

It is good to lead well

The ABC book of good leadership

- Research stories -



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Foreword

This book is one of the products of the research project *Promotion of Proactive and Responsible Local Leadership in BiH*, being implemented by the Enterprise Development Agency –EDA with the support of the Open Society Fund BiH and the Local Governance Initiative Budapest. The project itself represents a priority of *BiH Local Self-government Development Strategy* published in 2006 and with consensus amongst the leading municipalities and towns and all interested stakeholders from both public and non-governmental sector.

Once we had outlined the project and received support, we selected a research team from Macedonia, Croatia, Serbia and BiH. Along with the researchers, we selected twelve local leaders from Balkan, Mayors of municipalities who are renown of their work results outside their regions. Then we assigned one researcher and one journalist to each of them to investigate – the first one will use research methods and the second one the reporter's eye and ear- o note and then to tell their own stories. Thus we got two research collections of stories about the same phenomenon and the same people, two perspectives showcasing personalities of our selected leaders, making them more concrete and distinctive.

Research part of the collection is primarily dedicated to the public policy creators and decision makers at the executive and legislative levels of authority in BiH and countries of the region with an aim to instigate policies and programs supporting development of accountable and pro-active local leadership and local self-governance as a whole. It is none the less dedicated to the Mayors, who in the past years showed tremendous interest and valuable capacity for learning from each other. We hereby expect that this book will be of interest to our colleagues from institutes, faculties, policy organizations and non-governmental sector, and that they will pay more attention to this not sufficiently explored but abundant, none the less, area of research and public advocacy.

We shall continue our research and advocacy

We would like to thank to the Mayors, researchers, journalists and editors for their dedicated participation in making this stories-*good news* in Balkans region.

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Mr. Šoja did not start to fight windmills, but he rather did what others tried to persuade him to be impossible: to start the economy in the municipality with its own resources, brains and persistence of diligent people who are used to hardships. He decided that no one will ever question Baranja and its capabilities again. He will use every opportunity to finger point at the map and say, this is Baranja, and there is future in it.

Deneš Šoja, Mayor of Kneževi Vinogradi (Prince's Vineyards)

For the wellbeing of all people who live here

Written by: Nives KOPAJTICH-SKRLEC

Tourist and production capacities of Baranja have been neglected and insufficiently exploited for a long time. Baranja people, faced with their own passive approach to life and economy and personal feeling that nothing can be done, displaced and neglected, could not gather strength to move on. However, they stoically endured displacing and severe changes in the economy, hoping that one day things would be better. And it happened even in Kneževi Vinogradi, and the town managed to move forward. For some it may seem as a small step forward, but for others it was the beginning of a new and better life.

Some would say that a complex national structure represents a potential danger and constant source of national intolerance, even conflicts. Others would claim that such national, cultural, traditional and religious mixture actually represents an advantage, provided that it is governed by the person who is wise, respectful and deliberate. Kneževi Vinogradi was fortunate enough to be led by such person, who recognized this advantage, appreciated it and personally contributed to it. A man who returned to Baranja, graced with will and enthusiasm, which have never abandoned him.

It would be a shame to “bamboozle” such Mayor

According to the valid Law on Local and Regional Self-governance, municipality of Kneževi Vinogradi has a possibility to establish a unique administration department. Although the Law limited the number of departments, it did not actually limit the number of employees. They drew the limits themselves, proving that this was a municipality with rational administration, whose size was determined more by the budget and less by the number of population. Municipal administration employs five public servants only. Rationality is commendable; however it often pushes to the limits of endurance given the number of projects being currently implemented. Unfortunately, there are no funds for additional employment or staff education. It is hard to explain that education is priority to someone who still does not have access to water supply. Problems occur, especially when one of the staff members is on the sick leave or vacation. This rarely happens though, especially when it is known that Mayor Šoja will rarely admit he is ill, but he will always be the first in line to shoulder the burden. It would be a shame then to lie such a Mayor, as his staff whisper, wishing he would sometimes go home earlier instead of pushing himself over the limit. However, they do not mention this, knowing he would not listen to them. He is rarely seen tired, rather more thoughtful; he does not give up asking: what will happen if we give in?

He has stayed in Baranja, that is, Kneževi Vinogradi, attached to this region and pursued by the feeling of responsibility and obligation to do something useful for the town and its people. Today, when he looks back, he can proudly show tangible results i.e. sport's center and other sport facilities. All projects he had promised so far were completed. He proudly states that he has completed more projects than he has promised or even mentioned in the pre-election period. Life in Kneževi Vinogradi has normalized again, and that fact is of tremendous importance to him. Thus, abundant resources and wealth of Baranja did not merely remain an opportunity.

Honesty and loyalty should exist within every municipal administration. In Kneževi Vinogradi, they do not only exist but give results. Honesty and loyalty are the only precondition for successful work and regular functioning of municipal administration in social environments as such. Mayor Šoja points out that there was neither possibility nor a need to have radical changes in the administration once he returned from refuge in 1997 and resumed his official duty. Unfortunately, there were no sufficient financial funds for additional employment and for attracting new professionals, and it is still the same. At that time, even strong tourism centers in the Adriatic region struggled to employ new staff.

Therefore, Mayor Šoja had to rely on the expertise of the municipal administration staff and they justified his expectations. He can proudly say that no one betrayed his trust. Disagreements exist but only at the professional level. As an intellectual, he is willing to appreciate profession as well as arguments of other people but political decisions and political responsibility are his burden. The right and obligation to make decision and personal responsibility are part of the job and he is led by his own conscience as an independent man and politician. It is the best way, he says, for he only depends on Baranja and its progress. He is accountable only to Baranja people for whom he wants to ensure normal life.

Creating future is a hard job

Mr. Šoja did not start to fight windmills, but he rather did what others tried to persuade him to be impossible: to start the economy in the municipality with its own resources, brains and persistence of diligent people who are used to hardships. He decided that no one will ever question Baranja and its capabilities again. He will use every opportunity to finger point at the map and say, this is Baranja, and there is future in it.

There were many challenges to face, and they were not easy. However, a lot has been done. Mr. Šoja made his personal contribution to his native town and he will definitely leave results behind him. He is not keen on being compared to others; however, when compared to the Adriatic region, Istria, Medjumurje or Zagreb areas, its progress is significantly slower. He is aware that its progress is conditioned by reason of current circumstances and weak initial position; however, he relies on his own strength, lobbying and personal skills.

Creating a future is a hard job, especially in the area where Belje industry existed in the past, a state in the state, so to speak, whose general director used to decide on almost every aspect of life in the municipality. With the destruction of the former economic giants society and region suffered great a collapse. Similar companies existed in other parts of the country; they conditioned many aspects of life, had great power and represented at the same time a driving force for one area as well as a guaranty for the existence of its population. Such companies had huge economic and political impact. The prevailing motto and the way functioning were to get a job in “BELJE, the state-owned farm, which could not go bankrupt, and offered security, numerous privileges and a possibility to work on your own land. “BELJE” used to cultivate 35,000 ha of land, meat processing industry was

strong, and if there were losses they, they were covered. There is still enough good and fertile land, which will be sold soon, but based on the discussions with young and educated people you can hear that they are unwilling to take risks and start up their own jobs, and even though they work for small salaries insufficient to secure good quality existence, very often they lack courage and initiative. They have been oriented to “BELJE” for generations, but the company seized to be what it represented in the past. These things should be changed; people should be additionally empowered and encouraged for private initiative and entrepreneurship. He wishes to change the old way of thinking and working, and he succeeds in doing so.

Numbers are the same in all three languages

Communication with citizens and public relations has been established since his return to Baranja in 1997. The communication, which is to be done in three languages i.e. Croatian, Hungarian and Serbian, is sometimes an objective problem. Some things simply have to be done according to the rules, laws and Constitution. For example, annual municipal reports must be printed and available in all three languages: Hungarian, Croatian and Serbian. In the past, the number of printed copies in all three languages was much bigger, and today, he comments with a smile, the three nations understand each other better. He remembers anecdotes related to the sessions of the Council. He says that regardless of the language they speak, my councilors “dash into” in numbers, which are same in all three languages. There is money or not, or kindergarten or water.

To reconcile various interests and appetites, to equally invest in everyone and at the same time to outline priorities and dedicate yourself to it sounds like an awfully hard homework even in the nationally unified communities, which are not stigmatized by the consequences of the recent war. The population is extremely heterogeneous in Kneževi Vinogradi in national as well as in the religious sense, comprising 41% of Hungarians, 31% of Croats and 20% of Serbs. It is the only municipality in Croatia predominantly inhabited by Hungarian population.

Regardless of its heterogeneous composition, political situation is positive and very stable. All nationalities are equally and equitably represented in the Municipal Council, representation body, Municipal Administration as an executive body as well as in the Municipal Administration Department.

He is aware of the fact that democracy costs money, he is aware that exercise of rights costs money pursuant to any law including Constitutional Law on the Rights of Minorities, the law regulating use of language, but it makes him angry to see that significant funds are allocated for the printing of materials on three different languages, when there is no interest for them afterwards. Still, he does not give for it is about legal obligations and human nature. If these materials are not printed in three languages, there would be instant queries and complaints. He adds with a smile that their signboards worth more and take more time to be manufactured.

He tries to have regular daily contacts with citizens, since there are not many events in the town. He convenes Municipal Assembly once a year for the citizens' sake just in time when the reports of the Municipal Council and Municipal Administration are finalized. They gather and discuss the results and achievements as well as future plans and budget distribution. This happens without cameras, Standing Orders, parliamentary immunity and mandates.

He convenes meetings with chairs of the seven Local Community Boards on quarterly basis. He tries to inform the chairs on the daily activities, results of each respective project and future short-term and long-term plans. He also organizes regular meetings with local community councilors. They almost meet on day-to-day basis. Problems occur when a chair of the Municipal Council and a councilor do not belong to the same political option and despite their common wish for the wellbeing of their region, projects are delayed until their heads "cool off" from high politics and important themes.

Meetings with journalists are also frequent; they simply announce themselves, come and ask questions. There is no mystification or secrets. He tries to have enough time for them and to present them with data he has on disposal. He emphasizes that journalists report regularly and correctly. Articles are frequently published in "Slavonski Dom" and "Slavonija Herald". Once in two months he is a guest on the Beli Manastir Radio. Listeners directly participate in the show and ask questions. There used to be unpleasant questions but recently less and less. Political tensions and important issues are slowly put aside, whereas quality of life, progress and daily big issues become priority regardless of the nationality and political option. In general, there are no big issues regarding media or public relations. Media report regularly and openly. He insisted on installing a public display down town with information, advertisements and news in all three languages.

Councilors and members of the municipal administration have never questioned his decision to include citizens in the municipal activities. They are all well aware that citizens allocate resources to municipal projects and municipal operations. It is easier for municipal authorities to be aware of the citizens' opinion in order to have guidelines and directions. It is not disputable that citizens are to be included; moreover, it is an imperative.

Daily human problems

They started from what they had and what was the tradition of this region, vine and fruit, and made a success, for they received a well-deserved award for the vine roads. Vine roads are a tradition in many European countries; they revived this region, too. In short time, 250 to 300 old vine cellars changed their owners. He is not happy that most of those cellars were bought to be resold again, but the market dictates its rules. Individuals with sufficient funds buy three, four or even five vine cellars under favorable price and then resell them under new infrastructure conditions. Progress and town-opening are taking its toll. Things are actually simple; as soon as asphalt road came to town, buyers came with it. The town is being reconstructed, vine roads attract tourists, and local potential is being promoted. Despite certain progress, investments in the infrastructure are forthcoming, particularly in sewage system; these are all realistic life problems, which should be resolved, which are not an issue to the authorities of other regions. He says all of this just to illustrate that the municipality actually has revived, which was his basic motive and a challenge.

