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**SMALL BUSINESS
EXPANSION PROJECT**

SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION PROJECT

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This quarter was filled with adventure sports events supported by SBEP. Starting with the Krali Marko Bouldering Cup near Prilep which took place in April, through the Demir Kapija Rock-Climbing Outdoor Festival and the Mariovo Off-Road Biking Event in May, June saw three more events that serve to promote this type of activities as tourist attractions.

In June, the first event took place in the Azot area of the Vardar region and it was a recreational off-road mountain biking event organized by the local cycling club *Veles Biking*. Even though it was a first time event, there were around 200 officially registered participants, but the final count reached more than 250. They could choose from three different rides: the most difficult one 52 km long and reaching an altitude of 1400 m, the second one fairly difficult and 33 km long, and the recreational one, which was 17 km long. The good turnout promises similar or greater attendance next year, while at the same time provides the organizers with feedback on where they need to improve.

On June 13-14, the Mavrovo Mountain Bike (MTB) weekend took place, which included the first UCI (International Cycling Union) mountain bike race in Macedonia. In the race, which provided qualification points for participation in the Olympic Games in Brazil in 2016, fifteen elite mountain bikers from Macedonia and the region took part.

On the second day, two mountain bike marathons took place – one 42 km and one 90 km long, as well as a recreational tour around the lake of Mavrovo. The event gathered more than 300 participants and visitors.



In the Vardar region, the biking event in the Azot area gathered more than 250 participants



The UCI race, which brought qualification points for the Olympic Games to participants, took place in Mavrovo on June 13



On June 14, two mountain biking marathons took place in Mavrovo

IN A NUTSHELL

A number of SBEP supported adventure sports events took place during this quarter:

- ➔ The Krali Marko Bouldering Event (3-4 April);
- ➔ The Demir Kapija Rock-Climbing Outdoor Festival (22-25 May);
- ➔ The Mariovo Off Road Biking Event (30-31 May);
- ➔ The Azot Biking Event (6-7 June);
- ➔ The Mavrovo Mountain Bike Race (13-14 June);
- ➔ The Gostivar Open Paragliding Cup (27-28 June).

All of the events (those that were not held for the first time) reported an approximate 30% increase in participants.

- ➔ The first cycling tour resulting from last year's Adventure Week will take place in August.
- ➔ SBEP is supporting RDC Pelagonija in putting together a "Discover Pelagonija" event, which would promote the tourist offerings of the region.

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL

The two-day event was organized by *Energi Cycling*, a biking club from Skopje, with the support of the Municipality of Mavrovo and Rostushe the National Park Mavrovo and SBEP.

On the first day of the event, officials including Mr. Stefano Lazzarotto, Ambassador of Switzerland to Macedonia and Mr. James Stein, USAID Macedonia Mission Director joined the organizers from *Energi* and the hosts, Mayor Mukrem Mehmedi of the Mavrovo and Rostushe municipality and Mr. Oner Jakuposki, Director of the National Park. In the short speech each of them gave, they stressed the following:

“The ultimate goal is for Mavrovo to become a popular destination not only in winter, but throughout the year, which will create more full-time jobs”, said Ambassador Lazzarotto.

“Events like this help Macedonia to position itself as an attractive location for professional and recreational athletes”, said USAID Mission Director Stein.

The third event that SBEP supported in June was the inauguration of the first paragliding take-off site in the Gostivar municipality. The occasion was Gostivar Open – a paragliding competition which included participants from Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania and Ukraine. Deputy US Ambassador, Mr. Barton Putney and Gostivar Mayor, Mr. Nevzat Bejta, together with USAID/SBEP representatives, members of the local paragliding club *Condor*, contestants and paragliding fans participated in the event. It was also part of the celebrations marking the Day of the Municipality of Gostivar, June 29.



Equipping the paragliding take-off site near Gostivar



Deputy US Ambassador, Mr. Barton Putney (middle), Gostivar Mayor Nevzat Bejta (right) and Mr. Mentor Saiti cutting the ribbon of the paragliding site



Mount Taul near Gostivar also offers excellent hiking opportunities

In addition to paragliding, the two-day event included hiking as well, to the highest point of near-by Mount Taul. Around 100 people attended the event, of which more than 80 paragliding pilots.

The project itself entailed four months of intensive work. Information boards, a meteorological station and a platform for preparation of the gliders were put up on the take-off site. In addition, the access to the site was well marked with road signs. The president of the paragliding club *Condor*, which carried out the initiative in cooperation and joint funding from the Municipality of Gostivar and SBEP, Mr. Mentor Saiti, expressed his satisfaction that the initiative has found support:

