



Ministry of European Integration
REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

#EY
ЗА ТЕБЕ



EU
PRO+

QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT

Jul - Sep
2022

(DRAFT)



Implementing partner
in 99 cities and municipalities in Serbia

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Overall objective: | To contribute to socio-economic development, prosperity and social cohesion of Serbian society |
| Purpose: | To decrease socio-economic disparities in two regions within Serbia |
| Budget: | 40 million Euros |
| Donor: | The European Union |
| Start date: | 1 January 2021 |
| End date: | 30 June 2024 |
| Programme area: | The Regions of Šumadija and Western Serbia and the Southern and Eastern Serbia |
| Implementing partner: | United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) |
| Report date: | 27 October 2022 |
| Period covered: | 1 July– 30 September 2022 |
| Prepared by: | UNOPS |

Acronyms

| | |
|---------------|--|
| BSO | Business Support Organisation |
| CLLD | Community LED Local Development territorial development instrument |
| CFP | Call for Proposals |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DEU | Delegation of the European Union |
| EU | European Union |
| GAP | Gender Action Plan |
| GAU | Grant Administration Unit |
| GG | Good Governance |
| GMT | Grant Management Team |
| GSA | Grant Support Agreement |
| ITI | Integrated Territorial Investment |
| ISTD | Integrated Sustainable Territorial Development |
| LAG | Local Action Group |
| LSG | Local Self-Government |
| MLEVSA | Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs |
| MPALSG | Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Government |
| MoE | Ministry of Economy |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MEI | Ministry of European Integration |
| PSC | Programme Steering Committee |
| RDA | Regional Development Agency |
| SCTM | Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities |
| SME | Small and Medium Sized Enterprises |
| SUD | Sustainable Urban Development |
| URBACT | Urban Development Network Programme |



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1. SUMMARY

The progress in implementation of the **European Union for Local Development Programme - EU PRO Plus** continued in the third quarter of the year. Implementation of 33 local infrastructure projects, and 16 projects implemented by business support organisations (BSOs) commenced, along with development of 12 territorial strategies. Additionally, as a result of the Call for Strengthening Social Services [twenty beneficiary civil society organisations \(CSOs\)](#) were endorsed and a [Public Call for Economic Infrastructure Projects](#) was launched.

The first of several analyses which shall contribute to the **establishment of the national model for integrated and sustainable territorial development (ISTD)** has been finalised, and the Comparative analysis of six selected EU countries on ISTD approaches has been developed. The analysis provides critical information which should be considered for the establishment of the most appropriate model for use of territorial development instruments, and decentralised management of EU funds, which is an important contribution to establishment of policy and institutional framework for pursuit of balanced development.

The process of development of territorial strategies in seven Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and five Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) territories with a total of 31 LSGs, formally started with the establishment of the institutional framework by adopting decisions on initiation of strategy development processes and appointment of working groups for development of strategies. The territorial strategies will create conditions for use of multiple sources of funding for joint socio-economic initiatives and more equal distribution of funding to particular territories.

With regards to **enhanced economic growth** the projects under implementation of BSOs are progressing, with six out of the 16 grantees identifying 162 SME beneficiaries, and capacity building activities in the areas of SME resilience, digitalisation, marketing and internationalisation, access to financial instruments, standardisation and greening of their businesses and circular economy underway.

Additionally, evaluation of over 600 applications received in response to the [Call for Procurement of Equipment and Provision of Services for MSEs](#) is being finalised, and is expected to be concluded by early November 2022. Through this assistance, the Programme shall directly support at least 100 enterprises to improve their competitiveness through procurement of equipment which shall create positive effects on the value chain, as well as socio-economic impact on the local communities.

Furthermore, the Programme has extended the support to local governments to improve conditions for investments into industry and tourism through the [Call for Economic Infrastructure Projects](#) launched in September 2022. This activity should create conditions for investments of at least 25 million Euros, and creation of hundreds of new jobs.

Significant progress has been made in implementation of activities related to **improved social cohesion and social infrastructure** with activities under the 33 grants for improvement of local infrastructure initiated. A vast majority of procurement processes for construction works are initiated, eleven contracts signed with contractors, and works on reconstruction of kindergartens, health centres, a school, a science centre, a water supply system, sports and recreational facilities and areas and a multi-functional cultural facility have commenced. The construction works are planned to be executed during the current construction season in most beneficiary local governments, with visible impact on the quality of services provided in these facilities to be registered in early 2023.

Following endorsement of the Programme Steering Committee, preparations for the award of the 20 projects for strengthening social services are underway, and are to commence in October 2022. Finally, the Programme support in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is concluded, with delivery of the remaining disinfection devices.

The Programme remained highly visible during the quarter. Interest of the public in the ongoing activities, and public calls was high, as evidenced by the recorded 4,581 visits of 2,771 unique visitors to the Programme website. Additionally, the visits of the Head of Cooperation (HoC) of the EU Delegation to Programme beneficiaries and meetings with local stakeholders attracted attention of the media and the public. The visits of the HoC included meetings with 13 mayors, representatives of five regional development agencies and visits to over a dozen EU PRO Plus projects. This resulted in substantial media coverage of 137 media reports out of which 40 were published in the national media.

With the market value uncertainties and exchange rate fluctuations, **Programme exposure to risks during the quarter was significant**, however successfully proactively managed. When it comes to projects under implementation, emphasis on the expected risks in the preparatory phase of projects have yielded results, and, thus far, no major fluctuations between the expected and actual values of procurement processes have been recorded during the quarter. Likewise, as a risk management method, the Programme has opted for recommending the award of a fewer number of grants for strengthening social services with a reserve list which will be triggered in case the prices of the already awarded projects remain without significant changes to their value.

Additionally, prolonged coordination and decision making processes have influenced delays in implementation of several activities, including initiation of implementation of projects relating to strengthening social services, launching of the public call for economic infrastructure projects and organisation of study visits, which influence overall implementation period of the Programme. Mitigation measures, including enhancement of regularity of Programme Steering Committee meetings and potential extension of the implementation period, will be expedited.