Even though they did a lot, there are still things to be done. He states an example of the village Zmajevac, which needs water supply network as a priority. It is a big investment and they would not be able to move on with it without help from other institutions. This municipality is capable of providing with 5 to 10% of funds for projects through lobbying and loans. The Mayor is not afraid of being indebted and debt is not a mere burden, although it is often perceived otherwise. Debt is actually an investment in the future and it should be seen as such.

Presently, some permits are at the stage of being issued and big investments are about to begin. However, it is certain that they cannot do it on their own, it is also certain that some crucial issues like sewage network will be resolved in five to ten years for the whole municipality area. Circumstances in this municipality imposed the focus of activities. What is normal and understandable elsewhere; it is being developed and created in Kneževi Dvori.

Entrepreneurs field of activity is also important, since it offers concrete advantages, there are exempted from paying utility contributions and fees. It is a great thing for a new entrepreneur to be able to work for three years without paying utility fees and having significant tax exemptions. Municipality pays 2/3 of interest per loan to entrepreneurs from the municipal budget, reimbursing some costs i.e. soil analyses, geodetic measurements, laying out in lots, work of construction machinery, and disposal of leveled buildings.

He does not forget to mention protection of environmental, i.e. reconstruction of the town waste dumps and unsecured landfills. After hard work and negotiations with Local Community Boards, waste is removed in an organized manner. He emphasizes this for similar problems in other areas were resolved long time ago, and are not mentioned at all or imposed as a priority.

These activities were predominantly determined by the political situation. Somehow, whatever we start to talk about we go back to this unfortunate time. Thus, Mr. Šoja remembers that municipality had 300 Serb families after 1997, when they came back from the refuge. There was a question what to do with those people and where to accommodate them. Several families decided to stay in Baranja and in Kneževi Vinogradi, to start a new life and create existence. Some decided to emigrate to Serbia, to some other parts of the country or world in general. All those families were taken care of without further excesses, incidents in a humane and sensible manner. Those are huge issues and difficult situations. Within two to three years, the situation was resolved in a satisfactory way and all of them had their own home. Situations and issue like these determined and directed their actions and defined their priorities, consumed their energy and time even beyond maximum.

One of the turning points was adoption of the program relative to the ownership of the state-owned land. The program was passed on time and so far not a single decision or resolution was contested. They managed to „score” with this project and they sold 2000 ha of land. All nationalities living in this region were covered and equally participated in the program. He is aware that situation is different in the business world, decisions are different particularly those related to investments. Business and business decisions are not and should not be politics, however, they managed to reconcile both aspects In Vinogradi on time.

Free use of agricultural land was both test and a risk and at the same time, a turning point to stabilize situation after the war. It was difficult to restart economy

after the collapse of “BELJE”, now owned by AGROKOR. Population is now encouraged up to the extent to start cattle breeding and agricultural production being aware that “life-long” employment in Belje-time is long gone.

Today the climate is different, however it is a disturbing fact that middle class is disappearing. Those financially stronger are “pulling forward”, however they are not strong enough to employ bigger number of employees, nor are the services able to absorb all available labor force. Social pressure is still strong, homes and jobs are basic and you cannot live without them. However, he is generally content: agricultural land allocation program went well. Now, the fourth round is currently on and most importantly, majority of property issues have been resolved. Unresolved land cadastre situation represents a problem in all parts of Croatia. Unresolved issue of ownership, differences appearing in land registry and cadastre records additionally complicate investments and any other free use of real estate. There is no moving forward and no investments until property issues are resolved.

He illustrates further problems as follows: there are 16 churches and graveyards in six villages. A village with 600 to 700 hundred people has three graveyards, so it is a big issue requiring a lot of skills, wisdom and compromising to find location for the morgue. Those are ordinary everyday human problems. They named a morgue “a facility for religious activities” and placed it in the spot equally distanced from all three churches and all three graveyards. It all requires additional and significant funds. The graveyard surface is 25 ha and maintenance costs are extremely high. Some graveyards are over a hundred years old and should be maintained and preserved to witness Baranja history.

Three religious confessions are dominant in the municipality, Roman Catholics, Reformists and Orthodox Christians with the total of thirteenth religious objects of extreme historical value. It is not disputable that churches are to be preserved, however the issue is which one is to be reconstructed first. This requires wisdom and understanding to avoid politics. Mr. Deneš Šoja is irreplaceable in situations like this.

Sports center has an important role in the affirmation and promotion of Kneževi Vinogradi. Last year it was awarded for the best beach in the continental part of the country. He is also proud of wine roads, of the best practice award in 2004 for the development of local self-governance and participation of citizens. But, he concerned with the negative consequences of bureaucracy and existing administrative fragmentation. Baranja is divided in eight municipalities and before 1992 it

was a part of Beli Manastir Municipality. Channel network cannot be fragmented; everything has to be resolved in coordination and agreement. It cannot be that some villages clean and maintain the channels, and others do not. There are many issues than cannot be resolved within one municipality only. He also mentions the identical situation with reference to hailstorm defense. Coordination is missing and there is a lot of understatements about this issue.

There are two important issues relative to the economic and social environment, economic revival and employment. Each of those investors opened ten jobs, which is not little this region. On the contrary.

Municipality is slowly changing its appearance, old houses are being leveled and basic conditions for private entrepreneurship are growing faster than previously presumed as possible. Mayor Šoja is pleased that things are moving forward and he expects modernization of roads and installation of street lights.

Problems and specific situation ensue from the complex and heterogeneous national configuration, such as increased information costs. We must be transparent and take care of issues that other municipalities do not dream of. Documents must be written in all three languages, Hungarian, Serbian and Croatian, one should take care of all details, every comma, and every shade. It is important that any kind of institution, nor a president of Hungary or Croatia, Parliament Committees on Human Rights, Minorities, Legislation, Constitution, Standing Orders, nor county departments had any complaints whatsoever on the degree of and standards relative to the protection of minority rights in the municipality. Everything is in compliance with the law and the Statute. He is particularly proud of this.

He feels that he has repaid to his citizens

When answering the question whether he would accept another mandate, he poses for a while and thinks. He says if his health is good enough he might accept it. Surely, there are for the next term. Several very important projects are currently going on; there is a plan to build hotel, concessioners call. Categorization of roads is planned, vine roads project is important in economic point of view, there is intention “to open” Baranja Hill. All necessary documentation has been obtained from all relevant ministries awaiting publishing in the Official Gazette, which will be immediately followed by

orders and project development. Several projects are going on and development of sewage system is a priority for the entire municipality.

He is confident that it is possible to accomplish it in the next four to five years. He would definitely have things to do and finalize in the next mandate. For years he has been thinking about a lateral channel, which would bring water from the Danube during the drought season and return it to the Danube, when the floods threaten. It is a big investment of HRK 50-60 million or € 6.9-8.3 million. He asks: "Can you imagine how important this channel is for Kneževi Vinogradi and Baranja as a whole."

There are good future prospects for the population of this area. Rural tourism is important for the region, and besides the vine roads there is a great interest in hunting and fishing. Kopacki Rit is nearby and everything related to this is useful in many ways. He is an optimist and believes in good future prospects; however it is not going to be an easy process. He is emotionally attached to many buildings i.e. sports center, stadium, outpatients health center, post office, kindergarten. He started some of these projects many years ago, during the time he was the President of the Executive Council of Beli Manastir. He feels he has repaid to the citizens and not only to his voters from Kneževi Vinogradi. He plans to cooperate with future municipal authorities. If he does not win the next elections for the Mayor, he will definitely remain the member of the Council.

There are no obstructions, only good discussions

Citizens always have opportunity to discuss serious matters, to make suggestions and request solutions, whilst municipal authorities are doing their best to prepare well, to ensure and present preliminary designs for each investment in order to prevent objections and have only positive argumentation. He believes that citizens appreciate the work and efforts of municipal authorities.

Municipal authorities also cooperate with National Minority Councils. Several years ago, two different fractions won half votes each at the elections for national minority council. Nowadays, situation is different and the Mayor's party won with seven mandates, whilst other option won only three seats in the council. It seems that this explains implies the level of appreciation and support provided by the citizens with respect to his work and program.

He cooperates with the Council correctly; there are no obstructions, only discussions. Do they always agree with each other? Certainly not, nevertheless, they always try to hear and appreciate each other's arguments. The Council decides by majority of votes, that is the system. They cooperate and they are open for cooperation. He also mentions cooperation with the county and state authorities and all other institutions. Cooperation and discussion shall lead to better results as opposed to conflicts and disagreeableness.

Municipal Council acts without any official coalition. He is in coalition and cooperates with the Serbian Independent Democratic Party and Croatian Democratic Party. He was a candidate on the independent list with five seats in the Council; the second also an independent Hungarian list has three seats, whilst Serbian Independent Democratic Party and Croatian Democratic Party won two seats each. Another member of the Council is one independent lady representative. The Municipal Council has thirteenth members in total. The national structure of the executive body is in line with legal regulations and all nationalities are present but not all the parties. HDZ does not have its representative; it is their internal issue, however the Mayor keeps a seat for its representative. There were no problems whatsoever with councilors. The second Hungarian party is in the opposition and an independent lady councilor can cause tensions and persuasion, however those are quite common and often in other representative bodies.

Would it be easier for the Mayor, if he was a political party candidate? Party membership in the party, in position at the national level opens many doors, directs and enables contacts with decision makers, enables and accelerates access to funds and may ensure municipal categorization as a priority. He is not sorry he does not function in such manner, that is, to be supported and shielded by the party. To be an independent candidate and to win majority of votes gives him a freedom, which other Mayors who belong to political parties can only wish. Maybe this is a harder way; however, it is an independent way. Being independent means exactly this- being independent from politics and day to day oscillations, accountable to the citizens of Kneževi Vinogradi and his conscience.

Osijek-Baranja County is in the specific position since its leadership is not on the same "waves" as the Government and many things are resolved on the county level. He thinks that situation should not be deteriorated. Should you come to the meeting and criticize the Government or protest against the county leadership? Situation will inevitably change after the elections. All the same, contacts and visits either from Zagreb or from the county level are wrongly interpreted no matter where they come from, which is inevitably reflected on the overall

situation in the municipality. Despite the complex political situation, he is aware that the county invests in Vinogradi, however its funds amount to one hundred or two hundred thousand of HRK (€ 14,000 to 28,000), whilst the Ministries invest minimum two to three million of HRK (€ 280,000 or 420,000). The truth is that nothing can be done without assistance from Zagreb. Other municipalities are probably in the same situation. The situation was slightly easier for him given the fact that he was an independent candidate, that he won the elections and the trust of the citizens of the municipality he now leads.

Municipality of Kneževi Vinogradi cooperates with other municipalities in Croatia and wider; however there are no formal agreements. They are mainly directed to Šikloš, Hungarian nearby city, yet they have not formalized this cooperation in the form of an agreement. They are aware, though that it is necessary to establish international cooperation with local units of other states in order to gain access to the European projects and funds. Referring to the national associations of municipalities and towns, he tries to be active given the obligations he has, although that is not much.

Paradoxical, but true

He believes that all Mayors generally agree that one should work with dedication and honesty and adjust wishes to possibilities. You should also know about the available resources and advantages of the region without being attached only to what is currently at your disposal. There are always more options and investments “on the side”, a new production facility that would employ some people. The interest lays in the profit, and that is our driving force and we need to create conditions for it. However, you should always be realistic. Most importantly, you should work transparently and honestly.

Praises are very rare in our job, but we do not lack critics. He mentions a recognition he received and he is very proud of it. He was awarded by the Hungarian Prime Minister, Gyurcsany Ferenc, for his work with national minorities, Hungarian minority primarily. It is a paradox that his work was recognized by other country. However, the recognition and award did not go without adjudication and reaction from the representative of the Hungarian opposition party, who claimed that Mr. Šoja's municipal authority represented an obstacle to the implementation of the Constitutional rights for Hungarians. This is a paradox, however the truth.

