



- ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING -  
as a Means for the Integration of Refugees, IDPs and Returnees



The project is financed by the European Union, co-financed by the municipalities involved in the project and implemented by ENECA

"If we ignore the plight of the refugees or the burden of the countries which have received them, I fear we will pay a heavy toll in renewed violence. Conditions must be created urgently to allow the refugees to go back and live in peace and tolerance in their own country...Freedom has little meaning for those who are hungry or homeless. Poverty and social inequity often contribute to unrest and upheaval which in turn lead to refugee flows, as Haiti has shown.

Development assistance, with an emphasis on priority human needs, including job creation, poverty alleviation, education and health, is therefore indispensable for greater social stability. Investing in peace, democracy, rehabilitation and economic development is in the long run the best way of resolving refugee problems. It is also the best way of preventing new refugee problems from arising." \*

\* Liberty Medal acceptance speech, July 4, 1995.  
[http://constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal/recipient\\_1995\\_speech.html](http://constitutioncenter.org/libertymedal/recipient_1995_speech.html)

In two decades of refugee tragedy, Republic of Serbia hosted all the refugees and war-affected people, regardless the religion and nationality. According to official data of the Commissariat for Refugees and migration and UNHCR, **Serbia has provided shelter for 850,000 people affected by the war**. It should be noted that Serbia continues to be the thirteenth state in the world, with over 300,000 refugees and displaced persons, the twelfth country in the world with over 86,000 refugees, and the first country in Europe regarding the number of refugees. Serbia is one of five countries in the world and the only one in Europe also known as the country of protracted refugee crisis.\*\*

In order to harmonise with EU standards, Serbia adopted a comprehensive *Strategy on Migration Management* and developed strategic activities targeting migrants. One of the Strategy's priorities is to solve the problems of the three most significant categories of migrants (refugees, IDPs and returnees). The common problems of all three migrant categories are **lack of appropriate housing solutions and inability of finding adequate employment**.

In the past two decades the Republic of Serbia, strongly supported by the EU, made efforts to create the conditions for local integration of refugees, IDPs and returnees by investing significant financial resources. However, the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons has not yet been fully resolved. It is necessary to intensify regional cooperation in order to achieve just, comprehensive, and durable solutions for the most vulnerable people. Support and coordination at all levels are prerequisite for achieving the objectives of the process. And only with joint national and local authorities efforts the status of migrants' rights could be substantially improved.

\*\* <http://www.politika.rs/pogledi/Chedomir-Antic/Trajna-izbeglicka-kriza.lt.html>



## IPA - Pre-Accession Assistance Instrument

IPA- the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance is the streamlined mechanism created by the EU to deliver aid efficiently to the Western Balkans and Turkey which will bring direct benefit to the citizens, while the countries receive additional assistance in achieving European standards.

The total amount allocated for IPA projects in the region for the period 2007-2013 amounted to EUR 11.5 billion. IPA replaces five previous EU instrument for pre-accession-Phare, ISPA, SAPARD, programme for Turkey and CARDS.

### **The main priorities identified for IPA assistance over the period 2011-2013 are to:**

- ① Strengthen the rule of law and public administration;
- ② Overcome the economic crisis and improve competitiveness;
- ③ Support social inclusion and reconciliation.

With the aim of concentrating IPA support on the main priorities, the Commission focused its assistance on a selected number of sectors: Justice and home affairs; Public administration reform; Social development; Private sector development; Transport; Environment, Climate change and energy; as well as, Agriculture and rural development. These sectors were selected in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

The 2011 allocation for IPA component I is EUR 190.5 million. In addition to the assistance identified in this programme, EUR 32.1 million is provided for Social development component under which 7.0 million for Support for the implementation of strategies for IDPs, refugees and returnees.

Livelihood and living conditions of vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees is a pressing problem in Serbia and in the region as a whole. The main goals of the programme in this sector are to **align Serbia's social policies with EU standards** and to support the country's efforts to meet the *Europe 2020 targets* in terms of poverty and social exclusion, and in particular, to adhere to the objectives and actions of the *European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion*.