This Report provides review of progress and performance, update on management and coordination issues, review of assumptions and risks, quality and sustainability considerations, insight into the key outputs for the next reporting period, and lessons learned. A number of annexes give the readers opportunity to get in depth knowledge of some specific actions taken by the Programme.

2. QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT

2.1 Review of project progress

2.1.1 Policy and Programme Context

[Urban Development Network Programme - URBACT IV \(2021 – 2027\)](#), the fourth iteration of the urban development programme, was officially adopted by the European Commission in September. The programme will continue to support cities working on integrated, sustainable urban development through EU cooperation. Since 2002, [URBACT](#) has been driving change all over Europe by enabling the cooperation and idea exchange amongst cities within thematic networks, by building the skills of local stakeholders in the design and implementation of integrated and participatory policies, and by sharing knowledge and good city practices.

In addition to EU Member states and Norway and Switzerland included as partner states, IPA beneficiary countries, including Serbia, are included for the first time in the programme. The cities from IPA countries will receive support related to the design of integrated action plans for sustainable urban development and will have the opportunity to share experience with EU peers supporting the preparation of these countries for accession to the EU. The first call will open in January 2023.

Upon adoption of [the Law on Social Entrepreneurship](#) at the beginning of the year, the [Council for its implementation was established](#) in July 2022 by the representatives of public institutions, civil sector and social enterprises. The role of the Council is to provide key guidelines for the improvement of the social economy sector, including the creation of a social entrepreneurship development programme. Creation of this strategic document should enable direct support for approximately 500 companies of social entrepreneurship and encourage the creation of new companies that will contribute to the development of a more inclusive society.

The Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue announced [elections for members of national councils of 23 national minorities for 13 November 2022](#). The members of the councils of 19 national minorities will be elected in direct elections, while four minorities will be elected through the electoral assembly. The members of national minorities can register in the special voter list until 27 October, when the list will be closed and when it will be known exactly how many members of national minorities will participate in the November elections for members of national councils.

In order to improve the quality of legal and strategic documents in the context of human rights and social inclusion, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue with the support of the UN Human Rights Team, presented the [tool for the introduction of the Leave No One Behind \(LNOB\) principle into legislative and strategic acts of the Republic of Serbia](#). The [tool](#) provides clear guidelines for the implementation of the human rights-based approach and the LNOB principle in all stages through which legislative and strategic acts pass, thereby ensuring that the most marginalised and excluded groups are recognised and involved. The tool is primarily intended for those developing and adopting legislative and strategic acts at all levels, as well as for all other stakeholders who are involved in their development.

Innovation fund has published three public calls during August and September. [Katapult](#), a Call dedicated to support startup entrepreneurs, by providing mentoring support and grants for technological development and innovations. [Early Development Programme](#) (Mini Grants Programme) published with the objective to stimulate innovative entrepreneurship and creation of innovative companies with high commercialization potential and a scalable business model. [Matching Grants Programme](#) published with aims to encourage established and profitable micro, small and medium-sized companies in the Republic of Serbia to engage development and commercialization of technological innovations in the form of new and improved products, services, technologies, and technological processes. All three programs focus on most innovative companies in various phases of development. Although the EU PRO Plus programme also www.euproplus.org.rs

supports startups there might be small or no overlap with the Innovation fund programmes as this support is primarily focused on social impact and regional development.

2.1.2 Progress towards achieving objectives

The Programme is setting the groundwork for joint socio-economic development initiatives and more equal distribution of funding through development of territorial strategies which has commenced during the quarter. Additionally, the comparative analysis on usage of territorial instruments developed by the Programme will support establishment of the most appropriate model for use of territorial development instruments and decentralised management of EU funds, eventually contributing to a more balanced development.

As a result of the activities implemented by the Business Support Organisations (BSOs), and the expected direct assistance to Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) based on the evaluation of the applications which should be concluded in November 2022, competitiveness of over 550 enterprises will be enhanced. This will boost economic growth at the local level through creation of jobs and strengthening of value chains while contributing to social development through corporate-social responsibility (CSR) activities which will be implemented by beneficiary MSEs.

Additionally, the Programme assistance to local governments to enhance economic infrastructure through the Public Call under implementation, should create conditions for investments of at least 25 million Euros in industry and tourism, and also support creation of project pipeline through development of technical documentation creating conditions for future investments.

The initiated works on local infrastructure projects shall create benefits for over 23,000 citizens of Boljevac, Doljevac, Babušnica and Žagubica, while the Programme support to the improved functioning of educational, cultural, sports and health, and social protection institutions overall should contribute to enhanced public service provision to over 190,000 inhabitants in 32 local governments. Additionally, over 2,000 disadvantaged people will benefit from social services to be strengthened through 20 projects endorsed during the quarter.

2.1.3 Results and Activities

Result 1: Improved development planning in targeted municipalities and introduction of the ITI concept

The Programme continued the activities related to introduction of territorial development concept. The first document from the set of studies anticipated for the establishment of the national model for ISTD - the Comparative analysis of six EU member states on usage of territorial instruments is developed.

The process of development of territorial strategies in seven Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and five Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) territories with a total of 31 LSGs, formally started with the establishment of the institutional framework - Municipal Assembly decisions on starting development of strategies, establishment of working groups and development of questionnaire for preparation of the contextual analysis.

Activity 1.1 Enhancing national capacity to introduce integrated territorial development

The Programme's international experts completed the work on a Comparative Analysis of the ISTD

approaches in EU Member States¹, focusing on six EU countries² selected together with MEI. The analysis presents the key features of integrated territorial development in the selected countries in terms of their governance and implementation procedures, highlighting challenges and lessons learned. By illustrating a variety of different models used to implement the territorial dimension of EU Cohesion Policy, all of which are tailored to their specific institutional and territorial contexts, the report constitutes a key resource for the forthcoming tasks within Result 1. Upon MEI review, the analysis will be consolidated and finalised.

The Programme started the preparation of the overview of the EU Member States' cases regarding capacities needed for management of territorial mechanisms, in relation to requirements to the Serbian context, by agreeing the scope of the document. The report, which is complementary to the Comparative analysis, will be prepared by the end of the year.