“Happy Circle“

He does not want to talk about world trends, global warming or terrorism. He is primarily interested in Baranja and its prosperity. The region lacks coordination, and too often personal interest is put in the first plan. He knows this region well; he knows what Darda is, and what Beli Manastir is. That town develops by all means, but it seems that it is becoming a closed society as the only urban area. Its own development is a primary interest; employment is limited to the people from Beli Manastir. At the same time, it is not quite clear that it is a town with public institutions, and should provide services to the entire Baranja. Functional and modern market place may be more of a interest of people from the surrounding municipalities, who producing and sell than the interest of Beli Manastir itself. Although, they point out their good cooperation with Beli Manastir, it is a fact that Manastir has a stronger lobby, it receives more funds, which it indisputably needs, however there is a small discrepancy in the development process. He believes that the whole region should benefit more from the development of that town.

Decentralization is a top subject in Croatia, however it is a question what exactly is to be decentralized and what is to be transferred to the municipal level, which is only starting to resolve important issues such as infrastructure. One day, local units will surely have more work, tasks and income. Transfer of authorities should start first in the big and financially strong cities, which have potential to work and pay experts. Kneževi Vinogradi cannot be a part of that “happy circle” yet.

He is also worried about environmental protection. He has already stressed that environmental protection primarily means prevention from pollution and contamination, so it one of the priorities of the local government. Baranja abounds with valuable natural resources. Pollution could cause invaluable damages, which could not be improved by the generations to come.

He pursues his own ideas

Where do we stand in relation to the leadership in Croatia? Does anyone evaluate results and successes? Does anyone make decisions based on the defined criteria about who has been successful and what has been accomplished? Mr. Šoja's success is incomparable with the success of a Mayor of a big developed city with excellent governance. He is only interested in the recommendations from colleagues who live and work under similar circumstances, the Mayors who

managed to resolve similar issues he will most probably face or which are already representing an obstacle to his work. He wonders why we do not make analyses, which are necessary to compare our work with the work performed by others. We could compare the data and see how well they are organized, how rational they are when compared to other municipalities in Baranja, what are the areas to be improved, what are their mistakes, what new ideas could be adopted even with the modest funds they have at disposal. They would not compare themselves to other distant regions but with those nearby with the same heritage and similar problems. All surrounding municipalities have the same problems and costs. He believes that Kneževi Vinogradi is a rational municipality with the rationally organized management, which also invests in the environmental protection.

However, demands are huge. Major projects are ahead, he will accomplish a lot in this and in the next mandate. Some basic things are important here i.e. water supply system. Six or seven projects are ready with obtained construction permits, however they lack sufficient funds. They will have to lobby for those funds. This is a recommendation to all his colleagues, to lobby in every occasion, to listen about the ways others face their problems and to see what novelties they introduce.

He is aware that they have only basic funds and the situation gets complicated sometimes, politicized with no apparent reason. He thinks that there is always a way to resolve issues in peaceful manner. He is not a devotee of politicizing, which he, however, could have used a lot.

As a Hungarian, a member of national minority, he never used it in the manner not moral or acceptable by human standards. He is proud that his merits are not disputed either by Croats or Serbs. Once he steps down from his post, everyone will be able to say that he has worked for the benefit and well-being of all people who live here. This is one of his recommendations to his colleagues and to the future Mayor who will succeed him. They should avoid interfering with politics for the general benefit of all citizens.

Speaking honestly, he did not want to use the fact that he did not receive a response from a political instance he turned to in a written form. Someone else would use it, and some even expect him to do so. The fact is that by reason of this approach he received understanding in the state institutions. He also has to be a diplomat, who acts in a positive manner, organizes various promotions and invites representatives of authorities to attend them; he tries to explain issues they face, shows them advantages of the region and recommends solutions for the problems. He believes that the state and County authorities perceive him as a

positive man with valid argumentation and averse to conflicts, and who persistently “pushes” his matter and succeeds in it.

It is important to work on advertising, promotion and development of web page, presenting of useful information and new editions of advertising material, and present it to the tourists. Baranja is tourist-attractive area, Kopacki Rit a famous tourism site. Promote your region; be proud with what you have, for very often you are not aware of its value – those were the words he said seeing us off.

Changes could not happen overnight; one should work patiently with people, offer them a chance, appreciate and protect their ideas, and above all, address them humanly. To be with them and motivate them with your own example, when they thought there was no solution. People had to understand, he exclaims, that changes were not a luxury but a necessity.

Husejin Smajlović, Mayor of Zenica

A leader who turns hope into reality

Written by: Branka KUŠLJUGIĆ

When he became the Mayor in 2004, Husejin Smajlović continued the process of the city transformation, from lethargic and featureless place to modern regional center with recognizable identity.

He brought a new energy and enthusiasm in only three years of his mandate. He is developing entrepreneurship, and has a new and inventive approach to problems. He builds stadiums and sport halls and protects traditional rapport and familiarity of the small town.

The concept – “returning to its roots” - that had been disturbed by the pre-war industrialization now became an important policy for Zenica civil identity strengthening and its image. Newly-created “industries” brought liveliness, color and international atmosphere to the town and citizens got back hope in better future. Husejin Smajlović’s vision was confirmed in 2006 when the municipality gained the status of the local economic development leader according to the British Beacon Scheme.

His commitment to making changes is contained in his personal motto: *Zenica thinks differently.*

“Think differently!”

At the time Mr. Husein Smajlović became a Mayor, citizens of Zenica had already lost their optimism. The town went through difficult economic, social and demographic decline, which was predominantly associated to the problems in the metal processing industry symbolized by *Steelworks Zenica*. Before the war, *Steelworks* was the biggest employer in the town, a giant which shaped the character of the town and people were closely attached to it.

The concept of strong attachment to one industry in the transition period proved very wrong and unsuccessful. The *Steelworks* could not compete with the world and European steel producers, production dramatically reduced and many people were left jobless. Previous balance in the local economic development was lost and the town was left without energy and “joie de vivre” it had in the past.

Labor market crisis, low income tax receipts and increased costs of social welfare for the unemployed provoked serious crisis in the municipal budget. The citizens’ respect for municipal authorities was diminishing. Citizens took amiss against municipal authorities for distancing from them and not doing the right things in the right way.

The additional burden for Zenica was also a part of its war history related to the presence and incongruous activities conducted by the Islamic groups from Arabic countries. Therefore, a number of political representatives from Zenica suffered bad reputation within the international democratic public. They perceived Zenica as a town supporting radical Islamic views.

Think differently! – a slogan used by city administration for the town promotion clearly shows that citizens of Zenica led by Mr. Husejin Smajlović are in the process of developing new image, different from the one still remembered by a number of people. Today, citizens of Zenica send the message: In order to feel “new” Zenica, take a stroll around the town. It is the only way you loose the perception trapped in your heads.

Mr. Smajlović’s motive to run for the Mayor was his wish to persuade Zenica people that there is a hope for economic revival and better social environment. “Zenica in future, the town I imagined when I made decision to run for the Mayor, is the town not ashamed of its past, the town which first and foremost understands it past, value it and reconciles with it. For, Zenica is not only a paradigm of dirty factory chimneys and the state prison. It is also a green oasis,

situated on the three rivers, in the heart of Bosnia. It is the town of open people, who sought shelter from the war and poverty. Zenica, the town of my dreams, kept these positive characteristics and relinquished them in the same manner it has used the knowledge and skills acquired during the most intensive period of industrialization, but this time taking care of the environmental protection and protection of people who must not to be the victims of the greedy production. Therefore, I see Zenica as a town of free spirit, where writers, musicians, designers, actors and sportsmen feel equally good as metal and machine industry workers.”

A precondition that he insisted upon to run for the elections was to change the election law. He wanted citizens to elect him as their Mayor, and other options were not acceptable for him.

“The main motive was to change hopelessness and lethargy prevailing in the town. However, the main precondition to participate in the election was to change the election law and enable citizens to elect their Mayor directly. Only then, one can have the necessary legitimacy. First because this was a confirmation of my vision of Zenica, and second, I won the mandate to implement this vision.”

Talking about challenges that were before him when he became the Mayor, Mr. Smajlović says: “How to change a peaceful and sleepy lake into an active river, which will turn the turbines of progress and turn this unused potential into the power making progress? To accomplish such change one should modify the way people think. I think that this was the biggest challenge in the initial days of my mandate.”

Mr. Smajlović set the following milestones: to provide more opportunities for work, to revitalize social and cultural environment, to return the nature to its roots, to develop municipal administration, to retrieve the citizens’ trust and to improve the image of town.

“I divide goals in two groups: psychological and project-oriented. It is always more difficult to achieve psychological goals, because they are connected to the human habits and attitudes. There are several of them: development of self-initiative, independence, participation in community activities, change of attitude towards the city, development of new identity. Project-oriented goals largely depend on psychological goals, i.e. balanced urban and rural development, completion of capital projects, good quality reconstruction of infrastructure, construction of sports and cultural facilities, long-term resolution of water-supply system and city traffic, etc.”

Mr. Smajlović has had a course to follow from the beginning of his mandate. He followed “Zenica Development Strategy until 2015”; however, he has invested significant time and energy in listening to the citizens’ desires. He deeply believed that only this approach was rational and cost effective in the long run. “When I was designing development program for Zenica municipality I added issues I felt about and heard about from the citizens. The thought of the prettier Zenica was present in the heads of many local people, and I tried to give it a realistic and feasible framework. I always thought of Zenica as a place that abounds with various qualities; however it never had an opportunity to confirm it in practice”.

In order to justify his city development program and his vision, Mr. Smajlović first applied a method of persuasion of people into the realistic perspective of his vision, and when the results began to arrive, the resistance weakened. Projects that were useful for the city turned cynicism, mistrust and frustration into hope.

“The best way to overcome resistance toward changes is to use changes as a prevailing model of behavior. I will illustrate that with an example: when we were reconstructing the main street in the town, the final part of the project was reconstruction of facades. The municipality did its part of the having created domino effect, so the owners of the buildings, one by one, renewed their facades. Those who did not participate were criticized.”

He emphasizes that he does not have an illusion that he should be loved by everyone, or that everybody should agree with his approach, but he is not ready to compromise in order to improve his picture. He deems his devotion to principles his virtue; however, that does not mean that he is not ready to give up, if arguments are not on his side. He does not allow himself to be subjected to the lobbies, meaning that he carefully considers each proposal.

From results to trust

Mr. Smajlović instigated changes in the beginning of his mandate. The first important focus was revival of economy and harmonization of labor market along with the constant care for people’s health and natural environment. Mr. Smajlović knew the changes could not happen overnight without local initiative. The lack of consistent concept on the national level did not bother him. He said: “Three to four years ago, Zenica still hoped that salvation would come from the state, or reconstruction of big economic systems or international aid. Today, Zenica

thinks differently: *let's do what we can and then ask for help.* We live in the times when quality needs to be proven and visible. I think that we have realized that in Zenica, so this change of consciousness illustrates the most important difference between the present and past time.”

Mr. Smajlović invited local and foreign investors to discover their interest in investing in Zenica. Certain business groups and companies recognized this and the biggest foreign investment actually happened in Zenica. *LNM Group*, (*Mittal Steel Company*) the biggest world steel producer employing 224,000 workers in 49 countries, bought 51% of the *BiH Steel Zenica*. Based on the agreement signed between BiH Federation Government and *Kuwaiti Investment Agency* in 2004, *Mittal Steel* had committed itself to invest \$80,000,000 in the next ten years: \$65,000,000 will be invested in working capital and the remaining \$13,500,000 in the new factory and equipment. It kept 2,800 workers with the intention to increase the number once the *BH Steel* reaches the level of full production. The Slovak company *Cimos* registered the company *Cimos TMD Casting* for casting and processing of casts with the initial capital of KM 1,000,000. It will employ around 600 workers.

