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Czech Republic took over EU Presidency on 1 January 2009

The Czech government's main motto for its EU Presidency is "Europe without Barriers" – the symbolic motto referring to Europe without internal economic, cultural and value barriers for individuals, entrepreneurs and economic entities; a Europe open to the world, but not defenceless against illegal activities and attacks.

Only an economically strong and cohesive EU without internal barriers, building on its values and roots, will be able to address complex global issues and establish its position in today's world. Hence, the Czech Presidency's main priority areas will be Economy, Energy and the European Union in the World. Other priorities include sustainable and safe energy, the revision of the EU budget and the Common agricultural Policy, transatlantic relations, enlargement to include the Balkans and Eastern Europe, and progress in the areas of freedom, justice and security.



2009 the year of the Western Balkans

On 5 November, 2008 the European Commission adopted its annual strategy paper for the EU's enlargement policy. It highlights the role that the EU's enlargement policy plays in the Union's strategic interest in stability, security and conflict prevention. The Commission also reviews the progress achieved in the Western Balkans and Turkey over the last year and spells out the challenges ahead. The Western Balkan countries' advance towards EU membership can be accelerated, provided they meet the necessary conditions. It should be possible to reach the final stage of accession negotiations with Croatia by the end of 2009, provided that Croatia fulfils all the necessary conditions. The pace of negotiations with Turkey will continue to match the pace of reform in the country.

Enlargement has helped to increase prosperity and growth opportunities, to improve links with vital transport and energy routes, and to increase the EU's weight in the world. In the light of recent challenges to stability to the East of the EU, the consistent implementation of the enlargement policy becomes more important than ever. The present enlargement agenda covers the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Montenegro are moving ahead with the implementation of their respective Interim Agreements and have made progress in important reform areas. Consolidating the rule of law and administrative enforcement capacities remains a major challenge in these countries. In particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina now urgently needs to achieve the necessary political consensus and to proceed with reforms, in particular with a view to assuming greater ownership of its governance.

Serbia needs to follow by positive developments through full cooperation with ICTY and making tangible progress in priority reform areas related to the rule of law and economic reform. If Serbia meets these conditions, it could obtain candidate status in 2009.

In Turkey, domestic politics in 2008 was marked by strong political tensions. It is expected now from Turkey to re-energise its reform efforts. The pace of negotiations will continue to match the pace of reforms in Turkey.

The Commission continues to take measures to make the European perspective tangible for citizens and companies in the Western Balkans. Provided that the established conditions are met, the Commission may propose lifting the visa obligation in the course of 2009, on a country-by-country basis.

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New Year's Message

In June 2008, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) took a major step on its path of EU integration by signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union. This will surely be remembered as a historic moment for this country and all its citizens.

Still, today, reflecting on the past year as a whole, our thoughts are divided. In the first half of 2008, we witnessed important progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which led to the signing of the SAA and the start of the visa liberalisation dialogue. This was a clear message to the people of BiH that their future lies in the European Union.

However, the negative political climate that marked the second half of 2008 brought no results in addressing reforms which delayed the country's European future to the detriment of its citizens. This, unfortunately, showed us how it was possible to lose momentum by insisting on divisive agendas.

The Progress Report adopted by the European Commission in November 2008, acknowledged some progress made by BiH authorities over the past year. However, it also communicated concerns that progress had not been as strong as generally expected.

Progress in reform processes on the path to EU integration is not only a matter for political leaders, government and administration. It is a matter of all spheres of public life in the country, including civil

society and media, trade unions and business community.

BiH must put EU-related reforms at the top of its political agenda and must address the priorities of the European Partnership, including state- and institutional capacity building. That is why we expect the year 2009 to bring more political wisdom that would allow for the building of a wide and constructive consensus on fundamental political issues. The recent agreement among some political parties reached in Prud/Odzak is certainly an encouraging signal.

At the same time, the European Union's readiness to assume a greater role in Bosnia and Herzegovina only testifies to our strong commitment to this country and to its European future. The European Union will intensify its support to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it is up to the citizens and the institutions of this country to use this opportunity in a way that will bring this country closer to the EU membership.

With sincere hope that the coming year will bring Bosnia and Herzegovina closer to the European family, allow me to wish all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina much happiness, health and prosperity in the New Year 2009.

Ambassador Dimitris Kourkoulas

Ambassador Kourkoulas handed over Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008 Progress Report to Chairman Špirić



H.E. Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas** handed over to BiH Council of Ministers Chairman, Mr. **Nikola Špirić**, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2008 Progress Report*, which was adopted by the European Commission on November 5, 2008. At the press conference organised on this occasion, Ambassador Kourkoulas presented key findings of the Report mentioning main positive and negative developments. The overall conclusion is that some significant progress has been made, but that lack of consensus on the main features of state building, frequent challenges to the Dayton/Paris peace agreement and inflammatory rhetoric have adversely affected the functioning of institutions, have continued to slow down reforms and put at risk the achievements made so far.

Ambassador Kourkoulas briefly presented conclusions regarding political criteria, economic stability and European standards. He took the opportunity to underline that although BiH signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), unfortunately it lost the positive momentum because it was compromised by very negative political environment.

Political criteria

Aside from all segments assessed under the political criteria, Ambassador Kourkoulas made reference to the lack of progress achieved in constitutional reform and clarified that the European Commission would like to see „*constitutional evolution rather than the revolution.*” He explained that it was necessary for the new Constitution to be compatible with human rights standards and that BiH was able to speak with one voice before EU as a future candidate country. Also, the new Constitution should enable effective and functional state structure capable of implementing and enforcing European *Acquis* throughout the country. Ambassador Kourkoulas noted that BiH Parliamentary Assembly should have a better coordination with the BiH Council of Ministers. On behalf of the European Commission he welcomed adoption of the National Strategy for Development of the Justice Sector for 2008-2012, but warned that fragmentation of judicial system and the complexity of the legal framework remained main obstacle in this sector.

Economic criteria

Ambassador reminded that these criteria assess the ability of a country to have functioning market economy and to cope with competitive forces within the European Union. In general, the progress made is positive, mainly because BiH maintained the economic stability in 2008 with positive growth rate. Establishment of the National Fiscal Council was welcomed, together with Indirect Tax Allocation Methodology and new Laws on Income Taxes.

„*I am pleased to say that State Competition Council works well, however no decision has been taken yet as regards the State Aid Authority. We believe that this is the best solution away from any political debate to have State Aid Authority.*”, explained ambassador Kourkoulas referring to two segments important also for the implementation of SAA.

European Standards

Ambassador Kourkoulas noted that as far as European standards were concerned, progress had been made in the fields of customs, taxation, agriculture, transport, visa administration, border management, asylum and migration. However, he also named a few obstacles to the European integration process such as the lack of strategies in the areas of small and medium enterprises (SME's), agriculture development policy, industrial development policy and weak protection of the intellectual property rights.