The planned two-day training on territorial development instruments (Module I of Capacity Building Programme) for national level planned for September has been postponed. The training will be delivered once the Comparative Analysis of EU member states is reviewed and more details on the potential roles of the various relevant national-level institutions are known. After the review, the involvement of other national level institutions in the EU PRO Plus capacity building activities and Module I in particular will be reconsidered.

The draft revised concept note on the IT tool and Terms of Reference (ToR) for ISTD networking platform is prepared and will be furtherly discussed after the review of the Comparative Analysis.

The Programme revised ToR for two local specialist positions to support preparation of the Analysis of Serbian legal framework in relation to the requirements of the EU legal framework for territorial development and usage of territorial instruments under the EU cohesion policy, as well as practice in EU member states, as agreed with MEI. The vacancy will be advertised upon consultation with MEI and the Cohesion Policy Project that is creating a framework for the overall Cohesion Policy in Serbia.

Activity 1.2 Improving capacities of municipalities and regional development agencies to introduce concepts of integrated territorial planning

The provision of technical support to development of territorial strategies started with the establishment of the institutional framework required for the formal procedure of the planning process. To date, 29 out of 31 Municipal Assembly decisions for initiating the process of strategy development were adopted, while Požega and Bajina Bašta entered into an adoption procedure. The working groups are established for nine territories³, while the appointments of representatives from institutions needed for formal decision are still in procedure in Loznica, Užice and Zaječar, and it is expected to be completed early in October 2022.

The approach for provision of technical support to ITI strategies is defined, and will be done by in-house experts, which includes two international and five local experts, thus other experts from the expert pool will work on particular cases. Initial meetings with experts were held in August and September and an overall approach was agreed. The Programme prepared a questionnaire for contextual analysis⁴ for both SUD and ITI territories, which will be distributed to LSGs in the beginning of October. The draft contextual analysis with preliminary SWOT analysis for all 12 territories is planned to be completed by the end of November.

The Programme developed the Outline of the Study Visit to the Netherlands and Belgium⁵, which is planned to be conducted from 5 to 9 December, for the representatives of the cities of Niš and Kragujevac

¹ See Annex I Attn I_Comparative analysis of EU member states

² Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechia

³ Bor, Kragujevac, Niš, Novi Pazar, Kruševac, Leskovac, Pirot, Smederevo and Šabac

⁴ See Annex I Attn II_SUD and ITI context analysis questionnaire_SRB

⁵ See Annex I Attn III_Study visit NL and BE outline

as the ITI territories of two largest urban areas in the Programme AoR with stronger urban centres and wider areas covering also small cities and territories with significant natural and cultural heritage.

Activity 1.3 Implementing activities contributing to socio-economic growth deriving from integrated territorial planning strategies

The activity is planned for late 2023.

Result 2: Enhanced economic growth in targeted municipalities

With publishing of the Call for economic infrastructure projects opportunities are provided to LSGs to enhance economic infrastructure through realisation of industry investments, tourism or innovative business development initiatives. The realisation of project activities aims to create new jobs and facilitate a minimum 25 million Euros of new investments. Additionally, the LSGs will have an opportunity to obtain support for development of technical documentation that would provide the necessary technical preconditions for further industry/tourism investments.

According to project applications 425 SMEs are expected to directly benefit from the BSO projects activities, while thus far six BSOs have selected 142 SMEs beneficiaries while 91 have already participated in some of the capacity building activities in the areas of SME resilience, digitalisation, marketing and internationalisation, access to financial instruments, standardisation and greening of their businesses and Circular Economy.

Administrative and eligibility checks for the Call for Procurement of Equipment and Introduction of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises and 80% of technical evaluation of more than 600 received applications has been completed. At least 100 enterprises are expected to be supported through this initiative resulting in job creation and increased productivity.

Activity 2.1 Developing economic infrastructure and business related services at the local level

Upon the PSC endorsement, the [Public Call for proposals for economic infrastructure projects](#) was advertised on 26 September 2022. The Call includes assistance through three LOTS - for construction or reconstruction of industrial zones and other business - related facilities, for development of sustainable tourism and for development of technical documentation for economic infrastructure projects. The information about the Call is shared directly with the 99 participating and six info sessions, along with an orientation meeting with RDAs planned for October.

Considering a two-step process is envisaged, the deadline for submission of concept notes is set to 25 October 2022.

Activity 2.2 Enhancing competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises contributing to economic stability of local communities

Implementation of sixteen BSO projects is underway. During the quarter meetings with all sixteen BSO grantees have been conducted, including the update of work plans, procurement and financial plans. Total of 104 procurement processes are planned to be conducted within these projects, out of which 43 have already been completed. Six out of the 16 BSOs have conducted the SME identification and selection processes, and a total of 148 SMEs thus far have been selected for the support. Initial training for SMEs has started for 91 SME beneficiaries. First delivery of equipment within these grants is expected in October 2022.

Public calls have been organised and selection of the beneficiaries finalised by Business Development www.euproplus.org.rs

Centre Kragujevac, Regional Development Agency Braničevo-Podunavlje (RDA BP), Regional Development Agency Šumadija and Pomoravlje, Inter-Municipal Union of Agricultural Associations (MOUPU), Business Innovation Centre Kragujevac and Centre NIT. Eleven kick off events and orientation meetings were conducted informing potential beneficiaries and the wider public on project objectives and activities.

Several trainings took place during the quarter. Ten in person and three online training events have been conducted covering subjects on digitalisation, improvement of production processes and access to finance. Business Incubator Centar Yumco organised a round table on Circular Economy and the Regional Development Agency Braničevo-Podunavlje (RDA BP) organised a Gastro workshop.

In addition to above, through help desk service provided by The Centre for the development of Jablanica and Pčinja districts a total of 126 SME received consulting services, mentoring and training on business improvement in areas such as E-trade, Digitalisation, Marketing, Access to finance, Export opportunities and regulations, Innovations and Technical assistance for available public calls.