“I was never keen on balancing, and I have no illusion that everybody will love me and will support my visions. If the times are normal, you can gain trust in politics by achieving results. My ambition is to leave an imprint on this town with my accomplishments and to contribute to the better quality of life for citizens of Zenica.”

Much credit goes to Mr. Smajlović for the construction of Business Zone with 67 business sites and 19 facilities. The abandoned land not any more in use by Steelworks of 340,000 m² was transformed in business area thanks to the assistance of the European Development Funds. “Our Business Zone is being transformed from the old and untended steel plants into a lively construction zone with new industrial capacities and manufacturing facilities offering new jobs”, the Mayor wrote in his welcome speech on the Zenica municipal website. This compound also contains the entrepreneurship incubator with 25 workshops, with 7155 m², offering incentives for business start-up. Local Agency for Economic Development (ZEDA) manages the Incubator, offering technical assistance and consulting services to entrepreneurs within and outside it. The municipality is co-founder of the Central BiH Regional Development Agency (REZ), which is an important development factor.

Economic revival reflected on the financial potential of the municipality. Today, Zenica is the most successful financial region in the BiH Federation. Municipal

budget for 2007 amounts to KM 42,300.000 and it is one of the biggest budgets in the BiH representing a sufficient base for investments in economic development and enhancement of the quality of life in Zenica. <http://www.zdk.ba/BSCPHP/tekst.php?idteksta=34>

Citizens of Zenica proudly show facilities built during the mandate of the Mayor Smajlović, which thus enriched and adorned the town. The town got *Athlete Stadium*, the best athlete track on the Balkans and only multifunctional stadium in BiH, which welcomed the best athletes of Balkan in 2006 and athletes at the European B-Cup Competition in 2007. The town bowling alley has been reconstructed, which is used as a skating rink in the winter time.

The city also got in-door market place specified for the sale of food and textile with 200 removable stands. The facility is pleasant in summer and safe in autumn and winter. It is safe from rain and snow, which might bother the shoppers, and in the evening hours it is transformed in the area for public events. Nowadays, Zenica also has a museum, thanks to Mr. Smajlović. The museum is modern and multifunctional with space of 1,500 m². The city is building new and repairing old roads and bridges over the River Bosnia: Kanal, Vraca and Drivusa. Municipality, in cooperation with local communities, is implementing the project *Mark to Mark*.¹

“The Project *Mark to Mark*, which established partnership with citizens in the process of resolving infrastructure problems, represents a successful model of project implementation. To each convertible mark invested by a local community, same amount is added from the municipal budget. Results are more than satisfactory.”

With assistance of World Bank, municipality built a sanitary landfill covering the area of 25 ha with disposal site with capacity of 3,800.000 m³. The facility will be used not only by Zenica but other municipalities of Zenica - Doboj Canton and Central Bosnia Canton in the next 30 years.

Mr. Smajlović initiated numerous projects, which enabled natural resources and cultural and architectural wealth to show its full potential. Business community in the old town center is in the rejuvenating process: new facades, renovated *Tito and School streets and Fishermen Promenade* for fishermen and hikers, reconstructed parks and playgrounds and renewed various cultural and social institutions.

1 Convertible Mark (translator's note).

However, the highlight of his work is the construction of the business and sports center *Kamberović polje*, the biggest construction site and the biggest investment in BiH worth KM 100 million. The total area of inner space will amount to 79,000 m² and 13,000 m² of outer space. They also plan to build five-level hotel and sports hall for five to six thousands spectators, business area of 23,000 m², supermarkets, restaurants and coffee bars, several swimming-pools, tennis courts, bowling and billiard rooms. This project will open more than five hundred jobs.

Asked to name the project he most proud of, the Mayor says: “The city is very complicated mechanism with many interactive demands and needs. It is hard to say which of the stated projects is the most important. They are all important in different ways. They all affect the quality of life and it is most important that citizens realized their capacity to do better; however, no one will give them that for free, but, we have to struggle to accomplish that using our own capacities and resources. It is particularly important that we do that as soon as possible.”

With reference to the turning point in his career, Mr. Smajlović reminds of the success of his first several projects: “If I should determine the turning moment more precisely, than I would mention the time we began implementation of the first several projects, when I actually felt for the first time that my associates had trust in me and in the implementation of my program.”

Speaking about projects that enriched Zenica, he exclaims that many projects would not have been implemented donors’ aid. However, talking about relations with donors he says: “There are less and less donors and donor funds. That is not good, however it is expected. The good thing is that there are neither unconditional donors nor privileged beneficiaries anymore. Donors are setting clear rules for the allocation of funds. They set out conditions, allowing equal opportunities to all. Those who prepare themselves, get funds. In order to be prepared you ought to have a vision, a project, and to follow procedures and respect donors’ requirements. We used significant funds for building social welfare flats, incubator, for the housing project for Roma people, improving quality of life for children without parental care as well as for the reconstruction project of the town landfill, waste waters purification, etc.

Changes are not a luxury but a necessity

Zenica City Administration has eleven Departments. Mayor has two advisors for urban planning and public utilities and economic relations and entrepreneurship. The City Administration has 320 employees and more than 60% of them do not have university education. Departments are equipped with computers and employees are trained to use them.

Smajlović inherited the existing structure from his predecessors, since the law defining municipal administration structure and employment procedures is very strict and does not allow much space for maneuvering. Mr. Smajlović says that such inflexible law hinders better functioning of local administration. Creating public assets and raising the citizens' quality of life is a hard and complicated job and cannot be done efficiently without competent city administration. Inability to choose his associates often "ties the Mayors' hands" when they want to implement ambitious projects. Therefore, Mayors have only two options: to ask from their current associates to work beyond their capacities or simply "to miss the trains". The state, he emphasizes, ought to find a way to "soften" this law so that local communities get necessary energy for further development.

"I wish I could change the law which obliges Mayors to implement the programs they were elected for, but does not allow them to choose the team to help them in the implementation. Protection of civil servants' rights has many advantages; however, elected representatives should have more freedom to hire the most capable people to implement municipal development programs."

Inherited administration was not motivated enough and it was traditionally organized, with bad communication system. Some workers were insufficiently agile and not in favor of changes and innovations. And some needed assistance to show their full capacity. He describes the situation he found upon his arrival as the following: "I inherited unmotivated administration. Many of those people were doing their job just fine, however the real circumstances and the municipal administration model did not allow them to express their potential and to show what they were able to do." Being restrained and unable to make significant changes within the executive team, he required from his associates more engagement, creativity and readiness to adapt to changes. He has never fired any of his employees nor did he appoint people to managerial positions, but they earned their positions by participating in significant projects and by resolving important issues. The only exception to this rule is the Urban Planning and Utilities

Advisor, who was appointed by Mr. Smajlović. During his mandate he managed to reconstruct the Entrepreneurship Department with the help from ZEDE and to employ educated and capable staff able to promptly answer to all project requirements. Municipal administration comprises professional team of people with good technical and general education and who speak foreign languages.

He introduced changes or “the new software”, as he calls them, at the beginning of his mandate and they were aimed at developing the culture of organization, emphasizing open communication through the entire organization and involving employees in decision-making process. He admits now that changes could not happen overnight and it took some patient work with people, offering them a chance, appreciating and protecting their ideas. It is most important to have humane and good approach in communication with staff. It is necessary to work with them and to motivate them with your own example, to give them hope to persist in finding good solutions. People had to understand that changes were not luxury but necessity.

“It is important to create a system where idlers and those without motivation and ideas feel unwanted and start to look for different job. Forcing people to something would not bring anything good in the long run. There should be a system and we should allow this system to start developing and the rest will follow,” says Mr. Smajlović.

He carefully and systematically moves through this system of changes. He meets his employees and talks to them. His messages were clear and he expected everyone to participate in decision-making process and to attempt to work in a different way as opposed to the previous period.

“The first task, with reference to my staff, was to offer them participation in the implementation of Zenica development project. Each of them had an opportunity to participate since the beginning of the project. Some seized the opportunity, others did not. Those who did, now have pleasure to be the part of the joint effort to make Zenica the city of comfortable life style, which is a great reward, not only for them but for their children and future generations. Most of my colleagues recognized this as an additional incentive for their work.”

He encourages atmosphere and attitude where changes are perceived as positive values, not something to be feared from.

“I have told my colleagues that from now on it will be forbidden to pronounce the sentence: “There is no money.” The money will come along with the ideas and good projects. No ideas, means no money. Relations with associates have been simplified to a very the following formula: I encourage them to come to me with new ideas, and together we find resources for their implementation. Their activities are their zone of responsibility. They must feel at home there. As long as the things are put in that way, there are no problems in interpersonal relations.”

Mr. Smajlović instigates an open communication with his associates and he listens to what they have to say. There is no much use of a frightened employee, who fears to speak his/her own mind. The employer has the least benefit from that situation. Being a civil servant is not the most lucrative job; however it is one of the most honorable. Therefore, I expect from my associates to have ideas and to give suggestions how to implement those ideas for the general benefit of all citizens in Zenica. They must feel that they are an active part of the team, and that they share the success of the whole team. They need to understand that the Mayor Smajlović is the person they can freely talk to without formal obstacles. He is not in favor of iron rules and frightening approach to his employees, he prefers talking and settling problems together.

Mr. Smajlović prefers team work and cooperation since he believes that this approach gives better results as opposed to the command and control. He supports continuous education of public servants, because only educated people can make changes and instigate them. He motivates his staff with his own example (he works 24 hours) and he avoids travelling every time he gets invited. He reduced travelling costs of his staff and he introduced practice of paying only those traveling costs which bring concrete benefit for the municipality.

This approach resulted in better working culture. Partnership relations with stakeholders within the city and with surrounding municipalities have been improved together with the citizens' trust in the Mayor and city administration. No other Mayor before him did not have such trust that he earned from his fellow citizens.

The changes he introduced to the municipal administration resulted in better quality of services. Citizens are served at one place, which saves them from wondering around different parts of administrative building trying to finish their business. They receive all services in time and they are served and met by smiling and kind officers.

Open to good ideas

Mr. Smajlović managed to establish close relations with citizens. Since the beginning of his mandate he has sent one message to the citizens - the city will not only provide services to the citizens, it wants to establish partnership relations and mutual trust with them. The Mayor says: "The city administration is obliged to build a stage where citizens will play the roles of their life: creatively and with dignity."

Mr. Smajlović does not say to the citizens only what has been done, but expects from them to tell him what they would like to be done in the city. In this way, municipal administration and citizens are connected by common interest of creating conditions under which they would all feel better. "It makes me very proud to see the citizens thinking about municipal administration as their own property and that they feel good when they make contacts with us. We endeavor to be at service to all citizens and to show them that our function is not to rule but to manage our common assets for the wellbeing of all." He says that he is always open to good ideas and constructive discussion with citizens. He regularly meets with citizens, nongovernmental organizations and business communities. His colleagues say that he stays at these meetings from early morning till late evening. He does not have scheduled appointments for meetings and citizens can come to his office at any time, so it happened that he, for example, received a hundred of citizens in one day. He knows that some people come even if they do not have good reason but he has never refused to see anyone. He talks to citizens in the streets, market place and other less formal places. He admits there are many good ideas coming from these conversations and the citizens are ready to invest their potential and reputation in the town's interests, if the municipal administration behaves transparently and responsibly. Citizens are allowed to attend Council meetings and he asks for their opinion when defining priorities or drafting budget. All citizens of Zenica can get information on the activities of municipal administration from abroad through media, press conferences and web presentations on the municipal official page. Public servants went through the OSCE training in public relations.