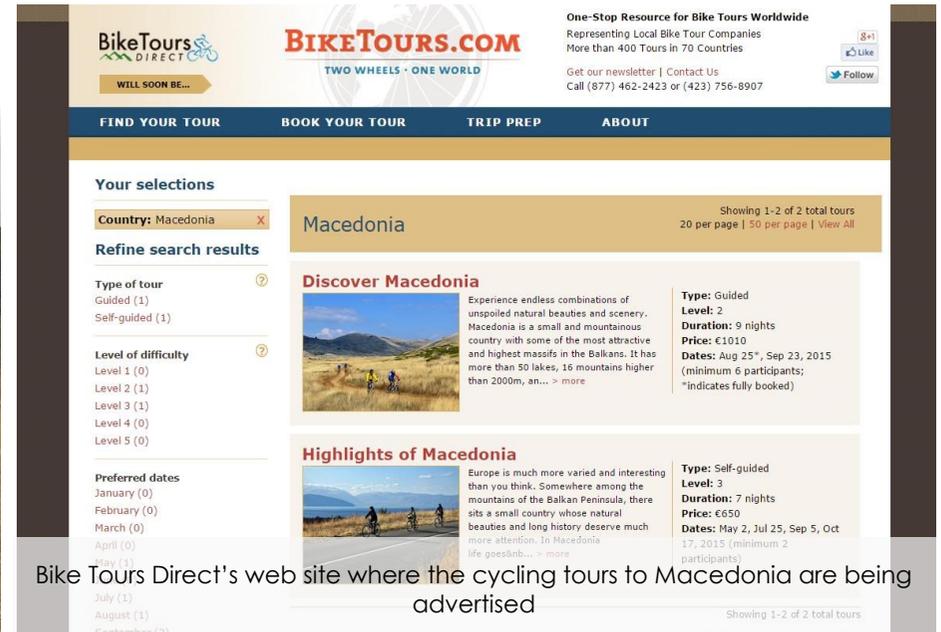
“This project was a dream that we’ve had for a while and with the help of the Municipality of Gostivar and SBEP, it has become reality. This sport has fans, and interested people are constantly coming to the Club.”, said Mr. Saiti.

Supporting this type of events is in SBEP's strategy this year, which aims at strengthening the capacity of local tourism stakeholders to attract foreign tourists with an interest in sports and adventure travel, especially in the light of next year's Adventure Travel Conference in Ohrid. Other activities are also under way in preparation for the conference, including the visit of SBEP's tourism consultant Kirk Smock and ATTA representative Gergana Nikolova next month. They will meet with partners and other participants in the organization of the conference and work on itineraries, accommodation and other logistic issues.

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL



Journalist and paragliding pilot Marcus King (middle) with fellow pilots from the local paragliding club Vertigo at one of the take-off sites above Ohrid Lake



Bike Tours Direct's web site where the cycling tours to Macedonia are being advertised

In addition to a couple of adventure sports events in August in the Polog region, coming up in the autumn is another tourism initiative. In Pelagonija, preparations are underway for *Discover Pelagonija* - a series of events to promote the region as an adventure travel destination. The RDC is coordinating stakeholders who will participate in the organization of activities, which will combine sports and musical events in different parts of the region.

Also within its Adventure Travel initiative, SBEP continues to work on the promotion of Macedonia's potential as an adventure tourism destination through articles in targeted specialized media. In June, SBEP invited journalist and paragliding pilot Marcus King from Cross Country

magazine (<http://www.xcmag.com/>) to visit paragliding sites across Macedonia. The purpose of his visit was to learn what the country has to offer in this particular adventure sport and feature it in the magazine, so as the information reaches enthusiasts who would be interested in coming to fly here. Mr. King visited Krushevo, as the most prominent paragliding location, as well as Chegrane and Popova Shapka take-off sites, where he had the opportunity to fly. He also went to Treskavec and Sliva take-off sites in Pelagonija, and Galichica and Velestovo take-off sites near Ohrid. Unfortunately, the weather conditions in these places were unsuitable for flying. Mr. King will write an article about Macedonia for the magazine as well as feature it in a separate guide.

As previously reported, a number of the participating tour operators in last year's AdventureWeek have started offering tours in Macedonia as a result of the familiarization trip. In August, the first such tour will take place. *Bike Tours Direct* from Tennessee is bringing a group of cycling enthusiasts for a guided 9-night tour of Macedonia. The tour, which costs US\$ 1.010 has been sold out, and another one is offered for September.

ExperiencePlus!'s longer multi-country tour, which also includes Macedonia in the itinerary, has been sold out early in 2015 and will take place in September-October 2015. A number of other companies are finalizing their offers for 2016, which will include Macedonia.

MACEDONIA ADVENTURE TRAVEL

IN A NUTSHELL

- ➔ Most of the drip irrigation systems have been installed on the corn and sunflower fields of the 160 farmers participating in this year's Grow More Corn initiative.
- ➔ SBEP has assisted 39 farmers from across Macedonia to apply for the 50/50 measure. If approved, the total investment from these farmers, including the subsidies will amount to approximately US\$ 230.000.
- ➔ In an effort to enable more and more farmers to access funding for expanding their farming business, USAID and SBEP have been working on a Loan Guarantee Fund through the Development Credit Authority.

During this quarter, most of the drip irrigation systems have been installed on the corn and sunflower fields of the 160 farmers who are participating in SBEP's Grow More Corn initiative this year. SBEP staff and partners have started conducting field visits so as to give the farmers instructions regarding the irrigation frequency and intensity, as well as recommendations for fertilization management.