Evaluation process of the [Public Call for Procurement of Equipment and Provision of Services for MSEs](#) is underway. Administrative and eligibility checks of all submitted applications were completed while there are 20% of applications to pass technical evaluation. Upon completion of this process verification visits will take place in late October and first half of November 2022.

Result 3: Improved social infrastructure and social cohesion in targeted municipalities

The 33 local infrastructure projects under implementation are contributing to the improved functioning of educational, cultural, sports and health, and social protection institutions, while a few projects contribute to improved communal infrastructure and the functioning of public institutions contributing to around 190,000 beneficiaries. During the reporting period activities providing benefits to around 23,000 beneficiaries will be implemented through projects in which the realisation of infrastructure interventions had already started: Boljevac, Doljevac, Babušnica and Žagubica.

Twenty project proposals for supporting strengthening of social services in 23 LSGs⁶ through joint cooperation of civil and public sectors are endorsed for funding by the PSC. These interventions will mainly focus on improving services provided to children and young people from vulnerable groups, including the services of a personal companion of a child, neurofeedback therapy, day care centres for children with disabilities and behavioural problems, day care centres for street children, as well as home care services for adults and the elderly, personal assistance for people with disabilities and other social protection and health care services. Furthermore, these projects should contribute to increased resilience of social service providers for possible future emergency situations, as well as to reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 on the quality of life of vulnerable groups. The implementation of the activity is set to start in Q4 providing benefits to over 2,000 disadvantaged people.

Closing of 23 grants provided to medical institutions in preventing and combating COVID-19 through engagement of medical and non-medical teams is in the final phase.

Activity 3.1 Developing and improving infrastructure which contributes to enhanced quality of life

The implementation of the 33 local infrastructure grants is well underway with the Programme completing the payment of its first tranche of contribution to the dedicated municipal sub-accounts in July and with eleven LSGs transferring their portion of contribution during the reporting period. Twenty nine projects

⁶ Kuršumljija, Prijepolje, Bojnik, Lebane, Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Velika Plana, Bor, Zaječar, Negotin, Leskovac, Babušnica, Trstenik, Sokobanja, Ub, Čičevac, Čajetina, Novi Pazar, Loznica, Ražanj, Niš, Čuprija, Žitorađa
www.euproplus.org.rs

initiated and advertised public procurements for works with the remaining four (4) pending mainly on the completion of design for execution works as a prerequisite for finalisation of procurement documentation. Upon the successful completion of public procurement processes, eleven contracts for execution of works with the most favourable bidders were signed.⁷ The municipalities of Boljevac, Doljevac, Žagubica and Babušnica are, thus far, most advanced in project implementation as the execution of works started at the end of August/September. During August, the grant agreement with the municipality of Bosilegrad was amended based on a budget modification reflecting an increase of beneficiary cost-share covering the difference in price of about 100,000 USD in comparison to the original project budget reflecting the market price increase and the finalisation of the execution design. With the first transfers to the sub-accounts, the format of financial cards was shared with the grantees thus enabling registration of transfers from and to the sub-account. A monitoring tool was developed to register the progress of all relevant activities during the implementation of grants, and the format of monthly reports to track the overall progress of implementation was agreed with the grantees.

During the reporting period, the Programme was officially informed by the Tax Administration on the introduced changes in relation to the value added tax (VAT) exemption. Namely, the VAT exemption now extends to the cost share contribution provided by the beneficiary in accordance with the Official Gazette no. 49/22 Article 112/5. This may partially compensate for the increase of construction costs and release LSGs budget needed to cover the price difference.

Parallel to the activities in relation to realisation of works, the Programme, in coordination with Swiss Pro programme met seven grant implementation teams⁸ to initially agree on the measures to be taken to ensure integration of Good Governance principles in infrastructure projects through the development of necessary documents, e.g. manuals, regulations, Memorandums of Understanding to support their implementation. The remaining thirteen municipalities would be visited during the next reporting period. Finally, visibility guidelines for implementing EU funded projects were shared with all grantees so that adequate promotional measures could be implemented prior, during and following the completion of works.

Activity 3.2 Supporting public institutions, including the social protection institutions, to enhance social services and preparedness for emergencies

The PSC in an e-voting procedure endorsed the results of the CFP for Social Services Strengthening on 16 September 2022, which was followed by the publishing of the [results](#) and the applicants notifying. Total of 20 project proposals in the value of 61,187,607.10 RSD⁹ were approved for funding with the reserve list of three proposals in the value of 9,042,798.00 RSD¹⁰. The financing of the reserved projects will depend on available funds in relation to the exchange rate fluctuations.

This activity will be realised in 23 cities and municipalities with participation of 22 CSOs, 14 LSGs, six social protection and health care institutions. Priority areas include improvement of social protection and health care services through support to vulnerable children and youth (12 projects), support to vulnerable adults (6), primary and secondary health care (3), family support (2) and social protection planning (2).

The Programme is conducting final verification of the activity plans and budgets and the contracts issuing is being prepared. The implementation will be initiated in Q4.

Activity 3.3 Support to COVID-19 related prevention and response activities

⁷ Babušnica, Užice (for both grants), Knjaževac, Doljevac, Žagubica, Boljevac, Pirot, Prijepolje, Varvarin and Lapovo

⁸ Šabac, Krupanj, Vrnjačka Banja, Trstenik, Varvarin, Čičevac and Lapovo

⁹ 521,629.03 Euros

¹⁰ 77,090.54 Euros

An administrative closing of the grants for supporting 23 medical centres in combating COVID-19 is nearly completed. Total of 22 grants were closed, where nine more grants were closed during the reporting period. The project realised by the Institute for Public Health of Serbia remains to be closed, as their financial report is still in the process of verification.

2.2 Management

2.2.1 Governance

The EU PRO Plus is governed by the Programme Steering Committee (PSC), constituted by the representatives of the key national institutions relevant for the Programme activities. Following initiation of the e-voting procedure on 25 August 2022, and addressing the comments provided by the PSC, during September the Programme published the [Results of the Public Call for Strengthening Social Services](#) and launched the [Call for Proposals for Economic Infrastructure Projects \(EIP\)](#).