Mr. Smajlović has good relations with non-governmental sector. Lately, this relation has become more intensive with organizations involved in the local development initiatives. However, he has certain doubts related to the motives of a number of non-governmental organizations and he is ready to support the work only of the organizations with sincere intentions to serve the community

development. The municipality regularly allocates funds for non-governmental organizations succeeding to prove that some projects are in the function of community progress. "Cooperation with non-governmental sector is extremely good only with those organizations applying with useful projects and with an aim to implement them and not with those trying to benefit personally by opening another NGO," says Mr. Smajlović.

He shows particular sensitivity to the youth issues, he is open to their initiatives and encourages their participation in the political and social life of the municipality. Each year, municipality advertizes a bid for the Youth Advisory Board comprised of students, representatives of youth NGOs and individuals who stand out by their good school, sports, artistic or other results. The Board has ten members and deals with different issues of the social life: education, ecology, sports, media, students' living standard, human rights, free time, etc.

Mr. Smajlović considers recommendations of this Board when deciding upon the program and budget proposal. He also showed his support by letting them to think how to use the former Yugoslav National Army Hall. Since 2003, Zenica municipality has a budget line called Youth Grants, which are allocated on the basis of a bid for financing projects applied by youth organizations and individuals or talented students. "Besides regular budget allocations for non-governmental organizations there are competitions for youth projects and we evaluate each project after which, the Board selects the best ideas and decides who will get the grant. We try to support projects instead of individuals or legal entities. It has proved to be the best way to select the quality and to support it.", says Mr. Smajlović.

He emphasizes that one of the prerequisites for the successful work of the administration is also a good cooperation with the Municipal Council. Although SDA party he belongs to has a parliament majority, Mr. Smajlović gives a credit to all parties participating in the Council. "I wish that cooperation model between the municipal administration and Zenica Council becomes an example of good practice for other municipalities, since we have managed to attract investors and to shorten the time needed for decision making and issuing of necessary permits."

A number of citizens of Zenica I talked to said that Mr. Smajlović has never been blindly devoted to his party and only recently, he has had some problems with his party. This is still a rumor and the Mayor does not talk about it in public. He describes his relations with his party as follows: "I need to express gratitude to

the political party which supported my candidacy. However, it is less important compared to the fact that it fully supported my comprehensive and detailed pre-election campaign. My duty was to implement those tasks without too much politics and my political party largely supports it.”

Good image is created by good communication

Today, Zenica is returning on the scene, Mr. Smajlović observes. Perceptions of this town are slowly changing. Zenica is on the way to build its own brand which is “a difficult but progressing task”. As defined by the Mayor, it uses a positive shock method. “We aim to present Zenica at its best; we try to make an impact using positive shock method and to encourage people to return to Zenica and spread the positive story.” Zenica has never renounced people who originate from this area, regardless of their famous or public status. Zenica is proud with them, because they cherished it and spread the voice of its beauty, goodness, openness and tolerance. Zenica uses this today for its affirmation in the world. “We could name many successful people from Zenica in the area of art, sports or business, but more important than their names is the principle according which an individual contributes to the wellbeing of the community.” Husejin Smajlović emphasizes that they feel equally strong for all other “anonymous” current or past citizens who entered their differences and characteristics in the specific assortment of fellowship and centuries-long coexistence in this town.

Changes introduced by Mayor Mr. Smajlović included increased quality of the promotion material, media programs, and web presentations. Mr. Smajlović says: “Image is created through communication. Municipal presentation has great significance in this process; this includes web portal and establishing of e-governance. This is the project we currently work on and together with changes and multifunctional web presentation Zenica will be more present in the country and in the world”. Municipal administration promotes and develops cooperation and partnership with towns, municipalities and regions within BiH and outside it aiming to preserve its characteristics. Also, success factors relative to other towns are systematically analyzed.

“Zenica municipality is open to all models of cooperation. The best example showing its openness is building of the regional sanitary landfill. This project encompasses ten other municipalities. In addition to this, there is a good example of joint effort of Zenica, Travnik, Novi Travnik, Vitez and Busovaca to build a regional water supplying system “Blue Waters”. The contracting parties to this project are various companies from Sisak, Banja Luka, Brcko, Srebrenik, Tesanj, Zavidovici, Maglaj, Zepce, Kakanj, Visoko, Sarajevo, Konjic, Jablanica, Mostar, Vitez, Travnik and Livno.”

Asked about major mistakes he says: “I sleep well. Judging by that, there were no huge mistakes. However, the fear from making mistakes has never been an obstacle to my activities.”

Mr. Smajlović underlines that his previous professional experience and education helped him to become successful in work and it is difficult to separate one occupation from another, however, he gives small preference to lawyer’s position.

“It is hard to separate experience from education. However, there is no dilemma that my occupation as a lawyer helped me in understanding tasks and obligations I encounter as the leader of the local community. It would be much harder had I not worked in mining industry, banking, housing and construction departments, as a Government and Parliament official and in the private sector.” He adds that experience is the best school including information he gets when meeting with citizens. “Education and experience are important, whereas the ability to understand needs and requests of the city and its citizens is crucial; you either have it or do not. That is hard to learn.”

He is not a mere life observer

It is a great honor for Mr. Smajlović for having been elected directly by citizens. He is not sure whether he would do the same if he should go the same road again and solve the same issues. The Mayor’s post, as he says, is nice but stressful, it requires 24 hours of work, sacrificing family obligations and distancing from friends. He will leave to his successor a more professional administration, defined and prepared strategic milestones and more space for action. This will allow him to continue the process of establishing relaxed but efficient administration. Mayor Smajlović says that besides working around the clock a good Mayor needs to understand the needs of citizens to have a vision, persistence and courage to make decisions and take risks. His colleagues say that besides visionary, persistence

and courage he has other good characteristics such as modesty, nonconformism, ethics, good communication skills and positive energy. It needs to be added that he likes to read and has a gift for nice and poetic writing.

The important success indicator relevant for Husejin Smajlović is that he is not a mere life observer but an active participant. He shows clear understanding for the importance of synergy created by close relations between the Mayor and “his” citizens. He meets citizens, civil sector, entrepreneurs, talks to them and listens to what they have to say. He unselfishly invests time and energy in this for this approach proved to be the right one. He also stresses his big love for the town and this love is beyond political membership.

He approached this task with no aspirations to become a good looking Mayor loved by everyone. He is trying to work in the manner that the citizens do not see him as someone who gives them a mere hope but as a person who offers real projects and changes, so that they can continue to live with a hope after he leaves his post.

Mr. Smajlović showed he was ready to take a risk trying to do something no one else did before. He says that he is not pro “do not rock the boat” approach. It is human to make errors but only if errors were made in the attempt to “refresh” or change situations blocking the progress. His example tells us that we should try looking for solutions even when we see an obstacle or mountain ahead and when we think that we cannot climb it. He says that Zenica deserves the best and it is possible to accomplish the best if you sincerely wish that and work hard.

Husejin Smajlović has also one “fault-virtue” depending how people see it and that is his ascetic life style, which is presently atypical for people in his position. He diligently performs all his duties by protocol; however, he avoids celebrations offering glamour and glitter. He leaves his office only to visit construction sites, meet citizens, visit schools or social institutions, attend congress in Zenica or region and he rarely travels abroad especially if he considers it more of a tourist journey than a business one. Unlike most of the politicians who qualify their opponents as enemies, Mr. Smajlović appreciates persons with different views and it is not hard for him to admit and emphasize their values and achievements.

At first sight he looks like a strict man and it might even seem that he is a kind of man who does not listen to others. Nevertheless, he is a man who was getting up at five o'clock in the morning to hear problems of his fellow-townsmen and who visited them in their homes when they were not able to come. He had never spent a dime from the budget for his official lunches and he volunteered as a blood donor hundred times.

Ljubiša Marković, Mayor of Sarajevo Center Municipality

Enough of empty promises

Written by: Stevo PUCAR

Sarajevo Center municipality has always been the administrative, business, cultural, educational, health and trade and services center of Sarajevo and BiH. Before the war, it used to be one of the most dynamic places with rather high living standard. Nowadays, twelve years after the war, it might sound logical that situation is the same.

However, in the four years of war, close to 7,000 people were wounded or killed in this area. According to the estimates, 26,000 people amongst which 2,700 experts left the city. It is also estimated that the war damage exceeded KM 6,500,000,000. Besides devastated economy and facilities of social significance, close to 64% of apartments and 72% of houses were damaged. Following the war, close to 1,500.000 m² of land remained under mines.

Returning of the municipality to its “glory days” and creating something new, not previously seen in BiH, has not been an easy and simple job. Much credit for this project goes to Ljubiša Marković, Mayor of this municipality during the period 2000–2004. During his mandate, municipality Center was largely reconstructed and renewed.

He donated blood hundred times

As a Mayor, Ljubiša Marković was always very rational, logical and pragmatic. Thanks to the *Fridrih Ebert* Foundation he visited Germany at the beginning of his mandate, which was a great benefit for him. He noticed many interesting things visiting German cities; he collected leaflets, took photos of the window halls in the institutions, carefully observed where they keep shelves with instructions and thought how apply the same procedures in his Town Hall. “That was in September 2000, and my head was full of information, I welcomed all data and analyzed them and finally I was able to make some very good decisions.”

He then designed his approach to the city self-governance, and realized that municipal administration as well as any other company should provide services. “If a beneficiary is unhappy after you provide him/her with a service that cannot not be corrected, as opposed to the purchased a product, which you can replace or repair. Therefore, my theory was to invest more in construction, education and staff development. We worked a lot, because we thought that the work of municipal administration is similar to the work of any other service providing company and that people are its major resource.”

At first sight he looks like a strict man and it might even seem that he is a kind of man who does not listen to others. Nevertheless, he is a man who was getting up at five o'clock in the morning to hear problems of his fellow-townsmen and who visited them in their homes when they were not able to come. He had never spent a dime from the budget for his official lunches and he volunteered as a blood donor hundred times. This tells enough about him as a human being and shows that the first impression can be wrong.

Generation gap

At that time, the election laws did not motivate people to fight for the Mayor's post, and Ljubiša Marković won the seat by accident. During the elections in 2000, Mayors were elected from the councilors' list. Social Democratic Party (SDP) list in the municipality Center was composed in a way that older party members tried to use their younger colleagues to win leading posts. That approach was not successful as the younger members seized the opportunity which was offered to them. In this conflict between older and the younger members, the party leadership chose younger members and it was agreed that Ljubiša Marković should be

a candidate although he had no ambitions of that kind and he was not planned to be on the candidates' list in the beginning. Once he was elected for the Mayor's post he felt obliged towards people that voted for him. In the town inhabited by 85% of Bosniacs, he as a Serb won three times more votes than SDA candidate who was a Bosniac. With him SDP won 81% of votes in the municipality Center with him as a candidate for the Mayor's post, which was an additional obligation to invest more efforts and do his job in the best possible way.

Action plan or empty talks

Prior to his election, Ljubiša made a development plan for Sarajevo Center for his party without thinking that he would be the one implementing it. The plan was based on the analyses of the activity reports of the municipal services and their action plans. It contained three annual reports on the implementation of all administrative services including Mayors' work for the period 1996-1998. He realized that they did not contain real action plans and it was an empty talk without possibility to determine the actual responsibility. Then he became aware of the scope of the challenge to manage one local self-governance unit, the list of problems it involves and the list of opportunities to change and improve the life of citizens. "Until then, I have never worked in the municipal administration and I even went there to get my birth certificate, hence I was not aware of the real situation and problems." Based on the action plans he had read, he precisely defined what was to be done not knowing that it would actually be his job. The action plan was very innovative and it was welcomed and approved and became the election program of his party.