# PROJECT

- The project *Economic Strengthening as a Means for the Integration of the Refugees, IDPs and Returnees* was based on the platform of sustainable **integration** of the most vulnerable migrants into society.
- It is a part of a broader initiative of the European Union, i.e. support to the **implementation of strategies for IDPs, refugees and returnees**.

**The idea** for the project was based on the results achieved in previously implemented EU funded project in six municipalities of southern Serbia and presents its logical continuation. The project realization was designed in line with the features transpiring from the previous similar projects dealing with vulnerable population and having impact on critical socio-economic issues present in Serbia (in kind grants to start up or expand a business in the fields of agriculture, service and craft, support for different vulnerable groups, support to business registration, providing of business and vocational training, networking among the supported beneficiaries...).

By adopting the *Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs* in 2002 the Government of Serbia confirmed the commitment and political will to work together with other state agencies and international community on finding durable solutions for local integration of the most vulnerable groups.

The project addresses refugees, IDPs and returnees and is concentrating on the improvement of their economic situation through income generation activities and business/vocational training. The set of activities were implemented in order to assist the displaced to achieve self-sustainability, financially and socially equal position to other citizens of the country.

- The project was implemented from **May 2012 to January 2014**.
- The European Union financed the project with **222.160,00 Euros**, while municipalities of Blace, Kuršumlija, Sokobanja, Vladičin Han, Žitorađa and Zaječar contributed with **26.400,00 Euros**.

# RESULTS:

By putting all of its efforts to assist the target population in finding durable solution and achieving self-sustainability, ENECA has established **direct link to all relevant local structures in charge** (local trustees, Centers for social welfare and relevant associations) as well as the **Commissariat for refugees** as a beneficiary institution of the project results.

Since 2004 the European Union has been providing assistance in the area of support to Returnees and Reintegration of Refugees and IDPs, with the main purpose to assist the target groups and the authorities responsible for helping them find durable solutions to their problems. Therefore, it is evident that there is an overall will and strong national and international commitment to engage all available funds required for that purpose.

During the twenty months period the project has provided **support to 87 refugees and IDPs**, also including 17 extremely vulnerable local residents from municipalities of Blace, Kuršumlija, Sokobanja, Vladičin Han, Zaječar and Žitorađa. This support contributed considerably to **improvement of the economic status of beneficiaries and their families**.

The project started with the information campaign and information meetings held in selected municipalities, in cooperation with local trustees and local authorities. Through the information campaign, ENECA has informed more than 390 potential beneficiaries about the possibilities offered by the project, informed relevant stakeholders about the project objectives, project donor and expected results, and distributed more than 450 application forms and at least 550 project brochures.

Nine months after the project has officially started, ENECA has signed first Grant contracts with the final beneficiaries. Out of 280 submitted applications for the project grants, 181 fulfilled the social and economic criteria. They were interviewed by ENECA grant officers in order to **assess their business idea and get a clear picture of socio-economic status of the potential beneficiaries**.

The final selection was made in cooperation with the Commissariat for refugees and migration, local partners and other relevant stakeholders from the field (local NGOs, Centers for social welfare...) that were invited for further consideration and remarks.

As a result of an exhaustive selection process with considerable involvement of all important national and local actors, ENECA has signed **grant contracts with 87 vulnerable IDPs and refugees** with most promising business ideas in six selected municipalities of South-East Serbia.

87 grant amounts were distributed in the form of **equipment and raw material needed for starting or developing a business idea**. As an addition to the grant, the appropriate training combination (business and vocational) was defined and implemented in cooperation with the relevant training providers, enabling the supported entrepreneurs to work theoretically and practically on improvement of their businesses and achieve a long-term profitability.

At the end of the project, as well as throughout the project realization, **the constant monitoring and counseling** of supported entrepreneurs were provided. This way, ENECA maintained an active role in the development process of businesses conducted by vulnerable population. They were provided not only with the advice, but also with the information about **current possibilities and initiatives available on the market**.

