

# Newsletter

## PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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## CHAPTER 22 – POSITION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, IMPORTANCE FOR SERBIA

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Chapter 22, Regional policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments, is not just one of the Chapters in Serbia's negotiations about EU membership. It has a double significance and meaning: the chapter itself is important, because negotiations about this Chapter have to prove that we are capable of establishing sufficient, efficient and good capacities for the use of EU Cohesion Policy. Through negotiations on this Chapter, Serbia will prepare to be an equal participant in the EU Cohesion Policy, just as other member states.

However, horizontal role is equally important, because this is where it links to all other negotiation chapters. Actually, its significance lies in its essence, which includes the use of different EU funds after the accession (according to some estimations, eight to ten times more funds than what is currently available), as well as a return, mutual impact of each chapter, because this defines the strategic framework for all other public policies and areas for the use of these funds.

EU Cohesion Policy is one of the oldest and financially most generous EU policies. Its purpose is to alleviate the difference in the level of economic and social development within the EU and at the same time

improve competitiveness of member countries and the EU as a whole. More than a third of the total EU budget is planned for Cohesion Policy implementation (more precisely, around 36%, which is around 350 billion Euro). Funds for Cohesion Policy are European Regional Development Funds, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. The first two funds are called structural funds. European Commission distributes funds by objectives: 1) Convergence– reducing differences in the development levels of regions (82% of funds); 2) Regional competitiveness and employment (15% of funds); 3) European cross-border and interregional cooperation (3% of funds).

It is interesting that there are no legal requirements in this field, i.e. there is no special *acquis communautaire* to be harmonized with, but procedures and structures that have to be built. It is not sufficient to "copy" Serbia's existing structures for IPA funds into future structures for Cohesion Policy. It is first necessary to precisely understand the competencies of bodies that will conduct the monitoring of the spending of structural funds, and then establish such bodies, or work on the development of the existing ones with clear tasks. It is very important to keep in mind the

### IN THIS ISSUE:

AEBSR - Centre for Balkan of the Association of European Border Region

Mountain race Gazivode - Mokra Gora

InTER News

necessity to involve other partners in the programming phase, and not necessarily in fund management, especially social partners in programming, as in the case of use of ESF (effective partnership). It is difficult to define the size of administrative bodies and how many people precisely is needed for the use of EU funds, because we cannot precisely define the date of accession, which the dynamics of capacity building depends on. According to the estimation of DG Regio during screening, our administrative capacities are already better than in some of the member countries, and this should not slow us down, but on the contrary, work should be done on their strengthening.

Apart from precise definition of the place and responsibilities of relevant institutions, and especially their administrative capacities, there are several more questions that will be a challenge during the negotiations on Chapter 22. The main issue is the need for consolidation of the strategic framework, which is the foundation for multiannual programmes – it is actually about the need to define the general Development Strategy of Serbia, which would specify general development directions of Serbia. Some elements of this strategy are strategic principles of the Economic Development Programme, first presented last year, and a new version of EDP is being prepared for 2016.

Another important challenge is how to negotiate the size of Serbian Envelop – how many EU funds will we

be able to use after the accession. This scope of funds is usually calculated in relation to the GDP of the negotiating country, but the value recorded a few years before the accession (in our case it will certainly be 2016, 2017, 2018). This actually provides an estimate of the country's capacity for financial absorption. Therefore, the increase of GDP in the following years is a pre-condition for higher availability of funds after the accession.

A new challenge in terms of criteria for closing negotiations on Chapter 22, which did not exist during the negotiations with Croatia, but appeared in negotiations with Turkey, is the focus on balanced regional development of the candidate country. Namely, one of the conditions to close negotiations in this Chapter is the assessment of the national policy for reduction of regional disparities, which has to include the definition of the methodology and instruments for monitoring of the existing disparities, and develop indicators to overcome the imbalance which will bring the regions to the national average, and thus help achieving the overall, European average.