He defined clear and precise objectives for each activity and by doing that he followed basic principle that municipal administration needs to give a chance to all participants in the local community to have equal access to resources. Special attention was paid to the youth and their education. Furthermore, close to 1,500.000 m² of the municipal land was under mines and the idea was that it would be cleared by the end of his mandate in 2004.

A breaking point

It was not an easy task to form a team to work with. He had to work in accordance with guidelines stating that each party has a right to employ assistants depending on the percentage of votes they won. That means that his assistants belonged to three different parties: SDA, SDP and Party for BiH. He could not influence their appointments nor could he choose a candidate from his party. However, this was not an issue, and he made clear that they would all follow his program, the program citizens voted for and which won the elections.

He required from his assistants to think and explain how they would implement program objectives, which projects should be implemented and in what time framework. He explains: "It was a breaking point for people, because I acted according to the principle – I do not care which party you come from, if you know the job, but if it turns out that you do not know your job, this is not a place for you. They opposed for some time, worked around the clock, consult friends, experts and began to come with suggestions and ideas. I encouraged them, for they realized what they were required to do, so they actually got a freedom to act."

It was also very good to include all employees in the process of implementation of these goals. His assistants were made clear that they would have to consult their people in order to respond to the requirements set out by Ljubiša Marković. "We got excellent energy and suddenly 200 people, the entire municipal administration, were in the same story, which was not the case before," exclaims Ljubiša.

However, if it happened that one of the assistants was not up to the job, Ljubiša would use that situation for the benefit of all. Since he was not in position to choose his assistants, and this is particularly relevant to from other parties, he would then work extra hours to make up to that. That additional work required direct contacts with citizens and he saw it as an excellent opportunity to beat the mistrust they had toward him as a Serb. He gives an interesting example: "From threats with demonstrations by war veterans' organizations, we came to the stage where municipality invested KM 10,000 in the establishment of a war veteran company. Today, this company is the biggest investor in the municipality Center, and it invests KM 20,000.000 and employs 80 people. This is what we consider the biggest success. From mistrust we advanced to establishing a profitable organization offering people better life. Municipality does not allocate funds to this organization anymore, it is self-sustainable."

They worked four hours per week

Before he became the Mayor of Sarajevo Center municipality, general unhappiness with municipal administration had prevailed. Citizens had problems in obtaining what they needed from municipality and they were generally unhappy with the service provision. The city administration was distanced from the people. One of the important objectives was to change relations in the administration and towards citizens. This was the first result citizens noticed after the arrival of the new administration.

He tells an interesting story: “The first morning I came to my new working place, a deputy of the former Mayor together with a number of other officers showed me around the offices and I noticed the sign on each office with information about the hours open to the clients from 9 to 11 Mondays and Fridays. Municipal administration, whose purpose was to be at service to the citizens, received salary from tax payers and still worked with citizens only on Mondays and Fridays, then I asked a Head of a Department if they worked every Friday and he confirmed. Then I told them to take off those notices.” The second day, citizens were informed that they could come every working day, any time during the work hours and not only on Mondays and Fridays from 9 to 11 on.

A priority was to create professional staff with an idea that municipality was there for people. Once he became the Mayor he had 283 officers on work, but according to the systematization of job posts that number was 308. He started with analyses of all occupied posts as opposed to the needs and established standards and frameworks in accordance with his goals.

In order to accomplish his plans he needed additional young people with university degrees instead of middle age public servants with secondary school degree, who were in majority in the municipal administration. Guided by those principles he made systematization of job posts and reduced the number from 208 to 207 people. He also redefined education requirements for certain posts in order to employ young university educated people. This is how he improved the quality of his staff.

However, this change caused enormous problems to him. One has to take into consideration that he was a Serb living in the area predominantly (85-90%) inhabited by Bosniacs and he made redundant 59 workers, mainly Bosniacs. That was a brave step. Talking about that time he says:” I personally handed over every notice of dismissal. I did not want to send letters by mail since it was a hard situation

for all of us and I thought I was obliged to explain them why they were made redundant.” He endured great pressure; however he did not retreat, because he believed that it was the right way to go and that people would soon see the change, which would make them pleased. He accomplished this change by employing 35 young and university educated people. They were already volunteering in the municipality and knew how demanding the job was. This is how he increased the percentage of university educated personnel from 25% to 50%.

His political party thought of his radical moves as damaging. He ran afoul of several fellow members in the party management because he did not want to fulfill their demands which were not in accordance with rules and guidelines. Several members of the party presidency started an initiative for his dismissal. The Party Presidency voted and the result was even. Zlatko Lagumdžija, the party President, decided against his dismissal.

Happy people work well

And that was only a beginning of changes Ljubiša Marković began to introduce. In order to run successfully municipal administration he thought it was necessary to find a model for systematic, efficient and transparent management. He found it in the quality management system ISO 9000 with clear terms of references. Its introduction implied municipal management with standardized processes and procedures, with defined inputs, outputs and measurable objectives. This brought several important benefits. First of all, it ensured efficient management and measurable results, created a mechanism for continuous improvement, which satisfied clients and people working in the central reception hall. In order to accomplish this, lots of work and funds have been invested. Sometimes it was exhausting and tiring but they provided a program of psychological support to people working in the central hall as well as communication skills training and other types of support required by the standards.

Ljubiša had meetings with his team every year and each member of the team had a separate scheduled meeting. That was their chance to talk about problems and issues they face and to improve mutual trust. The other important thing is that he worked on the raising of the level of living standards of his staff.

When he became a Mayor of the municipality Center, people with university degree had the same salary coefficient as drivers and he thought it was outrageous. At the same time with reduction of the number of employees, the salaries were increased to all employees. In addition to that they developed a list of all people who did not settle their housing problems and in cooperation with banks they resolved those issues. As Ljubiša says “My philosophy was to have content people who were willing to work.”

Turning point was in 2002, when people finally accepted changes and the organization started to function. The municipal administration went through transformation from the situation where employees waited to be ordered to do something, when activities were unnecessarily postponed, when citizens were addressed as enemies to the completely different atmosphere and different attitude. Employees became proud that they their institution was considered one the best municipal administration in BiH, working properly and timely their job and welcoming members of the local community as good friends. They accepted this process as their own and started to develop it. “I was very pleased because I saw they wanted to make good impression on the citizens and that citizens were happy,” says Ljubiša. It was particularly important that he created such atmosphere without pressure from the Mayor telling them what to do, because they already knew what to do.

„It was in 2002, when I realized that we were one team and that there were no more problems: everybody understood everything and supported each other. We tried to get to know each other better after working hours and we started to organize New Year’s parties and reception for councilors, guests as well as parties for employees. This was financed from the budget and that was the only budget expenditures I signed because I thought it was important. First year there were 50 people, and the next year everybody came,” says Ljubiša.

Face to face

The next important thing was that he noticed that there was lot of people who did not have access to municipal administration, services, responsible persons, etc. Since the Center Municipality had enormous number of 10,500 of unresolved case he started to receive those people and he dedicated one day in the week for those meetings. That idea and many others he implemented were copied by other municipalities. A possibility to talk to the Mayor was welcomed by people.

However, when they got a list of almost 2,000 people registered for meeting. Since he could not receive more than 20 citizens per week, some had to wait for 6 months to meet the Mayor.

Ljubiša saw that the situation will not be that easy and he introduced another method. He informed the public that he would be in his office every day from five to eight in the morning, every working day and all those who have some issues to be resolved can come. People started to arrive from half past four and at five o'clock there would be a big queue in front of his office. Some complained on early hours that he scheduled for these meetings, but he replied that those who were not ready to get up so early obviously did not have big problems. He had been getting up so early every morning for two years. He explained the reasons behind this schedule:” It was an opportunity for me to get reports about our services directly. I was compared information from citizens with our reports and tried to find out discrepancies between them. I had insight in the real problems and I could check the objective side of the municipal activity reports as well as I could if the citizens were unprejudiced.“

In order to resolve 10,500 issues he introduced overtime work. They worked every day until 6 p.m. and every Saturday. His political opponents brought criminal charges against him since it was against the law and overtime was not paid. However, when he made this decision he was guided by the fact that since 1996 municipal officers had worked for 40 hours per week instead of 42 as prescribed by law. He calculated that they caused damage to the state in the amount close to KM 700000, so they had to reimburse it or work overtime. This is how he got acquitted.

In order to develop partnership and communication with entrepreneurs, municipality opened a business center. This is how they obtained information on their economic priorities, on their opinion about municipal decisions and about the solutions, which would help meet their needs. They had meetings with non-governmental organizations once a year. They had good cooperation and it was Ljubiša's idea to delegate as many activities as possible to NGO sector. He gives one example:” I did not want municipality to decide on scholarships. Therefore, we allocated KM 20,000 to one NGO active in this field – “there are your criteria, use the criteria and make a list of candidates, prove that you have followed the list and we shall allocate funds”. This is how we have delegated a number of responsibilities and services to NGO sector and that was an important part of our future communication”.

His political opponents used every opportunity to spread misleading information about his Serb origin, or where he was in the war, etc. This required lot of engagement and Ljubiša realized it was best to confront that through direct contacts with citizens. He thought he needed to offer opportunity to people to talk to him, to know him personally instead of listening to the rumors and allegations.

He had three to four group meetings with citizens per month. He talked to them and explained the situation and tried to learn about problems from their perspective, the real problems of the community. He also did something, not very common amongst BiH Mayors: he used to go to people's homes directly to talk to them and to try to find a solution to a particular problem together with them. Enormous energy and effort which he invested in this resulted in the strong mutual trust he built with local community. That also significantly strengthened his position and no political game from any side could endanger him any longer.

“One needs to talk about things one does”

The two most important results of his work, according to Ljubiša, are interpersonal relations created within the municipal administration- mutual feeling of apurtenance to one organization and partnership and friendly relationship with local community. The way people perceive municipal administration has also changed. Lot of work, efforts and energy were invested in accomplishing these results.

Sarajevo Center is the first municipality in BiH that offered opportunities to individuals, NGOs, and entire community to participate in decision-making process. Citizens felt that they were a part of the whole process instead of feeling as insignificant individuals never asked about their opinion. Ljubiša thought that was very important.

“I was grateful to them, for you cannot know what is going on unless you open yourself and give people a chance to come and tell you about the problem. That openness helps you to learn about problems and try to respond to the requests and to meet citizens' needs, in fact to help them in resolving problems with our support.”

Those two results – good relations within municipal administration and good relations with local community, were most significant, according to him. All those material things that have been done are not so important to him, but they are

considerable: 1,500.000 m² of area cleaned from mines, all gravel roads were covered with asphalt, 190 were streets reconstructed, street lights in every street, big funds invested in infrastructure, etc.

Good image of the Municipality Center was not a mere product of public relations campaign. “We did not have PR program. Our rule was – work well and talk about it,” says Ljubiša. Municipality had IT service and IT support team. It was one of the first municipalities to have website with updated information for citizens and that was a revolutionary achievement at that time. They initiated a monthly issue of municipal bulletin and some other conventional issues but they did not pay serious attention to the promotion of their work results. The rule was: only if you accomplished something you were allowed to talk about it. Results speak for themselves.

During that time, representatives from 120 other BiH municipalities visited Municipality Center. They called what they saw a miracle, because everything was completely new and different from other places in BiH. These visits were instigated by OSCE so that people from other municipalities could see how good their municipal administration was. “It was important for us to prove our leadership through the fact that many other municipalities turned to us, because it was a particularly good if we were isolated and boasted about our best achievements. You may boast about being the first and help others to follow you. We stick to that theory.”

Why don't you leave them alone?

At first, one could say that Ljubiša's management was strict and authoritative and that people were afraid of him. However, if we closely observe decision-making process we can be persuaded otherwise. His system was to encourage good ideas and proposals. He gave 10-20% salary raise for a good proposal regarding positive changes. If the proposal is not applicable one would get 10%, and if it is good and applicable the raise would be 20%.