## 20 MONTHS =

- + informed more than **390** potential beneficiaries
- + distributed more than **450** application forms
- + distributed **550** brochures
- + **280** submitted applications for the project grants
- + signed grant contracts with **87** vulnerable IDPs and refugees

# BENEFICIARIES

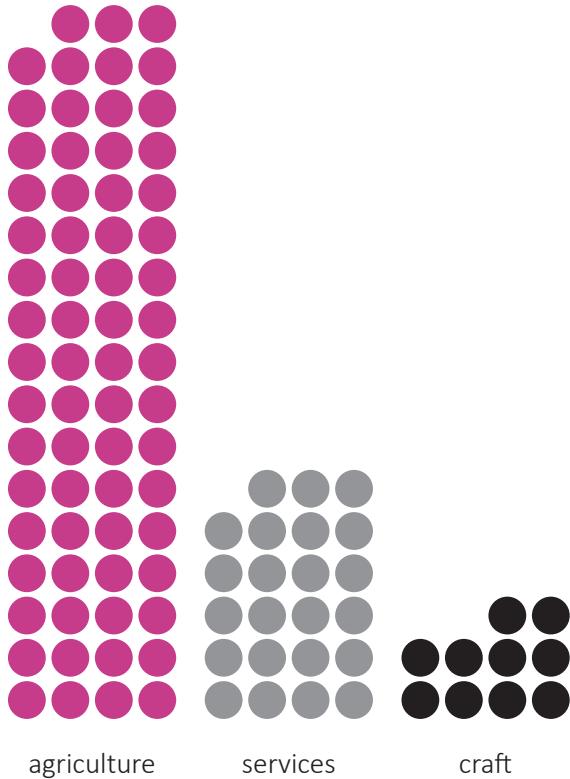
The project *Economic Strengthening as a Means for the Integration of the Refugees, IDPs and Returnees* has provided support to 87 beneficiaries. Out of the total number of supported beneficiaries, **42,5%** are **IDPs**, **38%** are **refugees** and **19,5%** are the most vulnerable **local citizens**.

## Supported beneficiaries:



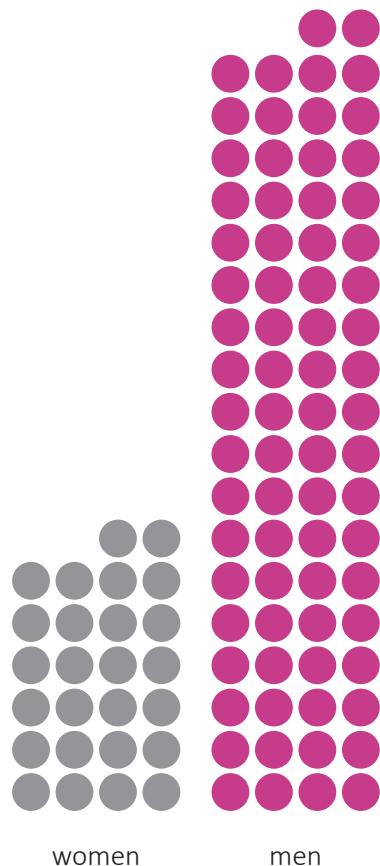
As for the supported activities, the greatest interest was shown in the field of **agriculture** (**67%**), followed by **services** (**23%**) and **craft** (**10%**).

## Supported activities:



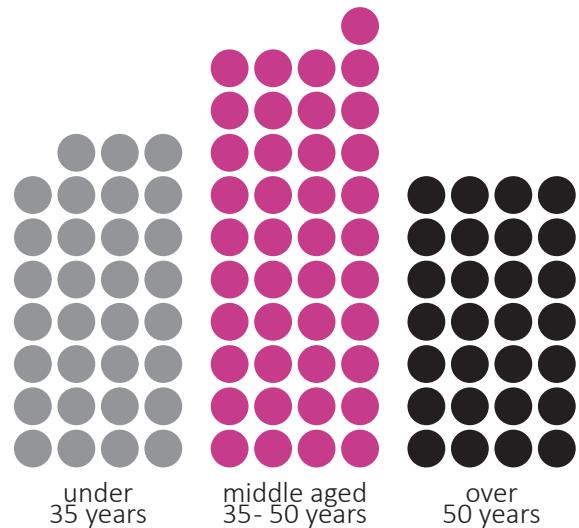
Concerning the gender structure of final beneficiaries the outcomes have not met our efforts made during the information campaign and throughout the project realization. Only **26,4%** of all supported businesses are led by **women**, whereas the rest of them (**73,6%**) are led by **men**.

