

**The Embassy of Italy in Belgrade,  
the Italian Cooperation Office,  
and the Italian Trade Commission present:**

**SERBIA: A STEP CLOSER TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**  
**Institutional perspective and financial instruments**  
**Belgrade, 25-26 February 2010**

Starting from the beginning of 2007, a *Desk for the European Union (EU-Desk)* has been established within the main office of the Italian Development Cooperation in Belgrade, and in the two focal points of Podgorica and Pristina, in order to strengthen synergies between Italian stakeholders and local counterparts and to promote their participation in programmes financed by the EU.

The EU-Desk, among its activities, promoted a series of thematic workshops (in Belgrade, Pristina and Podgorica) about the mechanisms for participation to European tenders, as well as the issues considered of high priority for Italy and beneficiary Countries, such as institution building, regional development, environment, energy, tourism, SMEs, research and innovation, cross-border cooperation.

A fourth workshop, to be held in Belgrade on 25-26 February 2010, is the natural prosecution of this important contribution to the European integration of the Balkans countries.

The workshop will give participants in-depth insight of most recent developments in EU policies, such as institutional developments and new programming strategies, also in light of the new sector-based approach discussed at the Conference on Effective Support for Enlargement held in Brussels on 19 October 2009. In this perspective, the Italian Development Cooperation is willing to contribute to the dissemination of information regarding IPA and the EU, as decisive support to prepare Serbia for the EU membership.

Providing sector-level overviews on issues perceived as priorities in the country and defined in compliance with a beneficiary-driven approach, the workshop will represent a moment of reflection on the path of Serbia towards European integration, contributing at strengthening the synergies between EU Member States and local stakeholders.

**STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP**

**1. Institutional session:** speakers will highlight the key progresses of the approximation of Serbia to the EU and will also underline some of the successes and difficulties of the Enlargement process. The session aims at investigating in particular the following issues:

*What has been achieved so far under a political/institutional and an administrative/technical point of view in Serbia's integration path? Is the current EU financial assistance approach to Serbia relevant to the established priorities? Is the programming mechanism efficient and flexible enough? What concrete support is still needed in developing strategies at sector level in Serbia?*

Representing a reflection on the processes ongoing in Serbia, this session will also contribute to increase public awareness of the EU Enlargement process by stimulating a public debate on the current agenda.

**2. Technical session:** the second session will focus on specific **operational tools** related to the Enlargement process which are of high importance for Serbia. Representatives of the EU Delegation to Serbia will provide participants an overview of the areas and scope of intervention, as well as of the tender procedures. The session will include:

- IPA COMPONENTS III-IV: new areas of intervention

The debate concerning the possibility of Serbia changing its status from Potential Candidate to Candidate Country in the near future bring to the forefront the opportunity to provide economic operators information on the needs and approaches to IPA Components III and IV (Regional and Human Resources Development). Components III, IV (and V) are designed to mirror structural, cohesion and rural development funds in preparation for the management of such funds upon accession, and therefore require the relevant management structures to be in place, but also specific capacity of stakeholders to implement projects in this new framework;

- DIS – Decentralized Implementation System: future procedures for economic operators

One concrete way to strengthen and demonstrate ownership and adequate administrative capacity is to move towards decentralized implementation of IPA and other assistance through local structures and institutions. As strongly underlined by the EU Delegation to Serbia, even if the accreditation process is long, it is fundamental to start preparing economic operators on new tender procedures foreseen under DIS.

- TWINNING PROGRAMME: strengthening administrative capacity to transpose and implement EU *acquis communautaire*

Being one of the principal tools of institution building, the twinning instrument assists beneficiary countries in developing modern and efficient administrations with structures, human resources and management skills needed to implement the *acquis communautaire* at the same standard as the Member States of the EU.

**3. Working Groups:** the last session will consist of three parallel **working groups** exploring topics of high priority for Serbia: Agriculture and Rural Development; Civil Society; Business Environment for SMEs.

The working groups will be moderated by an international and a local expert (representative of the relevant Ministry, of the civil society or the business community). This session will provide participants a sector level overview, fostering synergies between economic operators which could strengthen, from one side, the institutions and planning capacity of Serbia and provide, from the other side, to potential partners a better knowledge of the local context. Such participatory approach will give the Government of Serbia, local and international stakeholders the opportunity to assess the current existing strategies as well as to exchange experiences and best practices.

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## KEY ASPECTS

DATE: 25-26 February 2010

LOCATION: National Bank of Serbia, Nemanjina 17 – Belgrade, Serbia

OBJECTIVE: reflecting on Serbia's path towards European integration, informing European and local stakeholders about IPA and further development, networking

PARTICIPANTS: generally open to all interested stakeholders, yet the workshop is designed to meet the needs of specific target groups: institutions, public entities, universities, private companies, civil society, NGOs as well as international community.