



Ministry of European Integration  
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

**#EY  
ЗА ТЕБЕ**



**EU  
PRO+**

# MINUTES OF THE FIRST PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Belgrade, 09 December 2021



**UNOPS**

Implementing partner  
in 99 cities and municipalities in Serbia



## I. Agenda

### Introductory session

09.45 Arrival of the participants, registration

10:00 Welcome and introductory speeches

Jadranka Joksimović, Minister of European Integration

Emanuele Giaufret, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Serbia

10.20 Signing of Agreement for EU for COVID-19 Economic Recovery as a part of EU PRO Plus Programme

10.25 The end of the introductory session, Coffee break

### Working session

10.40 Welcome remarks by the Programme Steering Committee Chair

10:45 Terms of Reference for the work of the Programme Steering Committee

10:50 Findings from the Inception Period, Programme activities to date and the plan for the forthcoming period

11:15 Other business

11:30 End of the meeting

## II. Introductory session

Minister for European Integration Jadranka Joksimović and Ambassador Emanuele Giaufret, Head of the European Union Delegation to Serbia, attended the introductory session of the EU PRO Plus Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting, when they symbolically signed an agreement worth ten million Euros for recovery from COVID-19 to be added to the initial Programme budget.

## II. Working session

**Luka Pivljanin, Advisor at the Ministry of European Integration** thanked for the continuous support to the territorial local development that also included EU PRO Plus Programme and welcomed the new members of the Programme Steering Committee. He underlined the importance of their role in the PSC that encompassed directing the programme in order to most efficiently adjust the Programme to the medium and long-term policies of the institutions, in order to ensure results and sustainability. Pivljanin also presented currently absent PSC members Ana Stanković, Project Manager in the EU Delegation, and Branko Budimir, Assistant Minister for European Integration, who leads the entire IPA in the Ministry.

**Pivljanin** stated that the total programme budget of 40 million Euros included ten additional millions. The initial 30 million Euros was allocated from IPA for 2021, and then in mid-2020 a special action document was made to support the health system of the Republic of Serbia<sup>1</sup>, as a quick response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and to prevent long-term consequences for the Serbian economy. An additional ten million Euros have been earmarked for EU PRO Plus, while the same action document contains an additional seven million Euros related to support to the tourism sector, which is one of the most affected by the crisis and the resulting restrictive preventive measures introduced to curb the virus.

The EU PRO Plus Programme covers the region of central Serbia, all except the territory of the city of Belgrade, Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija. The implementation period has been extended from 36 to 42 months, taking into account certain structural issues and reforms that need to be implemented, primarily in the context of Chapter 22.

**Martin Klaucke, Head of Operation II, in the EU Delegation** noted that although the Programme had been signed a while ago, due to overlapping with the predecessor programme EU PRO and preparatory activities, the Programme Steering Committee had been delayed. However with public

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<sup>1</sup> Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 EU for Local Development Programme and EU for COVID 19 Economic Recovery

calls launched, as said, the real Programme activity started while introducing new innovative elements. After lengthy discussions between all the stakeholders about the design of this new phase, the way ahead was to try to strengthen the integrated, more systematic approach to local/regional development which moves away from individual and nurtures multi-municipal approach based on a clear development plan and coordination. He reiterated the expectation and importance of this strengthening the capacities at the local level, as local self-governments need to be able to implement these programmes independantly in the future once these kinds of projects were over.

**Marko Vujačić, UNOPS Head of Programmes** thanked the new and old members of the Committee for their support and patience so far, because as he said, with a lot of challenges and slow flow of some interventions at the beginning, the work on the programme would be intensified. He noted that the PSC was a very important support mechanism for the programme as it guided the preparation and development of activities, and had a role in monitoring progress, while providing coordination and synergy, and seeking solutions to problems.

