



Government of the
Republic of Serbia

MARCH 2011

6th 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.

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ŽARKO OBRADOVIĆ, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education – A Key Resource for Socio-Economic Development

Serbia's strategic priority is accession to the European Union. To achieve this aim, reforms are necessary to facilitate our country's accelerated socio-economic development, improvement of social status of all groups in society, families and individuals. Knowledge and education are key resources for the achievement of this task. To develop and implement new technologies and thus increase employment, we need to have the requisite knowledge and to improve the educational level of the overall population, in particular the younger generations. Only an educated Serbia can attain an equal position in a modern Europe.

With a view to ensuring that education is, in a true sense and to the maximum extent, a driving force in the process of transforming our society, we have chosen to upgrade and modernise our educational system. The basis for advancing education has been provided by the adoption of four strategic laws – on the foundations of the education system, on preschool education, on text-

books and teaching materials and on pupils' and students' standard. This legislative basis facilitates the achievement of three intertwined aims: improving accessibility and equity, improving quality, and raising efficiency, which constitute the fundamental education system development aims. The implementation of these laws and the measures and activities undertaken pursuant to them yielded important results in a short period of time.

The accessibility and equity of education have been advanced through increasing the coverage of children, in particular children belonging to vulnerable groups (children with developmental impairments, Roma children, children with socially and economically disadvantaged background), by institutionalized pre-school education, as well as extending the duration of the mandatory pre-school programme, introduced earlier and delivered free of charge for all children in the year preceding the first grade of primary education, from six to nine months.

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WILLIAM S. INFANTE, UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Vulnerable Groups – Serbia's Potential

As Serbia moves towards Europe and ever closer to candidate status, laws, regulations, and policies will increasingly be harmonized with EU norms and standards. Institutions will build evermore robust capacity to promote efficiency, accountability and transparency, and reduce systemic risk and vulnerability of corruption. Statutory and institutional reforms are fundamental to accession, but a further "litmus test" will be the adoption and diffusion of values that are upheld by the member states. These values are associated, in part, with commitment to social inclusion which ensures that all enjoy access to employment, services and rights. And for Serbia's vulnerable populations, there is evidence of progress on all three of these fronts that times are changing for the better.

Ensuring that vulnerable populations are employed contributes to an inclusive society, but also reduces poverty and meets the Millennium Development Goals to which the country has subscribed. Traditionally vulnerable populations such as Roma, persons with disabilities, women and rural households were hard-hit by the global economic crisis which saw unemployment spike at close to 20% in Serbia. According to a recent Household Budget Survey, in 2010 8.8% lived below the relative poverty line, up from 6.9% in 2009. Yet, because of a new law, and the allied commitment of the public and private sectors, over 3,000 persons with disabilities

found employment in 2010, as compared to 400-600 in previous years.

Over the past year, nearly 2,000 vulnerable youth joined the workforce, either in ongoing firms, or in their own businesses, thanks to the Youth Employment Fund that provides subsidies, work placements, vocational training, and grants to would-be entrepreneurs. The Fund is a part of a program implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, the National Employment Service and other government offices with support provided by the Kingdom of Spain through the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Achievement Fund. Of the youth placed under the program, none has a secondary school education, 45% are women, 6% are people with disabilities, and 17% are Roma.

Ethnic minorities are among those most often excluded from the labor market, and for whom services are inaccessible, but this is changing. New and innovative programs have been launched by ministries and municipalities to employ ethnic minorities, thus increasing household income and contributing favorably to the "social determinants of health," according to World Health Organization Representative to Serbia and Manager of Public Health in South East Europe, Dr. Dorit Nitzan.

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ŽARKO OBRADOVIĆ, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education – A Key Resource for Socio-Economic Development

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Last year, we also embarked on the free textbooks project – free first-grade textbooks were provided, and the scheme has been expanded to include second-grade textbooks from this school year. The end goal is to ensure all primary school children are provided with free textbooks, in line with the idea of free education.

The accessibility of education has been improved by providing Internet connections to all schools. Equity in education is also pursued through the inclusion of children with disabilities and developmental impairments and children from disadvantaged social groups in regular schools (with special attention given to children of low social status and the Roma).

It is very important that Serbia retain a social dimension in education and ensure equal opportunities for all, irrespective of affluence and background. The state must maintain and improve free primary and

secondary education, provide free textbooks and encourage the pursuit of higher education levels. It is only through this approach that we can increase the share of educated citizens in the overall population and develop into an economically prosperous, socially stable and democratically developed society, ready for and capable of integration into Europe.

By improving the accessibility and quality of education, i.e. by increasing the number of educated people equipped with adequate knowledge and skills, Serbia is taking a significant step towards reducing poverty. Education provides important prerequisites for obtaining employment and earning a living, regardless of age, in particular for the population belonging to marginalised and socially vulnerable groups. At the same time, higher employment reduces the strain on social funds, thus contributing to the society's overall efficiency.

On-line Course on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction

The on-line course on social inclusion and poverty reduction of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit will be accessible as of mid-March 2011 on the address www.inkluzijakurs.info. The course was developed by SeConS – Group for Development Initiative.

The course shall enable the development of knowledge and competencies of different stakeholders on the topic of social inclusion and poverty reduction, contributing to a more efficient harmonization of the institutional framework, policies and practices in the field of poverty reduction and social inclusion with the EU standards. The course targets a number of beneficiaries: decision-makers, civil servants, local authorities, associations, students, professionals and experts, and a wider public.

The course contains seven modules: the Concepts of Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, EU Social Inclusion Policies, Social Inclusion Policies in Serbia, the Status of Poverty and Social Exclusion in EU and Serbia, Causes and Consequences of Poverty and Social Exclusion, Measures against Poverty and Social Exclusion and Towards an Active State of Wellbeing.