This season, a number of farmers have applied for subsidies under measure 121 in the National Program for Financial Support of Rural Development, also known as the 50/50 measure. Farmers from all over the country have recognized the value that drip irrigation will bring to their farms, and SBEP has assisted a total of 39 farmers from all regions where it operates, as well as outside, to apply for funding. The combined number of hectares for which farmers applied reached 152.3, amounting to an investment worth 7.494.169 MKD, i.e. US\$ 132.010. If fully approved, the total investment from these farmers, including the subsidies, will be worth 12.999.678 MKD, i.e US\$ 229.810.



Farmers filling out 50/50 applications



A drip irrigation pipe going through a corn field

GROW MORE CORN INITIATIVE

SBEP's estimate is that this year, as a result of its Grow More Corn initiative, the number of hectares of corn and sunflower under drip irrigation will reach almost 700. This number includes the farmers that have received equipment through SBEP's initiative, as well as those who have invested in it themselves—either fully or via a government subsidy scheme. This is already 10% of the envisaged 7,000 hectares of corn under drip, which is projected to satisfy Macedonia's need for corn, i.e. substitute imports with domestic production.

These results were achieved thanks to the cooperation between SBEP, the Ministry of Agriculture and a number of other partners on the ground, including the Regional Development Centers (RDCs) and the National Extension Agency (NEA). Minister Cvetkov made sure to stress this during one of this year's launch events in the village of Lopate in the North-East region:



US Ambassador Bailey and Minister Cvetkov at Igor Jankulovski's field in Chashka

"I would first like to thank USAID, who showed farmers that by introducing science and technology, they can increase their production by three to four times. With this project, it is envisaged that with 7,000 hectares under drip irrigation the need for corn will be satisfied, and we will produce the needed quantities, which we are currently importing from the neighboring countries." said Mr. Mihail Cvetkov, Minister of Agriculture

This year, the farmers that have received drip irrigation systems are much more optimistic at the start of the season compared to previous years, when farmers were more cautious with their expectations. This is largely on account of the strategy of gradual introduction of the drip irrigation systems and the approach of trying to achieve broad exposure to the idea of growing corn and sunflowers with drip irrigation that SBEP has been using for the past years. This difference in the stance of the farmers proves that the approach is working – more and more farmers are now recognizing the role that drip irrigation can play in boosting their outputs and in increasing the efficiency at which they produce their various products, whether they are feed, milk, or other.

A number of the farmers participating in the initiative, as well as more and more of those who have learned about the benefits of using drip irrigation for growing corn and sunflower are purchasing additional equipment. SBEP is constantly receiving information about farmers who have invested in drip systems to cover additional hectares of land. They are realizing that by making such an investment, they increase their production and thus lower their costs in the long run substituting the purchase of corn at market prices.



Farmer Aco Malchev from Gradsko is a first time user of drip irrigation for sunflower

GROW MORE CORN INITIATIVE

As further evidence of the increasing cooperation between USAID Macedonia and the Ministry of Agriculture, a joint press conference will be held in July to announce the establishment of a Loan Guarantee Fund through the Development Credit Authority, which is administrated by USAID. This is the result of the work and research that USAID, SBEP and local partners have been doing for the past two years, as an effort to enable more and more farmers to access funding for expanding their agricultural businesses.

The Fund will target farmers who have good business plans and ideas, but have difficulty finding coverage for their loans, and lack buildings or assets that could be mortgaged. Farmers will need to provide 50% of the coverage, and the Fund will provide a guarantee for the remaining 50%. This will allow Macedonian farmers to increase their liquidity, procure new equipment and balance their investments more easily. This Fund will guarantee coverage for loans totaling 20 million dollars.



Farmer Igor Jankulovski from Chashka received a drip irrigation system for one hectare through the Grow More Corn initiative, and invested in additional equipment for 29 hectares by himself

“

We used to irrigate with sprinklers for two and a half months, with four or five people spending their whole days on setting them up and irrigating, and now we can have just one person spending about an hour or two per day to do the same job, and probably even less than that.

said Igor Jankulovski, the farmer on whose field the launch event for the Vardar region was held this quarter. Igor, with his 30 hectares of corn under drip irrigation, sets a great example for other farmers in the region.

”

GROW MORE CORN INITIATIVE

This quarter, the trainings within SBEP's EU LEADER initiative in both the Vardar and the Polog regions continued. In the Vardar region, the trainings are being conducted according to schedule in each of the three micro-regions, with an average of 27 participants per training, of which half are usually women. As in Pelagonija and the North-East, where the series of trainings have been completed, the trainers here follow the same dynamics and cover the same topics.



Consultant Hari Shutovski during a training in Negotino

In Polog, after the initial informative workshops that took place last quarter, the Local Action Groups (LAGs) started taking shape in terms of regular participants who take part in each training. The pre-LAG members from the municipalities of Bogovinje and Brvenica, comprising the LAG 2, and those from the municipalities of Tearce and Jegunovce, who make up the LAG 1, are the most active. Each LAG had three sessions on the different topics, with an average of 22 participants, of whom an average of six women.



Participants in one of the trainings in Negotino

However, the LAG consisting of participants from the municipalities of Gostivar, Vrapchisthe and Mavrovo and Rostushe, had to delay its activities, mainly due to inconsistency of the representatives who were required to be regular and absence of the participants. Because of this, the trainings have been postponed for August and in the meantime, the consultants will work on improving the structure of the group, making sure that it has the required representation.



