculture were approved by NLB Bank (241 loans), Hypo Alpe Adria Bank (108), Credo Bank (10), Banca Intesa (221), Privredna Banka Pančevo AD (3), Univerzal Banka AD (84), AIK Banka AD Niš (7) and Komercijalna banka AD Beograd (532).

Short-term loans are approved for purchase of equipment and the loan beneficiaries are registered farms – physical persons. The total approved proceeds for these purposes exceed RSD 300 million.

Contact: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Tel: 011 2607 960, [www.minpolj.sr.gov.yu](http://www.minpolj.sr.gov.yu)

## SWIFT: Sustainable Waste Management Initiative

The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided funds for the implementation of projects within the SWIFT program – Sustainable Waste Management Initiative for a Healthier Tomorrow, based on a comprehensive and sustainable approach which shall contribute to social inclusion and better health care of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Belgrade. SWIFT is a comprehensive and multilayered project involving Government and non-government to convert current informal Roma waste “scavenging” into an effective and credible means of income whilst in parallel directly tackling health and human rights issues.

The project is implemented by WHO as managing organization, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNOPS. The project comprises three inter-linked components: healthcare implemented by WHO, economic implemented by UNOPS and social inclusion implemented by UNOPS. The project shall be financed by the Kingdom of Norway in the course of two years.

Project activities include: recycling center launch (SWIFT center), integration of currently informal waste recycling in regional waste management strategies, improving efficiency, management and organizational capacities of collectors, better access to health care and improved knowledge of health care, better safety at work, mobilization of the Roma community and relevant actors to improve social inclusion.

## Roma Cooperative of Secondary Raw Material Collectors

At the initiative of several Roma organizations and the Programme for Local Economic Development in the Balkans (LEDIB), financed by the Government of Denmark, in Niš was formed the Association of Secondary Raw Material Collectors.

The main aim of the Association is to improve collection, purchase and sale of raw materials.

With the support by LEDIB was formed an Office, whose task is to identify the number of Roma in this business, the state of affairs and the needs and resources of funds.

It will also propose a problem resolution in this field, as well as the status of the collectors.

The solution should contribute to the transfer of raw material collectors from the “grey zone” into the legal and organized business operations.

According to the assessment made by Roma organizations, as many as some 70 percent of active Roma population is in the secondary raw material collection business, mainly in the Central Serbia.

It is estimated that in Niš some 7,000 out of 10,000 active Roma population hardly make ends meet by collecting secondary waste.

Contact: Programme of Local Economic Development in the Balkans (LEDIB)  
Tel: 018 292 316, [www.ledib.org](http://www.ledib.org)

## Awards “Success Flower for a Dragon Woman” Presented

Awards of the Association of Business Women “Success Flower for a Dragon Woman” were for the third time presented to the most successful women entrepreneurs.

In one of the two main categories, with the award for the “most European” women’s company were presented Prof. Dr Snežana Đorđević, owner of the enterprise “Agrounik” dealing with researches in the field of biotechnical sciences, and Danka Božić Isaković, owner of the company “Polymit-B”, domestic producer of innovative, environment-friendly construction items.

Winners of the award for the best model of women’s employment are Branislava Gajić, founder of the on-line employment website “Infostud”, and Ana Jovanović, co-owner of the company “Krojač” (Tailor) and author of the project “Souvenirs of Serbia”, domestic internet souvenir shop.

Award for the most successful and most creative self-employment concept was presented to Angela Pinter, owner of the independent craft shop “Angie”, and to Bosa Milanović, owner of the confectionery company “Dela Bosa”.

Award for the Corporate Social Responsibility was given to Vera Scepanovic, owner of the enterprise “Bag”. Maruška Toplavić, owner of the Studio Maruška was awarded for development of a quality product of Serbia, while the editor of “Ekonometar” and “Business Magazine”, Radojka Nikolić, was presented with an acknowledgement for media promotion of women’s entrepreneurship.

Special award “Golden Flower” was given to Ksenija Fekete Cvetković, owner of the foreign trade enterprise “Al Grosso”.

The European Commission, in the year in which it marks the Global Week of Entrepreneurship, included the “Success Flower for a Dragon Woman” into its official programme. The “Success Flower for a Dragon Woman” was also joined by BAS Programme of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Contact: Association of Business Women, tel: 011 2776 801, [www.poslovnezene.org.rs](http://www.poslovnezene.org.rs)

## COMPETITION “DOBROTA’: Improvement of the Life of the Elderly

The State Lottery of Serbia (DLS), in cooperation with the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF) announced two competitions in the scope of the donation programme “Dobrota” (Goodness).

The aim of the first competition is improvement of life conditions of children and youth accommodated in centres for children without parental care in Serbia by allocating financial resources (up to RSD 300,000) to nonprofit organizations that are active in the local community in which there exists a centre for children without parental care. Beneficiaries of the centres should be included in activities.

The aim of the second competition is to contribute to improvement of the position and qual-

ity of life of elderly by initiating activities for encouragement of their active participation in social and cultural life, through allocation of donations to the maximum amount of RSD 500,000 to local nonprofit organizations.

The competition is intended for elderly over 65 years of age, and the priority will be given to projects related to especially vulnerable groups of old people (sick persons, disabled persons, single old people’s households) in remote outlying settlements and rural areas not encompassed or partially encompassed by some aspect of programmes or services rendered to elderly.

Contact: State Lottery of Serbia  
Tel: 011 2029 292, [www.lutrija.rs](http://www.lutrija.rs)  
BCIF, e-mail: [office@bcif.org](mailto:office@bcif.org), [www.bcif.org](http://www.bcif.org)

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: VIRTUS Award

The Balkan Community Initiatives Fund has announced competition for the VIRTUS Award for corporate philanthropy. The award is given to companies and enterprises that came into the picture in the course of 2009 by supporting a social or nonprofit action or organization.

The VIRTUS Award for 2009 is given in four main and two special categories: Main Award for contribution at the national level, Award for contribution to the local community in which the company carries out its business operations, Award to a small and medium-sized enterprise and Award for support to the most innovative project of the year.

The Award for long-term partnership between the business and nonprofit sectors and Special Award for contribution of media are special acknowledgments.

In competition could participate all domestic and foreign companies, public and state-owned small and medium-sized enterprises, media houses, as well as corporate funds and foundations, with the exception of nonprofit organizations and State institutions.

VIRTUS has been awarded since 2007, and the aim of the award is to promote and encourage corporate philanthropy as an element of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of companies in Serbia.

The Award is organized by the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF), with the support by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Institute for Sustainable Communities.

Contact: Balkan Community Initiatives Fund,  
[www.bcif.org](http://www.bcif.org)  
US Agency for International Development  
<http://serbia.usaid.gov>

## Children and Poverty

The international conference “Children and Poverty: Global Context, National Priorities and Local Solutions” was held in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia in mid-October. It was organized by Taiex Department of the European Commission and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with the UNICEF Office and National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

The impact of economic crisis consequences on children in Serbia was discussed at the conference, as well as different modalities and measures taken in the scope of the European Integration Process, for the purpose of preventing increase in poverty of children. Slavica Đukić-Dejanović, President of the National Assembly and chairwoman of the Assembly Working Group for the Rights of Children, in her introductory speech pointed out our obligation to protect children from poverty and social exclusion, especially in difficult times of economic crisis; she also said that all institutions and the State must work together on improvement of the social protection and social inclusion of children.

During the conference achievements in the scope of the National Plan for Children, were presented as well as findings of the Plan analysis that was carried out for the purpose of improving this strategic document for children.

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