As the more substantial comments were provided regarding the Draft Call for Proposals for Development of Geographic Information System (GIS) and Digitalisation of Service, EU PRO Plus will organise additional consultations in order to facilitate efficient agreement and expedite initiation of this activity.

The Programme held technical meetings with the DEU Head of Cooperation on the activities and their progress, while the focus was given to the Result 1. It was followed by a joint meeting with the MEI and DEU on the subject matter, which encapsulated Comparative analysis of EU member states, capacity building activities, and the approach towards pilot grant scheme.

Further, upon the DEU comment, the next PSC meeting should be held in person in order to further strengthen cooperation and coordination with the relevant stakeholders and PSC members.

2.2.2 Coordination

During the quarter, the Programme met with representatives of the [Public and private finance for development](#) - Ensuring sustainable local communities by improving local development planning in the Republic of Serbia project. The project financed by the Slovak Development Assistance Grant (SlovakAid) and implemented through the United Nations Development Programme in Serbia (UNDP), with the SCTM being the implementation partner for the subject piloting is concluding its second phase, which deals with implementation of the public policy coordination in accordance with the Law on Planning System. The focus of coordination was related to the identification of possible activities through one year project extension based on identified local initiative to support development of Golija Mountain whose development was supported through the EU PRO Plus predecessor projects and to ensure harmonisation with current Programme activities.

Additionally, the Programme met with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), to initiate coordination in overlapping development of SUD strategies and local development plans in Šabac and Kruševac, and to discuss on Programme activities related to support to Community LED Local Development (CLLD) territorial development instrument and support of Local Action Groups (LAGs).

2.2.3 Human Resources

During the reporting period, Programme established the Pool of Project Management Support - Specialists for Comparative Analysis for Integrated Sustainable Territorial Development by engaging three retainer positions to support the activities of the Capacity Building Sector.

As per established performance evaluation timelines, during July and August, the programme personnel

underwent formal mid-year review discussions that were recorded through the online performance appraisal tool. This exercise gives a formal opportunity to reflect on the set objectives, progress made towards achieving them and reflect on the learning and development plans. A series of interactive workshops for Supervisors and Supervisees aimed at fostering performance and feedback culture were organised with the goal to facilitate performance discussions. As an additional resource, UNOPS developed a Performance Management Basics course that aims to introduce UNOPS personnel to Performance Management policies, processes and practices, and their roles in the process and improve alignment in how performance is managed and evaluated across the organisation.

In terms of learning and development, the Programme team has undergone WebEx training as well as courses available in the corporate learning portfolio in project management and working tools topics.

2.2.4 Procurement and Grants

The EU PRO Plus predominantly uses grant methodology which gives ownership over the projects to the grantees while the Programme maintains monitoring and advisory roles. During the third quarter of 2022, the Grant Administration Unit (GAU) conducted administrative assistance (sorting of the applications, completion of administrative and eligibility checks, managing applicant clarifications, budget checks etc.) in the application evaluation process of the Public Call for Procurement of Equipment and Provision of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises, in a total of 611 applications.

Moreover, the GAU conducted administrative closure and financial report verification of 5 projects in regard to support the employment of human resources in health care institutions on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, for the purpose of control and suppression of COVID-19 virus.

Finally, the GAU supported the development of the Public Calls for Economic Infrastructure Projects and the preparation of evaluation results letters for the applicants of the Public Call for Strengthening Social Services.

Following the project needs, UNOPS has conducted 8 different procurement processes for purchase of various goods and services. As for the Covid 19 related purchases, deliveries of disinfection devices and disinfection liquid were completed prior to the commencement of the school year. In parallel, the maintenance of the previously delivered disinfection devices is ongoing. In relation to the value of the processes, its nature and complexity of the requirements, UNOPS has conducted the following solicitation processes:

- 2 Shopping processes, i.e. small value purchases up to USD 5,000.00 for purchase of various workshop moderation tools and material and Adobe Cloud licence.
- 6 Requests for Quotation processes, i.e. purchases of USD 5,000.0 to USD 50,000.00 for provision of services regarding the organisation of different events (2 x DEU Head of Cooperation's visit); identification of new office premises in Nis; various goods for school painting and art classes; CASCO Insurance of project vehicles; establishment of Blanket Purchase Agreement for provision of visibility project signboards.

No Request for Proposal/Invitation to Bid, purchases of value more than USD 50,000.

2.2.5. Finance

The following are the main financial indicators¹¹:

¹¹ While these figures provide quality insight into the Programme's spending, the final figures are only provided in the Programme's financial reports.

- The total delivery of the EU PRO Plus as of 30 September 2022 was EUR 11,188,613.73 Euros or 27.97 % of the Programme budget.
- The delivery in Q3 2022 was 1,272,195.46 Euros
- The forecast delivery for the next reporting period is 812,983 Euros.

3. RISKS AND ISSUES

During the quarter, the Programme proactively managed risks and issues. A summary of the current set of issues and risks affecting the Programme is as follows:

- **Prolonged coordination and decision making contributed to delays in implementation of Programme activities.** The decision making process related to some activities has been prolonged due to different expectations or requests from the partners causing delays on several Programme activities. To address the delays in the coming period, the Programme will increase the engagement in particular with the MEI and DEU and enhance regularity of PSC meetings. Additionally, potential need for extension of the implementation period for the Programme will be discussed.
- **Unfavourable exchange rate fluctuations could negatively affect the funds available for implementation of grant agreements.** When it comes to social cohesion projects, the Programme created an extended reserve list under the CFP for Strengthening Social Services. Funding of the project on the reserve list will be reconsidered upon contracting of the projects on the approved list and it will depend on the current availability of the funds. For BSO and LIP projects under implementation, the Programme has encouraged consideration of potential exchange rates fluctuations during the project proposals development phase.
- **The increase of market prices on local and global level could affect the realisation of Programme activities.** In spite of LSGs revising the available technical documentation so as to reflect the changes in the market prices, there is a risk that they would not be able to top their planned contribution. In response, a certain portion of the cost increase could be compensated with the portion of funds the grantees had previously planned in the budgets for the payment of VAT. In the case of Bosilegrad where execution design showed a need for additional 100.000 USD for the works, Bosilegrad ensured the contribution funds from MLEVSA and the Programme approved budget modification request to Bosilegrad. Niš also reprogrammed their budget to cover the 25,000 USD price difference between planned and market costs.
- **The possible delay in establishment of working groups for SUD and ITI strategies might cause the delay in initiation of the formal procedure in strategies development in some LSGs.** The Programme is striving to ensure that all working groups are established by mid-October to ensure smooth implementation of activities. The Programme will keep regular contacts with LSGs and address the importance of timely establishing of working groups and organised additional meetings with LSGs.