Bogovinje and Brvenica representatives are regular participants in the trainings

IN A NUTSHELL

- ➔ Trainings in the Vardar region continue according to schedule in each micro-region, with an average of 27 participants, of whom usually half are women.
- ➔ In Polog, trainings continue, but with a slower dynamics, due to the month of Ramadan, but also due to discrepancies between the capacities in the participating municipalities. SBEP and partners are making efforts to include all stakeholders in the process.
- ➔ The EU NIMS (New IPARD Measures) Project held a number of meetings and workshops, at which SBEP representatives and partners took part. The result is a draft LEADER measure, which will be presented to the Ministry, and the DG Agri in Brussels for accreditation.

EU LEADER

Polog region	LAG	Topic	Number of participants		
			Total	Men	Women
May 29, 2015 Tearce and Jegunovce	LAG 1	Detailed explanation of the principles of the LEADER approach	18	13	5
June 11, 2015 Tearce and Jegunovce	LAG 1	Analysis of the situation from the aspect of forming a Local Action Group and drafting of the Local strategy	25	17	8
June 16, 2015 Tearce and Jegunovce	LAG 1	SWOT Analysis and preparation of Action Plan for forming Local Action Group and preparation of the Local Strategy.	19	14	5
May 26, 2015 Bogovinje and Brvenica	LAG 2	Detailed explanation of the principles of the LEADER approach	24	16	8
June 4, 2015 Bogovinje and Brvenica	LAG 2	Analysis of the situation from the aspect of forming a Local Action Group and drafting of the Local strategy	21	16	5
June 10, 2015 Bogovinje and Brvenica	LAG 2	SWOT Analysis and preparation of Action Plan for forming Local Action Group and preparation of the Local Strategy.	22	16	6

Another challenge that has appeared in the implementation of the EU LEADER initiative in the Polog region is the unresponsiveness of some stakeholders on the ground. For instance, Tetovo and Zhelino municipalities have failed to send representatives to date. That, combined with the discrepant capacities of the municipalities and the weak RDC, make the work in the field quite demanding.

In discussion with SBEP's implementing partner, MDC Ti.net, SBEP is planning to approach officials in each of these municipalities to reiterate the necessity of cooperation in the process. One alternative would be reshuffling the composition of the micro-regions, so as to get the maximum possible result on the ground. It would mean focusing efforts and energy on what is currently available and functioning. The

been involved in various LEADER approach activities and projects. Also, they organized a series of workshops with a working group consisting of representatives of the relevant institutions involved in the LEADER approach in Macedonia, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, the Paying Agency, the IPARD managing authority within the Ministry, representatives of the LAG initiatives from the Pelagonija, North-East and South-East regions, as well as representatives from SBEP and the USAID Climate Change Project.

final decision on this will be made in the coming month, so as when activities resume in mid-August, less time and energy is wasted on unproductive communication and coordination.

In parallel, representatives from the EU NIMS (New IPARD Measures) project, working on the accreditation of the LEADER in Macedonia, have been meeting with key local stakeholders who have

As a result, the working group drafted a LEADER measure which will be put forth for consideration by the Ministry, and subsequently sent to Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development in Brussels for accreditation. Once accredited, the measure will become part of the IPARD II Program (2014-2020). It is expected that the measure will be fully operational from January 2017, while 2016 will be a bridging year during which the NIMS project will finance small pilot projects. This entire effort is based on the previously undertaken LEADER initiatives in Macedonia, of which SBEP was integral part.

Vardar region	LAG	Topic	Number of participants		
			Total	Men	Women
April 9, 2015 Sveti Nikole	LAG 1	Detailed explanation of the principles of the EU LEADER approach	35	12	23
May 11, 2015 Sveti Nikole	LAG 1	Establishment of partnerships based on the territory and creation of LAGs	28	9	19
May 28, 2015 Sveti Nikole	LAG 1	Building networks between local stakeholders	20	8	12
June 22, 2015 Sveti Nikole	LAG 1	Skills for Making Analyses and Estimation of the Local Interested Stakeholders	21	13	8
April 8, 2015 Kavadarci	LAG 2	Detailed explanation of the principles of the EU LEADER approach	38	24	14
May 5, 2015 Negotino	LAG 2	Establishment of partnerships based on the territory and creation of LAGs	31	17	14
May 27, 2015 Kavadarci	LAG 2	Building networks between local stakeholders	25	13	12
June 9, 2015 Negotino	LAG 2	Skills for Making Analyses and Estimation of the Local Interested Stakeholders	26	13	13
April 3, 2015 Veles	LAG 3	Detailed explanation of the principles of the EU LEADER approach	27	13	14
April 28, 2015 Veles	LAG 3	Establishment of partnerships based on the territory and creation of LAGs	28	10	18
May 21, 2015 Veles	LAG 3	Building networks between local stakeholders	16	4	12
July 2, 2015 Veles	LAG 3	Skills for Making Analyses and Estimation of the Local Interested Stakeholders	12	1	11

EU LEADER

Within its Light Manufacturing initiative, SBEP's consultants continue to work along the lines identified early on in the project: the development of local supply chains by searching for opportunities to match buyers and suppliers, and the development of new markets by locating opportunities for new local production which would substitute import.

