**Closing conference of Market Surveillance project**

The conference, which took place in Belgrade marked the closing of a 2.5 year EU-funded Market project “Strengthening of the Serbian System of Market Surveillance for Non-Food and Food Products”, which, in the words of the National project director Lidija Stojanovic, has “been vital to help increase the capacity of the MTTT to provide a high level of consumer protection and to ensure fair competition without unnecessary trade limitations.”

The Head of Operations of the European Union Delegation, Mr Jose Antonio Gomez Gomez, acknowledged that the task of aligning Serbia’s market surveillance legislation and practices to that of the EU’s New Legislative Framework is “Sisyphean.” It involves checking, revising and approving thousands of pages of legislation. But, he pointed out, “the rewards are considerable, given that it will provide Serbia’s businesses with access to the EU’s internal market of 500 million consumers”.

The task is daunting because in addition to revising technical legislation in line with EU safety and other relevant requirements for all products, all staff must be familiarized with the new standards and legislation. Moreover, more recently the EU has adopted the New Legislative Framework (NLF) 2008/765 which establishes the requirements for a new approach for accreditation and to market surveillance that relevant staff have been trained in with the help of this project. In all almost 900 participants were trained in a variety of workshops and study missions to EU states to learn how the system works.

As the Safety coordinator of Department of Technical Surveillance in Market Inspection, Goran Aksentijevic explained, the new approach also has implications for businesses because “now, everyone from manufacturers to retailers will be liable for meeting the essential harmonized safety and other product requirements if they want to be able to operate. If they fail to comply, they can all be responsible for the consequences and will be fined. No one can pass the buck. It’s much more clear-cut”, he explained.

This is good news for consumers. Furthermore, as the State Secretary for Ministry Tourism, Trade and Telecommunications Vesna Kovac pointed out in her opening remarks, the new MS System, “provides better coordinated and hence more effective protection”. The EU’s market surveillance system calls for a Europe–wide effective exchange of information and communication so that unsafe and non-conforming products can be dealt with in a substantive and coordinated way.

To this end through this project, Serbia and the EU are co-funding the development and implementation new and sophisticated Management Information System, which has two parts. The first database supports the planning, preparation, execution and follow-up of the market inspection activities by providing extensive information about inspections and economic operators. Meanwhile a second system shares information more widely about non-conforming and/or dangerous products which need to be prevented from entering, or should be withdrawn from, the Serbian market. This serves the public interest and supports all Serbian authorities, which are responsible for product safety. The system is now almost completed, and will be ready and further expanded to support the work of the inspectors over the coming years as more and more results are inputted.

“Serbian consumers and businesses alike will gain much from the progress achieved with the help of this project, the national director of the project”, Lidija Stojanovic concluded.

The Project ‘**Strengthening of the Serbian System of Market Surveillance for Non-Food and Food Products-MSS’** supports the authorities to improve the market surveillance system. This will lead to increased protection for Serbian consumers and greater access for Serbian businesses to EU markets. The project aimed to improve the legal and policy framework, effective coordination and cooperation between market surveillance stakeholders and to develop knowledge of inspectors to monitor markets. The MSS project was jointly funded by the EU with EUR 2.5 million and the Republic of Serbia with EUR 350,000.