Course users may test their knowledge in a final test, and print out a certificate. The course may be used for information purposes only, without an obligation to pass the test or acquire overall knowledge.

WILLIAM S. INFANTE, UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

Vulnerable Groups – Serbia's Potential

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The SWIFT I project (Sustainable Waste management Initiative for a Healthier Tomorrow) being implemented in Zvezdara municipality (Belgrade) employs more than a dozen Roma people; and, this number will increase to 300 when the project expands under the EU-funded successor SWIFT II that will include families from Cukarica and Makis who were resettled as a result of the Gazella bridge refurbishment. SWIFT provides employment, and it also provides counsel and support for families seeking access to education, health, and other social services, including legal registration. SWIFT will help families and communities break the poverty trap and enjoy rights and dignity.

SWIFT is focused on a handful of communities, but there is evidence that social services are becoming more accessible nationwide. The Government-implemented Social Innovations Fund (SIF) introduced a precedent-setting public-private mechanism to fast-track social service reform. Civil Society Organizations partnered with 120 municipalities to enhance home health care for the elderly, promote independent living for people with disabilities, and establish day care centers for children. The EU-funded SIF has influenced new policy and law, including the Social Protection Development Strategy and the Law on Social Protection that are to be adopted in 2011.

These policies and laws will promote inclusion and enfranchise vulnerable populations. They will build on the body of law, which includes the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination. In conjunction with newly-formed institutions, such as the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, minority rights will be ever-better protected, if commitment is sustained.

Strides taken by the government over the past two years provide evidence that vulnerable populations now enjoy increasing access to employment, services and rights. Sustaining impetus for reforms that further promote social inclusion represents a fundamental turn towards the values that will propel Serbia on its path towards the European Union.

Government's Crisis Mitigation Measures in 2011

The Government has adopted the Programme of Measures to Mitigate the Adverse Effects of the Global Economic Crisis in 2011.

Seven billion dinars have been earmarked for the Programme in the budget of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development. The Programme includes granting further loans at subsidised interest rates to businesses and individuals, for the purposes of ensuring liquidity, financing permanent current assets and export operations.

The programme also includes investment loans, as well as consumer loans. It foresees continued subsidies for purchasing cars manufactured in Serbia through a car scrapping scheme, support measures for the construction industry through subsidised interest rate on housing loans, incentives for manufacture, overhaul and sale of construction machinery, lorries and specialised superstructures mounted on lorry chassis, as well as manufacture and sale of Serbian-made tractors and tractor attachments.

The Programme of Credit Support to the Economy through the Development Fund has also been adopted. The Government also adopted regulations on promoting the quality of hospitality services and a tourism development subsidy programme for this year.

Contact: Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, tel.: 011 2855 231
www.merr.gov.rs

SBRA: Registry of Regional Development Measures and Incentives

The Serbian Business Registers Agency is about to start keeping a registry of regional development measures and incentives.

This will enable compiling data from all ministries and institutions on state funding for promoting entrepreneurship and balanced regional development in a single database.

Data on subsidies, infrastructure investments, start-up loans and grants, broken down by territorial units, will be collected there.

The Serbian Business Registers Agency will also start keeping the following electronic databases: Registry of Domestic and Foreign Charitable Trusts and Foundations, as well as a registry of sports organisations, public institutions, real estate finance leases and court injunctions.

Contact: Serbian Business Registers Agency, tel.: 011 20 23 350, www.apr.gov.rs

RSO: Population Census in October

The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings has been postponed to October 1–15 this year, i.e. it has been delayed by six months, while the Census of Agriculture will be carried out between October 1 and December 15, 2012.

The RSO proposed the postponement as a result of funding shortage. Budget funds earmarked for the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings are considerably below the amount foreseen by the Law on the Census of Population and will not cover sound and timely preparations for the Census. By postponement of the Census, the missing funding will be provided from the EU pre-accession funds, as they will be available in September 2011.

Contact: Republic Statistical Office of Serbia, tel.: 2412 922, www.stat.gov.rs

Serbia Delivers Answers to the EC Questionnaire

On January 31, 2011, Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković delivered the answers to the European Commission Questionnaire on Serbia's Candidacy for EU Membership to the European Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle.

The Questionnaire, delivered to Serbia by the European Commission on November 24, 2010, covering all elements of future accession negotiations between Serbia and the EU, contains 2483 questions in six annexes and 33 chapters.

The answers to the European Commission Questionnaire should inform a key part of the Commission's opinion on the merits of Serbia's application for full EU membership.

CONFERENCE: Social Policy Coordination

The conference "Social Policy Coordination in the Context of EU 2020" will be held at the Palace of Serbia, Belgrade, on March 29, at the initiative of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration.

The conference will be held in collaboration with the European Commission – Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, with the support of the Directorate-General for Enlargement (TAIEX Office).

The event should contribute to discussion on the social dimension of the EU accession process, in view of the fact that both the EU and Serbia face challenges in the areas of poverty reduction and social inclusion.

Europe 2020 strategy measures in the field of social policy and new Commission initiatives, as well as the framework, good practices and possibilities of active inclusion in the Republic of Serbia will be presented at the conference.

The meeting will be opened by Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration Božidar Djelić and Minister of Labour and Social Policy Rasim Ljajić.

Conference participants will include representatives of line ministries, local authorities, the civil society and science and research institutions and organisations.

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

European Parliament Adopted the Resolution on EU Roma Inclusion Strategy

The European Parliament adopted the Resolution on the EU Strategy on Roma Inclusion on March 9, 2011. The EP called on the European Commission to propose, and the Council of the EU to adopt the Strategy as an indicative, inclusive EU-wide plan to be implemented at all political and administrative levels.

