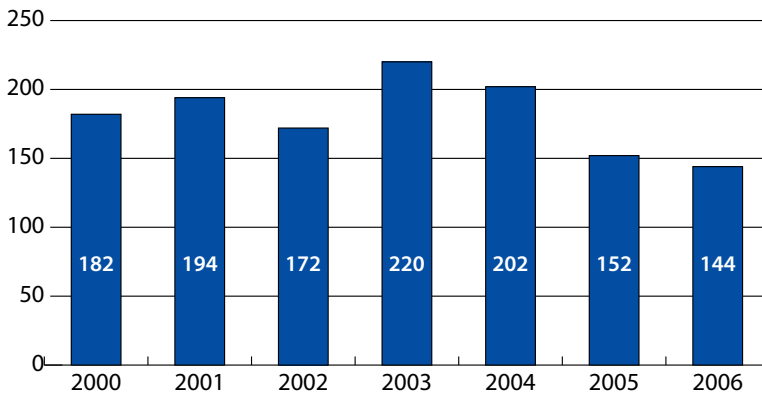


Figures

Start of operations: January 2001 (in million €)



Interview



Empowering women in Serbia

The Belgrade-based NGO Center for Democracy Foundation has just completed a training project for women as part of the Agency's employment support programme "A Step to a Job". We asked project director **Nataša Vučković** to tell us more.

The project, called "Return of Women to the Labour Market – Strengthening Women's Self-Confidence", lasted 10 months and was done in cooperation with the association Equal Opportunities. It was designed for women aged 35-55 living in Belgrade who for various reasons were unemployed, and who wanted to learn how to seek a job more actively or how to start their own business. We had three target groups: women who had left their jobs years ago after having children, and who now had difficulties in getting back into the labour market. Then there were those who had lost their jobs in recent years due to economic restructuring and privatisation. We also addressed employed women who wished to find jobs that better match their education and capabilities.

>> How did this project help?

An important feature of the project was its focus on two main economic areas – tourism and social services. Social services is very important for a big city like Belgrade – and includes care for the elderly, children and others who need help in their everyday life. State capacities are still very poor and

there is a growing need for private initiatives in this field.

We began by establishing cooperation with institutions such as the National Employment Service, Council for Gender Equality, NGOs, centres for social work, tourist agencies, and others. Recruiting the trainees was seen as one of the major risks of the project: we feared a lack of interest. So we advertised widely. The response was overwhelming. The project was designed for 180 women and more than 716 applied in writing, not to mention the many who tried to apply after selection was completed. The main activities included three cycles of two-month training programmes for 180 participants, 60 per programme. One cycle consisted of a five-week general business course and a three-week special course for tourism and social services. Our experts designed special curricula.

>> What are some of the results?

It is difficult to see results immediately, and we will continue coaching and monitoring over the next six months. So far, however, a group of participants from the social

Key sectors:

- > Good governance
- > Economic regeneration
- > Social development & civil society
- > Energy
- > Health
- > Agriculture
- > SME development
- > Environment
- > Media

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Nataša Vučković leading a training session

services programme has set up a new NGO which aims to provide various social services in Belgrade – 33 participants are active so far. To date, 17 other women found jobs either in tourist agencies or other companies.

>> Do women face any particular problems in finding work?

In Serbia, women are more likely than men to get fired due to economic restructuring. Gender-based discrimination is increasing. In job-seeking, women face serious gender and age discrimination. If employed, they are faced with lower salaries, and can be subject to various forms of harassment. On the other hand, our impression is that women are very eager to learn new things, and to acquire new skills which would enable them to find better jobs. If our project has helped a little in this, it will have been worthwhile. ■■■