Within the first item on the agenda related to the work of the Program Steering Committee, **Luka Pivljanin** announced that meetings would be held in line with the epidemiological situation, including online meetings, while the PSC would also use e-voting procedure as one of the ways to adopt decisions. He underlined that, following the example of the previous EU PRO programme, meetings would be held at least once a year in the field, in order to bring the work of the PSC closer to the beneficiaries and LSGs. He explained that the PSC members were expected to participate in the programme in line with the competencies of their ministries and provide strategic guidelines, adjust the programme operation to the medium-term and long-term policies of their institutions, as well as to take part in operational matters. The goal of the PSC is to coordinate activities, especially considering that these were interventions and activities to be implemented at the local level.

**Marko Vujačić** explained that the progress of the programme was slowed down due to the COVID-19 and transitions between the EU PRO and EU PRO Plus, as the completion of EU PRO was prolonged due to some disruptions in the procurement market. He stated that perhaps the key reason for this slowdown lies in the fact that the new programme would bring new ideas and certain new approaches. The programme would build on success stories from previous programmes, continue to support LSGs to improve public infrastructure, including business infrastructure, and support micro and small enterprises, either through direct grant support schemes or indirectly, such as the case of the call published for business support organisations, while the support to civil society organizations would be also continued. This programme brings a novelty related to development of a national system for a new approach to integrated territorial development, following the experiences, mechanisms and instruments that exist in the EU. The main difference is that this approach goes beyond the administrative boundaries of local self-governments, and focuses on the territories and inter-municipal cooperation. It also goes beyond the individual sector and strives for a holistic approach to development based on the comparative advantages of a particular territory in order to encourage LSGs to think differently about financing development, and to jointly identify

new mechanisms. This change implies a process and consultation with DEU and MEI to better understand what are expectations from this programme, especially in the sphere of capacity building and introduction of integrated territorial development. As Vujačić concluded, a solid level of agreement has been achieved so far, four public calls were approved and with the successful first PSC meeting a solid foundation for accelerating activities and leading to the first concrete results was laid.

**Olivera Kostić, EU PRO Plus Programme Manager**, thanked PSC members for the support in the implementation through bilateral meetings, revisions, and comments and suggestions provided to public calls. She pointed out the key recommendations from the inception period that implied that the introduction of an integrated approach needed to happen gradually so the programme activities were adjusted to them. Kostić also underlined the importance of coordination at the local, regional and national level, vertical coordination and networking of activities, synergies, etc. The recommendations and findings from the inception period also indicated the need for stronger support in recovering from the Covid 19 effects, both in strengthening the health system and through a concrete contribution to the local level with future public calls. Presenting the Programme results and the first public calls, Kostić added that the Programme also deals with cross-cutting themes that were integrated in all activities and public calls, such as good governance, environmental protection, digitalization, digital transformation, and social aspects.

**Stefan Kah, expert for territorial development** explained the concept of the integrated sustainable territorial development (ISTD) that included two dimensions within integration, one that refer to different themes, different sectors, different types of the activities, and the other that implies integration in terms of territories, between various levels of the multi-level governance system from national to local and everything that is in between. He said that sustainability in terms of ISTD had three dimensions, economic, social and environmental, but is also contemplated in terms of time and durability so that whatever was planned and done would have an impact after the programme ended. He said that the term territorial meant that it was placed based on the strengths of a territory while the territories are defined according to the needs, not according to the administrative borders necessarily.

He said that in the EU Cohesion policy, ISTD was used for the first time in an organised manner in the finishing programme period of 2014 to 2020. There are mainly three types of ISTD tools: the first is ITI - integrated territorial investments dealing mainly with urban territories but that can also be rural, or mixed. The important aspect is that they are functional territories, so they cover more than one LSG territory of various sizes, and this has been adopted or used in 330 strategies across Europe. Second type are sustainable urban development (SUD) models that are strictly urban and encompass only one municipality and across the EU there are 760 SUDs. The third type is a community led local development (CLLD) approach similar to LEADER, which is the rural development model for bottom-up development. This mostly a rural tool (also can be urban) is characterized by the strong and obligatory element of the participation of the local population. There are roughly 800 CLLD strategies across the EU. In the 2021- 2027 period, the emphasis on

territorial instruments is further increased, so these experiences made in 2014-20 are used by the different member states to build, expand and professionalize these models that have been implemented so far. He explained that there are 5 policy objectives. The fifth one is for territorial development named "Europe closer to citizens" which is about fostering sustainable integrated development and of all types of territories.