Conclusion

In the near future Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to address two priorities: to ensure proper implementation of the Interim Agreement of the SAA, that so far was implemented smoothly, and to make progress in the area of Justice, Freedom and Security. „*Lack of proper statistics, including up-to-date population census is a serious handicap for policy planning in this country. If the new census is not undertaken in the coming two years, I am afraid that we would not be able to prepare our opinion once BiH applied for membership. To put it more clearly – no census – no negotiations for accession.*”, underlined Ambassador Kourkoulas. He added that many rights and obligations of the countries derived from these statistics and that European Union was interested only in statistics at state level.

Ambassador Kourkoulas concluded his presentation by saying that the corner stone of the European Union was the willingness and capacity to overcome the legacy of the past, the legacy of conflicts, and look towards a common future in democracy and prosperity. „*What we have been witnessing in past months in BiH is not compatible with European standards. Statements, actions based on nationalistic lines, inability of country to speak with one voice both in the country and at international level, all these actions risk not only to delay but to jeopardise your European perspective.*”, concluded Ambassador Kourkoulas.

Documents available at webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008_en.htm

Ambassador Dimitris Kourkoulas welcomed the BiH Presidency's approval for ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union



"The ratification of the SAA by the BiH Presidency gives a clear signal to all citizens of this country that their future lies in the European Union. I hope that this ratification will encourage all political forces to move forward in the European integration process which will bring concrete benefits to the people of BiH." said Ambassador Kourkoulas, Head of European Commission Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EU's Policy in BiH: the way ahead Report handed over to Chairman Špirić

Head of the European Commission Delegation to BiH H.E. Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas** and High Representative/European Union Special Representative to BiH, H.E. Ambassador **Miroslav Lajčák** handed over the document **EU's Policy in BiH: the way ahead** to Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dr. **Nikola Špirić** in Sarajevo on November 11, 2008.

Ambassador Lajčák explained that Mr. **Javier Solana**, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union and Mr. **Olli Rehn** EU Commissioner for Enlargement, prepared this Report after meeting of the EU Member States Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers that took place on November 10, 2008 in Brussels. He informed that Ministers expressed their concern regarding pitfall in reform process, nationalistic rhetoric and unilateral activities that are taking BiH away from its EU path. Although the Ministers commended political agreement reached by the three main BiH

political parties on November 8, 2008, they were expecting to see its concretisation now. Ambassador Lajčák also informed that it was agreed that EUFOR should remain until political decision of its future transition was made. *"European Union sent the message that it was willing to play its active role in BiH after closure of OHR and is not satisfied with the fact that political leaders in BiH are not doing what they were obliged to."*, concluded Ambassador Lajčák.

"On behalf of the Council of Ministers I consider this document to be an invitation to BiH authorities to undertake their responsibilities and reinforce their efforts in order to ensure the continuation of commenced reform process and to ensure the progress of BiH towards EU.", said Chairman Špirić.

Chairman Špirić underlined the need for sending positive news from BiH and expressed belief that it was only possible through an open dialogue and discussion about outstanding issues. *"I assure you that Council of Ministers of BiH will remain dedicated to the fulfilment of all of its duties and responsibilities in this regard."*, concluded Chairman Špirić.

Pierre Mirel attended the Conference "Parliament for Europe" in Sarajevo

Mr. **Pierre Mirel**, Director for Western Balkans in the European Commission's Directorate General for Enlargement, attended the Conference "Parliament for Europe" organised by the European Union Special Representative to BiH Dr. Miroslav Lajčák on November 10, 2008 in Sarajevo. This session gathered members of parliaments at all levels in BiH and guests from the European Union to share with BiH parliamentarians expectations of the EU and the experiences of other countries in the EU integration process.

Mr. Mirel presented major messages for Bosnia and Herzegovina from the recently published European Commission's Progress Report. He reiterated that the European Commission hoped that the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement would have opened the way for further reforms. He stressed that commitment to European Integration process, often expressed by BiH political leaders during the past years did not result in concrete measures which would take this country further in that process. In this regard

he concluded that wide political consensus was necessary for the success in the European integration process.

Ambassador Lajčák announced that this session represented the beginning of the systematic approach to the promotion of the European integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, he said that these sessions would be organised on a monthly basis until June 2009. He explained that the European Union wants the support of European integration process in BiH to be based on in-depth knowledge about the benefits of the process itself. In that regard, Ambassador Lajčák announced activities planned for non-governmental organisation and other stakeholders in order for them to take active part in the entire European integration process. *"From today this parallel activity begins and I am inviting all citizens to take their active role in this process. The process which is of benefit to all citizens of this country,"* said Ambassador Lajčák.

Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes associated to the Seventh European Framework research programme (FP7)

On November 24, 2008, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Commission which will allow full access to the EC's 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7) 2007-2013. This "associated status" will allow Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in all calls for proposals and compete on an equal footing with the EU Member States and the other associated countries for research co-operation and support actions funded under FP7, as of 1 January 2009. This agreement is an important step in Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into the European Research Area and in the pre-accession process for European Union membership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the 12th country associated to FP7. With Bosnia and Herzegovina, all Western Balkan countries are now associated to FP7 which will increase research opportunities in the Region and support the regional competitiveness. *"I am pleased to see that with Bosnia and Herzegovina's association to the FP7, we have all Balkan countries on board to participate in the European Research Area",* said Science and Research Commissioner **Janez Potočnik**. *"Research cooperation with Europe's scientific community is a tool that can smooth the way for the integration process of candidate and potential candidate countries into the European Union. In addition to forging links with scientists and companies across Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have new opportunities to work with its regional partners in addressing common challenges."*



At a ceremony held in Brussels, Commissioner Potočnik signed the Memorandum on behalf of the European Commission with the BiH Minister of Civil Affairs Mr. **Sredoje Nović**, who represented Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Background

FP7 - the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development is the EU's main instrument for funding research in Europe and will run from 2007 to 2013. Association to FP7 means that these countries compete in FP7 on the same basis as EU Member States and the other associated countries. It opens up research opportunities for the European scientific community. Traditionally the Balkan countries have a solid scientific base, and more research cooperation with the EU will allow for a greater flow of ideas, people and transfer of technology. The FP7 supports scientific research in the EU and the broader European Research Area with a budget of almost 55 billion Euros over a time span of 7 years (2007-2013).

For more information on research cooperation under FP7:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>



European Commission - Youth in Action Programme

Youth in Action is the new EU Programme in the field of youth, which is being implemented from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2013 with a total budget of 885 million Euro. It is a key instrument in providing young people with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension.

Youth in Action Programme encourages the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities and addresses young people aged between 13 and 30. It offers young people opportunities for mobility and active participation in the construction of Europe. It aims to contribute to building a "Europe of knowledge" and to create a European arena for co-operation in the development of youth policy, based on non-formal education. It encourages the concept of lifelong learning and the development of skills and competencies, which promote active citizenship.

This programme offers financial support to projects of young people, provides information, training and opportunities to develop new partnerships across Europe and beyond. General objectives of the Youth in Action Programme are to promote young people's active citizenship in general and their European citizenship in particular; to develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people, in particular in order to foster social cohesion in the European Union; to foster mutual understanding between young people in different countries; to contribute to developing the quality of support systems for youth activities and the capabilities of civil society organisations in

the youth field and to promote European cooperation in the youth field.