On the other hand, he established a practice that people were trying to prove their point. “I would, for example, say that we have problem relative to a specific department and challenge them to propose solutions. I would tell them to prepare their suggestions for the meeting. At the meeting, I would ask questions; ask about data, possible impact on the administration, etc. If a staff member or a Head of Department is not ready he needs to ponder on it once again and then

provide me with answers. Once he/she answers the questions we start to find a solution to the problem. The hardest part is to answer my questions.” Because of this approach everybody felt important and responsible to offer good quality solutions instead of empty talks and promises, because the Mayor will anyway make a decision on his own.

All employees knew that they could come to Ljubiša Marković whenever they had problems. Ljubiša would try to help them and back them up. The following example confirms that:

“I have been pursued at court for five years for having issued construction permits which were in compliance with law and they also charged three members of my staff. I asked:” Why did you charge them, they only prepared the decision, which I signed well aware of its content, so I am to be blamed if there is a problem. This is how his associates felt his strengthened and safe to work freely, because I stand behind their work.”

We implemented our plans based on our own strength

Ljubiša Marković and municipality Sarajevo Center have developed strong position towards all levels of authorities. Everything they accomplished was not done with support of those institutions but in spite of their actions. Ljubiša states an interesting example:” I have told the representatives of many different state bodies in charge of labor and social welfare that when people want to register small shops they need to go to the Center of Social Welfare to get certificates showing that they are in capacity for work for which they charge them KM 10 per certificate. On the other hand, we can finish this job by phone or the Center can fax us a list of people without capacity for work.” Six months later, they still did not do anything about that particular issue. Then I asked them to send me an updated list and I told to my staff: “I order you not to send people from the list to the Center for Social Work. Therefore, higher instances of authorities made our work difficult in many ways.”

When we talk about donors and donations, Municipality Center used funds intended for demining. We were the first to turn to the International Demining Fund, whose work was based on the principle one KM to KM that is, to each invested KM they will give one KM. When they realized that they figured out they could demine the entire municipal area with KM 1 million. When KM 1 million

is divided to four years that is KM 250,000 per year, which was acceptable with respect to the budget. Those were the most significant donor funds used in our municipality.

“It is important to say that almost all embassies are situated in the Center. I have never invited them around, since I did not think my job was to socialize with ambassadors and pondering on important political issues. We did not impose ourselves to anyone nor did we ask for anything. We accomplished everything based on our own plans.”

“I am a sportsman”

Before he has become famous as a Mayor Ljubiša Marković, was famous as a successful sportsman, basketball player, and then a fisherman. “My sports life has made an impact on me. I am sportsman and when I do something I try to be the best. When I accept that there are better sportsmen than me, I appreciate the effort they invest to be better, because I know what a huge effort I had to make. So, I always think things can be done better.” He is lawyer by profession and he thinks that his education was very important to him. “At the end of the day, you have 200 municipal officers waiting for me to give them my opinion. The Mayor must have a capacity to provide with his opinion on any kind of decision such as construction permit, to know how to encourage his people and support them so that a big investment is not delayed by reason of ignorance and lack of knowledge.” Besides his sports spirit and education, Ljubiša thinks it is important what he brings from his family – the influence of his mother on his attitude towards people, understanding for problems of other people and modesty. This is an illustration of his work: “In four and half years I have not spend a dime from the budget on lunches and dinners. The municipality had never paid for lunch or dinner, because I thought it was unnecessary. Municipality is not a company trying to entertain a client. We are a municipality that pays KM 1,000 to humanitarian purposes for every holiday instead of New Year’s cards.”

Good or bad bate?

It is also interesting why he did not run for the elections second time. First of all, he thought that four years were enough to show what one could do and he knew and he showed quite enough.

“I noticed with my friends, who are very good people, that the second mandate is a critical. People, who used to be normal, can hardly be recognized after the second mandate. Usually, they start thinking that they are the only ones to remain on that position until the end of their lives. I was terrified that the same would happen to me.”

The third reason was that this job was a great burden to his family. “I often think why I had to fire all those people and to make some kind of revolutionary moves when the most people only tried to go through the mandate as peacefully as possible and without traumas.”

Ljubiša thinks that bad times are coming and there are going to be less and less good leaders.

“Since I am a fisherman, I will use that fishermen’s language to explain what I think. If one throws a good bate, one will catch a good fish; without a good bate, there is no good fish. Why would a competent man decide to accept the job where he would be offended, pronounced a criminal, etc? I think that with labor market developing and offering more possibilities it will be difficult to find competent people who will work in the municipal administrations in the manner we used to work and this does not refer to Mayors only but to all employees.”

According to Ljubiša, this issue will be resolved within political parties and it will not be relevant to one’s capacities. More and more people will see this post as a comfortable way to travel the world and accomplish personal interests. I think bad times are coming and that the time when I worked as a Mayor, although a pioneering and hard, was still easier than now.”

Years of work in the social sector marked and defined her life. She met so many disappointed and needy people. She gained difficult but valuable life experience. She realized that many people needed only a little to live better and she persuaded herself that she could do a lot to contribute to the general wellbeing with her personal work and dedication.

Nedjeljka Klaric, Mayor of Šibenik

Wisdom and Diplomacy

Written by: Nives KOPAJTICH-SKRLEC

Šibenik as many other cities on the Adriatic Coast went through difficult and demanding phase of economic reconstruction (TLM, TEF), abandoning and terminating technologically unaccepted industries. Simultaneously, the number of the unemployed and socially endangered people grew. They were left without basic existence overnight. It took some time, funds and efforts to stop negative trends and to change the economic approach. However, it was important for Šibenik that it managed to redirect economy and start better promotion and exploitation of its natural advantages as well as to change the public perception.

Along with the economic indicators, Šibenik has changed its atmosphere and nowadays it is an optimistic city with many just initiated and finished projects. Along with the economy, their basic problems were public utilities infrastructure, which was outdated and insufficiently built. All those projects required skillfulness and significant funds.

Today, optimism replaced despondency and results are evident even to opponents. Citizens have felt that things started to get better and move forward.

Firmness and reconcilableness

Women in this area are rarely engaged in politics. Even more rarely, they occupy political posts. Only 4.8% of women were elected for county parliaments at elections in 1993, and at the last elections in 2005, there were 14.5% female local political representatives. As for the city councils, 15.7% of women won their seats, whilst their presence in the municipal councils is significantly lower and it amounts to 8.4%. Their political activities are not perceived seriously. Very often they are directed towards NGO sector, civil society and their political engagement and actions are not viewed as a rule but exception. What they accomplish, their successes are more subjected to disapproval and it is very often these are attributed to the happy circumstances not to their knowledge and enthusiasm.

She would not be able to do this without support of her family. Unfortunately, there is not too much time for family and that is usually harder for women than their male colleagues. In some way, she thinks of the town as her family and her home. She believes that one needs to take care of the town with lots of skill, love and responsibility. With her visions, personal dedication and compromising she makes, results are inevitable.

Major objectives and priorities of every town in Croatia, Šibenik included, is to create prerequisites for local community development. It is hard to find a leader in the territory of the former state, who would not agree with this initial idea. It is a common task and priority to create conditions for better life. However, the new beginning is not easy in Šibenik or anywhere else.

Šibenik public utilities infrastructure was a significant obstacle to economic development and there were a big number of socially endangered people who needed to be taken care of. Šibenik needed to change its image of the city-social case, where bad things were happening and where there was no future.

Economy, social welfare system and public utilities system and restructuring of former big industries were the priorities. During the war, Šibenik became home to thousands of people, who fled from different parts of the country and not only from the Šibenik hinterland but from Knin and Drnis area, too. From holiday resorts for rest and fun hotels were transformed into home for refugees. Therefore, it is hard to say what the priority in the beginning of her mandate was.

The public remembers her as being able to calm down tensions with lots of wisdom and diplomacy and she managed to place the opponents around the same table. Not many of her male colleagues would be able to do that. Firmness and reconcilableness could go hand in hand.“

What used to be the city—a social case—is moving forward now and stands out according to many indicators, employment increase, salary growth, quality and diversity of services offered by the city administration and citizens' participation in the activities of local administration? It has a leading position in relation to the communication with citizens, who were pleasantly surprised with the efficiency of the city services. This is rather a novelty for citizens of Šibenik and wider.

Very often it is considered that only those with high aspirations can succeed but it seems that the advantage of Šibenik was actually her sense of reality. There were neither unrealistic suggestions nor impossible demands. At the same time, she did not wait for help from the state nor did the city depend on social benefits. Additional developments were made based on the consensus of all political parties who agreed that city problems were to be solved immediately and the city and its prosperity should be priority. That consensus was actually valuable and it provided conditions not only for the daily functioning of the Mayor but the implementation of projects, too.

She also faced an ancient model of work of the city administration, a number of municipal officers avoided work, responsibilities and did not care that they were paid by tax payers. However, that was not only a situation specific only for Šibenik.

During the transition, war and unemployment, administrative work in the municipality was attractive, since it brought regular, monthly salaries and was a protection from the market uncertainty. In the city where big companies were falling apart and which suddenly generated a big number of the unemployed, the long-term contract was a big advantage. At that time, it was not recommendable to make dismiss employees, who became surplus under the new systematization of job posts. Therefore, she did not make radical moves.

New jobs – new organization

Her predecessors were also not in favor of pompous behavior. Mayor Klaric also came into the system which had functioned for years, system that needed

development, better functionality and more personal responsibility. The structure of the City Administration is not perfect, development and changes are welcome and these are about to start soon by reason of decentralization process which is slowly taking over. Soon, the city of Šibenik will start issuing construction permits and other relevant documentation. It is an important job and it will require engagement of major part of the city administration staff, reorganization of management departments and city services. As a member of the Government Decentralization Board, the Mayor actively participated in this process and strives for decentralization of documents' issuing process so that the procedures of management planning and issuing of construction permits could become one process, which will enable better protection of historical heritage and old down town.

City administration departments and services today employ 58 employees. The city administration provides the following services: City Secretariat, Mayor's Office and Department for Social Affairs, Department for Physical Planning and Environment Protection, Finance Department, Department for Economic Management of City Property. Out of 58 employees one third has university education. The city finances and pays salaries to almost 250 employees in the institutions founded by the city or owned by the city.

New activities will require new organization, new and different jobs and constant education and professional development. Public servants are regularly educated and professional development was not exception but a systematic practice. Educational needs are defined, the situation was screened and analyzed and the city will finance training of its public servants and it constantly does so. It is a lucky circumstance that the Mayor started to work with employees who were professionals and people with communication skills. Good quality team of professionals was a great advantage and help. She emphasizes that very often. However, it is not rare that opinions are sometimes opposed. Disputes and discussions are often welcome as well as exchange of divergent opinions. It is a rare union of different opinions and arguments and it is a force that drives forward. The city administration consists of professionals who are free to state their opinion without hesitation as well as to object to the Mayor's proposals. The Mayor appreciates their opinion and when they are convincing, she accepts them gladly.

Revival of economy and opening of other opportunities for employment means job vacancies in the city administration under the new systematization. Mayor is happy with her team and extremely appreciates their optimism and readiness to face problems, challenges and projects. Even though the pleasure after well-done

job is very much appreciated, she is aware she should develop and introduce financial incentive or rewarding procedure; whereas one should avoid that it is perceived in a wrong way. She and her colleagues would not like for this financial incentive to get negative connotations.