#### Gender structure:



In spite of promotion support between younger population, we have reached the following: **31%** of all supported beneficiaries are **younger than 35**, **41%** of them are **middle-aged** (between 36 and 50 years of age), whereas the population of **over 50** years of age represents substantial part of grants (**28%**) demonstrating the factual situation among vulnerable population – many of older citizens are without a steady job but want to work and have initiatives.

#### Age structure:



Behind all the statements and statistics about refugees, asylum seekers, the internally displaced and the stateless are real people with harrowing tales of suffering and loss, as well as hope and ambition. UNHCR believes we must provide a platform for their voices and - when it does not risk their safety - to give a face to the millions of people of concern. The best way to understand the suffering of others is to hear their stories of hardship, courage, struggle and perseverance.\*\*\*

Here are some of the supported beneficiaries and their stories.

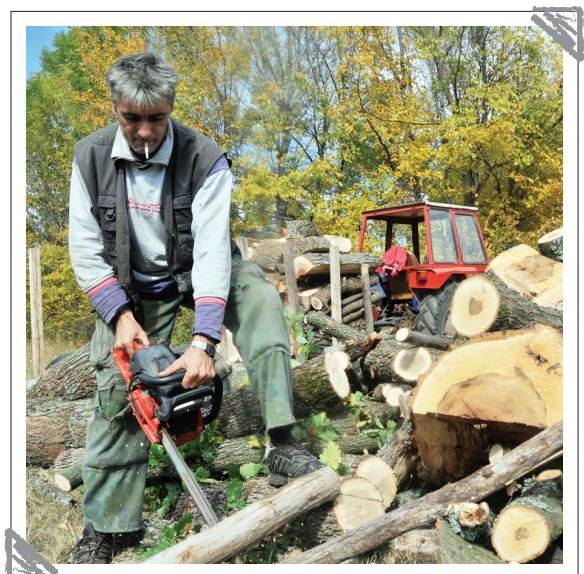
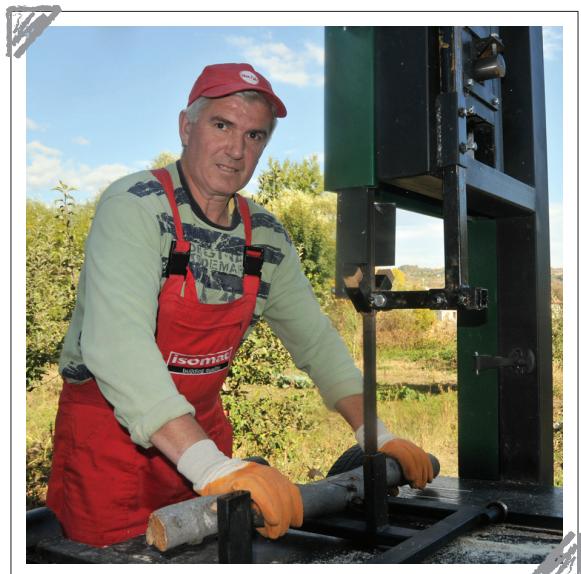


In June 2013 **Vesna Delibašić** opened a shop "TWITY" with the help of the European Union donation. She came to Vladičin Han with her family in 1999 and stayed there. Together with her husband, she is offering a carpet and car wash service to her fellow citizens. At the very beginning they were able to earn one average salary. An additional boost to their success, besides machinery and personal effort, was knowing that there was someone who believed in them and their idea which gave them hope and faith in better future.