The Strategy should build on the fundamental values of equality, access to

rights, non-discrimination and gender equality and be based on the tasks, aims, principles and instruments defined by the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In April, the European Commission will present the Strategy proposal, which should be adopted by the Council of the EU in June.

Contact: www.euractiv.rs

Hungary Takes Over Presidency of the EU Council from Belgium

At the ceremony held on January 6, Hungary took over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union from Belgium.

"Strong Europe" is the slogan of the Hungarian presidency, resting on four priorities: growth, job creation and social inclusion; a stronger Europe – reinforcing foundations and securing a future; citizen-friendly Union; responsible enlargement and focus on overcoming global challenges.

European Year of Volunteering

The European Union has launched the Year of Volunteering, aiming to encourage the citizens of the 27 Member States to engage in voluntary work and to ensure better legal regulation of this area, higher recognition of its benefits and provision of funding for volunteering organisations and coverage of volunteers' costs.

It is widely believed in the EU that the European Year of Volunteering might help the EU overcome the economic crisis. Volunteering should contribute to the EU's economic recovery, as each euro invested yields a return of five euros.

An estimated 100 million Europeans engage in voluntary work and contribute between 0.5% and 5% of the Member States' gross domestic product.

Volunteering has the lowest share in the gross domestic product in Slovakia, Poland and Greece – below 0.1% of the GDP, and the highest in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden – between 3% and 5%.

According to Eurobarometer research, 30% of Europeans volunteer. Of these, 34% work in sports organisations, 22% in cultural, educational or artistic activities, 17% in humanitarian organisations, 16% in churches, 13% in trade unions, while less than 10% are engaged in assisting the elderly, in professional organisations, political parties or other forms of volunteering.

EU Sustainable Energy Week

This year's EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) will take place between April 11 and 15. During the week, hundreds of events will be organised throughout Europe with the idea of promoting and supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy. Brussels will host a range of events on the topics of energy conservation and renewable energy, including a three-day conference organised by the EC.

Contact: www.eusew.eu

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: EU Mentoring Scheme for Business Women

This year, women entrepreneurs will receive EC financial assistance as part of EU-wide initiatives, as was announced in Brussels in late February. By identifying priorities in the assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises, the EC will launch the mentoring scheme, which will include providing advice and support to women entrepreneurs in at least 10 Member States.

According to estimates, small and medium-sized enterprises account for 99% of all enterprises in the EU and almost 30% of them are managed by women.

The Commission's most important initiative for supporting women's entrepreneurship is the European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship. Network members include representatives of governmental bodies and institutions competent for promoting women's entrepreneurship from EU Member States and from Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Turkey. The Network aims to increase the visibility of the existing women entrepreneurs and build an environment conducive to increasing their number. The project was initiated by Sweden back in 2000, but the most recent

report on project activities available on the Commission's web site dates from 2008 and is a result of contribution of only 15 states. Another important Commission programme is the European Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors, launched towards the end of 2009.

The original group of 10 Member States selected a total of 150 women entrepreneurs and facilitated networking among them, to enable them to exchange experiences and good practices within the network.

Contact: www.euractiv.rs

EU Gender Pay Gap

March 8 is marked globally to celebrate women's achievements in the efforts towards equality in all spheres of life and is commemorated for the 100th time in 2011.

The first European Equal Pay Day was marked on March 5, 2011, shortly before the International Women's Day. On that occasion, it was highlighted that, on average, women earn 17.8% less than men over their lifetime, which would be tantamount to not being paid for their work until March 5 every year. It was for this reason that this date was chosen as the European Equal Pay Day.

The inequality that has persisted after a full century of intensive fight for gender equality is

illustrated by the pay gap between men and women. It is estimated that women in the EU earn, on average, 17.8% less than men over their lifetime.

According to 2008 data, Estonia has the highest gender pay gap, with women's hourly wages on average 30% lower than men's, while Italy has the lowest gap – 5%. These data indicate high discrimination level in the labour market, stated the European Commission in its report.

Differences in earnings also result in lower pensions and higher risk of poverty for women. Risk of poverty affects 22% of women and 16% of men aged over 65.

National Council for Rural Development Established

By Government decision, the National Council for Rural Development has been established, at the proposal of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management.

The Council is established to place rural development higher on the agendas of other ministries, achieve broader results through cooperation among line ministries, prevent duplication of work and enable a strategic approach to the use of resources.

In addition to representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Council includes representatives of the ministries of economy and regional development, environment and spatial planning, labour and social policy, infrastructure, public administration and local self-government, youth and sport, education, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Serbian European Integration Office and Office for Sustainable Development of Underdeveloped Areas.

New Law on Cooperatives

The Draft Law on Cooperatives might be included in the agenda for the Spring Sitting of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. It should overcome the "legal dualism" in cooperatives' operation, as the matter is regulated by laws on cooperatives dating from 1996 and 1989.

The new Law will provide legal basis for converting cooperatives' assets registered as socially-owned into cooperative-owned. This will solve the cooperatives' greatest current problem, namely the fact that they are not able to enter into legal transactions concerning their assets and, consequently, are not creditworthy. Within six months of the passage of the new Law, cooperatives should provide evidence of asset ownership to formally transfer the title of ownership to them.

In 2009, the number of cooperatives and cooperative unions totalled 2,140, while membership in cooperatives totalled 122,192 people.

Agricultural cooperatives accounted for the majority – 1,425 in number or 67.1%, followed by youth and student cooperatives – 378 or 17.8%. Building societies accounted for 6.9%, skilled trades and crafts cooperatives – for 4.1%, and all other cooperatives – for 4.2%.

The United Nations designated 2012 as the International Year for Cooperatives.