Activities supported by the Youth in Action programme are divided into five Actions:

- Action 1 - Youth for Europe
- Action 2 - European Voluntary Service
- Action 3 - Youth in the World
- Action 4 - Youth Support Systems
- Action 5 - Support for European cooperation in the youth field

Bosnia and Herzegovina is eligible **only** for the following actions:

- Action 2 - European Voluntary Service
- Action 3 - Youth in the World – Youth exchanges and Training and Networking.

More info on the programme: <http://www.europa.ba/>

More info on rules and criteria on:

www.ec.europa.eu/youth

www.salto-youth.net/see/projects/

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The Commission's major Recovery Plan for growth and jobs expresses its solidarity with the candidate and potential candidate countries

In the comprehensive plan to drive Europe's recovery from the current economic crisis, presented by the European Commission, the EU's solidarity is also extended to the candidate and potential candidate countries. The Commission continues to support the economic and social consolidation of the candidate countries and the Western Balkans in the mutual interest of the EU and the region. To this end, the Commission will put in place a 120 million Euro "Crisis Response Package" aimed at supporting economic development, for SMEs in particular and leveraging an amount of 500 million Euro in loans from International Financial Institutions.

At the adoption of the Commission's Recovery Plan, Commissioner Rehn stated: *"I am happy that the Commission adopted this major proposal and it is of particular importance that the enlargement countries are not forgotten. The financial crisis has clearly showed how much South-East Europe is already integrated to the EU. The emerging*



economies of this region are among the most dynamic economies in Europe, being a major destination for EU exports. This shows, that enlargement is not the problem, on the contrary, it is part of the solution for the economic revitalisation of Europe. We share a common destiny."

The Commission's Recovery Plan is based on two mutually reinforcing main elements. Firstly, short-term measures to boost demand save jobs and help restore confidence. Secondly, "smart investment" to yield higher growth and sustainable prosperity in the longer-term.

More information on the Commission's Recovery Plan for growth and jobs:

http://europa.eu/press_room/index_en.htm

EC adopts the National Programme for BiH under the IPA - Transition Assistance and Institution Building component in 2008 – Part II

The European Commission adopted the second part of the National Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina under the IPA component I - Transition Assistance and Institution Building in 2008, which will provide funds for a maximum amount of 54 million Euro in order to assist the country make progress in key reform areas.

The programme consists of 21 projects to support Bosnia and Herzegovina's political and economical reform process as well as the country's alignment with EU standards.

Projects in the **political field** include the development of an integrated social protection and inclusion strategy for vulnerable groups, the provision of equipment for courts and prosecutors' offices, support to prepare for the decentralised management of EU funds and to de-mining activities. Moreover, 3.5 million Euro are allocated for the support to civil society in BiH.

In the **economic field**, the programme supports local economic development, the health care system, and the reform of the education sector. In addition, financing is foreseen for support to BiH's trade policy, its agriculture and food safety policy, its environmental institutions, implementation of the BiH integrated border management strategy and action plan and the alignment of



the Indirect Taxation Authority of BiH with European legislation.

Last but not least, the programme finances Bosnia and Herzegovina's **participation in Community Programmes**. Other donors and Bosnia and Herzegovina will provide co-financing for 16 out of 21 projects.

The Community contribution under IPA represents 70% of the total budget allocated to this programme. Improved donor co-ordination has resulted in a division of labour in certain areas where member states or other donors are carrying out projects which would otherwise have been considered for financing.

The first part of the National Action Plan, totalling 12.5 million Euro, was adopted on 9 October 2008 and covered five projects which had been identified for having the highest political priority or which required continuous EC financing. Those projects are related to the police reform process, support to the State Court and Prosecutor's Office to fight war crimes and organised crime, the construction of a State high-security prison, a project preparation facility which enables the BiH authorities to submit good quality project proposals and a project on EU awareness.

Ambassador Kourkoulas attended Regional Conference on Youth Policies and Youth Civic Participation in Sarajevo

H.E. Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas** addressed the participants at the Regional Conference on Youth Policies and Youth Civic Participation in Sarajevo on November 12, 2008. The Conference was organised by „Forum Syd – Balkans Programme“ and the Commission for Coordination of Youth Issues of the BiH Council of Ministers, with support of the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

In his opening address, Ambassador Kourkoulas stressed that poorly organised education sector and high level of unemployment remain two main problems for youth in BiH. He explained that common objectives of the European Union Youth policy, supported with powerful financial means, were to favour mobility, to support social and occupational integration of young people, to create best conditions for young people to become active citizens and to put focus on volunteering. *“We want to involve young people in a more*



structured dialogue with policy makers at local, national and European level. There are two main elements of our policy: first is participation, dialogue and consultation, while the other part is cooperation with all stakeholders, NGO's, civil society, member states, and also partner countries.”, pointed out Ambassador Kourkoulas.

The two-day conference took place under the auspices of the EU Special Representative in BiH, H.E. Ambassador **Miroslav Lajčák** who underlined that the European Union expects young people to take a more active role in the society and to be its allies in contributing to the Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards European Union. *“Young people are natural partners of the European integration process, but it is up to state to create adequate conditions for youth to feel more comfortable and to link their perspective with this country.”*, stressed Ambassador Lajčák.

Support to Civil Society under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA

Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas**, together with Mr **Osman Topčagić**, Director of the Directorate for European Integration of BiH addressed participants at the seminar on new financial facility for civil society under the “Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance IPA”, that took place in Sarajevo on November 12, 2008.

EU Info Centre Sarajevo in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Directorate for European Integration of BiH organised the seminar in order to provide a forum for a discussion between international and local representatives on how to use the funds that the EU allocated for strengthening of civil society in BiH.

Ambassador Kourkoulas stressed that recent past of the entire region is another reason which made civil society a crucial factor for success in the integration process. In that regard he underlined: *“I am an optimist, but we have to be aware of the challenges this country will face in years to come if it does not want to miss the European train.”* In addition, he expressed his hope that this new facility would contribute to development of a more active role of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and entire region. *“It is up to you to take advantage of these instruments and to propose quality projects.”*, Ambassador Kourkoulas explained to representatives of civil society.

Mr. Topčagić stressed the importance of the role that independent civil society should play in a society by correcting the government actions through partner relations. In that regard, he concluded: *“Development of civil society that shares freedom of assembling and acting for public good is one of the priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the European integration process.”*

Mr Yngve Engstroem, representative of the EC Directorate General for Enlargement, underlined the European Commission's clear

commitment to strengthen the civil society as already outlined in the Communication on Western Balkans of March 2008. *“Civil society is a key factor of the quality of the accession process”*, said Mr Engstroem and called on better coordination with donors in order to avoid overlapping and to support civil society more efficiently.

About new facility

The new facility will cover three areas of intervention:

- Support to local civil society initiatives and capacity building, reinforcing the role of civil society in the candidate and potential candidate countries
- People-to-People Dialogue programmes aimed at familiarising journalists, young politicians, trade union leaders, teachers, etc. with EU policies and institutions
- Support to building partnerships and developing networks between civil society organisations in the enlargement countries and the EU to promote transfer of knowledge and experience.