**Milan Vidović** came from Vrginmost in Croatia as a young man and he started a new life in Lepenica near Vladičin Han. He got married and had a child. Near the old small house where he lives with his parents, slowly rises a new, modern one where he will soon move in with his family. On ground floor of the house is a workshop where Milan produces concrete blocks for yard paths, fountains and decorations for gardens and yards. We helped his business rise – as he says – the entire season was busy and he is happy as his child is growing and the house is awaiting new tenants.

We found **Branko Vujanić** in Sokobanja. He came in 1995 from Ervenik near Knin. He left an entire life behind him – his job, house and property. All that was left were ruins – everything from the house was stolen. He started a new life working in a shop selling paint and polish. More than ten years he worked for a minimum wage and without any financial security. Now, he puts his hopes in European Union donation and his skill. We caught him resting between two jobs – it is October, high season, neighbors are preparing woods for the winter and Branko is very busy responding to all requests.

Five-member household of **Jovo Vukčević** lives in a school apartment in Čitluk near Sokobanja. He says – temporary accommodation since 1995 – when he came from Gračac. There is no job if you are not looking – he adds. He has to look for a job for himself as he needs to provide for everyday living. He has no land on his own so rents and some even he gets from good people for free to cultivate, keep and sell cattle, cuts woods... He was donated with additional machinery for tractor which facilitate heavy agricultural works as well as electric chainsaw for cutting woods during the season.



Dubovo, a village on the outskirts of the municipality of Žitoradja, is situated in an idyllic scenery near the artificial lake Zlatar. On a piece of land donated by the company FilipMoris, prefabricated houses for internally displaced persons were built. Here we found several new beneficiaries: **Lidija Šaponjić** from Prizren, **Zivorad Marinković** from Donje Nerodimlje near Prizren, **Apostol Veličković** from Obilić and **Vladimir Jocić** from Žitoradja. They all live with their families in this small neighborhood, handling everyday issues but equally happy and grateful for donations they received from the European Union. Vladimir has four greenhouses in his yard; Lidija expanded the land for growing vegetables and hopes to generate better income next year. Apostol cultivates land for daily wages and with a new motocultivator he will improve his effectiveness. This is the only source of income for his five-member family.





**Milos Milic** settled with his family in a village Belazemija near Blace, from Slatina in Kosovo. He came all the way from a tenant to an owner of a small house, from renting to owning land and orchards. Even today, he buys acre by acre of land, knowing it is future for him and his children. He is happy with the donation, additional machinery, and with pride talks about crops of plum he generated in the previous season.



He is welcoming us sitting in a tractor, waving and explaining that we could not go further with a car. We leave the car and continue down the village road towards the house. The nature is astonishing – especially in autumn with quince, plums and cherries in the orchards still green and harvest completed long time ago. The year was fruitful but the purchase price was far from the expected – says **Dragan Crnoglavac** who came from Kosovska Mitrovica to Blace with his family. “I had to work and feed my family. There was no job in a town so I came to a family estate and started a small business. When they called me from ENECA to apply for the European Union donation I was skeptical but my wife was persistent. I guess my enthusiasm gained trust and receive a donation for the first time: agricultural machinery. This donation means a lot to me! I am making plans for a new season and hope for a fruitful year!

**Smiljan and Dejan Lazović** came with their mother from Prizren in Kosovo in 1999. They stayed in Blace, not choosing jobs to survive the hard times. They realized that an open call for ENECA project “Economic Strengthening as a Means for the Integration of Refugees IDPs and Returnees” could help them fulfill their dream. Smiljan started a family business in a restaurant named „Otvorena vrata“ (meaning „Open door“). Both mother and Dejan work in a restaurant and they employed three more people. A new ambition of this small family is to build their own facilities to run a business.



**Tomislav Ristić** was a beekeeper in Kosovo. At the time it was a hobby but now is an occupation. Luckily, he likes nature and enjoys his work. Nothing is too hard for him. When he applied for a donation he had 30 beehives and now he received 30 more. He keeps on talking about bees and honey, pollen, royal jelly... it is evident he knows his job and keeps learning. He came to Blace from Uroševac with his wife and two children. They have a small apartment and some land in the nearby hills with enough sunny days to maintain beehives Tomislav takes care of. The children go to school and his only concern is to develop his business in order to provide his children with good education. The donation contributed to realization of his goals.





