**SUMMARY REPORT**

**INFORMATIVE SESSIONS**

**Public Call for Proposals for Procurement of Equipment and Provision of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises (CFP 05-2018)**

**Šabac, Kragujevac, Kruševac, Kraljevo, Novi Pazar, Užice, Smederevo, Zaječar, Niš, Leskovac, Pirot, Bujanovac, Čačak, Valjevo**

**Sessions held 1 to 21 June, 2018**

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**Background**

The European Union (EU) allocated 4.5 million Euros for Public Call for support to entrepreneurs and micro and small enterprises aimed at increasing competitiveness of local economy in the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia and the Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia. The Call was announced on 22 May and will be open until 6 July 2018. The entrepreneurs, micro and small enterprises registered in 99 cities and municipalities involved in the EU PRO Development Programme, engaged primarily in production or provision of IT services and founded between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017 are eligible to apply.

In order to promote the Public Call for support to entrepreneurs and micro and small enterprises, the EU PRO Development Programme held 14 info sessions in the period from 1 to 21 June 2018. Initially, ten info sessions were planned and organized in the main business centres of the area covered by the program (Šabac, Kragujevac, Kruševac, Kraljevo, Novi Pazar, Užice, Smederevo, Zaječar, Niš, Leskovac). They were co-located with the Regional Development Agencies (RDA), except for Smederevo and Sabac. Due to interest shown and after evaluating responses on sessions held, additional four sessions are organized in Pirot, Bujanovac, Čačak and Valjevo, to provide opportunity to potential beneficiaries to obtain more detailed information about the Call.

**Objectives**

The main objectives of the informative sessions were as follows:

- to promote the Public Call and generate interest of potential applicants;

- to present to the public detailed information about the programme,

the application process and selection criteria;

- to provide an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions;

Within the call there are two groups of enterprises to be supported – the first group includes newly-founded enterprises registered between 1 January 2016 and 31 December 2017, and the value of the individual projects to be funded may range from 10,000 to 20,000 Euros. The second group includes enterprises operating more than three and up to five years, i.e. those registered between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2015, while the value of individual projects ranges from 10,000 Euros to 30,000 Euros, or 50,000 Euros for fast-growing and export-oriented enterprises.

The projects will be evaluated within two-stage process, first by assessing and ranking the submitted project concepts and, in the second stage, the shortlisted applicants need to submit the full project proposals.

**Project Team Members in Attendance**

The following project team members were in attendance at the Informative Sessions to support event, present information, facilitate discussions and to answer questions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Informative Sessions Public Call for Proposals for Procurement of Equipment and Provision of Services for Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises** | |
| **Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Business Support Organisations (SMO and BSO) Sector team** | **Role** |
| Olivera Kostić | *SME and BSO Sector Manager* |
| Enis Ujkanović | *Programme Associate for SME and BSO* |
| Milica Korać | *Programme Associate for SME and BSO* |
| Jelena Despotović | *Programme Assistant for SME and BSO* |
| Evgjenije Isljami | *Programme Assistant for SME and BSO* |
| Goran Zlatković | *Programme Assistant for SME and BSO* |
| **Consultants** |  |
| Radule Ristović | *Facilitator* |
| Ivana Todorović | *Facilitator* |