Contact: Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, 011 2855 231, www.merr.gov.rs

Satellite Accounts for the Cooperative Sector

Between 2007 and 2009, the cooperative sector recorded negative developments, according to the analysis performed by the Republic Statistical Office according to the satellite accounts methodology.

The gross value added (GVA) of cooperatives and cooperative unions showed an uninterrupted decline in this period (the decline in 2008 compared to 2007 amounted to 3.4%, and in 2009 compared to 2008 – 16.4%).

The GVA was the only positive item in the satellite accounts for cooperatives and cooperative unions for 2009 (RSD 4,256.2 million).

An analysis of turnover and net profit in the cooperative sector identifies two types of cooperatives. One includes efficient, market-oriented cooperatives, the "new-generation cooperatives", which improve their operations on an ongoing basis and have good prospects. The other includes cooperatives that have not managed to adapt to market economy and that record a steady decline in turnover.

Contact: RSO, tel.: 2413 922, www.stat.gov.rs

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Market Regulation – Primary Task

The main tasks of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management in 2011 include regulation and stimulation of the agricultural produce market and protection of farmers.

By the end of last year, Draft Law on the Agency for Agricultural Produce Market Interventions, which will respond to farmers' fears that prices for their produce will not cover the costs of production, was developed.

The Indemnity Fund has been established, providing for farmers' independence from large-scale systems and purchasers in selling their produce.

Farmers will be able to set up their production with credit funding at an interest rate of only 3%, with a pledge on their produce as collateral.

In 2011, the Ministry will continue to channel funding to small and medium-sized farms and individuals for whom agriculture is the sole source of livelihood.

The 2011 agrarian budget totals RSD 20 billion and exceeds last year's by two billion. The additional funds will be earmarked for reviving livestock farming and dairy cattle farming.

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

Support Network for Social Entrepreneurship in Recycling Established

The national Support Network for Social Entrepreneurship in Recycling has been established, with more than 40 members from civil society organisations, local governments and the business sector.

The establishment of the Support Network has been inspired by the fact that in the EU Member States various forms of social entrepreneurship contribute bet-

ween five and ten percent of the gross domestic product. Furthermore, recycling is the second largest industry in terms of the number of social enterprises.

Another reason for this network is that legislative changes in the area of waste management may put the waste gatherers' community at risk of losing their sole source of livelihood.

Contact: www.reciklaža.in.rs

Twelve Social Enterprise Organisations Selected

Twelve organisations have been selected in a competition for the Expert Assistance Programme for Promoting Social Enterprises' Operation, implemented by the Coalition for Social Entrepreneurship Promotion.

The organisations eko BaG, the association Živimo zajedno, Pirotex triko, Naša kuća, Studio, Ethno Forum, Liceulice, Hera Women's Club, the company Lak žica d.o.o., the Telecottage Association of Serbia, the cooperative Sosina kujna and Women's Centre will participate in the programme.

The selected organisations will take part in a workshop to identify areas in which expert support is required. Following this, each candidate will receive consulting and mentoring assistance during the seven-month project.

The Coalition for Social Entrepreneurship Promotion consists of the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund, the European Movement in Serbia, the Initiative for Development and Cooperation, Smart Collective and Group 484.

The Programme is financially supported by the Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund as part of the "Support to National Efforts in the Promotion of Youth Employment and Management of Migration" programme.

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND SERVICES: Seven Million Dinars to Consumers' Associations

The Ministry of Trade and Services has provided RSD 7 million for building capacities and strengthening the role of consumers' associations in this year. The funds are earmarked for regional advisory centres to fund consumer advice and assistance projects.

In 2010, the line ministry awarded incentives totalling RSD 4 million to consumers' associations for establishing and operating consumer protection advisory centres in Serbia. Requirements for the registration of consumer protection associations are independence from co-

mmercial and political interests, availability of competent staff and focus on customer protection activities.

The Ministry of Trade and Services pursues consumer protection policy in conformity with EU standards; as a result of this, since last year, four regional advisory centres of the Consumer Protection Division have been in operation, covering the regions of Belgrade, the AP of Vojvodina, Western Serbia and Šumadija, and Eastern and Southern Serbia.

Contact: Ministry of Trade and Services, tel.: 011 36 18 852, www.mtu.gov.rs

NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

121 Municipalities Applied for Co-funding of Employment Plans

The National Employment Service received applications from 121 local governments for co-funding of local employment action plans in 2011, amounting to RSD 772 million. Combined with additional funds provided by the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, it will enable more than 7,000 people to become employed. In 2010, only ten local governments applied for co-funding amounting to RSD 75 million.

Applications were filed in all regions of Serbia. The number of applications coming from municipalities classified as underdeveloped (58) was almost equal to the number filed by developed ones (59 applications). Among the applicants, there are two municipalities from the group of the

least developed: Bosilegrad allocated RSD 16.5 million from its local budget, whereas Surdulica earmarked RSD 11 million.

The local governments allocated the most funds for job creation subsidies, internship programme co-funding, self-employment subsidies and training programmes targeting the unemployed. The cities allocating the most funds for employment programmes were Niš, Leskovac, Kruševac and Novi Sad.

The Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance stipulates that local governments may apply for co-funding of employment programmes on condition that they provide at least 51 percent of the total amount of funds needed for the programme concerned.

Support to Employers in Creating New Jobs

The National Employment Service has announced a competition for awarding job-creation subsidies to employers.

The job-creation subsidy is awarded as a lump-sum payment to employers looking to create up to 50 new jobs, with a view to recruiting unemployed persons registered with the NES.

An employer is entitled to the job-creation subsidy for recruitment of more than 50 unemployed persons, for the purpose of ensuring balanced regional development, eliminating disparities in the labour market and increasing employment as part of greenfield and brownfield investments.

