

23 April 2007

ASB SEE CELEBRATES ITS 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

The Office of the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund for South Eastern Europe (ASB SEE) held a reception on the occasion of celebrating its fifteen-year anniversary in South Eastern Europe as well as the end of the EU-funded CARDS 2003 programme. The reception took place on 23 April 2007 at the Sarajevo "VF Golf" Club. Mr. Kjartan Bjornsson, Head of Section of Economic Development and Natural Resources on the EC Delegation to BiH, His Excellency Michael Schmunk, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Sarajevo, Mr. Heribert Röhrig, ASB Deputy General Manager, Mr. Denis Zvizdic, Chairman of the Assembly of the Sarajevo Canton, Mr. Samir Silajdzic, Prime Minister of the Sarajevo Canton, local authorities, international and local organisations and ASB staff attended the ceremony along with the media and other guests.

"ASB's work accomplishments would not have been possible without the assistance of donors, partners and colleagues from various political, economic and social domains of life. Without them, ASB would not develop into what it is today...one of the strongest regional NGOs in the Balkans...thank you", said Elmir Bojadzic, ASB Regional Director, in his opening remarks.

Since 1991, ASB SEE has implemented projects in the fields of emergency assistance, return, reconstruction and development in the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Kosovo valued at over 150 million euro with funds from multiple donors including the EU and individual member states. ASB SEE assisted in the return of over 47,500 refugees, the delivery of medical and humanitarian assistance, mine-clearance of 3.8 million m², the reconstruction of over 7,948 housing units, extensive rehabilitation of public and social infrastructure, economic development and democratisation initiatives. Along with the German Government, the EU has been the most valuable donor during the past fifteen years through the EU-programme CARDS with an allotment of 4.65 billion euro to the SEE region from 2000 to 2006. Since 2000, the EU has assisted 5,000 people in 20 municipalities in BiH through the reconstruction of over 1,128 houses together with ASB.

Mr. Kjartan Bjornsson from the EC Delegation pointed out in his speech that, "...The EU is continuing to provide support for return, and this year we will spend another four million euro and expect matching funding from the BiH Government. Municipalities will be again the most important partners. I would like to conclude by wishing the ASB staff every success in implementing future projects".

Mr. Heribert Röhrig, ASB Deputy-General Manager, expressed his satisfaction of participating in the 15 year anniversary celebration of ASB in SEE. He spoke about the ASB which was founded in 1888 by six carpenters in Berlin to provide first aid training. Today ASB is one of the biggest welfare organisations in Germany with 259 branches and 18,000 staff as well as volunteers. ASB's first international intervention was in 1920 in Russia. Today, ASB provides assistance in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, with projects valued at approximately 15 million euro a year.



This project is funded by
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The European Union numbers 25 Member States: 25 different nations determined to shape their future closely together. Over a period of enlargement of 40 years, they have, together, built a zone of peace, stability, progress and solidarity. The European Union is a model for overcoming conflict and promoting reconciliation through close co-operation to achieve common goals, while respecting national sovereignty and territorial integrity. But the EU is not focused on itself: its ambition is to share its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders. The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

P R E S S R E L E A S E

At the reception, ASB SEE has also announced the finalisation of the implementation of the EU-funded projects under the CARDS 2003 Integrated Return Programme valued at 5.25 million euro, which included three different projects in 10 municipalities in BiH. Under this programme, ASB reconstructed 447 houses with the associated technical infrastructure, created 322 new jobs and 193 livelihood opportunities along with the capacity building of 10 local NGOs and a significant number of municipal authorities. The BiH Government also contributed with KM 400,000 for the reconstruction of an additional 27 housing units with infrastructure.

On this occasion, the representatives of the Una-Sana Canton and Sarajevo Canton expressed their gratitude to ASB and its donors for the implementation of the CARDS 2003 projects in their municipalities stressing that the projects had a significant impact on inhabitants and the improvement of their living conditions. They expressed their hope that this successful co-operation of municipal authorities and ASB would continue in the near future through other jointly-implemented projects.

For further information please contact:



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