4. QUALITY

The Programme continuously implements quality management procedures defined in its Quality Management Strategy securing quality planning, control and assurance.

During the quarter, the Programme developed a monitoring tool for measuring the outputs, outcomes and impacts for individual local infrastructure projects to ensure proper monitoring mechanisms. Reporting templates were developed and guidance provided to 28 local governments on developing tender documentation for works and services. The Programme ensured that all quality control

mechanisms are introduced during the works execution, so that all commencing projects would have technical supervision and health and safety experts.

Likewise, the quality of products and activities implemented by beneficiary business support organisations has been monitored, and ensured through review and provision of feedback on the key outputs produced during the quarter, including the tender documentation for procurement processes, terms of reference for service provision, etc.

Furthermore, the Programme ensured internal and peer review of quality of the Call for Economic Infrastructure Projects. Additionally, all related tools and annexes have been peer reviewed and tested prior to launching of the Call.

Finally, prior to the contracting of the projects endorsed under the Call for Strengthening Social Services clarification process is being conducted in order to confirm the current status of the licences required for provision of the social protection services, to ensure final verification of the budget and their readiness for the implementation phase, given the unplanned delay in the start of the implementation.

5. SUSTAINABILITY

Establishment of new social services planned in several LSGs under the recently awarded social cohesion projects should set required institutional and legal framework in order to ensure their sustainability. This will include decisions adopted by relevant governance bodies, fulfilment of legal requirements and budget plannings among other things. Furthermore, two LSGs¹² foresee development and adoption of strategic plans in social protection in order to ensure feasibility and sustainability of various social protection services in the long run. These interventions will be closely monitored and supported by the Programme with the start of their implementation.

The elements of sustainability were also incorporated in the conditions of the Call for Economic Infrastructure projects, eliminating the proposals with negative impact on nature and without secured funds for maintenance and structures for governance.

In order to enhance institutional sustainability, the programme has ensured that BSOs that procure new equipment for the joint use by the beneficiary SMEs have adopted adequate rulebooks for use and maintenance of the new equipment purchased within the implemented projects. With this, the probability of conflicts between users and inadequate maintenance of equipment is reduced.

6. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES: Good governance, Gender equality, Social inclusion, Environment and climate change and Digitalisation

During the reporting period, the Programme ensured that the cross-cutting themes are included as integral parts of the activities in development, such as the CFP for Economic Infrastructure Projects. The GE aspect was included as an added value of the activity. Through evaluation criteria, the applicants are encouraged to make contributions to gender equality and ensure support for the vulnerable in the project activities design, where applicable. Furthermore, negative environmental impact was set as eliminatory in this Call to ensure neutral environmental impact as minimum.

¹² Zaječar and Kuršumljija
www.euproplus.org.rs

Positive impact on nature that was previously encouraged in local infrastructure projects resulted with projects using renewable energy sources and energy efficient solutions which will decrease CO2 emissions. The impact will be measured against the set indicators and the Programme will report on the achieved results. Likewise, encouraging digitalisation brought funding to several local infrastructure projects which will ensure improved services.

Through the questionnaire developed for contextual analysis of the SUD and ITI territories, which will be integral part of territorial strategies, all relevant cross cutting aspects were encapsulated, in particular, gender equality, social inclusion, environment and governance. The results of the analysis will serve for identification of development needs and potentials of each territory.

As a result of the set criteria, the Call for supporting entrepreneurs, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) ensured satisfactory response from the women-owned businesses, where around 30% of the received applications were submitted by such MSEs.

Social inclusion, Gender Equality and Good Governance represent the main focus of 20 project proposals endorsed under the CFP for Social Services Strengthening. The awarded projects will contribute to social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups, including women, by improving their access to different social services.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY

The Communications team led organisation of three field visits for the Head of the Cooperation (HoC) of the EU Delegation, to the South Serbia on 26 and 27 July (Niš, Lebane, Bujanovac and Vladičin Han), to the West Serbia on 2 and 3 August (Šabac, Čačak, Priboj and Prijepolje) and to Kragujevac on 6 September 2022. The support was provided to the HoC visit to East Serbia on 8-10 August, which was led by GIZ. The visits included meetings with 13 mayors, representatives of five regional development agencies and over 20 visits to the projects mainly implemented through EU PRO, and EU PRO Plus programmes. The visits generated substantial media coverage of 137 media reports out of which 40 were published in the national media.

The briefing documents and the media material, media advisory and press release were prepared for three visits, and full answers prepared for DEU HoC's interview with the Niš regional TV stations Belle Amie. As per DEU request a draft agenda for HoC visit to West Serbia was developed, inputs for the panel on the local self-governments role in the EU accession process were prepared, and a list of the projects related to the sports as well as the full list of all implemented projects with project descriptions were provided covering the ongoing and the predecessor Programmes. The team habitually cooperated with the EUIC on the visits, media issues and responded to several information requests on statistics and success stories.

The programme activities were promoted through three press releases announcing the results of the Call for Strengthening Social Services and the start of the local infrastructure projects in Boljevac and Doljevac. In total programme activities were promoted in 380 media reports, out of which 118 (30 percent) in the national media. Relevant result factsheets were also developed. Additionally, promotional materials for ten BSO projects were revised to ensure alignment with the communication and visibility requirements, support was provided in developing materials for PSC online voting and Programme update presentation for DEU and MEI. Finally, the programme project table was updated with the new projects while the EU PRO Plus website has been updated with easy access buttons and innovated by a new project map.