The subsidy amount depends on the development level of the municipality in which the unemployed are recruited and ranges from RSD 100,000 to RSD 400,000 per person recruited.

In awarding subsidies, priority is given to the employers based in devastated areas and underdeveloped municipalities, as well as to those recruiting persons belonging to the less employable or vulnerable groups.

Public Works

The National Employment Service has announced a competition for the organisation and implementation of public works.

Public works are carried out by public work contractors appointed by the NES based on the completed competition. The maximum duration of public works is six months.

Public works may be organised in social, humanitarian, cultural and other fields, public infrastructure maintenance and rehabilitation, environment preservation and protection.

Competitions Aimed at Roma Employment

The NES has announced two competitions for awarding subsidies to employers for the creation of new jobs to be filled by unemployed Roma persons.

Lump-sum job-creation subsidies are awarded to employers creating up to 19 new jobs. The subsidy amount depends on the development level of the municipality in which the persons are recruited and ranges from RSD 100,000 to RSD 400,000.

A competition has also been announced for awarding self-employment subsidies. It is a lump-sum subsidy amounting to RSD 160,000, intended for the Roma persons to start their own businesses.

Engagement of Persons with Disabilities

The National Employment Service has announced a number of competitions aimed at stimulating the work of persons with disabilities through subsidies. Within one competition, job-creation subsidies will be awarded to employers opening up to 19 new positions.

The NES has also announced a competition for public works implementation as a platform for employment of persons with disabilities or as a means of providing personal assistance to persons with disabilities. The public works contractor is appointed by the NES based on the competition, while the duration of public works should not exceed six months.

Another competition announced by the NES entails the reimbursement of salaries of persons who provide professional support to persons with disabilities in the workplace, through counselling and training, assistance and supervision at work.

Employers may also apply for funding of training programmes for persons with disabilities. The NES covers training costs of up to RSD 90,000 per person with disability. Employers are also entitled to apply for reimbursement of workplace modification costs.

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

National Strategy on HIV Infection and AIDS

The Ministry of Health has drafted the second National HIV/AIDS Strategy. The new Strategy refers to the period 2011–2015 and foresees further work on the prevention, treatment and care for the persons living with HIV, as well as on the promotion of human rights and communication in this field. The Strategy drafting process involved representatives from the organisations and institutions working in the field of HIV.

Contact: Ministry of Health, www.zdravlje.gov.rs

Assistance to the Parents of Children with Cancer

The National Association of Parents of Children with Cancer (NURDOR) has started implementing the project of psychosocial assistance to the families of children with cancer, under the title "Time to Talk".

The project aims to show the necessity of hiring a psychologist in every pediatric hemato-oncology ward, to provide assistance to the children and their families. The project is envisaged to last six months in the pediatric hemato-oncology wards at the Institute for Oncology and Radiology and the University Children's Hospital in Belgrade, under the "Serbia against Cancer" National Strategy.

Financial resources have been provided by the BCIF and the Johnson & Johnson company.

Contact: NURDOR, tel: 011 26 84 448, www.nurdor.org.rs

Introducing Clinical Pathways

Under the Ministry of Health projects Delivery of Improved Local Services – DILS and Serbia Health Project – Additional Financing, a seminar was held for the representatives of primary health centres to present the results in the field of the clinical pathways development and introduction.

The seminar was attended by the representatives from primary health centres in

Kraljevo, Stari Grad, Doljevac, Voždovac, Indija, Novi Pazar, Valjevo and Savski Venac, who participated in the development and implementation of clinical pathways during 2010, as well as by the representatives of 20 primary health centres where clinical pathways will be further developed and implemented in the future.

A clinical pathway is a document showing a multidisciplinary medical analysis of a particular disease in the form of a sequence of all procedures and it also enables these procedures to be recorded at the same time. The development of clinical pathways entails the development of a methodology for a team-based, multidisciplinary approach to treatment with an accurately planned course, duration and expected outcome of the treatment, featured by active involvement of the patient.

Within the Delivery of Improved Local Services – DILS project, funded through a World Bank loan, the plan is to develop clinical pathway models and implement them in 18 health care institutions and 44 primary health centres by the end of 2012. Contact: DILS project, 011 36 06 421, www.dils.gov.rs

EUR 420,000 for 42 Health Centres

Each of the forty-two primary health centres participating in the DILS project have received EUR 10,000 for implementing projects aimed at increasing the accessibility of health care for more than 20,000 persons belonging to vulnerable groups of population – the elderly, children, youth, persons with disabilities, the Roma. In addition to the basic services, these persons will also have access to additional health care services.

Local governments contribute at least 10 percent of the funding, either in pecuniary contributions or by providing some type of services.

Protocol on Partnership in the Development of Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning

The representatives of 11 institutions signed the Protocol on Partnership in the Development of Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning.

The objective of this regional project is the development of entrepreneurial learning as a key competence at all levels of formal and non-formal education.

The project "Establishing Partnerships for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning in Serbia" gathered the signatories of the Protocol on Cooperation: the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, the Serbian Employers' Union, National Employment Service, National Regional De-

velopment Agency, the Conference of Serbia Universities, NGO Civic Initiatives and the Institute for Promotion of Education.

The partners have committed to developing the Strategy and Action Plan for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning within their respective mandates and to undertaking the measures necessary for a successful implementation of the Strategy.

The Protocol provides for the establishment of the Council of Partners for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning tasked with ensuring sustainable decision-making processes and efficient implementation of the Strategy and ensuing action plans.

The project was launched by European Training Foundation (ETF) in 2009.