Slobodan Bogićević



Vedran Trkla



Željka Muslin



Ranko Simić



Radovan Stojaković



Milorad Dragojević



Marija Toskić



Nataša Canović



Branko Roksandić



Saša Ilić

# CONCLUSION

The methodology for implementation of the project *Economic Strengthening as a Means for the Integration of the Refugees, IDPs and Returnees* is based on the positive experience of ENECA within similar projects conducted in southern Serbia. To create healthy environment for sustainable economic development of vulnerable groups and achieve long-term sustainability, more than economic and technical assistance is needed- **best results could be achieved only by combining several principles that include:**

- 1) individuality (individual skills, knowledge, personal interests, preferences),
- 2) integrity,
- 3) networking,
- 4) guidance,
- 5) tailor-made training

which implies success on the long run.

This project was designed in correlation with main strategic documents that are the basis for the integration of refugees and IDPs: National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Migration Management Strategy and National Employment Strategy, as well as the overall approaches and priorities of the EU, which includes suitable livelihoods for the displaced and socially vulnerable.

During the project realization, some difficulties were encountered in reference to the returnees and their reintegration under the readmission agreements. Our findings showed that the main obstacle during the information campaign was **absence of the database on the exact number of returnees**. Therefore, it was impossible to spread information about the project opportunities among this vulnerable category – **only one application has been categorized as 'returnees' in ENECA's database.**

That was the reason we did not provide support for a single returnee from all six municipalities.

## **Main project conclusions and recommendations are:**

- To continue with consultative and professional assistance to already supported beneficiaries and maintain the broad network of contacts between beneficiaries in order to consult each other and exchange good practice examples and advices.
- Combination of financial and technical support in the form of training gives the best results for long lasting profitability of supported beneficiaries.
- To continue cooperation with local and regional stakeholders in order to ensure sustainability of supported businesses and overall support to integration of refugees and IDPs.
- To propose a continual cooperation with National Employment Service local branches, local trustee offices and other relevant stakeholders so as to enable monitoring the effects of project actions regarding vulnerable groups, especially refugees and IDPs on the labor market.
- To foster activities on integration of returnees under the Readmission agreements improving cooperation on institutional level
- To support the adoption of the Law on Micro crediting which can be a way to economic empowerment of socially vulnerable groups and an instrument for poverty reduction.
- To promote entrepreneurship as a way for economic growth and poverty reduction.

# ENECA [implementing organisation]

**ENECA** is a local non-government organization from Niš, Serbia and has been operational since 2005. The mission of ENECA is to be a driving force for local sustainable development in the Republic of Serbia. It is our goal to continuously and consistently follow and meet the needs of our beneficiaries and provide better socio-economic conditions for all citizens **taking care of fundamental human rights, the values of civil society, rule of law and democracy.**

Through development projects worth more 1.8 million Euros, implemented individually or in partnership with local or international partners, ENECA has supported more than 1000 small businesses. Supporting the establishment or development of small family businesses, ENECA has enabled employment and new jobs creation for vulnerable population like refugees, IDPs, Roma, self supported parents, the young, redundant workers....

Employing is always followed by additional education through business and vocational training, local community support and often business sector support; the best outcomes and long-term sustainability are achieved this way.

The projects, which ENECA has implemented, are based on the sustainable development concept, taking care of the national and local strategies as well as the international standards. At the same time we have been trying to not only follow new mechanisms and trends but also to anticipate and create them.

In the context of socially vulnerable population ENECA gave its contribution to the integration process providing assistance to more than 300 refugees and IDPs from southern and southeastern Serbia through income generation activities, training and business counseling. The aim of these activities was to support IDPs and refugees to maximize the chances of success of the socio economic integration process by turning them into **productive members of society** and assisting with economic growth.





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