



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Promoting Competitiveness through IT, Investment, Trade, Agriculture, Tourism, and Regional Integration

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USAID - *Europe and Eurasia Bureau* *Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI)*

UPCOMING EVENT: **Regional Best Practices Workshop** **June 24-25 Yerevan, Armenia**

The **Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI)** and the **Business Growth Initiative (BGI)** projects in collaboration with USAID Armenia are excited to invite you to the **Regional Best Practices Workshop in Yerevan, Armenia on June 24-25, 2008**. This much anticipated event will feature leading experts in fields related to tourism, ICT, business service delivery mechanisms and regional cooperation. The latest agenda can be found at <https://www.businessgrowthinitiative.org>

If you are planning to attend, we encourage you to register early online at our website registration.bcserdon.com. The event will take place at the Marriott Hotel, **Yerevan, Armenia, June 24 – 25, 2008**. Please contact us at register@bcserdon.com for further details regarding conference registration.

3rd Regional Competitiveness Conference **in South East Europe**

The 3rd **USAID** / Regional Competitiveness Conference held in Montenegro on May 20-22 was a great success. The event was opened by the US Ambassador to Montenegro, H.E. Roderick Moore; the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Montenegro- Prof. Dr. Vujica Lazovic, and Deputy Assistant Administrator of Europe & Eurasia Bureau at the United States Agency for International Development (**USAID**), Mr. Thomas Mefford. The conference, which offered unique examples of international experience in several areas, was attended by over 200 participants from 21 different countries, representing USAID Missions and projects, private companies, associations, business support organizations, donors and investment funds.

Leading companies, organizations and consultants presented best practices in tourism, agribusiness, business services providing, software development development and investing in South East Europe. In both the tourism and agribusiness sectors, the conference participants concluded that there are numerous regional cooperation opportunities that need to be pursued in order to enhance the competitiveness of the companies in each country and the entire South Eastern Europe region. Other participants learned about the many business service providers and software companies from the region that can help the public and private sector with their economic development efforts. These examples need to be disseminated more extensively and all regional stakeholders need to be informed about their availability, effectiveness and use. Lastly, participants saw the large interest of investment funds and the great investment opportunities available in the South East Europe. In addition to these necessary topics, the conference provided an incredible opportunity for networking that will facilitate future business and partnerships for all the participants. We hope to see you at one of our future events in the region!

For additional information, please feel free to contact – RCI@bcserdon.com



Mr. Thomas Mefford, Deputy Assistant Administrator
USAID / Europe & Eurasia Bureau



Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) and Online Products Value Chain Bourse

Responding to an interest expressed throughout the region, the [Regional Competitiveness Initiative](#) Project organized and facilitated a regional meeting - **Agriculture Market Information System (AMIS) and Online Products Value Chain Bourse**. The event took place on April 10th, 2008, in Skopje, Macedonia.

Twenty-three representatives from Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and US Department of Agriculture attended the seminar. Participants discussed challenges and opportunities for the implementation of sustainable Agriculture Market Information Systems, and shared practices and examples developed in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania. In the afternoon, the RCI team presented to an international audience of **USAID** Project participants, and government representatives, the first steps taken towards the creation of a Regional Agribusiness Information Sharing Portal, including an online public register with exhaustive information on market players from various agricultural sectors in South East Europe – a Regional Agribusiness Database.

Serbian Competitiveness Quest of Europe



B2B in action at MosBuild

Moscow - MosBuild

The Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SIEPA) and the **USAID** Competitiveness Project supported the participation of eight Serbian companies at the International Building and Interiors Exhibition “MosBuild” in Moscow (April 1-3). Approximately 192,000 people visited the fair which included 2,600 exhibitors from 42 countries, including USA, Japan, and China. Serbia’s regional competitors (Croatia, Bulgaria, and Hungary) were also present. This was the first time Serbia participated in the event. Serbian firms made close to 200 individual contacts. Overall, 1 million Euros in sales are expected to be produced through these B2B contacts.



USAID Mission Director to Serbia, Mike Harvey, with the University of Belgrade Forestry Faculty students ahead of their trip to Milan.

Milan - Saloni Satellite

The **USAID** Competitiveness Project supported eleven students from the University of Belgrade Forestry Faculty. These students were selected from candidates from hundreds of universities worldwide to participate in the international furniture design fair “Saloni Satellite”, a part of the Milan Design Week (April 16-21). This was the first time the Belgrade Forestry Faculty attended the fair. Prior to the Fair, the **USAID** Competitiveness Project provided trained the students in trade show participation and negotiations skills, and provided promotional materials and marketing support during the fair.

Frankfurt - IMEX

Serbia recently presented its advantages as a new European M.I.C.E. (Meeting, Incentive, Convention and Events) destination at the International Meetings and Exhibitions Fair (IMEX) in Frankfurt, from April 22-24, 2008. The **USAID** Competitiveness Project supported the Serbia Convention Bureau (SCB) and 5 Professional Congress Organizers (PCOs) in their participation in the event, through marketing, B2B and promotional support. During this major international exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events, the SCB held several group meetings to present the unique aspects of Serbia as a convention destination to the international market. The PCOs had the opportunity to promote new offerings and incentive packages to diverse foreign clients. Through this event, Serbia expanded awareness of its capabilities in the M.I.C.E. industry, with the country serving as the host to several major upcoming events including City Breaks, Universidad, European Cities, and EuroSong contest.