SCHOLARSHIPS OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE EUR 5,000 to Women Scientists

Božidar Đelić, the Minister of Science and Technological Development of Serbia awarded EUR 5,000 scholarships to the winners of the national programme "Women in Science" to Ljubica Hrhaji-Trajković, molecular biologist and Dragana Cvetković-Ilić, mathematician.

This is the first time that these scholarships are awarded. The Programme was launched at the initiative of L'Oreal Balkans and the National Committee for Cooperation with UNESCO with the support of the Ministry. 142 candidates competed.

Serbia has the highest proportion of women scientists in Europe and in the world – 45%.

The Programme, implemented in 40 countries, awarded 500 young women scientists over the past 12 years. Contact: Ministry of Science and Technological Development, tel.: 011 26 88 047
www.nauka.gov.rs

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: Roma Mentors in 58 Municipalities

58 most underdeveloped municipalities got municipal mentors to support the development of inclusive education of Roma within the project "Inclusive Education of Roma". The agreement was signed by the DILS/REF Project of the Ministry of Education and 28 municipal mentors.

The project aims to provide quality education for all Roma children.

Seven areas are targeted: full capture of Roma children, the uniform quality of education, reduction of early drop-out, prevention of segregation, elimination of discrimination, introduction of Roma language in education and development of local action plans for creation of conditions for optimum integration of Roma children into the educational system.

The municipal mentors will, in collaboration with municipal teams, develop an integrated enrollment policy and support system towards a successful schooling of Roma children.

The project "Inclusive Education of Roma" will be implemented until the end of 2012.

Contact: Ministry of Education, tel.: 011 36 16 489, www.mp.gov.rs

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence on the Rise

According to the survey conducted in the project "Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence", the number of cases of sexual and gender based violence in Serbia is on the rise.

36 women died due to domestic violence last year. In addition, 7,500 cases of domestic violence were registered, but not all the cases get registered. An integrated database on cases of violence is maintained neither by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, health care institutions nor social welfare centres.

The Norwegian Government-funded project "Combating Sexual and Gender Based Violence" is conducted by the Gender Equality Directorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the support of UNDP.

Contact: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Gender Equality Directorate, www.minrzs.gov.rs

Results of the First Half of the Roma Decade

On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Decade and the 4th Annual Conference of the League, the League for Roma Decade announced that the legal framework for implementation of action plans of the Roma Decade has been established. The results achieved through implementation of the Action Plans during the first half of the Roma Decade in Serbia are relatively good.

Five years into the Decade, some 1000 Roma students and several thousand secondary school pupils are included in the education system. 83 health mediators are working in the field, 178 teaching assistants and 55 municipal coordinators are employed. The number of assaults and hate speech incidents involving Roma has decreased.

The League for Roma Decade said that the least has been done in the sector of housing, and the most in the employment of Roma, in the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development.

The greatest problem over the past five years has been the inadequate number of Roma children captured by pre-school education and the small percentage of Roma employed in state institutions and local governments.

Contact: League for Roma Decade
<http://ligazadekaduroma.org.rs>

Magazine "Liculice"

The third issue of the magazine "Liculice" has been published. It is sold in Belgrade and Novi Sad by young homeless persons. The price is RSD 100, of which RSD 50 is given to the vendors and RSD 50 is invested into the project.

The project was launched by the coalition of civil society organisations SMart Kolektiv, Centre for Youth Integration, Work Organisation, Yustat centre and Branislav Trifunovic, and the magazine is a member of the International Association of Street papers from some 40 countries.

Contact: "Liculice",
tel.: 011 24 40 096, www.liculice.org

Women in the EU Accession Process

The Autonomous Women Centre has launched a two-year project within the regional IPA 2009 Civil Society Facility.

The project aims to increase the influence of women to policy development in the area of social inclusion and contribute to their active participation in the EU accession process.

Women victims of violence, elderly women, women with disabilities, mothers of disabled children, single mothers, refugee and IDP women, homeless women, women living in rural areas, Roma are at particular risk of poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

The problems faced by these women will be analyzed in light of the current legislation. These analyses will serve as basis for recommendations as to changes and amendments of the current legislation and harmonization with the EU Platform for combating poverty and social exclusion and gender equality policy.

Contact: Autonomous Women Centre, tel.: 011 2645 328
www.womenngo.org.rs

EUROBANK EFG

"We Invest into European Values"

Eurobank EFG will continue to support the community through the project "We Invest into European Values" investing into the development of education, public health, environmental protection, culture and inclusion of persons with disabilities. The corporate social responsibility is one of the strategic priorities of Eurobank EFG.

Last year, Eurobank EFG supported the most vulnerable through numerous donor projects, to mention but a few: donations for associations of persons with disabilities, and assistance to children suffering from the gravest illnesses. The Bank has supported vulnerable groups by donations of office furniture and computer equipment.

Contact: Eurobank EFG a.d., tel.: 011 308 2863
www.eurobankefg.rs

EUROPEAN MOVEMENT IN SERBIA

Guide through EU Policies

The European Movement in Serbia published a "Guide through EU Policies – Agriculture" giving an overview of EU policies and legislation and obligations of Serbia towards fulfillment of the conditions for EU membership.

The Guide is the second of the five planned publications in the sectors of: energy, agriculture, environmental protection, trade and judiciary, freedom and security. Contact: European Movement in Serbia, tel.: 011 3640 174

www.emins.org

The Government Established the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society

The Government of Serbia established the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and passed a regulation governing the scope, organisation and other issues relevant for its operation.

The Office should manage the Government's affairs related to ensuring harmonised actions of public authorities and stimulating their cooperation with associations and other civil society organisations, such as initiating dialogue with the civil society about the issues of common interest, participating in the development and monitoring of implementation of strategic documents, initiating adoption of regulations and other documents defining the position of associations and other civil society organisations, organising round-table discussions and conferences, etc.