During the reporting period, the Programme website recorded 4,581 visits of 2,771 unique visitors, while the most visited web pages were those dedicated to the results of the public calls. The Facebook page has been followed by 19,295 users, while Instagram and Twitter fellowship stand at 2,812 and 1,170 respectively. The Programme YouTube Channel was updated with ten video stories, while 14 stories/news,

including the news on HoC visit to the west of Serbia were placed on the Programme website.

The tender for procurement of project signboards is to be published at the beginning of next reporting period.

8. LESSONS LEARNED

During the quarter, the Programme noted several lessons learned, the following being the most important:

Designing user friendly application processes and tools for Calls for Proposals encourages participation and facilitates the process. Relying on experience from the five public calls implemented to date, with the latest Call for Enterprises attracting over 600 applications, the Programme designed a simplified application process for the Call for Economic Infrastructure Projects launched during the quarter. Namely, with usage of online submission forms for applying for attendance of info sessions, posting questions and finally submitting project applications, the applicants can easily navigate through the application process.

Involvement of external expert observers into the evaluation process provides multiple benefits. It has been a standard practice for the Programme since its inception to include non-voting observers into the evaluation process for public calls, and this practice has yielded multiple benefits for the Programme. Firstly, it provides an opportunity for the Programme Steering Committee members to observe the quality of process implemented by the Programme, but also to have insight into the quality of applications and capacities of the applicants. More importantly, it serves as a quality assurance mechanism, and this was proven on numerous occasions, with the Ministry of Economy and Development Agency of Serbia providing technical inputs and additional guidance to the evaluators, and most recently the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs (MLEVSA) participating in the evaluation process of the social inclusion projects as observers. In this particular case, MLEVSA representatives identified potential risks related to the certification process for providers of social services.

9. NEXT REPORTING PERIOD¹³

The following are the key milestones for the upcoming period:

Result 1. Improved development planning in targeted municipalities and introduction of the ITI concept

- Activity 1.1 Finalising Comparative analysis of EU member states regarding usage of EU funds upon MEI comments
- Activity 1.1 Preparing report with an overview of the EU member states' cases regarding capacities needed for management of territorial mechanisms
- Activity 1.1 Conducting recruitment process of national legal experts for analysis of Serbian legal framework for ISTD
- Activity 1.1 Confirm the needs related to development of IT tools with MEI and DEU and initiate their development
- Activity 1.2 Conducting initial meetings with working groups for territorial strategies
- Activity 1.2 Preparing contextual analysis of the territories and preliminary SWOT analysis
- Activity 1.2 Initiate first thematic roundtables on contextual analysis of the territories

Result 2. Enhanced economic growth in targeted municipalities

- Activity 2.1 Conduct 4 live and 2 online info sessions for potential applicant LSGs and one orientation meeting for regional development agencies within the promotion of the Call for economic infrastructure
- Activity 2.1 Evaluate the received concept notes and invite the applicants who are

¹³ EU PRO Plus Work Plan for the period from 1 October 31 December 2022 is available in Annex V, Attachment 5.1.
www.euproplus.org.rs

- positively assessed to submit full project applications
- Activity 2.2 Continue monitoring of implementation of BSO projects
- Activity 2.2 Conduct field verification visits for the selected applicants of the The Call for Procurement of Equipment and Introduction of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises
- Approval of the results and award of the grants for Procurement of Equipment and Introduction of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises

Result 3. Improved social infrastructure and social cohesion in targeted municipalities

- Activity 3.1 Continue monitoring of implementation of 33 local infrastructure grants: monitor that all procurements for works are advertised and completed, monitor the start of the implementation of works, supervision and health and safety measures are in place and the promo activities.
- Activity 3.1 In coordination with SWISS PRO colleagues, visit the remaining 13 grantees so as to agree on the implementation of soft measures.
- Activity 3.2 Grants issuing and start of the projects implementation under the Call for Strengthening Social Services
- Activity 3.3 Administrative closing of the remaining grant to medical institutions under COVID recovery activity

Programme Communications

- High level visits organised for the EU Delegation representatives
- Publishing Calendar Competition
- Promotion of the Call for Economic Infrastructure Projects, and the SME Call results
- Organisation of Programme meeting (TBC)

LFM – progress against indicators

Legend

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| | Activity completed, outputs delivered in accordance with the set targets |
| | Activity progressing in accordance with the plan |
| | Activity progresses with manageable delay |
| | Activity is critical |

| Objectively verifiable indicators | Objectively Verifiable Indicators - Target | Progress during the reporting period |
|---|--|---|
| Overall Objective: To contribute to socio-economic development, prosperity and social cohesion of Serbian society | WB Doing Business Report score 74 | Not available. The WB discontinued publishing of the Doing Business Report. |
| | Global Competitiveness Index Rank 69 | The World Economic Forum paused comparative country rankings on the Global Competitiveness Index during the turbulent times of COVID-19 pandemic. |
| SO1. To decrease socio-economic disparities of two regions within Serbia | Šumadija and Western Serbia Region GDP and number of unemployed - 20% / 101,760 | Data for the year 2021 will be available in the Q4 of 2022. |
| | South-East Serbia Region GDP and number of unemployed - 14.2% / 83,712 | Data for the year 2021 will be available in the second half of 2022. |
| RESULT 1 | | |
| Improved development planning in targeted municipalities and introduction of the ITI concept | | |
| Result 1. Improved development planning in targeted municipalities and introduction of the Integrated and Sustainable Territorial Development (ISTD) concept | OC 1.1 The number of adopted Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies and the number of LSGs covered with these Strategies (Corresponds with IPA PF 2.11) - At least 15 strategies which include at least 35 LSGs | Call for Applications for Development of Territorial Strategies conducted. The Programme awarded 12 territories including 31 LSGs |
| | OC 1.2 Implementation of at least 80 percent adopted SUD and ITI Strategies initiated with at least three different funding sources - at least 12 (mid 2024) | This activity is planned for 2024. |
| Result 2 Enhanced economic growth in targeted municipalities | OC 2.1 Number of jobs created or facilitated - At least 300 (2023) | Assessment of the implementation modality for support to Business Related Services carried out and shared with MEI. |
| | OC 2.2 Number of start-ups and MSEs that benefited - 500 (2023) | Sixteen BSO projects started implementation expecting to support at least 425 MSEs. Call for MSEs closed. Evaluation |