Cooperation with Government Institutions

The services that SBEP's supply chain consultants are offering are clearly covering an existing gap, which is also recognized by Government institutions in charge of attracting foreign investment, as they have started contacting the consultants more and more, asking for assistance in identifying local suppliers that could potentially satisfy the requirements for inputs of foreign companies.

This quarter, the consultants have received a number of new inquiries for potential opportunities from the export department of *Invest in Macedonia*, the Cabinet of the Minister for FDI Mickovski and the Directorate for TIDZ in the country.

A Belgian company was looking for a joint partnership with a local castings company and a Dutch company was interested for capacities for metal processing: turning, milling and processing of sheet metal. The consultants singled out a few local companies for each of the inquiries and proposed them to the foreign companies. They continue to facilitate further communication, meetings and negotiations between the parties.

The WEIR group, a Scottish company dealing in engineering in multiple industries (minerals, oil and gas and energy) was looking for suppliers of castings and metal structures. The consultants proposed a few companies, three of which were contacted for potential orders by the WEIR group. The consultants are following up on these leads and assisting the companies to make sure requirements are met.

UK company, A. Perry, has decided to move their production from India to Europe and requires metal stamped parts. The consultants have started facilitating communication between them and Rezonator - a potential local supplier from Prilep. There is great potential for local companies in this deal as the A. Perry has around 15.000 different products they are looking to purchase from companies in Europe. The consultants continue to support the Prilep based company to identify local tool shops that could help them in the process of getting a deal with A. Perry. By including domestic tool shops, they could lower the prices of the tools for metal stamped parts, and thus be able to hit the quoted target prices.

A potential FDI in a TIDZ has requested proposals for metal processing companies that could also include welding services. The consultants proposed Svemek - a Skopje based company - which the FDI and TIDZ representatives visited and discussed potential cooperation.

IN A NUTSHELL

- Government institutions in charge of attracting foreign investment are contacting the consultants more and more, asking for assistance in identifying local suppliers who could satisfy the requirements of foreign companies.
- Consultants continue identifying matching opportunities for local supply chain development.
- MAMEI— the Association of Metal and Electrical Industry, is a potential sustainability hub for the activities and services the consultants are currently providing under SBEP.