The Office also prepares legal instruments through which the Government supervises, guides and harmonises the affairs of ministries and special organisations related to the issues of civil society development and cooperation of the Government with the civil society.

The Office collaborates with public authorities, bodies of autonomous provinces, municipalities, cities, as well as with associations and other civil society organisations in the development of relevant documents and regulations and promotes actions conducive to development of and cooperation with the civil society.

Contact: Government of the Republic of Serbia, tel: 011 3617 719

www.srbija.gov.rs

Call for Proposals of Youth Inclusion Projects

The Belgrade Youth Office has announced a call for project proposals contributing to implementation of the National Youth Strategy action plan and the local action plans of the municipal youth offices in the Belgrade area. The goal of these projects is to ensure the largest possible number of direct beneficiaries of services and programmes, depending on the needs of young people in each municipality. The total budget earmarked for funding these projects is RSD 4,000,000.

Contact: Belgrade Youth Office, www.kancelarijazamlade.rs

Second Belgrade International Film Festival For and By Persons with Disabilities

The "Koloseum" Centre in Belgrade announced a call for submitting entries for the Second Belgrade International Film Festival For and By Persons with Disabilities – BOSI FEST 2011. This year's slogan is "View, Movement, Life" and the topics are culture, sport, tourism, education, work and life of persons with disabilities.

The feature and documentary films competition on the topic of persons with disabilities is open for all interested contestants until March 28, 2011. Contact: BOSI Fest 2011, www.bosifest.rs

Inclusive Handicrafts Bazaar

The "H.ARTeFakt 2" inclusive handicrafts bazaar, hosted by the Rex Cultural Centre, held a display of works in the field of fine and applied arts, created by persons from marginalised and vulnerable social groups. The Bazaar resulted from the initiative to integrate young creative people from marginalised and vulnerable social groups in the community as its members on an equal footing.

Contact: galleryalt.wordpress.com

AIESEC Social Inclusion Project

AIESEC has launched the "ACTiviraj se!" project targeting social inclusion of children without parental care and persons with mild development disorders, which shall be implemented from January to May.

Volunteers and interns from abroad shall be visiting institutions and the Association for Supporting Persons with Development Disorders "Stari grad", motivating children to improve themselves through playing and interactive workshops in order to be integrated better into society. Workshops are organized in primary schools Vuk Karadžić and Mihajlo Petrović Alas, dealing with tolerance and differences.

The project envisages training in colleges and companies employing persons with development disorders, as well as mediation in establishing contact between persons with development disorders and employers. Contact: AIESEC Serbia, tel: 011 2621 455, www.aiesec.rs

GOVERNMENT OF SERBIA

Draft Law on Social Welfare

The Government prepared the Draft Law on Social Welfare, which foresees increasing support to the poor and extending the number of beneficiaries, especially among multi-member households and those without able-bodied members.

The Draft Law includes strategic objectives related to the reform of social services, stipulates the rights, defines the types of services, institutions and service providers, beneficiary groups, quality control mechanisms and competences in establishment and funding.

The Draft Law introduces major changes in the institutional and regulatory spheres. It provides for the establishment of social welfare chambers, licensing of experts and service providers, stipulates public procurement of services, redesigns the control functions, expert supervision and inspection.

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

Construction of 1,633 Apartments within the Social Housing Project

The Social Housing project will entail the construction of 1,633 apartments in total, 626 of which for non-profit lease and 1,007 for non-profit sale. The tenants and purchasers of these apartments will be low- and middle-income persons. The state will provide subsidies for a part of the down payment, and another subsidy is also planned to cover the repayment of the part of the loan provided by CEB, taken for the purpose of investing in the construction of apartments for lease, with a view to achieving lower rent levels for low-income households.

The full title of the project is "Provision of Housing Solutions for the Low and Middle-Income Population by Funding the Construction of Social Housing Units and Supporting the Development of the Main Instruments of the Social Housing System in Serbia".

Contact: Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning,

www.ekoplan.gov.rs

ANA & VLADE DIVAC FOUNDATION: First Building for the Families from Collective Centres

In April, Ana & Vlade Divac Foundation will commence the construction of the first of four buildings in Belgrade with 20 flats each, intended for the families living in collective centres in the Belgrade metropolitan area. As a partner of the Foundation, the City of Belgrade has donated building plots where complete infrastructure can be developed for the four buildings with 20 flats each. The United States Government has donated the funding for construction of one building, and the fund-raising efforts continue.

There are seven collective centres in the Belgrade metropolitan area sheltering 750 persons, while there are additional 54 collective centres with approximately 4,200 persons. In Serbia excluding Kosovo & Metohija, there are 37 collective centres housing around 3,600 refugees, while the remaining 17 are located in Kosovo & Metohija.

Eight collective centres were closed down last year and the Commissariat for Refugees provided housing for 1,789 families.

Last year, 1,300 individuals and around 30 companies participated in the activities of Ana & Vlade Divac Foundation, when they provided housing for 94 families and raised funds for another 83.

Contact: Ana & Vlade Divac Foundation, tel: 011 39 11 891,

www.divac.org.rs

BCIF COMPETITION: Green List of Serbia

The BCIF has announced the competition of environmentally focused local citizens' associations, in which 12 organisations will be selected and accepted into full two-year membership of the Green List of Serbia – the network of local environmental organisations.

The joint initiatives of the future network members will be realised within an environmental campaign under the slogan Oplaneti se! (a blend of two words, translating as "be smart about your planet"). The purpose of the campaign is to address the specific problems in the field of waste management and the promotion of recycling.

The competition has been announced within the Civil Society Advocacy Initiative in Serbia, in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

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

Guidelines for the Development of State Agencies' Web Presentations

The Government has adopted "Guidelines for Development of Web Presentations of State Agencies" created by the Republic Institute for Informatics and Internet.