The EU's strategy for enlargement has increasingly put an emphasis on civil society dialogue and development in the EU candidates and potential candidates. Since 2005, the European Commission has granted financial support to projects on civil society dialogue with and between Western Balkan countries. The EU's financial support to civil society activities in Western Balkans and Turkey will approximately amount to 130 million Euro over the period 2008-2010.

Delegations of the South-East European countries gathered in Sarajevo at the Multi-Beneficiary Programme Coordination Meeting

Hosted by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a two-day coordination meeting gathering participants in the Multi-Beneficiary Programme under the European Commission's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), took place in Sarajevo on October 9 and 10, 2008. Mr. **Boris Iarochevitch**, Head of Operations of the European Commission Delegation to BiH and Mr. **Hido Biščević**, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council addressed the participants at the opening ceremony. They both emphasized the importance of the meeting and of the Multi-Beneficiary Programme, which might become an important tool for the very essence of the work of the RCC.

Delegations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99), Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and European Commission have gathered to discuss and evaluate implementation of the ongoing projects, Programme's strategy and possibilities for future cooperation.

Mr. Iarochevitch underlined the importance of holding such meetings in order to exchange information among the beneficiaries of the countries and delegations of the region and discuss future regional cooperation and steps forward. *"I think that the timing is very important. As you all know, we are currently engaged in the IPA*



programming cycle. You have been recently asked to commence drafting programmes and plans for the years 2009-2011, and I think our work today will help us generate ideas with a regional scope for the future indicative programmes." - stressed Mr. Iarochevitch.

Mr. Biščević pointed out that the next year, a year of 2009, would be a crucial year for the countries of the South-Eastern Europe, and particularly for the Western Balkans countries. He said that these countries, which are at the crossroad now, could experience two possible outcomes – a positive one, where the positive trends can be sustained and accelerated, and a negative one, a scenario of standstill. *"I need to tell you that the countries in the region are eagerly waiting for a strategy to be finalised. The governments in the region are very much preparing to see in what way, how, to what dynamics and to what methodology the Multi-Beneficiary Programme strategy will be translated, in the forthcoming period, into concrete work, concrete projects."* – said Mr. Biščević.

The multi-beneficiary programme will complement and add value to the support given by different national programmes. Multi-beneficiary actions consequently focus on support that requires collaboration among the beneficiaries, such as regional structures, networks of experts or civil servants or to tackle needs or problems of a cross-border nature.

Ambassador Kourkoulas met with NGO representatives in Sarajevo

H.E. Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas** met with representatives of NGOs working in BiH together with the EU Special Representative, H.E. Ambassador **Miroslav Lajčák** at the premises of European Commission Delegation to BiH on November 13, 2008. The role of the NGO sector in the process of EU integration was in the focus of the meeting also attended by representatives of BiH authorities. The participants explored the possibility of joining efforts in key areas of interest to civil society and the European Union and in advocating EU integration.

"We will try to intensify our dialogue with civil society, mainly in two areas: programming of our financial assistance for this country and also in preparation of our annual report, where civil society is valuable source of information for this task. We encourage the local authorities to take the lead in this consultation process.", said Ambassador Kourkoulas. He briefly mentioned on-going programs and available instruments through which the EU financed civil society projects. In addition, he explained that European Commission was financing a comprehensive study on Strategy for Civil Society in BiH that would be available in April 2009.

Ambassador Lajčák stressed the importance of timing of the meeting, in light of recently published Progress Report and document prepared



by Mr. **Javier Solana**, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy/Secretary-General of the EU Council and Mr. **Olli Rehn** EU Commissioner for Enlargement. In this regard he sent a clear message to the NGO representatives: *"Our aim is to support regular and coordinated dialogue about European integration among yourselves through already established network on one hand, and your dialogue with EU institutions and BiH authorities on the other hand. Bosnia and Herzegovina could progress more effectively on its path to the EU if the pressure from the base increased. Without your voice, no state institutions would feel obliged to fulfil their tasks."*

Mr. **Nedeljko Masleša**, Assistant Director, Directorate for European Integration of BiH, reiterated their readiness to cooperate with civil society. In that sense, he mentioned recently implemented EU funded projects, such as "Together with Europe" and similar, where DEI put its efforts together with civil society partners to share the knowledge and information about the European integration process among BH citizens.

Civil Society Board's Representative, Ms. **Aida Daguda** stressed the importance of creating more proactive relations between BiH authorities and civil society through implementing the Agreement which was adopted in May 2007 by the Council of Ministers of BiH and 400 NGOs.

Business Incubator Opened in Jablanica

Mr. **Johan Hesse**, First Counsellor of the European Commission Delegation to BiH and Head of Operations Section for Economic Reform and Natural Resources together with Mr. Salem Dedić, Mayor of Jablanica Municipality cut the ribbon and opened the Business Incubator in Jablanica on December 11, 2008. The Business Incubator in Jablanica was established within the Project "Establishment of the Regional Entrepreneurship Centre in Herzegovina" funded by the European Union.

The Business Incubator is an example of how European Union supports development of small and medium enterprises, explained Mr. Hesse, adding that this support had been very successful in the EU member states. „Basic approach in supporting small and medium enterprises and their development are activities aimed to downsize inauguration cost during establishment of business until they become self-sustainable. This is highlighted in the EU policies which are based on the Charter on Small and Medium Enterprises.“, said Mr. Hesse. He also expressed his gratitude to the Mayor of Jablanica Municipality and the municipality itself because they recognised importance of this project and supported it financially and wished them success in their work.

The project was implemented by the Entrepreneurship and Business Association LiNK Mostar, in cooperation with the partner

municipalities of Trebinje and Jablanica, the Association of independent entrepreneurs Jablanica and with support of the Federal Ministry for Development, Entrepreneurship and Craftsmanship. Mr. **Salem Dedić** expressed his appreciation to the European Commission because it recognised the Municipality of Jablanica as partner in this project. „For the municipality, this project is very important. It is the interest of the municipality to gather as many entrepreneurs as possible in the course of Incubator's activities, and to facilitate their business activities, carrying out of business ideas, and create jobs through municipal administration. In cooperation with entrepreneurs' association, the municipality will support the project“, said Mr. Dedić.

Beneficiaries of business incubators are newly registered enterprises or natural entities who want to start their own businesses in the Business Incubator. Mr. **Velibor Sudar**, Team Leader on behalf of the Entrepreneurship and Business Association LiNK Mostar, explained that a public call for beneficiaries of the Business Incubator Jablanica was announced on 17 November 2008, and would remain open until all of its capacities are fully consumed.

The total value of the project Establishment of the Regional Entrepreneurship Centre in Herzegovina is 337.120 Euro, European Union provided 88% of the value.