**Overview of Info sessions statistics**

Details about the locations and attendees are outlined in table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Info sessions, location, date, time, venue** | **Registered Attendees** | **Attendees** | **Feedback Forms** | **Feedback %** |
| **ŠABAC** Friday, 1 June 2018 at 10:00, Hotel Sloboda (Cara Dušana bb) | 39 | **43** | 28 | 65% |
| **KRAGUJEVAC** Monday, 4 June 2018 at 11:00, Business Innovation Centre (Trg Topolivaca 4) | 27 | **77** | 44 | 57% |
| **KRUŠEVAC** Tuesday, 5 June 2018 at 10:00, Business Incubator Centre Kruševac (Jasički put 9a) | 18 | **63** | 49 | 78% |
| **KRALJEVO** Wednesday, 6 June 2018 at 10:00, City Administration Kraljevo, Conference hall 2 (Trg Jovana Sarića 1) | 31 | **43** | 32 | 74% |
| **NOVI PAZAR** Thursday, 7 June 2018 at 10:00, Cultural Centre Novi Pazar (Stevana Nemanje 2) | 15 | **38** | 30 | 79% |
| **UŽICE** Friday, 8 June 2018 at 10:00, Business and Technical College of Vocational Studies (Trg Svetog Save 34) | 41 | **44** | 37 | 84% |
| **SMEDEREVO** Monday, 11 June 2018 at 10:00, Regional Centre for Professional Development of Employees in Education (Goranska bb, 2. sprat) | 9 | **32** | 24 | 75% |
| **ZAJEČAR** Tuesday, 12 June 2018 at 10:00, Regional Agency for Development of Eastern Serbia agencija (Trg oslobođenja 1) | 27 | **27** | 19 | 70% |
| **NIŠ** Wednesday, 13 June, 2018 at 10:00, Regional Chamber of Commerce (Dobrička 2) | 115 | **108** | 65 | 60% |
| **LESKOVAC** Thursday, 14 June, 2018 at 10:00, Business College of Vocational Studies (Vlade Jovanovića 8) | 37 | **77** | 66 | 86% |
| **PIROT**  Thursday, 21 June 2018, Ugovorna okružna privredna komora Pirot (Dobrice Milutinovića, Trgovački centar) at 10:00 | 6 | **25** | 14 | 56% |
| **ČAČAK**  Thursday, 21 June 2018, Čačak Municipal Hall (Župana Strtacimira 2) at 13:30 | 8 | **17** | 10 | 59% |
| **VALJEVO**  Friday, 22 June 2018, Valjevo Municipal Hall (Karađođeva 64) at 11:00 | 2 | **18** | 9 | 50% |
| **BUJANOVAC**  Friday, 22 June 2018, Bujanovac Department of the Subotica Faculty of Economy (Karađorđa Petrovića bb) at 11:00 | 6 | **39** | 24 | 62% |
| **Total** | **359** | **651** | **451** | **68%** |

The registration process went through the EU PRO website. Out of the total number of attendees, only 55% registered through the website, which shows that entrepreneurs have not yet adopted the use of information technologies when they attend business events. Evaluation questionnaire was completed by 68% of the attendees.

**Attendance**

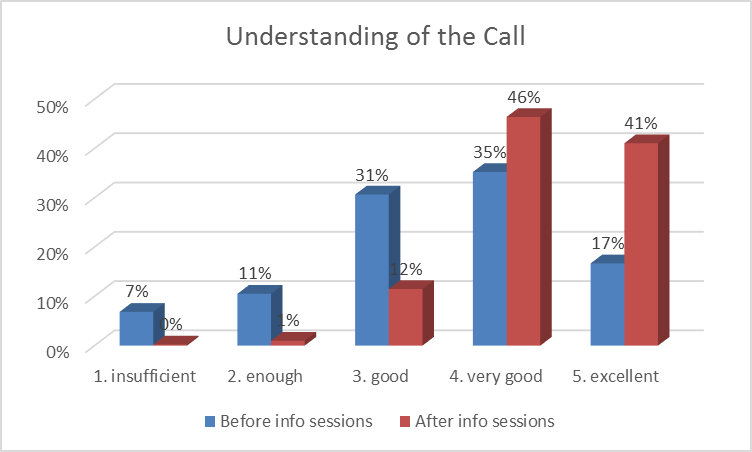
A total of 651 people attended fourteen info sessions, including businesses, local self-governments, regional development agencies and media. Details about the session’s attendances are outlined in table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Number of  Participant** | **Business  Represent.** | **LSG  Represent.** | **RDA  Represent.** | **Media  Represent.** | **Female** | **Male** |
| Šabac | 43 | 32 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 29 |
| Kragujevac | 77 | 70 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 28 | 49 |
| Kruševac | 63 | 56 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 19 | 44 |
| Kraljevo | 43 | 38 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 30 |
| Novi Pazar | 38 | 30 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 12 | 26 |
| Užice | 44 | 34 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 29 |
| Smederevo | 32 | 27 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 11 | 21 |
| Zaječar | 27 | 19 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 16 |
| Niš | 108 | 106 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 31 | 77 |
| Leskovac | 77 | 70 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 20 | 57 |
| Bujanovac | 39 | 34 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 37 |
| Pirot | 25 | 19 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 18 |
| Valjevo | 18 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 11 |
| Čačak | 17 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 9 |
| **TOTAL** | 651 | 557 | 39 | 22 | 33 | 198 | 453 |
| **TOTAL %** |  | **86%** | **6%** | **3%** | **5%** | **30%** | **70%** |

The greatest interest for the info session was shown in Niš, which also reflects the number of registered businesses, where a total of 108 attendees were present. According to statistics Nis has the greatest number of registered businesses, followed by Kragujevac and Čačak. The smallest number of participants were in two new municipalities, Čačak (17) and Valjevo (18). The largest number of attendees was from the business community (86%). Gender statistics shows that females made up 30% of the participants while male accounted for 70%. The smallest number of female participants was in Bujanovac, only 5%, while the ratio was the best in Čačak (47 %) and Zaječar (41%).