The focus of the third edition of this document is on the content of web presentations related to services and information of public interest that the state agencies need to provide on their web presentations in order to ensure transparency of work of state administration.

The third edition represents a joint effort of the Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society, Transparency Serbia, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), as well as the office of the Trustee for Information of Public Interest and Protection of Personal Data.

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

Tourist Guide and Interactive Window for Persons with Disabilities

The Centre for Independent Life of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia implemented two projects aimed at making the capital more accessible for persons with mobility problems: "Belgrade for All – A Tourist Guide for Persons with Disabilities" and info-system "Interactive Window Accessible to Persons with Disabilities".

The "Guide" is a continuation of projects entitled "Belgrade White Spots" implemented in 2003, 2008 and 2009 that identified the places in the capital accessible to persons with disabilities.

"Interactive Window Accessible to Persons with Disabilities", put up in Knez Mihajlova Street in Belgrade, provides information on the possibilities of access to parks, museums, galleries and other institutions and public spaces to the persons with disabilities. At the same time, the info-system informs about the events organized for persons with disabilities.

The projects were supported by the Tourist Organisation of Belgrade and the Secretariat for Economy with a view to removing physical barriers and creating an inclusive environment. Contact: Centre for Self-Sufficient Life of Persons with Disabilities of Serbia, tel.: 011 360 55 09, www.cilsrbija.org

CALENDAR of Important Dates

MARCH

01 March No-Tobacco Day

01-08 March Combating Cancer Week

08 March International Womens' Day

21 March World TB Day

APRIL

01 April No-Alcohol Day

02 April International Day of Children Literature

04 April Safety at Work Day

07 April World Health Day

08 April World Roma Day

22 April Global Day of the Planet Earth

Europe Telecentres Launch "Online Week"

The telecentres of Europe are launching a campaign "Online Week" to encourage 100,000 persons to start using computers and Internet.

The telecentres, public services, libraries, NGOs and ICT companies together with pupils and students all over Europe will gather and organise a wide range of events, trainings and competitions.

The national coordinator of the campaign in Serbia is IAN – International Aid Network. The aim is to prompt minorities, refugees and IDPs, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, the elderly and women, single mothers to start using computers and Internet.

The campaign is a part of the IAN project "Click to Europe" supported by the EU and Microsoft.

In 2010, the telecentres of Europe organized "online days" involving 60,000 people.

Contact: International Aid Network, tel.: 011 7617 197, www.ian.org.rs

Shared Work Space "Hub 101"

The first Belgrade hub entitled "Hub 101" is to be opened in the capital.

The "Hub" is a shared work space where individuals may rent desks and ensure work space for their IT projects for a symbolic fee.

The idea is supported by the Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society and the City of Belgrade.

What is the Hub?

The Hub is a name for a work space shared by many individuals. In addition to low costs as compared to individual rent of office space, the advantages of this shared space are numerous - team work, business contacts and access to infrastructure being but a few of them.

Contact: www.facebook.com/cvoriste101

Global Network "Women in ICT" Promoted in the UN

The global network entitled "Women in ICT" established at the initiative of the Ministry for Telecommunications and Information Society was promoted in the United Nations.

A global network of women decision-makers in ICT was presented at the 55th session of the UN International Commission on the Status of Women in New York.

The network is to help women become successful in ICT industry, strengthen the gender equality principles and promote ICT among women in the world.

The network "Women in ICT" was presented by Michele Bachelet, Deputy UN SG and Executive Director of UN Women and Maina Sina Damba, Minister for the Issues of Women, Children and Family in Mali, in addition to the Minister, Jasna Matić.

The members of the network may communicate and exchange information irrespective of what state they come from at www.witnet.org

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 1,000 Electronic Certificates Issued

The Certification Authority of the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia issued some 1,000 authenticated electronic certificates by end 2010. The owners of some 500 certificates are companies, member of the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia.

The Centre for Electronic Business of the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia developed 10 services implementing e-certificates. The most utilized is electronic submission of tax returns.

This service is used in 10 branch offices of the Tax Authority in Belgrade, as well as in tax authorities in Niš, Kraljevo, Užice, Čačak, Kragujevac, Leskovac, Subotica and Novi Sad.

Contact: Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, tel.: 011 3300 900, www.pks.rs

East Weekend Fest

The association of citizens „Istok“ (East) from Bor is organising a regional work /socialise meeting of Internet users who have their web domains/blogs as well as for users of Twitter and Facebook entitled „East Weekend Fest“.

One of the objectives of the event is to familiarise the users with the information technologies and attract new users by demonstrating ways in which the Internet removes state borders and differences among nations through selected programmes presented by numerous celebrities and IT experts. Contact: www.eastweekendfest.com

Vranje Gets City Council e-Sessions

Vranje was approved the project „Electronic Sessions of the City Council“ amounting to RSD 1.7 million in the call for project proposals to build ICT capacities of municipalities.

The project will result in the Council members receiving all the documents in electronic form, voting on their computers and the sessions becoming accessible to the citizens over the Internet.

17 projects totalling RSD 60 million were approved at the Call for Proposals published by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society.

"Get Knowledge, Not Drugs"

Supported by the municipality of Obrenovac, the association of citizens "Građanski odgovor" (Civic Response) launched a web-counselling service at www.overiznanje.org entitled "Get knowledge, not drugs". The Service aims to extend support to young people in all crisis situations, with their dilemmas or problems related to addictions.

The support is provided by a team of experts involving a psychologist, social worker, special pedagogue and a chemist.

Contact: "Građanski odgovor" tel.: 063 86 18 087, www.overiznanje.org

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