EU Support to the Statistical Sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Phase III - Final Conference

The final conference marking the completion of the EU CARDS Twinning project "EU Support to the Statistical Sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Phase III" was held in Sarajevo on November 18, 2008. Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH Mr. **Boris Iarochevitch**, BiH Minister of Finance and Treasury Mr. **Dragan Vrankić**, BiH Agency for Statistics Director Mr. **Zdenko Milinović**, Deputy Director General of the Eurostat Ms. **Maria Bohata** and Head of the Institutional and International Relations of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) Ms. **Claudia Cingolani**, took part in the conference, emphasizing the importance of the Project in the process of the European integration.

The aim of the project was to improve data collection and harmonise statistical methods and statistical information through technical assistance and training for the three statistical institutions in BiH in line with European standards. This included assistance to the relevant authorities of BiH in drafting and implementation of macro-economic and fiscal policies. Mr. **Iarochevitch** stressed that Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) requires from BiH to develop a statistical system, capable of providing timely, objective and accurate data needed to plan and monitor transition and reform. "Reliable and comprehensive state level statistical indicators are needed to assess BiH's progress in the EU accession process and in meeting different required



criteria, both required by the SAA and later the Copenhagen economic criteria.", said Mr. Iarochevitch.

Minister **Vrankić** emphasized that statistics was an important tool in the decision-making process that is used in development policies and programmes in efforts to improve citizens' lives based on clearly defined, time-framed, measurable facts.

Without statistics harmonised with the European and international standards, there would be no entrance into the European and international integrations, stated Mr. **Milinović**. He thanked all participants in the project implementation, and the European Commission for its support.

Ms. Bohata pointed out that official statisticians had to cooperate in order to identify and track change in the society and to develop and monitor public policies in response. "This project focused on fundamental aspects of the work of national statistical institutes and some specific domains. It demonstrated a possibility of working together and we are happy that the European Commission and partners from the EU countries facilitated this cooperation in BiH.", said Ms. Bohata.

The European Commission has funded this Twinning project with 1.45 million Euro.

Certificates awarded to over 40 employees of BiH institutions for completion of fiscal policy training programme

Certificate award ceremony for over 40 participants of a training programme within the EU-funded Project for Fiscal Policy Support to BiH (EUFPS) was held in Brčko on Tuesday, October 21, 2008. Mr. **Boris Iarochevitch**, First Counsellor of the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH and Mr. **Boris Petkov**, Head of the EUFPS project, took part in the ceremony.

The objective of the EUFPS project was to strengthen capacities of BiH authorities to devise and execute fiscal policies and improve the management of public finances at all levels of governments. The project also provided support in improvement of financial data bases at all levels of BiH governments, as the project's team assessed that BiH's statistical capacities were still not in accordance with the European standards.

Mr. **Iarochevitch** explained that civil servants were the main target of the project, as they could improve their daily work and therefore bring the country and its citizens closer to the European standards. *"It is important to know that having successfully completed this training makes you better prepared for assessing economic data and analysing*

new economic and fiscal developments.", said Mr. Iarochevitch announcing that the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH would use all lessons learned from this project to develop similar programmes in the future.

The Project team together with participating governments' staff has improved and developed macroeconomic/fiscal analysis and forecasting models, hence providing powerful tools for research policy in support of budget preparation and negotiations with international partners. *"I believe that we established very good relations will all relevant institutions and partners through implementation of this project, working together, coordinating and providing better fiscal policy for the future of entire country on its road towards the European Union"*, concluded Mr. **Petkov**.

As an additional benefit of the ceremony, Mr. **Daniele Franco**, one of the leading fiscal policy analysts in the European Union, gave a lecture on fiscal rules and budget coordination practice of European countries, their actual problems and possible solutions.



The Conference on "BiH Foreign Trade Policy – Moving towards Integration into the EU and the World Trading System"

Mr. **Johan Hesse**, the First Secretary of the European Commission Delegation to BiH and the Head of the Operations Section for Economic Reform and Natural Resources addressed the participants of the Conference on "BiH Foreign Trade Policy – Moving towards Integration into the EU and the World Trading System" on December 17, 2008 in Sarajevo. This Conference was organised by the EU-funded Project "Support to Trade Policy Development and Capacity Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (EU TPP) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations (MoFTER) of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to mark the end of the project.

In his opening address, Mr. Hesse noted that the importance of the project lies in the fact that BiH now has more than one year of experience in implementing the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) with the neighbouring countries, while at the beginning of implementing the Interim Agreement of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the European Union.

He also outlined that the necessary preconditions to improve BiH trade performance and the capacity to participate effectively in the regional and multilateral trade were to ensure that BiH has the ability



to formulate and implement appropriate trade policies. Mr. Hesse concluded his address underlining that the EU has allocated more than 5 million EURO for the assistance in this area as a *"strong indicator of EU preparedness to further strengthen BiH integration with EU trade."*

"Our aim is to put all our efforts to protect domestic trade from increasingly strong competition. In that regard, MoFTER was intensively enhancing its capacities related to the trade measures protection under this Project.", said Mr. **Vilim Primorac**, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH.

Mr. **Istvan Major**, the Chairman of the Working Group for BiH accession to the WTO, urged the BiH authorities to use the window of opportunity and speed up the bilateral part of negotiations in order to complete the entire process of accession. *"With good effort and appropriate determination by the end of the year your country could be a member of the WTO."* concluded Mr. Major.

The EU provided 1.457.653 Euro for the implementation of this Project.

Closing Ceremony of the EU Training And Consultancy (EU TAC) Project for SMEs in B&H

On October 22, 2008 Mr. **Johan Hesse**, First Secretary and Head of Operations section for Economic Reform and Natural Resources of the European Commission Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina attended the closing ceremony of the EU TAC Training and Consultancy Project for Small and Medium Enterprises in BiH. The objective of the event was to present the achievements of this EU-funded project in the overall regional economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its relevance in the context of European Integration process. In addition, it aimed to present practical recommendations for further capacity advancement of the BiH economic service providers, entrepreneurs and regional development agencies as well as to add to further promotion of entrepreneurial education in general.

"This project highlighted the importance of the entrepreneurial education for business community and stakeholders" said Mr. Hesse and presented other project achievements including certification of 50 EU TAC trainers from all over the country, business trainings events provided for over 1500 people, start-up of 15 new companies and relevant consultancy support for over 50 companies. Explaining the additional relevance of the project, Mr. Hesse added: *"The project outgrew itself – it did more than was initially planned and significantly supported regional economic development in Bosnia and Herzegovina"*.



On behalf of the Regional Development Agencies Network, Mr. **Ševkija Okerić**, Director of Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA) expressed his gratitude to the European Commission for financing this project which will contribute to further process of the regional economic recovery and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

About Project

The EU TAC project was implemented in the period January 2006 – October 2008 and its main goal was to improve business performance and competitiveness of SMEs, start-ups and local economic service providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The total value of the project was 1.5 million Euro and it was funded from CARDS 2005 under the EU Support for Regional Economic Development Fund. It was implemented by the project consortium lead by a German agency InWEnt in cooperation with B&H partners Izbor Plus, Association of CEFE Trainers to B&H and Enterprise Development Agency (EDA).