Integrating Marketing into Businesses - A Summer Internship Program

Business in Kosovo is starting looking beyond immediate production and invest in local and regional expansion. Unfortunately, the majority of producers and manufacturers have limited knowledge of, and few resources dedicated to marketing. The Kosovo Competitiveness and Business Support Project (KCBS) has designed a program that assists businesses engage full-time, dedicated marketing interns from leading Kosovo universities.

KCBS has designed this pilot program working in close partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and two leading universities. Kosovo businesses will experience first hand the added-value of having an internal marketing capability. Seven KCBS clients and three members of Kosovo Chamber of Commerce have agreed to participate in the program by committing to pay each intern €200/month which will be supplemented by €100/month from **USAID**. Interns will be conducting basic market and consumer research and competitive analysis, developing marketing plans, designing brochures or new packaging, writing communication strategies, organizing trade fair booths, and working with agencies to produce promotion materials, billboards and even TV commercials. The program includes trainings for employers and students together to ensure a smooth start to the internship.

The internship promises to be a valuable learning opportunity for both the businesses and the students and ultimately will launch a longer-term dialog which would ensure that Kosovo's academic institutions produce graduates with the skills to meet the current needs of the business community.

CAPS Program Introduces International Training Standards



The **USAID** -funded Competitive Armenian Private Sector project (CAPS) is facilitating the establishment of high quality training capacities for local tourism business associations.

A 'Training of Trainers' program began in October 2006 in collaboration with the Armenian Guides Guild (AGG). A course was delivered by trainers from the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), which offers internationally-recognized tourist guide training programs. As a result, 5 AGG trainers gained WFTGA Part II certification, qualifying them to deliver training courses in Armenia and prepare tourist guides according to WFTGA standards. In August 2007, two of these certified trainers delivered a 10-day course organized together with the Dilijan National Park. Seven guides successfully completed the course.

To ensure capacity to continue training in Armenia, CAPS facilitated the participation of 2 AGG trainers in the final stage of the WFTGA training program. Part III Certification creates the opportunity to establish the first ever tourist guide trainers' training school in Armenia to deliver courses on WFTGA standards for local and international students. The two selected AGG trainers attended the training organized in February 2008 at the WFTGA Training School in Nicosia, Cyprus. The training program consisted of workshops, hands on sessions, and presentations. The participants were also asked to develop a walking tour route as part of a test. Both AGG representatives successfully passed the test and became the first two tourist guides with the WFTGA Part III trainer's qualification in Armenia and the South Caucasus.

"The training provided us with an exceptional chance to upgrade our knowledge to the best standards, as well as enhance our experience", says Margarita Navoyan, one of the participants in the final Part III certification program. This is an important program for the future of Armenia's tourism industry. CAPS assistance in the introduction of WFTGA standards in training tourist guides in Armenia will lead to improved local tourism training capacities matching international standards, delivery of more efficient services by business associations and higher quality tourist guiding services; thus contributing to the enhancement of tourism in Armenia in general.



London Discovers Albania at World Travel Market

At a press conference held at the annual World Travel Market in London, Albania’s Minister of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (MTCYS), Mr. Ylli Pango, outlined efforts by the Ministry to increase Albanian tourism. The Minister foresees an advertising campaign on CNN this spring and the establishment of several travel itineraries to promote Albania’s ecological, cultural, and historic attractions. Albania’s National Tourism Authority (NTA), with the support of Albania Enterprise Development and Export Market Services (EDEM), produced promotional materials featured at the fair, including two photographic exhibitions showcasing Albania’s past and present tourism sites. These include “Albanian Destinations” by Roland Tasho, and “The Historic Marubi Collection: 1853-1950.”

According to Ministry statistics, Albania experienced its highest levels of international tourism in 2007, with 1.6 million visitors, an annual increase of 35%. The World Travel & Tourism Council reported that tourism has contributed 3.8 % to Albania’s GDP in 2006, and estimated that in the next five years tourism contribution to GDP will reach 7.5% of GDP. To support this growth, the Government of Albania has budgeted for a ten-fold increase in tourism development to €1 million for 2008 (compared to €100,000 for 2006), specifically to invest in tourism promotion, nationwide signage, and tourist information centers. Since 2004, the EDEM program has worked closely with the MTCYS and the NTA on international trade fairs like the World Travel Market in London, in order to enhance the country’s image and the overall industry competitiveness in the global tourism market.

LINKS

<p>Albania: http://albania.usaid.gov Armenia: http://armenia.usaid.gov Belarus: http://belarus.usaid.gov BiH: www.usaid.ba Bulgaria: www.usaid.gov/locations/Europeeurasia/countries/bg Central Asia: http://centralasia.usaid.gov Croatia: www.usembassy.hr/usa Georgia: http://georgia.usaid.gov</p>	<p>Kosovo: www.usaid.gov/missions/kosovo Macedonia: http://macedonia.usaid.gov Moldova: http://moldova.usaid.gov Romania: http://romania.usaid.gov Serbia and Montenegro: http://serbia-montenegro.usaid.gov Slovenia: www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/si Ukraine: http://ukraine.usaid.gov</p>
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