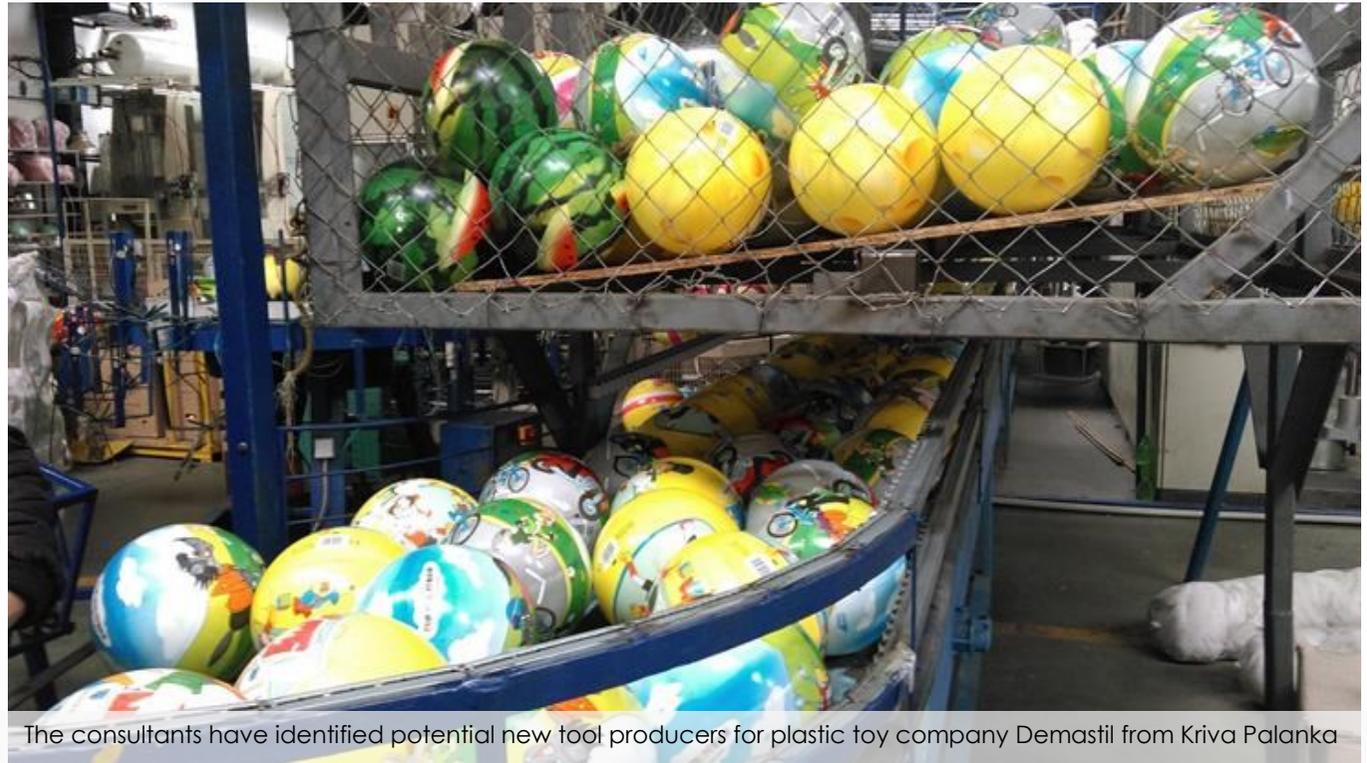
LIGHT MANUFACTURING

Local Supply Chain Development

In terms of local supply chain development, the consultants have been working with a few local producers, who have expressed readiness to substitute imports with inputs from local suppliers, provided they can satisfy requirements in terms of quality, quantity and price.

The support to Brako from Veles continues, as the consultants have identified a company in Kumanovo, which can supply them with polyurethane (PUR) products. After a few direct meetings and discussions between the two companies, which the consultants facilitated, the Kumanovo-based company – Filand – started testing materials with the purpose of producing samples that could meet Brako's requirements. However, as they could not reach the needed density of the material, the consultants proceeded with identifying alternatives and solutions to this obstacle and suggested to communicate with suppliers of such materials from different countries. The idea is to try and identify all alternatives for the supplier so that the product can be produced locally.

The plastic toy producer Demastil from Kriva Palanka is another one of the companies the consultants have been working with. Their requirements for tool production have grown as a result of the expansion of their assortment and production. The consultants have identified two companies from Skopje that have not been introduced to Demastil before and that



The consultants have identified potential new tool producers for plastic toy company Demastil from Kriva Palanka

could potentially become Demastil's suppliers. They facilitated a visit and the start of negotiations between Finalmeplast and O.S.A. with Demastil, and will continue supporting the communication until a potential agreement.

In addition, the consultants resumed facilitation and suggested a different approach for cooperation between Demastil and Alatnica HB - a company from Ohrid - as the initial discussions between the two companies have not yielded results.

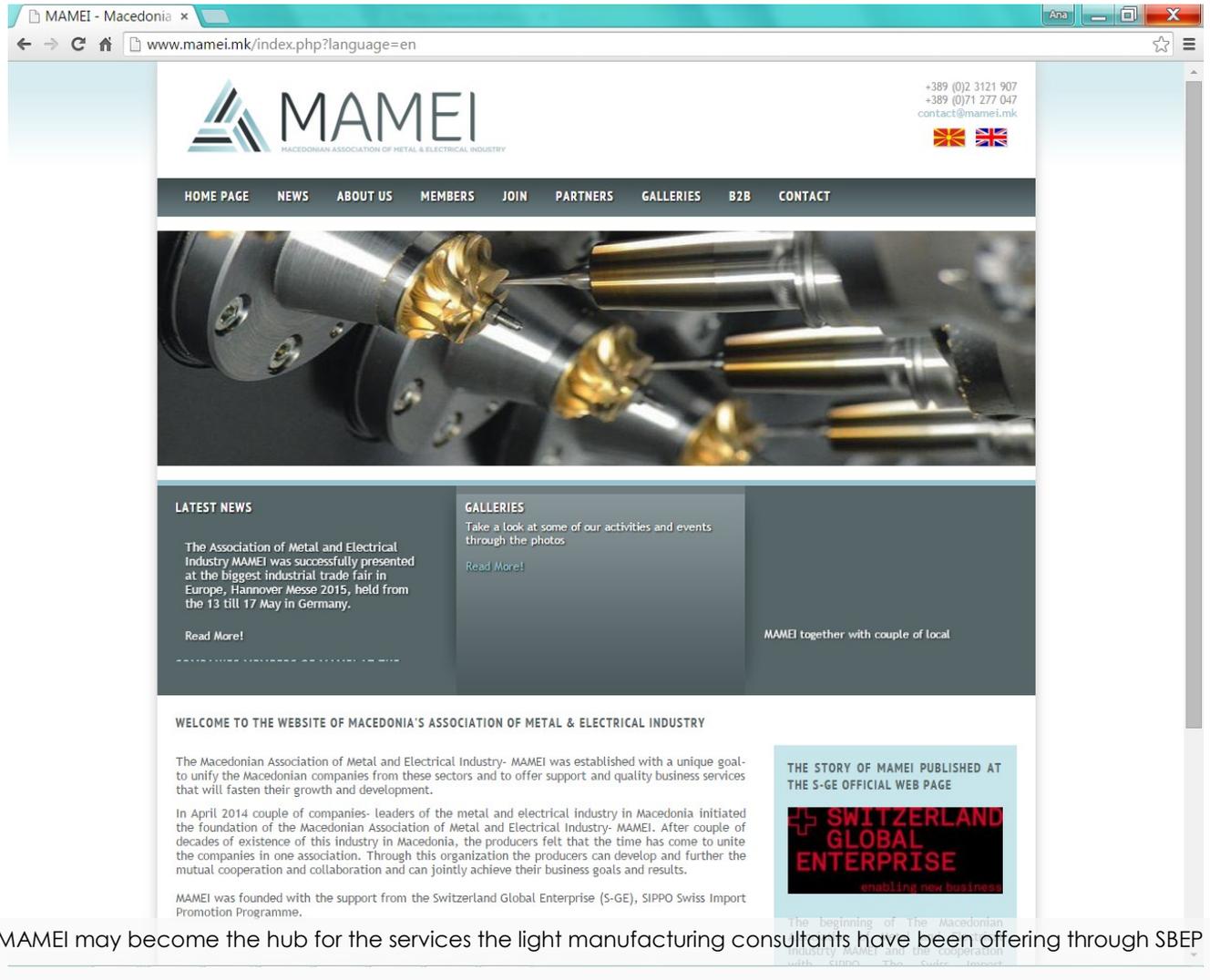
Also this quarter, the consultants have identified an opportunity that has potential to materialize in the second part of the year. A recently established FDI – Key Safety Systems (KSS) - which started as a brown field investment in Kichevo a year ago is currently finalizing its second phase. They will start producing airbag cushions and intend to employ around 500 workers. At the moment, they import all of the inputs that go into production, but are willing to consider purchasing locally some metal parts. Once they get a green light from their HQ, they will contact the consultants.