**Overall Assessment**

Participants’ knowledge and understanding of the conditions of the Call was good before the sessions with 83 % of participants stating that their understanding is on the scale from good to excellent. This indicates that the terms of Call were well explained in the documents but also that the subject is of great interest for the participants. Moreover, the understanding of the conditions improved after the session with over 98% of participants confirming better understanding of the Call.



Assessment of the topics discussed during the info sessions and their relevance to preparation of the project proposal have shown that 96 % of participants think that they are useful and very useful. A vast majority of participants (97%) stated that they received concrete answers to all questions asked.

Organisation of the info sessions, clarity of information, interactive approach and presentation of the call, the selection criteria and application submission were underlined as good. The format of the Info sessions allowed for productive dialogue between the attendees and the project team. Attendees asked questions related to the topics presented and record of the questions asked and answers provided is presented in Anex to this report.

**Summary of Evaluation Questionnaire results**

Out of the 651 attendees on Info sessions, 451 provided feedback. Attendees were encouraged to provide written comments in the provided evaluation form, which consisted of 10 questions. Not all of them filled in the feedback form, but a majority of 68 % did. Responses to questions were given mainly by rounding off the answers, while a very small number responded to questions where it was necessary to write an opinion.

With the exception of those that requested to be left off, all individuals who registered and signed in at the Info sessions with their contact information have been added to the project-specific contact database. This database will be used during the program implementation to contact/inform them on important issues and events.

**Question I** asked “ How did you get information about the Public Call?” This question was open-ended and most of the answers were not exact and with generic answers (via internet, via e-mail …).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How did you get information about the Public Call? | • Internet  • E-mail  • Friends  • Regional Development Agencies  • Regional Chamber of Commerce  • Social networks -  • Media |

**Question II** asked “What is your opinion on the available information on the Public Call on the EU PRO website?“

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. very negative | 2. negative | 3. neutral | 4. positive | 5. very positive | Total |
| Total | 1 | 1 | 21 | 219 | 188 | 430 |
| **Total (%)** | **0%** | **0%** | **5%** | **51%** | **44%** | **100%** |

A vast majority of participants (95 %) stated that they have positive anad very positive opinion on the available website informations.

**Question III** asked “ What is your general impression about the organization of info sessions?“

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. very negative | 2. negative | 3. neutral | 4. positive | 5. very positive | Total |
| Total | 0 | 0 | 12 | 215 | 224 | 451 |
| **Total (%)** | **0%** | **0%** | **3%** | **48%** | **50%** | **100%** |

A vast majority of participants (98 %) stated that they have positive anad very positive opinion on the organization of info sessions. There was no single negative answer and only 3 % gave nutral opinion.

**Question IV** asked “To what extent has this info session helped in better understanding of conditions proposed with the Public Call?“

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. not at all | 2. very little | 3. I do not know | 4. enough | 5. completely | Total |
| Total | 0 | 4 | 15 | 232 | 198 | 449 |
| **Total (%)** | **0%** | **1%** | **3%** | **52%** | **44%** | **100%** |

The large majority of evaluation participants (96%) confirmed that it helped them to better understand the Public Call conditions.

**Question V** asked “How would you evaluate the topics addressed during the informative session and their relevance to preparation of the project proposal?“

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1. irrelevant | 2. generally irrelevant | 3. partially useful | 4. useful | 5. very useful | Total |
| Total | 0 | 1 | 18 | 229 | 197 | 445 |
| **Total (%)** | **0%** | **0%** | **4%** | **51%** | **44%** | **100%** |

The large majority of evaluation participants (95%) assessed topics discussed as useful and very useful.