**Olivera Kostić** presented the remaining two programme results and published calls, including the Public Call for Business Support Organizations, an activity that should directly contribute to improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. Through this intervention, a large number of enterprises are expected to introduce innovations, digitalize their services, expand into new markets and improve their resilience to crises. She also announced the next calls to be published- a public call for small and medium enterprises, which is being developed primarily in coordination with the Ministry of Economy and the Development Agency of Serbia, as well as a call for support for business start-ups led by women and youth. Additionally there will be support for a better business environment through economic structure projects and development of technical documentation for these projects, as well as the public call aimed at improving services that LSGs provide to the economy. As part of the third programme result, she announced a public call for local infrastructure projects which, according to experience, contribute the most to improving the quality of life at the local level, and which is expected to include 30 projects. Regarding the public call for strengthening social services, she said it was important to provide support to civil society organisations in the context of Covid, in order to independently or in partnership with LSGs improve the services they provide at the local level. The call is to be published in January. As she explained, out of the additional 10 million Euros, a part of the funds was already used for urgent procurement of vaccine transport vehicles, for hiring health workers in 23 health centers, disinfectants and disinfection devices installed in schools across Serbia and triage containers.

As part of the activities expected in the coming period, she stated that the first beneficiaries whose applications would be approved within three public calls would be known by the end of March, or in early April. Further, the consultations for the public call for the improvement of services provided by local self-governments to the business started while its draft would be subject to approval at the next PSC meeting. She underlined that after the process of drafting territorial strategies, which is expected to last 12 months, a larger grant scheme of 10 million Euros would be published to support the implementation of integral projects identified through these strategies.

**Marko Vujačić** referred to the epidemiological situation and the impact on the Programme work, but noted that by using online and hybrid mechanisms, the team managed to follow the course of activities. Only in the event that the epidemiological trends worsen, then it may be expected that partners and beneficiaries could be negatively affected, which then would reflect on the programme itself. He added that there were reasons for concern about the upcoming elections in April, as they may cause some slowdown before and after the elections because development in that period would not necessarily be the number one priority for institutions even at the local level. In this regard it is important to finalise two public calls by the end of March in order to start the

implementation of the projects without hindrance. In the context of an integrated approach to territorial development, Vujačić stressed the importance of cooperation with LSGs, regional development agencies and national institutions in order to achieve planned results that include building or strengthening the institutional framework and administrative capacity, technical capacity, understanding, and behaviour change. The Committee would be regularly updated on progress and would be involved in discussions as well as in finding solutions to possible challenges, especially when they require more complex institutional changes within which the support of the Board is welcome.

**Luka Pivljanin** said that the first Programme result concerning integrated territorial development was related to Chapter 22 and that the plan was to build a system for the use of cohesion funds at the local level in accordance with negotiations at the national level, while EU PRO Plus would provide support to beneficiaries and ensure they could see the benefits of what they were working on. On the other hand, by implementing these types of grant schemes, the PSC has the opportunity to identify shortcomings, in which projects the beneficiaries were interested, as well as to obtain information for the overall system building process. He added that coordination was necessary in order to really utilize all the advantages of the approach and in order to avoid situations in which the strategies were developed within the projects without any impact.

Pivljanin asked for feedback and coordination with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), the Republic Secretariat for Public Policies (RSJP) and with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (MPALSG) so that the process has the real aim and realize its potential.