LIGHT MANUFACTURING

Sustainability of the supply chain initiative

SBEP's supply chain initiative and the services that the consultants are providing to both the local companies and the FDIs in the country has proven to fill a gap that has existed for quite some time. Therefore, the consultants have been considering ways to ensure sustainability and further development of this type of services. One of the alternatives is to nest it within MAMEI – the Association of Metal and Electrical Industry. MAMEI was established in 2014, and has been supported since the beginning by SIPPO – the Swiss Import Promotion Programme, within SGE – the Swiss Global Enterprise. SBEP also plans to support MAMEI with some activities, so this quarter the consultants organized a meeting between representatives of SBEP and SGE Switzerland, to discuss potential joint activities that could contribute to MAMEI's growth and development. The association has also received financial support from the Ministry of Economy this past quarter, to develop a supply chain software and data base, which would include and serve local suppliers and other participants in the light manufacturing supply chains.

By building an online platform that would serve the needs of the light manufacturing industry and the companies in increasing their mutual cooperation, MAMEI will allow the consultants to ensure sustainability and development of the services they currently offer.



The screenshot displays the MAMEI website homepage. At the top, the browser address bar shows 'www.mamei.mk/index.php?language=en'. The MAMEI logo is prominently featured, with the text 'MACEDONIAN ASSOCIATION OF METAL & ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY' below it. Contact information is provided in the top right corner: '+389 (0)2 3121 907', '+389 (0)71 277 047', and 'contact@mamei.mk', accompanied by the flags of Macedonia and the UK. A navigation menu includes links for 'HOME PAGE', 'NEWS', 'ABOUT US', 'MEMBERS', 'JOIN', 'PARTNERS', 'GALLERIES', 'B2B', and 'CONTACT'. A large banner image shows industrial machinery. Below this, there are sections for 'LATEST NEWS' and 'GALLERIES'. The 'LATEST NEWS' section features a headline about MAMEI's presentation at the Hannover Messe 2015 trade fair. The 'GALLERIES' section includes a sub-headline 'MAMEI together with couple of local' and a 'Read More!' link. A 'WELCOME TO THE WEBSITE OF MACEDONIA'S ASSOCIATION OF METAL & ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY' section follows, containing introductory text about MAMEI's mission and history. A small inset box on the right side of the page mentions 'THE STORY OF MAMEI PUBLISHED AT THE S-GE OFFICIAL WEB PAGE' and features a graphic for 'SWITZERLAND GLOBAL ENTERPRISE enabling new business'.

MAMEI may become the hub for the services the light manufacturing consultants have been offering through SBEP

LIGHT MANUFACTURING

IN A NUTSHELL

- SBEP in cooperation with ALRD and the South-East European University (SEEU) from Tetovo organized a Business Startup Competition for young people. The award went to sisters Rinita and Fortesa Asani, who plan to open a school which would offer tutoring to primary school children.
- The Women Advisory Board held two meetings, and selected three small businesses out of five, which will receive support from the Fund.
- The Municipality of Brvenica contributed US\$ 5.000 to the Fund for Support of Women and Youth Entrepreneurs.

This quarter, SBEP in cooperation with the Association for Local and Rural Development (ALRD) and the South-East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo organized a Business Startup Competition for students and young people aged 21-25 who live in the Polog region. The aim of the competition was to stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth and get them to think about starting their own business, by supporting the transition from an idea to actually beginning operations.

The reward fund was 5.000 USD, of which the best business idea would get 3.000 USD and the second place would win 2.000 USD. The competition was open from April 7 to May 20, and a total of six ideas were received. The Evaluation Committee consisting of business women Ms. Mimoza Thaqi and Ms. Pranvera Kasami, both representatives of the Women Advisory Board, Ms. Jasmina Trajkovski, business consultant, Prof. Stefan Qirici, the Dean of SEEU's Faculty of Business and Economics, had a preliminary meeting at the end of May, at which it made the initial screening, and invited three candidates to present their business ideas during an open session and explain in detail all business aspects.