More information available at EU TAC website: www.eutac.eu

Conference on Necessity for Development of Innovation Capacities in Bosnia and Herzegovina held in Brčko

Mr **Johann Hesse**, First Secretary and Head of Operations section for Economic Reform and Natural Resources of the European Commission Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed the participants at the Conference *Necessity for development of innovation capacities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* held in Brčko on December 4, 2008. The Conference was organised by the Independent Development Office (NBR) in cooperation with Chamber of Commerce and the Government of Brčko District as a part of the project *Strategic Strengthening of Entrepreneurship & Development Centres (RPC) in North East Bosnia and Herzegovina*. The implementation of this EU funded project started in October 2007 and it will last until May 2009.

Mr Hesse pointed out that this was not solely the European Commission project, but the project recognised by the Delegation as a valuable idea that needed to be supported. *"The Delegation allocated the grant for this project to enhance the development of small and medium enterprises at their start-up phase. These enterprises do*



not know the market very well, and they are not in a position to distribute their products and ideas. Therefore, through business incubators, as one of the project goals, these enterprises would receive business premises, offices or halls, in which they could establish their production. Additionally, business incubators would serve as providers of professional assistance and advice for financial management and business plan drafting", said Dr. Hesse.

Enver Sarvan, Executive Director of the Independent Development Office (NBR) outlined that the Conference was also an opportunity to define the activities in the innovation area and to adopt, in cooperation with other stakeholders, action plans in order to ensure a more favorable position of the innovation issue at all government levels in BiH. A round table discussion on *"Infrastructure for development of the innovation capacities in BiH"* followed the presentations.

The value of the Project is 588,548 KM and EU funding amounts to 89% (523,808 KM).



Final conference of the EU-funded project “Support to the State Veterinary Office (SVO) in BiH” was held on November 5, 2008 in Sarajevo. Mr. **Ferdinand Kopp**, Head of Section for Justice and Home Affairs/Public Administration Reform of the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH, Mr. **Matthias Heinz**, representative of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to BiH, Mr. **Darko Čobanov**, BiH Veterinary Office Deputy Director, Mr. **Eberhard Haunhorst**, representative of German Consumer Protection Office, Mr. **Hamdo Tinjak**, Secretary of BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and Mr. **Sanin Tanković**, Secretary of BiH Veterinary Office presented achievements of this Twinning project implemented in cooperation with BiH Veterinary Office and German Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

The overall objective of the project was to prepare the BiH veterinary sector for export of livestock and animal products to the European Union which has been banned since 2000. On this occasion, Mr. **Kopp** emphasised that BiH had a great potential in agricultural sector, but needed to harmonise it with European standards. *“BiH needs to get a system concerning food safety which is compliant with the EU standards which will then enable country to export BiH products to the EU but also to ensure safety for the consumers.”* – said Mr. Kopp.

The project assisted in preparation of important legislation necessary for implementation of the EU standards and gradual alignment with the *Acquis*. Mr. **Čobanov** underlined that this Conference and project activities *“were based on exchange of experiences, examples of good practices and pointed at things that needed to be improved. Our experts had opportunity to go to Germany and see how these issues are solved*

Completion of the EU - funded project “Support to BiH Veterinary Office” marked in Sarajevo

there in different segments. The project generated a whole set of recommendations that our relevant governing institutions at all levels should implement.” – explained Mr. **Čobanov**.

Mr. **Heinz** stated that there were two reasons why this project was supported by the German Government. *“Firstly, that is the accession of BiH and integration process towards the European Union, which requires a lot of technical expertise and a lot of adoption of structures and legislation. The other point is that we believe that veterinary sector may seem very technical, very specialised, small field of work, but we believe that this is a key area for further economic development of BiH, especially in agricultural sector.”* – said Mr. Heinz.

This conference also served as a forum for discussion on progress made by the BiH veterinary services as well as on plans for future period at all levels.

About project

EU funded project “Support to the State Veterinary Office (SVO) in BiH” was implemented since 2006. To address the main weaknesses of the veterinary sector, amongst other activities, the project supported establishing effective organisation of the State Veterinary Administration and its co-ordination with other institutions and relevant agencies, including the veterinary services at entities level and District Brčko.

European Union funded this project with 1 million Euro.

Ambassador Kourkoulas attended the Conference “Cooperation between the Police and Prosecutor’s Offices in BiH”

On October 13, 2008, Ambassador **Dimitris Kourkoulas**, attended the conference *„Cooperation between the Police and Prosecutor’s Offices in BiH”* in Sarajevo. The Conference is a part of the Project “Establishment of enhanced mechanisms of cooperation between the police and prosecutor’s offices in BiH”. This project has been facilitated by the EUPM and financed by the government of the United Kingdom. The project was jointly implemented by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HJPC) in cooperation with the BiH Ministry of Security, Ministries of Interior of Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska and Brčko District Police.

European Union is attaching particular importance to the consolidation of the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *„In this context, improved cooperation between prosecutors and police agencies is essential for the European integration process.”*, said Ambassador Kourkoulas and underlined the importance of the rule of law for three main reasons: First, it is a precondition for democracy and economic development, second, for the Stabilisation and Association Process, and third, it is important for future progress in relation to Visa Liberalisation.

Ambassador Kourkoulas noted that the European Union, to date, provided over 140 million Euro for Justice and Home Affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *„The European Union and European Commission will continue to be fully committed supporting your efforts in the area of Justice and Home Affairs through new financial instruments.”*, concluded Ambassador Kourkoulas.

Assessing the security situation in BiH, the Head of the European Union Police Mission to BiH, Brigadier General **Vincenzo Coppola** stated: *“We witnessed the number of complex and high profile investigations, which resulted with arrests and indictments. Some of the most dangerous criminals are behind the bars and serious organised crimes gangs have been dismantled. This shows that we are on the right track.”*

Mr. **Raffi Gregorian**, Principal Deputy High Representative and Supervisor for Brčko District said that this Conference had a unique role to play in bringing professionals together to consider the relations between police and prosecutors and how they could be improved.

Two-day workshop on organised crime threat assessment held in Sarajevo

A two-day workshop on organised crime threat assessment hosted by the BiH Ministry of Security and organised in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Interior, took place in Sarajevo on November 11 and 12, 2008. Mr. **Ferdinand Kopp**, Head of Section for Justice and Home Affairs/Public Administration Reform of the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH and, Mr. **Vjekoslav Vuković**, Assistant Minister of BiH Ministry of Security responsible for fight against organised crime sector, addressed the participants of the workshop, members of different law enforcement agencies from BiH.

The aim of the workshop organised with support of the EU's Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX), was to introduce European Criminal Intelligence Model and Europol's Organised Crime Threat Assessment project to the participants (OCTA). Mr. **Kopp** stressed that subject of this workshop was very important, since organised crime undermines economical, social and political development of the society. *"In this regard, the Europol crime assessments are an important tool to combat organised crime within a country. Sufficient information and meaningful analyses about the scope of organised crime and its various manifestations are important for the development and implementation of well targeted strategies in the fight against crime."* – said Mr. Kopp.