Only after the development of strategic documents, prepared projects, ensured administrative capacities, achieved good results in the implementation of IPA programmes, as well as definition of statistical regions according to Eurostat, we can say that a good foundation has been set for good use of the EU funds, and successful negotiation on Chapter 22. ■



# Centre for Balkan of the Association of European Border Region - Network of Young Leaders for Cross-border Cooperation

*Author: Ana Nikolov, MSc*

Ever since the beginning of the EU establishment, great attention was paid to cross-border cooperation. The main reason for that is dependence of EU sustainability on the intensity and quality of cooperation between neighbouring countries on the state, regional and local level. If we take in consideration the fact that the percentage of population living in EU cross-border areas is 37.5% of the total EU population, it is clear why cross-border cooperation is considered to be so important. Cross-border cooperation is one of the crucial factors affecting the establishment of economic, social and territorial cohesion within Europe, especially in case of borders between new and old member countries, between new members, as well as between new EU member countries and neighbouring countries. Cross-border cooperation can be defined as an action focused on development of good neighbour relations, connections and interactions. It is a constant process of suppressing lack of confidence and prejudice, and building trust in cross border regions. It helps building understanding and tolerance between neighbouring countries, strengthening regional identity and increasing economic attractiveness of regions, which significantly impacts the quality of living of the population from both sides of the border. It also plays a crucial role in national and international development, tolerance and harmonisation of intercultural relations. Initiation or development of cross-border relations depends on favourable geographical configuration, the existence of several border crossings and cooperation tradition, even informal. Regardless of the general context, the basic condition for successful cross-border cooperation is inclusion of the population. Success of Euroregions along European borders can only be explained with a strong wish for cooperation, not only between political but also socio-economic institutions, as

well as a large share of participating population. The foundations set through cross-border cooperation also slowly work as drivers in many fields. Cooperation boosts the development of mutual understanding between people and provides them with opportunities which bring European institutions and a large number of assistance programmes closer. International cooperation, understanding and agreements between people are foundations for stability and peace, and balanced development, and they mostly come from individuals that cooperate with neighbours, as well as institutions which directly represent them and speak on behalf of their needs. Cross-border cooperation has proven to be irreplaceable in future development and efficient integration of a unique Europe, through political, ethnic, social and cultural unity.



By accepting challenges of cross-border cooperation, regions cease to be only local interests and they are given the opportunity to make favourable economic and social agreements. This way, borders only take a role of administrative dividing lines, and in a long term, peripheral regions of individual countries can only benefit.

Even though we currently face numerous problems in the realisation of cross-border cooperation in the territory of Balkans, significant steps have been made in the last ten

years which indicate that cross-border is increasingly developing and it is more and more accepted in political, social and economic circles of the Balkans as one of the key instruments to promote development of underdeveloped border region. It is visible that there is a growing capacity for changes and innovation in the field of cross-border cooperation on local and regional level, and indicators certainly include the established Euroregions in border territories such as, for example: DKMT, Nišava, Drina, etc. We are certainly at the beginning of the development of Euroregions, where cooperation projects are implemented sporadically and with no continuity, which is a big deficiency that should be overcome if we want to boost the development of underdeveloped border territories and establish a good and continuous cooperation with the neighbours. With that goal, AEBR Center for Balkan was established in May 2014, with the main mission to strengthen the existing and provide support for establishment of new Euroregions in the Balkans. In order to achieve the mission, AEBR Center for Balkan is working on the implementation of the following tasks: strengthening Euroregions for programme and project implementation, building capacities of Euroregions for organisation of events dealing with cross-border issues, support to local self-governments to solve cross-border problems and planning of cross-border activities, establishing and managing the platform for exchange of cross-border experiences for the purpose of identifying and coordinating joint interests of Euroregions and local self-governments, raising awareness of the population about values and opportunities for Euroregions and cross-border cooperation, conducting analyses and studies about problems and possibilities of Euroregions as well as developing strategic cross-border studies. A special and most important task AEBR Center for Balkan got on this year's Youth Forum is to work on strengthening young leaders for cross-border cooperation.

