

USAID/RCI-Sponsored
 Stability Pact Trade Working Group
 Meeting of NTB Focal Points
 “Identifying and Eliminating Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade”
 October 31-November 1, 2006
 Bucharest, Romania

Final Report
10 November 2006

For BC Serdon – Angela Rodel, Foreign Liaison Officer

Project Description: The Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) sponsored the first meeting of NTB Focal Points in SEE, organized by Ms. Jan Forest, a USAID Senior Trade Advisor. Acting in its capacity as the RCI Regional Coordinator, BC Serdon organized the day-and-a-half long event, which took place at the Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest, Romania, on October 31-November 1, 2006.

Over the past year, trade ministers and government officials from ten SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, and UNMIK/Kosovo) agreed to each select a “Focal Point,” i.e. one governmental official from each participating country, to be part of a task force to address issues of NTBs. However, after being named, the Focal Points had not been brought together to meet one another in person. Thus, the objective of this meeting was to bring together the representatives to meet one another and establish a communication system, to clarify their roles and duties as focal points, and to begin identifying the most pervasive NTBs in the region.

Yes	No	Overall Status — At a Glance
X		Was the project completed on time?
X		Was the project completed within budget?
X		Were the project deliverables completed within acceptable quality levels?
X		Were scope change requests being managed successfully?
X		Were project issues being addressed successfully?
X		Are the parties satisfied with the organization and logistical support of the event?

Please find in attachment the following documents:

- Final agenda
- Final list of participants
- Presentations
- Photos

Accomplishments during This Period:

This conference achieved its goals of bringing together the focal points from nine of the ten SEE countries (the representative from Moldova cancelled at the last minute), as well as experts in the field of trade and customs, and members of the Stability Pact Secretariat. A total of twenty participants took part. A communication system was established, and the participants discussed the content and structure of their annual report of NTBs, which is their most important responsibility as focal points. They agreed to submit the reports for 2006 in January of 2007, then to meet again in March of 2007 to review the report and address one specific issue (yet to be decided) connected with NTBs. They hope to hold 2-3 meetings throughout 2007 in order to transition the group from the Stability Pact to CEFTA, which will take over responsibility for trade relations in SEE once it is signed in December 2006.

Participants seemed to be very pleased with the organization and outcome of the meeting. BC Serdon received many verbal and a number of written positive evaluations and comments from the participants and organizers.

Outside of the context of the conference, participants had the opportunity to socialize with each other and with the organizers, creating bonds of friendship and opportunities for further cooperation in the future.

Issues during the preparation of the event and action taken henceforth:

There turned out to be a number of changes to original list of focal points provided by Jan Forest (certain individuals had changed jobs or could not attend the meetings); however, working with Ms. Forest and the SPTWG Secretariat members, we were able to identify the correct focal points for all ten countries. However, the SPTWG was not very insistent about contacting these focal points and confirming their participation; thus, in the final weeks BC Serdon had to take on the responsibility of contacting these individuals by phone and email to confirm their participation and arrange their travel. In the end, we contacted all ten focal points and arranged their logistics in time for the meeting.

Acquiring Romanian visas was a problem for some of the participants, exacerbated by the late identification of certain focal points. However, BC Serdon met this challenge by contacting the Romanian Embassy in Macedonia directly to facilitate visas for UNMIK/Kosovo representatives, as well as USAID Romania to help with necessary documents. As a result, every single participant who needed a visa was able to acquire one in time for the meetings.

We received certain presentations and conference materials very late (Saturday, October 28); however, BC Serdon worked through the weekend preceding the meeting in order to be able to print out and burn CDs of all the necessary materials before the conference.

Issues during the event and action taken henceforth:

The location of the welcome dinner was changed from the hotel to a local restaurant, Burebista, a few days before the conference, complicating the payment situation. However, BC Serdon staff worked with the restaurant immediately upon arrival in Bucharest to make

sure a proper invoice was issued; also, cash resources were gathered to cover this unexpected expense and the dinner ran smoothly and successfully.

We had underestimated the amount of cash needed to reimburse participants for travel and visa costs; however, we were able to make up the difference by withdrawals from an ATM and paid all reimbursements in cash in a timely manner.

At all times there was at least one BC Serdon staff member present at the meeting to assist with the technological and logistical aspects of the meeting, and also to work with the hotel staff to ensure the smooth running of events. All participants at the conference were satisfied and there were no major issues to report.

There was confusion with the hotel staff regarding whose airport transfers would be covered by the meeting organizers; however, we submitted the list repeatedly and eventually met with the manager of the reception desk to clarify this situation.

Issues after the event and action taken henceforth:

There was a miscommunication about the payment to one of the lecturers; he was paid by wire transfer as had been agreed upon before the meeting and confirmed during the meeting. However, he was not aware that he would be responsible for paying the receiving bank's processing fee. He contacted BC Serdon to reimburse this amount, and we asked the RCI Project Manager to approve this cost given the misunderstanding, which he did. We have reimbursed the lecturer for this amount.

Recommendations:

Although the event overall went very smoothly and participants and organizers were generally pleased with the forum outcome, there is still room for improvement, especially where communication between the RCI staff, Stability Pact staff, and BC Serdon is concerned. To this end, BC Serdon has developed a communication plan to make clear who needs to be informed about certain types of information and which communication channels need to be emphasized so that we can make sure that all the correct information is distributed to the correct parties.