EU supports BiH's efforts in fight against organised crime and has already allocated a lot of resources and funds for modernisation of police forces in BiH, added Mr. Kopp. *"Organised crime knows no borders, operates across geographical, political and ethnical borders, and is often conducted with very modern equipment, so it is very important for the police forces to be well equipped, to have modern techniques to join the efforts, to have good exchange of information and tools to cooperate."* – he said.

Mr. Vuković explained that Organised Crime Threat assessment (OCTA) is a network that collects data on assessed level of a threat of the organised crime in SouthEast European countries. This regional

OCTA is a part of Europol's OCTA and it will add-on to Europol's annual OCTA document which provides data on a threat of organised crime in EU countries and wider. Mr. Vuković also emphasised the importance of regional cooperation in combating organised crime.

"By gathering data jointly from all countries of the region, we will get a joint document with assessment of the level of organised crime threat here and how to overcome that problem. This South East European OCTA will especially help BiH, having in mind its complex administrative structure, and therefore complex structure of security and police forces. It could harmonise certain rules and procedures in police conduct in BiH at first place, so that we could exchange information in easier manner with our neighbours and colleagues from other countries." – stated Mr. Vuković.

Mr. Kopp took the opportunity to announce that EU will continue to support the strategy which sees the police in this country as a service to the citizens, capable to combat crime and provide security to stabilise the society and ensure the rule of law.

About TAIEX

TAIEX - Technical Assistance and Information Exchange, is an instrument of the Directorate General for Enlargement of the European Commission. TAIEX helps countries with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation. It is largely demand driven and channels requests for assistance and contributes to the delivery of appropriate tailor-made expertise to address problems at short notice.

"Rehabilitation of Obodina Landfill and construction of Sanitary Landfill Obodina in Trebinje Municipality"

Final ceremony of the European Union funded project "Rehabilitation of Obodina Landfill and construction of Sanitary Landfill Obodina in Trebinje" took place on Friday, September 26, 2008, at Municipality Trebinje. European Union ensured almost 1.3 million Euro for the works on the rehabilitation and construction of the sanitary landfill Obodina and additional 170.000 Euro for the financing of the supervising company.

The landfill Obodina is located 4 kilometers from Trebinje on the regional road Trebinje – Herceg Novi. Waste disposal has started in 1965 and since then there was a free access to depot, without required control. Due to lack of basic infrastructure, the Obodina depot had all attributes of a wild depot. The old landfill was extremely polluted, threatening to endanger whole environment in the region and presented a risk to human health.

The project for Rehabilitation of old and construction of new Sanitary Landfill ensured execution of necessary works for the renewal and development of the existing garbage dump, as well as introducing a sanitary landfill for the disposal of waste at the Obodina landfill.

The total area covered by closure of the old fly-tip is 14.911,32 m². The new sanitary landfill was executed in the close vicinity of the old one and it is the area of 21.000,00 m².



Conference dedicated to protection of war victims held in Sarajevo on October 14, 2008



On behalf of the European Commission Delegation to BiH, Mr. **Constantino Longares**, Head of Operation Section for Democracy and Social Development and Chairman of the BiH Presidency Mr. **Haris Silajdžić**, addressed the participants at the conference "Protection of war victims", held in Sarajevo on October 14, 2009. The conference was organised by the organisation Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) and association "Žena žrtva rata", with aim to raise awareness among governing structures, civil society and general public on the issues that civil victims of war have been facing in BiH today. Participants, legal experts, human rights activists, representatives of the relevant ministries and civil society discussed

the ways of improving the status of war victims in BiH.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. **Longares** expressed his hope that the project implemented by ASB along with its local partners would contribute to social inclusion of civil victims of war by raising public awareness of issues they face in BiH, and by providing recommendations for improvement of legislation in this sector at all government levels.

President of the association "Žena žrtva rata", Ms. **Bakira Hasečić** thanked both ASB for implementing and the European Commission for financing the project aimed at socio-economic empowerment of civil victims of war. She underlined that, through the project, they had a huge success in the past two years in creating a data base with information on war crimes and war crime victims in BiH.

ASB Director for the Balkan region, Mr. **Elmir Bojadžić**, explained that the project was implemented in four components – strengthening capacities of the local organisations, education of war victims in preparing and developing business plans, solving housing issues of the most endangered victims and raising public awareness on the issue.

The Head of the Special Department for War Crimes within the BiH Prosecutor's Office, Mr. **David Schwendiman** stated on this occasion that witness protection was one of the prosecution's greatest concerns.

Total project value is 1,000,000 Euro of which 750,000 Euro was provided by the European Commission, 100,000 Euro by Sarajevo Canton and 150,000 Euro by the ASB.

European Union provides significant funds for opening of Centre for Forensics and Support to the Department for Crime Investigation – Techniques in Sarajevo

The newly formed Centre for Forensic and Support to the Department for Crime Investigation – Techniques was opened on Friday, 14 November 2008 in Sarajevo. Mr. **Ferdinand Kopp**, Head of Section for Justice and Home Affairs of the European Commission Delegation to BiH, H.E. Ambassador of the United States of America to BiH, **Charles L. English** and Mr. **Nedžad Branković**, FBiH Prime Minister attended the opening ceremony.

European Union and US Government provided significant financial and technical assistance in equipping and opening of this Centre. With the objective to pave the way for the establishment of a centralised and autonomous Forensics Institute within the BiH Ministry of Security, the specialised equipment was provided to the two existing forensics laboratories at entity level in BiH following a complementary strategy between them; the two laboratories are committed to serve all the Law Enforcement Agencies and Prosecutors' offices in BiH.

On this occasion, Mr. Kopp stressed that citizens had the right to expect from the police and legal system to enforce the law and find, prosecute and punish crime offenders, thus improving the safety of citizens. "It is now your responsibility to work on it further and to develop it. It is your responsibility to make the best use of this Centre and

its tools and possibilities and to effectively contribute to carrying out modern investigations, increase the number of resolved criminal cases and increase security of the country and its citizens." stated Mr. Kopp.

Ambassador **English** said that BiH law enforcement agencies have passed a long way in almost 13 years, since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. He emphasised that this Centre is an achievement at several levels and a big step forward. "We are particularly pleased with the fact that this facility, now part of FBiH Ministry of Interior, will, under police reform agreement, become part of a new state level organisation in the forensics field. And I know that you will use this facility to advance greatly in the interest of law enforcement in BiH and once again to further entrench the role of law in this country," concluded Ambassador English.

At the opening ceremony, Mr. Branković thanked the EU and Government of the USA for the comprehensive assistance in this field, underlining importance of the provided training programs.

The Centre for Forensic and Support to the Department for Crime Investigation – Techniques is a part of the European Union's assistance project worth over 2.75 million Euro.