The public pitch took place on June 8, and all shortlisted candidates presented their ideas: Erblina Osmani from Tetovo is thinking about a company offering home care services for elderly people; Premton Qamili and Emrije Murtezani are considering introducing a Rent-a-Bike scheme in Tetovo; and Fortesa and Rinita Asani are planning to open a school which would offer tutoring to children of primary schools.



Erblina Osmani from Tetovo presenting her business idea about a home care company for elderly people



Premton Qamili presenting his and Emrije Muretzani's idea about renting bikes in Tetovo



Rinita Asani pitching her idea of a school for tutoring primary school children

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Each contestant presented their business plan before the Committee, which after careful consideration decided that the idea of sisters Fortesa and Rinita Asani from Tetovo was thoroughly thought over and needs minor fine-tuning so that it can be implemented. Therefore, they decided to grant this business idea the first prize of 3.000 USD. While good, the other two ideas need further elaboration. SBEP and ALRD have provided consultations and guidelines to these young people as to where they can receive further support to improve their start up plans.



Sisters Fortesa and Rinita Asani from Tetovo won the Best Business Idea contest

The Women Advisory Board had a couple of meetings in June: the first one to assess new initiatives proposed for support and the second one to review the administrative procedures of the Fund, the evaluation criteria, as well as the current financial situation and future potential private and public donations to the Fund.

This quarter, five small businesses owned by women were proposed for support: a hand-crafted producer of srma (gold or silver thread used for embroidery and decoration of clothes), a beauty salon, a producer of organic goat milk soap, a dress maker, and a cow farm owner. Of those, two will receive support from the Fund: the beauty salon owner from Zhelino and the organic soap producer from Tetovo. In addition, the srma producer will receive a grant if it registers as an official business.

Also this quarter, there have been changes in the structure of ALRD as administrator of the Fund. From now on, Ms. Sanela Shkrijelj will be the Coordinator of the Fund, while Ms. Ivana Srceva will be the President of ALRD.

The evaluation criteria of the Fund were also revised, so that the availability of the program is improved among those interested in both rural and urban areas. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Board, one of the Board members – Ms. Elita Masha - has been excluded from the Board, as she failed to show up in meetings or sent a replacement. A new member has been added, Ms. Natasa Stojanovska, representative of the municipality of Brvenica.

In June, SBEP and ALRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality of Brvenica, thus officializing its contribution of 5.000 USD to the Fund for Support of Women and Youth Entrepreneurship. In the coming period, the focus will be on approaching Gostivar municipality for support, discussing with the Polog RDC about making it an official regional initiative, and preparing and publishing success stories with the purpose of increasing the visibility of the program.



Before signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the Municipality of Brvenica

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

This quarter, a total of 11 trainings on sustainable collection of wild-gathered products took place, encompassing a total of 242 new collectors, of whom 37 women. Two trainings were held in the North-East region, three in the Vardar region, and six in the National Park Mavrovo.

The National Park will shortly open another public call through which it will invite interested companies to apply for purchasing licenses for wild gathered products in the three collection centers within the Park.

The total number of trained collectors since the beginning of the initiative more than 2 years ago is 1526, including 317 women, which make up 20.8% of the total number.



In Chashka, there is great interest for the trainings among collectors



The municipalities usually publish the opportunity for training on their web-sites

IN A NUTSHELL

- A total of 242 new collectors, 37 of whom women, participated in 11 trainings on sustainable collection of wild-gathered products in the North-East and Vardar regions and the National Park Mavrovo.
- Since the beginning of the initiative, a total of 1526 collectors have been trained, of whom 317, or 20,8% women.

WILD-GATHERED PRODUCTS

SBEP Performance Monitoring Plan

In parallel to the implementation of its activities, SBEP is making sure to capture and document relevant information which feeds into its Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP), and is used to analyze and plan further actions. In addition, SBEP's constant communication with its partners and beneficiaries yields feedback and anecdotal evidence of the progress and impact its activities have, which is later conveyed through reports and success stories.

This quarter, the regular collection of data for the PMPs has brought the following information:

- **615 retained or new jobs**, 225 of which are occupied by women. Most of these jobs were created or retained on the 160 farms participating in the Grow More Corn initiative.
- **US\$ 371.427** worth of investment, including the combined investment of corn/sunflower farmers in drip irrigation equipment; the combined investment of farmers through the Government's 50/50 measure; a US\$ 55.360 investment in machinery by Plamteks from Skopje; an investment in equipment by the aronia factory in Leshok; the cost-share of the RDCs, as well as the women-owned small businesses within the Women in Business initiative.
- **471 participants, of whom 148 women**, participated in trainings on sustainable wild herb collection, and in LEADER approach trainings in the North-East, the Vardar and the Polog regions.

The complete PMP table is attached in Annex I to this report.

Annex I: SBEP Performance Monitoring Plan table for current reporting period

Annex II: SBEP Activities and Events Calendar for current reporting period

MONITORING AND EVALUATION