

## Legal Aid aimed at protecting and promoting property rights of IDPs, refugees and returnees under the readmission agreement

ECG's latest project **Legal Aid aimed at protecting and promoting property rights of IDPs, refugees and returnees under the readmission agreement** was officially opened on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in Belgrade.

The implementation of the project "Promotion and Protection of Property Rights of Internally Displaced Persons Refugees and Returnees upon Readmission Agreements", for the most part financed by the EU through national program IPA 2013, has officially began on 22 August 2016. The beneficiary institution of this project is Office for Kosovo and Metohija.

This two-year project is funded by the EU with EUR3.65 million, and is a follow-up to four earlier projects implemented by the EU Delegation to Serbia and the Office for Kosovo and Metohija.



The Project Team leader *Declan O'Mahony* said at the conference that there were at least 60,000 property return requests made by IDPs from Kosovo to which local courts in Kosovo failed to respond, adding that such a situation resulted in huge backlog of cases impossible to process within a reasonable timeframe. According to O'Mahony, within the EU's project aimed at providing free legal aid to IDPs, refugees and returnees under readmission agreement, four separate units will be set up in Belgrade, Nis, Kraljevo and Valjevo with two additional departments in Kosovska Mitrovica and Gracanica.

Head of Operations at the EU Delegation to Serbia Nicolas Bizel described the project, which was already under implementation, as highly relevant as the right to legal aid was among the fundamental EU rights. He said that the Delegation would continue to be Serbia's key partner in resolving that issue.

Deputy Head of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija Dusan Kozarev said that there were 204,049 IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia, with estimates of another 18,000 in Kosovo. He warned that the abandoned houses, which once belonged to Serbs and other non-Albanians, were being systematically destroyed, adding that the Kosovo Property Agency is processing some 40,000 requests for the return of occupied property. Also, he said, there were around 18,000 compensation, damaged or destroyed property claims lodged with courts.

## In This Issue

### 01

Legal Aid aimed at protecting and promoting property rights of IDPs, refugees and returnees under the readmission agreement

### 02

SAM Annual Award gala evening

### 02

Training programme in response to labour market needs within the project "Increasing the Effectiveness of Employment Policies Towards Disadvantaged Groups" - LOT3 and LOT4

### 03

Presentation of the project of improvement of food control – From Farm To Fork

### 05

"Fostering Development of Serbian MSMEs in the Year of Entrepreneurship by enabling new financial institutions" Workshop

### 06

Mr. Mevludin Dzindo, Assistant Director of APIK (Agency for prevention of corruption and coordination of the Fight against Corruption) speaks about battling corruption in BiH

### 07

ECG awarded the "Management of EU Info Centre and EU Info Points 2017 – 2018" Project in BiH

### 07

ECG has moved to a new location!

## SAM Annual Award gala evening

14 December 2016, the fifth year in a row, the Serbian Association of Managers (SAM) organized a gala evening on the occasion of SAM's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary



Serbian Association of Managers traditionally hosts a gala event every December in order to “promote best business practices, companies, managers, educational institutions, regional projects and economic journalists who with their work promote best business practices and advocate for better business environment and for better life standards of all our citizens.”

This year, and in honor of SAM's marking its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, European Consulting Group's director Danijel Pantic received a Letter of Thanks for his contribution in the field of promoting SAM values and interests, as well as his crucial role in the foundation of the organization.

Speaking at the gala, he addressed Serbian managers and commended their vision and commitment to the society and the economy. He remembered the very beginning of SAM and turning points that shaped the organization.

## Training programme in response to labour market needs within the project “Increasing the Effectiveness of Employment Policies Towards Disadvantaged Groups” - LOT3 and LOT4

Training programme is to be implemented within the „EU Assistance to hard-to-employ groups“ project. Contracts related to implementation of tasks assigned were acquired by Consortium of 3 companies: Summit Consulting Services, European Consulting Group and BOLT.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 an initial meeting concerning LOT 3 – Agriculture, food production and processing, and LOT 4 – Economics, administration, trade and hotels & restaurants was held with the representatives of the National Employment Service (NES) and Consortium led by Summit Consulting Service.

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The overall project covers the provision of training courses in response to labour market needs, through six LOTs, for at least 5400 unemployed persons registered at National Employment Service (in addition to the unemployed persons trained through NES regular annual training programmes) in two training cycles of 2016 and 2017 (thus an annual average of 2700 people). Since this is, in fact, an expansion of the NES existing scheme, the implementation modalities are quite similar to the NES standard procedures.

The Lot 3 covers training courses for jobs in agriculture, food production and processing, with 410 persons trained for the professions in these fields, while Lot 4 covers the training courses for jobs in Economics, administration, trade and hotels & restaurants, with 447 persons trained.

The project was initiated in October 2016, and it is expected to be finalized before end of 2017, while trainings are conducted country-wide.

ECG will also participate in recently awarded LOT 2 – Textile, leather, chemicals and typography.

All activities are funded by the European Union through direct funding to NES.

## Presentation of the project of improvement of food control – From Farm To Fork

The Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection and the EU Delegation in Serbia presented their ITCM project “Food safety information system”, funded by the European Union, which aims to improve the IT system in the Veterinary Directorate, Plant Protection Directorate and Agricultural Inspection Sector.