Posavina – Hunting and Fishing Paradise

Mr. **Johann Hesse**, First Secretary of the Delegation of the European Commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Head of Operation section for Economic Reforms and Natural Resources, visited the locations of the EU funded project "Posavina – Hunting and Fishing Paradise" on 5 December, 2008. The central event of the visit was held at Gradačac Fortress and was hosted by director of Posavina Canton Tourist Board Mr. **Hajrudin Hadžidedić**, President of Posavina Canton Mr. **Mijo Matanović**, Minister of trade, tourism and traffic of Tuzla Canton Mr. Zoran Milić, Mr. Amir Zahirović, Mayor of Vukosavlje municipality, Mr. Željko Josić, Mayor of Domaljevac municipality and other representatives of the municipalities involved in the Project.

The EU funded Project "Posavina – Hunting and Fishing Paradise" is based on tourism development needs and potentials in Posavina region, with aim for this region to become the leading hunting and fishing tourist destination. The main activities, designed to accomplish the set objectives, are creation of Tourism product "Posavina – Hunting and Fishing Paradise", Tourist Product Promotion and attracting investments for further improvement of tourist potentials.

The Project has been designed through joint efforts of eight municipalities as well as Tourist Association of Posavina Canton (the

implementing agency), Government of Brčko District of BiH (the partner) and Independent Office for Development - NBR (technical assistance). «It is fascinating that the Project managed to bring together many people from different municipalities, cantons and entities who worked and cooperated during its implementation, which is not very often a case. Therefore, we wish you many tourists and lots of success in your future work», said Mr. Hesse. Members of the Association of Sport Fishermen "Hazna" from Gradačac handed over Mr. Hesse a token of appreciation for the assistance provided in promotion and development of sport fishing.

Mr. Hadžidedić pointed out that partners in the project were unified in the tourist development of this region. «Tourism can be developed only as a destination, and Bosanska Posavina is a destination. We have to expand it, not only through hunting and fishing tourism, but also through other forms of selective tourism», concluded Mr. Hadžidedić.

«I am glad that the project has this title. Posavina is the paradise for hunting and fishing indeed. We will give our best to make our region and our Canton an interesting place to visit», emphasized Mr. Mijo Matanović.

Total value of the Project is 332,000 Euro of which the European Union allocated 295,480 Euro or 89% of the total project funds.

European Commission Delegation to BiH marked the Human Rights Day

On December 10, 2008 activists from Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Tuzla marked the International Human Rights Day and 60th Anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. These activities were supported by the European Commission Delegation to BiH and organised by Human Rights Office Tuzla Youth Branch "Y", Youth Group of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH in Sarajevo and Helsinki Citizen Committee for Human Rights Banja Luka.

Young volunteers held street actions and distributed charters and roses, and other promotional materials. In Sarajevo, as a part of regional agreement, the group also shared free hugs. On the flipcharts that were set on the street, people wrote peace messages and their rights that were being violated every day.

Public program in the centre of Tuzla and 5th Human Rights Film Festival, „Over the Walls“ were main activities in Tuzla. Film Festival is a unique film festival of documentary films on human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The film festival gives wider dimension to human rights – political, economic and social – as one of the

innovative ways of promoting human rights in the country. Ms. **Nada Mladina**, president of Tuzla Municipality Council opened the festival and pointed out its relevance for the human rights protection and for the city and its citizens. On behalf of the European Commission Delegation to BiH Mr. **Vladimir Pandurević**, Task Manager, Ms. **Branka Rajner**, Executive Director of the Human Rights Office and Mr. **Adnan Hasanbegović** from Center for nonviolent action Sarajevo addressed the guests and expressed their support for all activities that promote human rights protection.

Main objective of marking the International Human Rights Day with mentioned activities was to motivate the citizens, especially the youth, to think about their fundamental rights and how much these rights are being violated or protected. Also, these activities aimed to inspire reconsidering the fact that equal rights for all were fundamental for peace and stability in BiH.

This year all the activities were supported by European Union, OSCE Mission to BiH and Working Title United Kingdom.

Understanding Enlargement

Recently the European Commission Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina published the brochure „Understanding Enlargement“ with the aim to promote European integration process among the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a user friendly manner, this brochure explains the nature of the enlargement process and provides more information about each of the phases that a potential candidate and candidate country needs to go through in order to attain full EU membership status. Brochure is also available at Delegation's web-site: www.europa.ba



Study in Europe- Erasmus Mundus programme

Presentations on Erasmus Mundus programme were organised at the BiH universities during December as a part of the EU awareness program "Together with Europe". The promotion was organised by the Delegation of the European Commission to BiH and Directorate for European Integrations of BiH. Additionally, the Delegation printed a promotional leaflet in order to spread the information about the Programme as much as possible among young people in BiH.

The Erasmus Mundus is education programme with overall aim to enhance the quality of European higher education. It fosters co-operation with third countries in order to improve the development of human resources and to promote dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures. The Erasmus Mundus programme offers scholarship to highly qualified students and scholars to participate in an Erasmus Mundus Masters Course.



Europeana – a single access point to Europe's cultural heritage - A European digital library for all – researchers, professionals and the public

Europeana (www.europeana.eu) is the common access point to the collections of European libraries, archives and museums from all around Europe. Europeana provides direct online access to at least 2 million items. Europeana is a simple but powerful tool for finding resources from all over Europe. Books, journals, films, maps, photos, music etc. are available for everyone to consult – and to use, copyright permitting.

The EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) celebrates its ten-year anniversary on 1 January 2009.

"It is ten years since the decision was taken to go ahead with a single currency for Europe, the euro. On 1 January 2009, the euro will be ten years old. Like the process of European integration as a whole, Economic and Monetary Union was a simultaneously visionary yet pragmatic project. A major step towards fulfilling the ideal of an 'ever closer union' among the peoples of Europe, it was achieved through close coordination and convergence of economic policies, and careful technical preparations among the EU countries.

Ten years on, it is a historic achievement of which all Europeans can be proud. Not only is such a currency union unprecedented in history; we can declare it a resounding success. Within the space of a decade it has clearly become the second most important currency in the world; it has brought economic stability; it has promoted economic and financial integration, and generated trade and growth among its members; and its framework for sound and sustainable public finances helps ensure that future generations can continue to benefit from the social systems that Europe is justly famous for. At the same time, the internal functioning of EMU and its external representation could be strengthened."

Joaquín Almunia, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/emu10/index_en.htm



Media launch of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009

On December 5, 2008 the European Commission launched the communication campaign for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 with the slogan "Imagine. Create. Innovate". The aim of the Year is to promote creative and innovative approaches in different sectors of human activity and contribute to better equip the European Union for the challenges ahead in a globalised world.

The European Year of Innovation and Creativity (EYCI) aims to raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation as key competences for personal, social and economic development. By emphasizing creativity and innovation, the EU aims at shaping Europe's future in a global competition by fostering the creative and innovative potential in all of us. The EU will offer a framework for raising awareness of the issues concerned and promoting a policy debate on how to increase Europe's creative and innovative potential. As for previous European Years, measures will include promotion campaigns, events and initiatives at European, national, regional and local levels.

The official inauguration took place in Prague on the 7th of January, in the presence of several Commissioners and members of the Czech Parliament. For more information:

<http://www.create2009.europa.eu/>