**Katarina Obradović Jovanović, Assistant Minister of Economy** asked if the first call for this new approach was primarily related to the development of strategic documents, and what the estimated value of an individual strategy was. **Pivljanin** explained that the Programme provides technical assistance in the form of expert support, therefore the price of an individual strategy was non-financial, i.e. it would be known only when completed in accordance with certain methodologies, while depending on the type of strategy. Some cities have already developed an urban development strategy (SUD), so the focus was on those yet to be developed, while in terms of the ITI strategy, the division of defined functional areas in Serbia does not exist as it is the case in the EU. As the country is not yet a member state, different models can be tested, so it is left to the LSGs to choose the way they would group, which would be then reflected in the number of points they received.

**Viktor Veljović, menadžer sektora za razvijanje kapaciteta** je u više detalja predstavio uslove prijave na Javni poziv za podnošenje prijava za izradu teritorijalnih strategija, a koji su podrazumevali da LSU imaju status grada te da mogu da apliciraju, ili samostalno ili u partnerstvu sa najmanje 3 LSU ali da obezbede prostorni kontinuitet, tj. fizički povezanu celinu. Prateći nacrt prostornog plana republike Srbije koji je definisao sistem urbanih centara, zaključeno je da su neki centri preko 40.000 stanovnika i veći urbani centri oni koji imaju potencijalno kapacitet za testiranje ovakvog

instrumenta. Kapaciteti na koje može da se računa i koji će biti uključeni u izradu ovih kompleksnih mehanizama su urbanističke službe koje izrađuju planove, regionalne razvojne agencija, kancelarije za lokalni ekonomski razvoj, odeljenja za društvene delatnosti i odeljenja za zaštitu životne sredine. Imajući u vidu iskustvo nekih zemalja članica EU koje su imale ozbiljnih teškoća da instaliraju određene mehanizme fokus će u radu verovatno biti jačim LSU a da se posmatraju relacije manjih LSU kao i usluge koje veće LSU pružaju manjim LSU. Bitan je i uticaj koji manje LSU koje su više ruralnog karaktera pružaju kao usluge npr. u snabdevaju hranom poljoprivrednim proizvodima i svemu onom što je značajno velikim LSU.

**Katarina Obradović Jovanović**, Assistant Minister of Economy, wanted to know how this activity fits into the Law on Planning System and where is the location of these planning documents as well as whether they are completed according to the methodology of Law on Planning System or some other law, **Veljović** explained that these documents are public policy documents, and as such, because they do not have an administrative division, they fall under sub-national strategies, and they must be harmonized with all relevant planning documents, as defined by the Law on Planning System. As the only challenge, Veljović sees the fact that these strategies do not envisage the development of action plans, which are envisaged, for example, by the Law on Planning System, but imply definition at the level of measures. In order to start the implementation, some key strategic or priority projects for a certain territory will be defined. The time period for drafting such strategies lasts at least 20 years due to the complexity of topics covered, for example, brownfield rehabilitation or rehabilitation of informal settlements or substandard settlements, which means that the time period is much longer than standard development plans which are mainly operational documents helping the development of key local projects, but due to the territorial connection, this time horizon is longer.

**Sandra Nedeljković Acting Deputy Director of the Public Investment Management Office (PIMO)** presented several examples of projects that included an integral approach, among them the Government working group for the Ovčar-Kablar canyon, established last year with an emphasis on integrated development development, where the goal is to network several sectoral policies in order to implement infrastructure projects. She also gave the example of the working group for the south, where six LSG units in the south of Serbia (Leskovac and Prokuplje as cities) were connected according to the same principle. EU PRO Plus was acquainted with all those projects that were included in the shortlist delegated by the LSGs and line ministries (for example, the road across Radan Mountain, which is of strategic importance for the region due to the fact that it connects several local governments). She stated that the goal would be to merge strategic priorities through infrastructures and large capital investments of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and by doing this to recognize a territory that is very important, for example for spa tourism. She also emphasized that there are a lot of capacities that are neglected and need to be renewed, and it is very important that everyone networks and gives their support, especially since some plans already exist and should be included in this strategic document. The main goal of strategic documents is to raise funds and implement something significant.



