

**Speaking points of H.E. Mr. Paul Vandoren at the presentation of  
the IPA Project “Women on the Labour Market“  
16/11/2010 at 10:00 hrs**

Vaša Ekscelencijo, Predsjednice vlade Kosor

Poštovani Ministre Popijač,

Poštovani državni tajnici,

Dame i gospodo,

Želio bih vas pozdraviti u ime Europske unije i izraziti zadovoljstvo što prisustvujem današnjem događanju.

*Your Excellency Prime Minister Kosor (if confirmed);*

*Dear Minister Popijac;*

*Dear state secretaries,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*I would like to greet you on behalf of the European Union and express my pleasure for being present at today's event.*

Today's occasion is an opportunity to look at progress in the delivery of IPA IV, a programme designed to enable Croatia to benefit from funding under the European Social Fund, and a programme which can contribute significantly to the development of Croatia's human resources.

We just heard from Ms Paun a first feedback on the progress made so far.

I would like to back up those words. We are pleased to see how this component has had a good start.

The awarding of 17 contracts today in the framework of a Grant Scheme with a budget of 2 million €, targeting unemployed women, is an additional positive sign.

As for Croatia, in terms of statistics, the employment rate among women seems a particularly worrying issue.

Based on the most up-to-date Eurostat data (August 2010) the unemployment rate for women in the EU 27 is 9.6%, while in Croatia it stands at 12.8%.

According to the same source, the employment rate of women in the EU 27, for 2009, stands at 58%, while in Croatia it stands at 51%.

These figures indicate that there seem to be some real barriers to the participation of women in the labour market in Croatia, such as the lack of a sufficient number of childcare facilities, the lack of more flexible working hours, the need for reconciliation of professional & private life, to name but a few.

As well as being a matter of social justice, a higher participation of women in the labour market is also a matter of economic necessity and is a key element to generating sustainable growth.

Not surprisingly, for citizens, employment and social inclusion are the priority issues of the day. A recent Eurobarometer survey has found

that 63% of Europeans want the EU to address unemployment as its priority.

This is why in the European Union we have now the Europe 2020 Strategy with targets and objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Partnerships & broad initiatives are an effective way in finding optimal solutions to such problems. The use of pre-accession & soon structural funds can materialise such solutions.

The European Social Fund – and the present Human Resources Development Programme – is there to address concrete economic and social issues like this one.

It aims at achieving smart policies, and establishing medium term integrated strategies backed by a stable and predictable budget allocation.

Only when we address these types of problems with vigilance over a longer period of time, we can expect real results, real changes.

In Croatia, these first projects are a pre-cursor of what is to come. The European Social Fund can be of far greater importance, and can make a real change.

It is, therefore, of key importance that Croatia takes full advantage of the projects IPA finances now.

It allows Croatia to practice, to see what works and what does not work – and even to make some mistakes.

All this will enable Croatia, once it is a member of the EU, to fully benefit from the social, economic and financial solidarity of the European Union. Much more significant amounts of funding will be available

We are, therefore, all looking forward to the results of those projects. Make them work! Show that Croatia is ready, not only in the central administration, but also regionally and locally through these projects.

I call upon you to make full use of this opportunity, to follow carefully the rules and to deliver concrete results, which will help Croatia to move forward.

I, therefore, wish you all a lot of determination and enthusiasm in the implementation of your projects and I hope to be able to congratulate you, at the end of the implementation period.

Best of luck.

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