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| | | process ongoing. |
| | OC 2.3 Number and financial value of initiated investments in industry and services facilitated - At least six investments valued at least 25 million Euros (mid of 2024) | Call for Proposals for Economic Infrastructure Projects and for technical documentation prepared as a two-step Call and announced upon PSC approval on 26. September 2022. |
| Result 3: Improved social infrastructure and social cohesion in targeted municipalities | OC 3.1 Number of persons benefiting from improved public facilities/ services - at least 35,000 (2023) | All 33 LSGs received their first milestone payment. 28 LSGs published tenders for works and for technical supervision, and out of them four signed contracts and initiated works. Programme visited seven LSGs to discuss soft measures envisaged within their projects |
| | OC 3.2 Number of introduced or improved social services provided by CSOs and/or LSGs - at least 15 | Call for Proposals for Strengthening Social Services completed with 20 awarded projects. Up to 25 social services are expected to be improved/introduced, and over 2,000 disadvantaged people to benefit from the intervention. |
| | OC 3.3 Number of persons benefiting from enhanced health care services related to COVID-19 prevention and recovery - at least 300,000 (2022) | The activity for supporting 23 medical centres to enhance services related to COVID-19 prevention and recovery is completed successfully. 5000 disinfection devices, 60,000 L disinfection liquid and 41 triage containers were delivered. |
| Activity 1.1 Enhancing national capacity to introduce integrated territorial development | Number of persons at the national level trained - 40 (middle 2023) | This activity is planned for first half of 2023 |
| | Proposals for regulators and procedural framework to enable preparation of the EU model for territorial planning - in place (end of 2024) | The Comparative Study on EU member states prepared. The preparation of the report with an overview of the EU member states' cases regarding capacities needed for management of territorial mechanisms initiated. The content and the structure of the Study on national model for ISTD is prepared. |
| | Monitoring, reporting and evaluation approaches related to ISTD model - in place (2022) | A wider list of indicators for monitoring and implementation of territorial strategies recommended by the European Commission, and those identified with the Strategy for Urban Development is developed. |
| | Number of tools developed or | A revised Concept Note on the potential IT tool and ToR for ISTD |

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| | enhanced - at least one (2022) | networking platform is drafted. |
| Activity 1.2 Improving capacities of municipalities and regional development agencies to introduce concepts of integrated territorial planning | Number of LSGs and RDAs benefiting from interventions - at least 80 percent (middle 2023) | 84,5 percent of the LSGs and RDAs benefiting from the capacity building process (82 LSGs and 11 RDAs participated in the training activities within Module I and in the part of the Module II of Capacity Building Programme) |
| | Population covered by SUD and ITI Strategies - at least 2 million (end of 2022) | The awarded applications from the Call for Development of Territorial Strategies cover a population of approximately 1,6 million. |
| Activity 1.3 Implementing activities contributing to socio-economic growth deriving from integrated territorial planning strategies | Number of integrated projects deriving from the ISTD strategies, whose implementation is supported - at least 15 (mid 2024) | This activity is planned for next year. |
| RESULT 2 Enhanced economic growth in targeted municipalities | | |
| Activity 2.1 Developing economic infrastructure and businesses related services at the local level | Number of supported economic infrastructure projects - 16 (2024) | Call for Proposals for Economic Infrastructure Projects and for Technical Documentation published on 26th September 2022. |
| | Number of LSGs supported in improvement of at least one business related service - 10 (2024) | Comparative analysis of the implementation methods for this activity conducted. |
| Activity 2.2 Enhancing competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises contributing to economic stability of local communities | Number of supported start-ups, entrepreneurs and enterprises - 100 (2022) | Call for Proposals for support to SMEs closed. Over 600 applications were received. |
| | Number of supported youth and women entrepreneurs - at least 50 (2022) | This activity is planned for the next reporting periods. |
| | Number of people benefiting from skill-development training - 200 (2022) | This activity is planned for the next reporting periods. |
| | Number of supported BSO projects - 10 (2022) | Sixteen BSO projects were contracted and implementation started. |
| RESULT 3 Improved social infrastructure and social cohesion in targeted municipalities | | |
| Activity 3.1 Developing and improving infrastructure which contributes to enhanced quality of life | Number of social infrastructure projects implemented - at least 30 (2022) | Implementation of all 33 Grant contracts underway. GSA Bosilegrad amended for increased value of contribution. All 33 LSGs are implementing grants in line with the submitted action plan, except from Paraćin, where provision of works will be postponed upon completion of the works that are conditioning the commencement of the project. |

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| <p>Activity 3.2 Supporting public institutions, including the social protection institutions, to enhance social services and preparedness for emergencies</p> | <p>Number of CSO projects related to social services supported - 20 (2023)</p> | <p>Twenty projects under the Call for Proposals for Strengthening Social Services are endorsed for funding by the PSC and in process of contract issuing.</p> |
| <p>Activity 3.3 Support to COVID-19 related prevention and response activities</p> | <p>Number of medical centres supported to enhance services related to COVID-19 prevention and recovery - at least 20 (2022)</p> | <p>This activity is completed and its administrative closing is in the final phase.</p> |

ANNEXES

Annex I Improved Development Planning

Annex I_Attn 1_Comparative analysis of EU member states

Annex I Attn 2_SUD and ITI context analysis questionnaire_SRB

Annex I Attn 3_Study visit NL and BE outline

Annex II Enhanced Economic Growth

N/A

Annex III Improved Social Infrastructure and Social Cohesion

N/A

Annex IV Communications

Annex IV_ Attn 1 EU PRO Plus Overview of Communication Activities

Annex V Programme Management

Annex V_ Attn 1 EU PRO Plus Work Plan for Q4 of 2022