On September 7-11, Association of European Border Region (AEBR) and Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives Balkans (CESCI Balkans), with support provided by the Provincial Secretariat for Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government, organized the VII AEBR Youth Forum in Novi Sad, with the title "Youth as the Driving Force of the European Union". The Forum was carried out through a discussion forum, seminars, round table, workshops and video conference with more than 60 young participants, and as many guests who recognised this event as important for strengthening of European integrations. The opening was also attended by: Istvan Pastor, President of the AP Vojvodina Assembly, Sanda Simic, Assistant Director of the Serbian European Integration Office, Branislav Bugarski, Provincial Secretary for Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government, Prof. Pavle Sekerus, PhD, Vice Chancellor of the University of Novi Sad for science and international cooperation, research and arts, Patricia Abafi on behalf of Levente Magyar, State Secretary for Economic Diplomacy of Hungary, Gyula Ocskay, Secretary General of CESCI Hungary, Martin Guillermo Ramirez, Secretary General of AEBR, Johannes Moisis Chairman Task Force of External Borders at Association of European Border Regions and others. On that occasion, AEBR Network of Young Leaders for Cross-border Cooperation was also launched, which will include the following working groups: WG for Environmental Protection, WG for Economic Development, WG for Spatial Analyses and Territorial Cohesion, WG for Cultural Diversity and Cultural Identity, WG for Peace and Conflict Resolution and WG for Gender Equality. The location of the Network is set up in Novi Sad together with CESCI Balkans office which was officially opened on this occasion. Activities of the Network will be implemented through AEBR Centre for Balkan. ■



## Mountain race Gazivode - Mokra Gora organised within the project "Climbing on Berim Rocks - Dare to Imagine"

**On** Saturday, October 10, 2015 a Mountain Race: Gazivode - Mokra Gora was organised by Outdoor In, Institute for Territorial Economic Development - InTER, Sport Club "Alti" and the Municipality of Zubin Potok. The event was organised within the project "Climbing on Berim Rocks – Dare to Imagine", financed by the Embassy of Finland, and also supported by PPSE/Swisscontact and USAID Empower.

The event was attended by the Ambassador of Finland, Anne Huhtamäki and her associate Jehona Ademaj, representative of PPSE Ivana Bozic, as well as officials from the Municipality of Zubin Potok including the Mayor, Stevan Vulovic. ■



## InTER participated at the VII Youth Forum "Youth as the driving force of the European Union" in Novi Sad

**InTER** participated at the VII Youth Forum "Youth as the driving force of the European Union", organised by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives Balkans (CESCI) and Provincial Secretariat for Inter-regional Cooperation and Local Self-Government, on September 7-11, 2015 in Novi Sad. The forum included many presentations and discussions in order to raise awareness of the youth about importance and opportunities in the accession and networking process among youth throughout Europe, for the purpose of starting new cross-border initiatives and projects.

With a presentation of the implemented cross-border cooperation project "Cross-border Economic Development of Montenegro and BiH", within the panel "New Generation and Sustainable Development of European Union" InTER introduced the participants to the organisation and scope of work, as well as the concept for successful cross-border cooperation. ■



## Workshop for Sectoral Civil Society Organisations "For better organisational capacities"

**On** September 17-18, 2015, a workshop was organised in Novi Sad for Sectoral Civil Society Organisations "For better organisational capacities". The workshop was organised by the Serbian European Integration Office (SEIO) and Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO).

The workshop's goals were to determine the joint priority needs for organisational development of SECOs, to improve cooperation between all participants and to draft an activity plan for the period until the end of 2016. InTER's representative participated in the SECO group for competitiveness. SECO group for competitiveness presented the proposed plan for organisational development of SECO organisations for the following year. ■



## Survey Results for Tourism in Ibarski Kolašin / Kollashini i Ibrit



A Research is published on tourism development in Ibarski Kolasin (Zubin Potok) carried out by the Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER), in cooperation with Outdoor In. The research shows the analysis of preferences of tourists visiting Ibarski Kolasin searching for attractions for active tourism. The research was published in Serbian, Albanian and English language, and translation and printing of the publication were financed by the Swiss project PPSE/Swisscontact.

The research was prepared in Serbian, English and Albanian and it can be found on InTER's website. [www.regionalnirazvoj.org](http://www.regionalnirazvoj.org)

## Analysis of European Commission's Progress Reports in issues relevant for territorial development



InTER has prepared a comparative analysis of Progress Reports of Western Balkans countries (without Turkey), with regard to topics relevant for territorial development as the main activity field of our organisation. With that regard we analysed parts of the Report related to the fulfillment of political and economic criteria, and we also tackled the chapters dealing with issues of special importance for territorial development: 8. Competition policy, 11. Agriculture and rural development, 20. Enterprise and industrial policy and 22. Regional policy and coordination of structural instruments.

The analysis was prepared in Serbian and it can be found on InTER's website. [www.regionalnirazvoj.org](http://www.regionalnirazvoj.org)

*Srećni novogodišnji i božićni praznici!*

*Season's Greetings*



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