**Pivljanin stated that all the existing elements will be connected through this approach,** and SWOT analysis of a certain territory will give a systematic overview of what is relevant for a given territory. The goal of the approach is to optimize the combination of funding sources, and therefore he invites everyone to cooperate and better prepare the strategy so when access to structural funds, cohesion funds becomes possible, the strategy is ready and compatible with what will be expected. A potential problem may be the introduction of certain strategic documents that represent something that will potentially be available when Serbia joins the EU, which is why everything is being done through Chapter 22, with its own preparation dynamics that will probably be accelerated in the future. Pivljanin also emphasized the importance of coordination with LSGs so that the strategy does not become a document that will be made only for the purpose of obtaining funds, but that the process itself is meaningful.

**Ivan Milivojević, Deputy Secretary General of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM),** confirmed the need for coordination and he mentioned the meeting with the EU PRO Plus program in relation to the fact that EXCHANGE 6 supports local governments in developing development plans. The experience of the SCTM shows that the multiplication, creation and implementation of strategic documents at the local level is often a problem for LSGs, and in the case of territorial and local development strategies, the problem could be harmonization, ie. how will the measures and goals they recognized in one of those strategies be harmonized, depending on which comes first. He pointed out the importance of coordination, for example SCTM cooperated with RSJP and developed a methodological tool for LSGs for the development of local development plans. He suggested that some of these tools can be used in developing these strategies, of course if it is consistent with all the procedures typical for this kind of regional strategy. According to the SCTM records, only 17 LSGs have adopted development plans so far, 51 LSGs have an assembly decision as a start of the process, or are in some of the phases of the development, and more than half of the LSGs have not even initiated that process. As Milivojevic said, coordination is especially important considering the short deadlines and weak capacities of the LSGs.

**Marko Vujacić** emphasized that although this iteration will include the development of planning documents, the development of strategies and the like, most of the funds will still be spent on very specific projects. He pointed out that this is a preparation for the next period when the country becomes a full member of the EU, citing the example of Croatia, which in the IPA cycle from 2014 to 2020 through the ITI mechanism attracted 350 million euros of support, which unfortunately LSGs in Serbia could not withdraw because they have to have developed strategic documents, and only through model testing, the Government of Serbia can have a clear understanding of how the system should look like.

**Viktor Veljović** explained that these instruments are primarily designed to connect sources of financing from EU structural funds through operational programs, but that in Serbia, although there are many available sources of financing, LGSs can still coordinate them better. That is why it is important for LSGs to start cooperating primarily within their structures, and also coordinate with the line ministries that are withdrawing other lines of funding in the implementation of funds.

**Pivljanin** pointed out the necessity of building capacities, through pilot projects, practical examples and attempts not only in this regard but in relation to the entire Chapter 22, and he underlined that Strategies should contribute to the use of different sources of funding and to the transfer of priorities from the central level to the local level.

**Olivera Kostić** responded to **Vera Veljanovski, Head of the Department for Implementation and Monitoring of Implementation of Projects Funded by EU Funds and Other Sources from the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs** about publishing date of the Public Call for Local Infrastructure Projects and online info sessions schedule, said that the call was opened on December 3, 2021, and translated into Serbian, while six info-sessions will be held live and three in online format. The call will be open until January 31, and the only anticipated challenge for LSGs is the requirement that the application forms are filled out in English, which has been implemented for the last ten years. LSGs have shown interest and according to the first records, 37 projects are already in preparation, stressing out that it is mandatory for the projects to have prepared technical documentation and a construction permit. She mentioned the innovations on the EU PRO Plus website, which is now interactive and enables easier communication and information location.

**Pivljanin** asked the Steering Committee to coordinate with each other about public calls and to get involved in setting criteria and giving feedback from the field. He asked EU PRO Plus to share information about info-sessions with the Steering committee and asked if the members of the Committee will be invited to attend the evaluation commission as observers in this program as well.