Integrated data management system, designed according to the most advanced standards of IT will allow to strengthen the control of food products of plant and animal origin, including imports from abroad, as well as the alignment of food safety control methodology to the principles used in EU member states. This is another step in meeting the standards of the market to which the products are exported and criteria for Serbia’s EU accession - was the message of the meeting.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Mr Danilo Golubovic said that “People increasingly tend to be fully informed about the origin of food and expect their food to be healthy and of good quality,” he stressed, adding that with this project Serbia is on the

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path to realize the basic principle of the EU in the field of agriculture - an integrated approach Icontrol of all production phases: processing, transport, storage and food preparation. Stressing the complexity of the negotiating chapter 12 concerning food safety, Golubovic said that he expects that Serbia will soon get the comments of the European Commission on the draft report on screening for this chapter, and then the criteria for opening negotiations for this chapter.



Head of Operations III of the EU Delegation to Serbia Richard Masa said that the EU supports the efforts of the Ministry and the Government of the Republic of Serbia in this strategic approach to control food safety and protect the interests of consumers and encourage responsible approach of all stakeholders in the implementation of this complex task.

The social significance of this project is that it allows for faster and easier data collection, analysis and dissemination of information, geographic data connectivity, advanced risk management system and advanced alerting system which aims better control of food safety. The project will use the existing IT solutions in three authorities, upgrading them where required, and develop new IT applications for data evidence, new web portal for information exchange, applications for certificates issued by inspections and other IT solutions that are required for functioning of integrated system.

EU project "Development of a sustainable information system for the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection" is developing an integrated system for management, communication, and control of food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health in Serbia, in accordance with the legal framework of the EU. The project is implemented by a consortium led by KPMG. The total value of the project funded by the EU is EUR 1.345.000. The new information system that will be used by the Veterinary Directorate, Plant Protection Directorate and Agricultural Inspection Sector will be established by the end of 2017.

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## “Fostering Development of Serbian MSMEs in the Year of Entrepreneurship by enabling new financial institutions” Workshop

On Thursday, 02 June 2016, in Belgrade, European Consulting Groups, in cooperation with our long-term partners Serbian Association of Managers and Serbian Association of Business Women, organized a policy workshop dedicated to analysis of new financial institutions that would support the growth of MSMEs in Serbia, as foundation for their increased share in the local job market and economy.



The Workshop gathered representatives of local and international banks, international donor organizations, expert society and professional associations, striving to pinpoint the bottlenecks for MSME sector development, support programmes for family and small business, and new channels of funding that could be implemented as seen in similar economies regionally and worldwide.

Topics such as non-banking finance institutions, credit unions, banking products, IFIs and access and cost of credit and capital absorption capacity were explored and discussed at great length. Key note speaker, Mr. Gattini Luca of the European Investment Bank, presented the research of EIB regarding the current financial market in the countries of the region and Serbia in particular. Following this, other speakers, including Dr. Vladimir Medan (Belgrade Banking Academy), Srdjan Bogosavljevic (IPSOS), Vladimir Jovanović (USAID Business Enabling Project), Miroslav Vujnović (European Consulting Group), announced the potential for creating the Development Bank of Serbia, where the positive example of the German KfW was mentioned, the results of the survey about citizens' attitude toward entrepreneurship, lack of financing and the problems in the financial ecosystem, credit union options etc.

Finally, Mr. Pantic (European Consulting Group), who initiated and moderated this Workshop, presented the plan to establish a Working group that would further analyze these problems and deal in detail with these topics further, further to be presented to the relevant government bodies in charge of SME development and related financial support.



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## Mr. Mevludin Dzindo, Assistant Director of APIK (Agency for prevention of corruption and coordination of the Fight against Corruption) speaks about battling corruption in BiH

Following the closure of ECG led project “Strengthening anti-corruption capacities and CSO networks in the area”, Mr. Mevludin Dzindo, Assistant Director of APIK spoke with us about the future of prevention and battle against corruption in BiH.

Mr. Dzindo evaluated the current situation and said that APIK is quickly becoming the focal point of anti-corruption processes in BiH. Basis for this activity are the legal competencies of the Agency and the Strategy for fight against corruption on one hand, while on the other hand this Agency became clearly visible when it comes to the fight against systemic corruption. Having drafted the Strategy for the Fight against Corruption 2015-2019, the Agency stepped forward as a leader in strategic planning in the field of anti-corruption in BiH.



Expert communication within the PAK Project (Podrška anti korupciji) ruled out all the concepts of “formal,” “sluggish” and “passive” that touch on general topics but not the essence, where real needs in BiH regarding next steps were identified, while battle against corruption was marked as a “living matter”.

Asked about the place of this project in the activities of the Agency and further EU Integrations, Mr. Dzindo stated that he can currently see two distinct processes in BiH regarding battling corruption. The first is the process of implementation of the Strategy for the Fight against Corruption 2015-2019. The focus of the primary expectations from Agency's is right on the implementation this document. The second process is the process of European integration and the implementation of the Reform Agenda for BiH 2015-2018. This document, which was adopted by all levels of government, accepted by Brussels, with his own concept touches on just the issues of preventing corruption and coordination of the fight against corruption.

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The primary focus now is to ensure implementation of specific activities defined by the Strategy and Action Plan, but also that the projection results are visible as being a part of the integration processes of BiH. It is evident that the role of the PAK Project was crucial as the APIK became the focal point of anti-corruption in BiH. The Strategy defines exactly what we need to do and how in the next five years, while key partners gathered around the PAK Project remain to work as a certain infrastructural network which forms a basis for all future work in anti-corruption in BiH.

## ECG awarded the “Management of EU Info Centre and EU Info Points 2017 – 2018” Project in BiH



among the citizens of BiH as well as to increase knowledge of the Country's accession process and its implications among different target groups.

The project is expected to go into full implementation in the first half of 2017, launching public awareness campaigns, public debates and organizing outreach events in designated locations.

## ECG has moved to a new location!



We are now located in New Belgrade's modern business building at the address of **Bulevar Mihaila Pupina 115v**.

## Links

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