**Question VI** asked “Have you received concrete answers on the questions asked?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | a. Yes | b. No | Total |
| Total | 408 | 14 | 422 |
| **Total (%)** | **97%** | **3%** | **100%** |

**Questions VII-VIII** asked “How would you assess your knowledge and understanding of the conditions of the Public Call **before** and **after** the informative session?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Period | 1. insufficient | 2. enough | 3. good | 4. very good | 5. excellent | Total |
| **Before** | 30 | 46 | 134 | 154 | 73 | 437 |
| **7%** | **11%** | **31%** | **35%** | **17%** | **100%** |
| **After** | 1 | 6 | 47 | 200 | 177 | 431 |
| **0%** | **1%** | **11%** | **46%** | **41%** | **100%** |

Participants’ knowledge and understanding of the conditions of the Call was good before the sessions with 83 % of participants declaring that their understanding is on the scale from good to excellent. In addition, the understanding of the conditions improved after the session with over 98% of participants confirming better understanding of the Call.

**Questions IX asked “What was good?“**

Responses are quoted as given by the participants:

* *Clearly presented matters, kindness, obtained answers to questions*
* *Answers to the questions asked*
* *Presentation, explanations*
* *In understandable way explained terms of the call, as well as application documentation*
* *Everything was good, from beginning until the end*
* *The fact that the concrete information was first mentioned*
* *Since I have just entered “the world of economics” I like the project idea and it is great that one of the goals are more jobs*
* *A lot of new information*
* *Understandable presentations*
* *Decomposition of the evaluation ranking*
* *Logically and chronologically exposed conditions of the Call*
* *Pens*
* *Presentation and answers to asked questions*
* *Openness of Program Representatives and freshness of the presentations*
* *Good approach and a nice explanation. It's my first time to be at event like this. A lot of useful information.*
* *Details on project evaluation criteria*
* *Absolutely everything is explained well and we are adequately informed about Public Call*
* *I got clarifications on the issues that I was not clear before*
* *The program is greatly presented. All questions were answered*
* *To be able to fully realize my ideas professionally*
* *Explanation of terms, conditions and procedures*

**Questions X asked “** **What was bad and how can we improve these events in the future?“**

Responses are quoted as given by the participants:

* *More information about the project partners*
* *To extend the implementation deadline for at least 2 years*
* *To offer more frequent trainings and support to businesses in achieving goals*
* *To use the microphone when presenting*
* *The flyer that you made was not clear to me, i.e. Map of Serbia. I could not understand clearly the regions you marked on it.*
* *I think I still cannot give an answer and suggestions*
* *Longer application time*
* *You could give a little more attention to us, (micro entrepreneurs) who want to work and grow, but do not have a team to deal with this procedures, neither finances to pay the expert team.*
* *Find the bigger hall next time. Adjust the space to the number of participants*
* *To give grants to companies older than 5 years*
* *By allocating funds for a Public Call to support the incubation of a young start-ups. It is very important to invest and encourage young people to pursue on the market.*
* *More information on EU PRO plans by setting up e-mailing list*
* *Why are older companies discriminated?*
* *To organize more often Public Calls and sessions*
* *Focusing on technological innovation, technological progress*
* *It is a bad thing that you only go to larger centres, it is necessary to come and explain programs in smaller places*
* *More info sessions in more municipalities*
* *That we have to invest 20% and we came here for support. We wouldn’t come here if we had finances to invest.*
* *Air conditioning was too strong, everything else was OK*
* *More detailed information on special conditions*
* *Provide lunch*

**Key Takeaway Points**

1. The Public Call is relevant as proven by the number of participants and received comments.
2. Larger number of applications with minimum budget requested may be expected, as entrepreneurs and enterprises struggle to obtain cost-share funding.
3. Engaging RDA’s is proven to be effective as thay do have built relationships with the business community.
4. E-mail for questions regarding the Call for Proposals should be simplified, i.e. [pitanja@unops.org](mailto:pitanja@unops.org), to enable easier access to the interested entrepreneurs to raise questions
5. Smart sheet is a good tool for organization of info sessions and for visibility
6. Sign-in sheet (List of participants) to be modified with added separate column, indicating the place where the participants come from.
7. Notice on privacy of e-mail addresses to be considered and to ask for permission for use of e-mail addresses in future communication.
8. To set deadline for registration of participation to the info sessions, in the smart sheet, to enable easier tracking of number of participants for better organization of the events.
9. To use petty cash for catering ( to buy coffee, water and juices) instead engaging MIROS, in order to be more efficient and cost effective.
10. Evaluation lists to be included in the promotional materials and to be pointed out at the beginning of info sessions, to avoid distraction of participants during presentation.
11. To reduce number of questions in the evaluation sheet, in order to get more focused questions
12. When organizing and scheduling info sessions, one working day of the week should be left for preparations and office work.

**Appendices**

Appendix A. Power Point Presentation

Appendix B. Questions & Answers