**Kostić confirmed** the participation of the line ministries and institutions in the capacity of observers in the evaluation commissions as very useful for the previous Program, and the intention is to continue with that practice in the EU PRO Plus programme. As an example, she stated that the EU PRO Plus accepted the suggestion from the Ministry of Labor, and included the possibility for LSGs to apply with two project proposals if one relates to health / social care in the context of COVID-19 for the Public Call for Local Infrastructure Projects. Kostić invited national institutions members of the Steering committee to engage in the implementation of the Program, through quarterly meetings and coordination, especially in the coming period which will be very dynamic. In the end, she expressed hope that the next meeting will be held at the beginning of the year which will include new public calls that are currently being prepared, and then one more meeting at the end of March and the beginning of April where the results of public calls that are published now will be presented.

## EU PRO Plus Programme Steering Committee Participants

9 December 2021, Palace of Serbia

	Name	Surname	Organisation	Position
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1	Jadranka	Joksimović	Ministry of European Integration	Minister
2	Emanuele	Giaufret	EU Delegation to Serbia	Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of European Union to the Republic of Serbia
3	Martin	Klaucke	EU Delegation to Serbia	Head of Operations II
4	Jovana	Joksimović	Ministry of European Integration	
5	Luka	Pivljanin	Ministry of European Integration	Advisor
6	Ivan	Milivojević	Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities	Deputy Secretary General
7	Nevena	Karanović	Ministry of European Integration	Cabinet
8	Nevena	Milić	Ministry of European Integration	Communication sector
9	Ljubica	Zavišić	Ministry of European Integration	
10	Sandra	Nedeljković	Public Investment Management Office PIMO	Acting Deputy Director PIMO
11	Katarina	Obradović Jovanović	Ministry of Economy	Assistant Minister
12	Milja	Vukovic	Ministry of Economy	Group for the implementation of IPA EU-funded projects
13	Vera	Veljanovski	Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Policy	Head of the Department for Implementation and Monitoring of the Implementation of Projects Funded from EU Funds and Other Sources
14	Vesna	Mirosavljević	Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veterans and Social Policy	Head of the Department for Legal and Normative Affairs and Systemic Issues in the Sector for Social Protection.

15	Una	Pavlović	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Head of Sector for International Cooperation
16	Uroš	Pribićević	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Acting Assistant Minister in the Sector for International Cooperation
<b>UNOPS</b>				
17	Marko	Vujačić	UNOPS Serbia Multi-Country Office	Head of Programme
18	Olivera	Kostić	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Programme Manager
19	Enis	Ujkanović	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	SME Sector Manager
20	Milica	Korać	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	SME Sector Officer
21	Ivana	Popović	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Communications Manager
22	Duška	Medić	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Programme Assistant
23	Marija	Radulović	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Communications Officer
24	Viktor	Veljović	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Capacity Building Sector Manager
25	Biljana	Kerić	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Officer for Social Cohesion and Gender Equality
26	Dragana	Novaković	UNOPS - EU PRO Plus	Infrastructure Sector Manager
<b>ZOOM online participants</b>				
1	Nevena	Dučić	Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure	Sector for International Cooperation
2	Jelena	Sedlarević	Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure	
3	Mila	Stanković	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government	
4	Stefan	Kah	UNOPS	
5	Daliborka	Kolar	UNOPS Serbia Multi-Country Office	Head of Support Services

LIST OF COMMON ABBREVIATIONS	
CFPs	Calls for Proposals (CFPs)

<b>DEU</b>	Delegation of the European Union (DEU)
<b>DoA</b>	Description of Action (DoA)
<b>LSGs</b>	Local self-government units (LSGs)
<b>MCTI</b>	Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (MCTI)
<b>ME</b>	Ministry of Economy (ME)
<b>PSC</b>	Programme Steering Committee (PSC)
<b>PIMO</b>	Public Investment Management Office (PIMO)
<b>RDAs</b>	Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
<b>SCTM</b>	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM)
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)