Very often she hears critics

Citizens are the first and the most important clients and the administration exists for their benefit. After all, everything is done to the advantage of citizens and authorities do not exist for their own sake. Upon any important issue, city administration organizes public hearings where everyone is expected to express opinion and to look for answers from the representatives of the city administration. During the meetings and gatherings organized for citizens, the Mayor points out the necessity and importance of partnership with and participation of citizens. She thinks that they can recognize that this is not a pure formality. City administration and the Mayor are available and open to citizens. She personally meets citizens and talks to them, she invites them to initiate things and make proposals, and she goes to the meetings and events they organize. Very often she hears critics but she thinks it is valuable to have different opinions.

The city is divided into several city quarters and Local Community Boards which have defined responsibilities and the competency to initiate and suggest things, to pass acts and resolve problems. The role of that model of municipal organization is important because the Boards represent the level at which citizens' interest in various parts of the city are balanced.

Sometimes she hears from her other Mayors that it is better to settle some issues without attention and participation of citizens. She personally does not share this opinion and she thinks they should participate and decide in all matters concerned. Of course, there is a time and procedure for that. There will always be people, who do not show any interest during the public discussions, nor they make any objections or suggestions for that matter, but that will not stop them to be critical soon after the decision is passed.

Citizens and media think of her as an open person, ready for a dialogue. Mayor's experience in communication with media is generally positive. She does not expect that trust and openness will be abused and, indeed, it rarely happens. Media have the right to access to all information and provision of information to media is also a legal obligation for local authorities. The city office has initiative,

reports on the events, sends press releases, invites citizens, publish announcements, etc. The city organizes many events and the City Office takes care that the event is covered by media. Press conference is an opportunity for journalists to receive information and transmit them to the citizens for the benefit of the city administration and citizens. Press conferences, radio shows are regular. Web page contains many interesting news and information.

City promotion is the process

She emphasizes building of the primary school premises - Meterize, as one of the most important projects. This project was initiated by the City Administration. Besides its primary educational function, the school will be a youth center with the multipurpose area of 3,300 m² suitable for many activities i.e. theatre, cinema and sports competitions.

Reconstruction of the industrial road with a tunnel and shopping floor at the railway station in Šibenik is in progress. The primary task is to ensure good traffic connection, that is, to connect railway station, bus station and ferry boat terminal. Without traffic connections one simply does not exist, the Mayor is positive. She emphasizes that construction of the highway changed the perception on the distance between Šibenik and Zagreb.

Along with the aforementioned, it is important to mention development of the economic zone Podi, since it opened a possibility for various activities and new jobs. The Podi project waited for forty years for its realization and once initiated becomes important development project of the city area of Šibenik. The idea to replace industrial manufacturing facilities from the Pod was suggested in 1974. The idea was to move *Electrode and Ferroalloy Factory* from down town. This administration came to the same idea and initiated dislocation, instigated the change of the law, lobbied other counties and towns in Dalmatia to support them and finally Šibenik became the owner of the state-owned land with full documentation and under financially good conditions. In the long term, this means to keep the population from the rural areas around Šibenik, which is an important element and precondition for development given the negative migration trend of the population in the near past. In order to explore the potential and level of interest of entrepreneurs in the investments in this area, the City Administration has advertised a public bid for the submission of a letter of intent for the purchase of construction land owned by the City of Šibenik and in the area of economic

zone Podi-Šibenik. There were many interested clients, since the infrastructure was good and entrepreneurs would get significant exemptions and incentives. They will be exempted from paying public utility contributions and would have discount on the utility fees. This is the first economic zone in Croatia, co-financed by the European Union funds. Podi zone opens numerous opportunities to entrepreneurs and investors.

The same refers to PIN – entrepreneurs’ incubator as a support to young entrepreneurs and those companies offering new kind of services, co-financed by the European Union. It has been very successful functioning for years.

It is not an easy task to say which project was the largest benefit for the town. For businessmen, it was a business zone; to other citizens the school was the most important project, or preservation of historical heritage near Zlarin Island. It is hard to select one project as the most useful. They also developed an action plan to promote Šibenik in the best way. They will not give up this idea; however, the city affirmation is the process and not only a short-term task possible to perform during only one mandate.

Mutual appreciation is an imperative

The City Administration was a partner to the USAID in the implementation of the project “City Property Management”. The cooperation was of mutual benefit and pleasure. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with an aim to improve city property management and introduce e-Government system in the Šibenik City, and to improve communication with citizens. *Memorandum of Understanding* represented a basis for the cooperation between Šibenik and the USAID on the *Local Self-governance Reform* project which was related to the provision of technical support to the local self-governance units in Croatia. The purpose of the support was to develop management capacity of towns and municipalities aiming to improve service provision and adjustment to new challenges that Croatia was facing in the process of decentralization and accession to the European Union.

Methodology for property management developed within the project *Local Self-governance Reform* began with a composition of a comprehensive list of property and evaluation of each property in order to determine its relevance for the public purpose, whether it is utilized and up to what extent, or if it is more appropriate

for sale. This methodology helped local self-governance in Šibenik to develop property evaluation mechanisms, to make analyses of direct and indirect subsidies and to introduce special financial reports regarding property. The expected results included increase of city budget and a detailed list of property owned by the city.

Partnership approach and argumentative discussion and presentation of ideas are the way to have your proposals accepted. Ideas should be presented to associates, the public and political opponents.

If professional experts or political opponents have counter arguments, indicators or confidential and reliable data, she will withdraw. Mutual appreciation is an imperative, and city on the Adriatic Coast is most important to everyone. To work and think in this way is a matter of developed political culture, which is often missing in these turbulent areas.

Šibenik cooperates with all institutions active in the city: scientific institutions, universities, faculties, nongovernmental organizations, religious communities, various groups and individuals. Šibenik has had many friends for years both in Croatia and abroad. However, there are no formally signed agreements on cooperation. Does one need to formalize friendship and put it on the paper, the Mayor wonders.

They cooperate with the German city Herford, Voiron from France and Italian cities San Benedetto del Tronto and Civitavecchia. Civitavecchia has an office in Šibenik. They promote each other, exchange ideas, share problems, etc. Each meeting is organized in a different city.

Her political party has a majority in the City Council, but there is cooperation with all parties, both left and right. The City Council is very heterogeneous but it has never represented an obstacle to dialogue, exchange of opinions and open relations. The Chair of the Council is a young intellectual whose presiding is well tolerated and with full appreciation of all participants. The Council is a forum and a body, which decides on the relations with long-term consequences for all citizens and it functions without hindrance and in a successful continuation.

In 2005, Mayor Klaric has been elected Vice President of the Republic of Croatia City Association and she participates in all its activities. The Association has done a lot to promote local self-governance to citizens, NGOs and state bodies. The

Association is slowly becoming a bridge connecting cities, helping in exchanging experiences and good practice. Based on the experience of the developed European countries, Croatia is strengthening its awareness that partial and uncoordinated settling of problems in local communities will not bring long-term benefits.

The Mayor has good cooperation with county administration structures and central state authorities in Zagreb. Every opportunity in Zagreb or elsewhere is used for the benefit of the city. Unfortunately, lobbying still has negative connotations. The Mayor thinks and recommends that lobbying should be used for the benefit of the city and its citizens, however, she warns that in exercising it one should be realistic and not ask for the impossible.

Is such an effort worthwhile?

The Mayor answers without hesitation, so common to politicians, that it is worthwhile. She believes that the Croatian Democratic Party, which she belongs to, will nominate her again to lead the city in the next four years after the regular local elections in May 2009. She believes that her political opponents, who she appreciates very much, will be happy to have an opportunity to work and cooperate with her during the next four years.

There is enough work for the next mandate as well as numerous challenges. European Union Accession process will require lots of skills in project development and fund raising. Process of decentralization of competencies and duties to the city level is a great challenge. Šibenik is a big city and it will receive more competencies and tasks, which should be organized properly to serve the citizens in the best possible way.

The example of a good practice in the city is organization of events in the city. The Šibenik Festival is famous worldwide and since recently the city has Mediaeval Fair. These events are important for the branding of the city, creating positive climate and perception of Šibenik as a city where work, festivities and tradition are valued above all. It is not unusual that the Mayor dresses in the medieval costume of duchess and walks around the city and the main square.

The capacities of local self-governance are numerous. The Law on Building and Physical Planning has been adopted recently and the cities will plan physical

development and manage it directly. Traffic roads and marine management are equally important. There are many other activities that should be transferred to those local communities with sufficient budgets and human resources. This is a process that requires careful consideration.

Šibenik could overtake many activities now and its performance would be more efficient compared to efficiency of the state administration. The city has possibility and competency to hire good quality people and to ensure professional performance.

Decentralization is the systematic and partly “political process”, because even today citizens blame city administration for many issues. They blame the city for bad roads not knowing that it is under the county competency not municipal. The City is viewed as guilty for many other issues that are not under its competency according to other the law in power.

She personally thinks that solutions offered by different laws are unsustainable and it is necessary to change law provisions to allow the city to manage its coast, which is undoubtedly the most valuable part of the region. Generally, the more competencies the city gets, the more capacity it will have to meet the needs of citizens in a faster and more appropriate manner.

How to develop local leadership?

It is counterproductive to offer recommendations. In the next elections, Mayors will be elected directly which represents a novelty in the Croatian legislation, hence newly elected Mayors will have greater autonomy and independence as opposed to those who had to balance political powers within representation body, since their position depends on them. Politics prevails in all life segments.

Some time ago, someone made a syntagm – “homogeneity of contradictions”, and that is actually applicable to every job I do, says Mayor Klaric. Although, it is difficult to give advice, she is sure that one needs to be determined but ready to compromise.

Efficiency and good personal organization together with good organization of staff or the city she leads is essential factor of success. It is good to avoid formalities as much as possible, since administrative procedures and details can easily

take over. However, changes should not be avoided, but at the same time one should not rush into it without previous consideration, plan or experts' opinion. This is not calculation or avoiding risks but experience and wisdom.

I would recommend to any future Mayor to choose his team of people. First of all one should need to check whether anything can be done from the "available material". City administration is full of clever and creative people, they only need to be recognized and offered a chance, motivated and given a good example.

One should avoid dismissals of employees, but rather find the way to neutralize and pacify those unsuitable without endangering their existence. Employing people based on private connections should be avoided at all costs. Good administration is available to citizens, cooperates with them, listens to what they have to say and tries to resolve their issues. This is what it was attempted and succeeded in Šibenik.

Every Mayor needs to make a maximum effort, 24 hours minimum. Praises, gratitude and glory should be expected at minimum level otherwise you are disappointed. She thinks she has had success in encouraging and motivating people, Šibenik has become a recognizable "brand" in Dalmatia and Adriatic Sea. She is recognized by the whole Šibenik and she cannot have a quiet cup of coffee with her husband at the town quay. She is also familiar face in other parts of Croatia. She is doing her best.

She would not have succeeded, if she had not listened to, had not have energy and will to be an optimist. She believes that her communication skills helped her best. She listens to the people she talks to. She believes that despite their knowledge from books educated people should know how to listen to other people, their environment and family. To live in the community means to be its active member and to give your maximum for its progress.

Nevertheless, she hopes that citizens of Šibenik will remember her not only by projects implemented during her mandate but by honesty and dedication to them and the city.

I wanted Tuzla to become recognized in the whole region; I wanted to show what Tuzla has and other towns do not have; to emphasize the natural and cultural heritage of Tuzla to the maximum and to preserve tolerance as a major development factor.” The image of democratic and open Tuzla, Mr. Imamović turned into development strategy with a slogan “T=3T.” The first T represents tolerance, condition for survival and duration, the second signifies the citizens’ talents and the third T means technology. At the end, T=3T symbolizes Tuzla.

Jasmin Imamović, Mayor of Tuzla

“Everything is possible when you wish hard enough”

Written by: Branka KUŠLJUGIĆ

Tuzla is the city narrowed between the mountains. It does not have big rivers or good road communication. Tuzla has an airport which does not work and a railway, which has been transporting only cargo since the end of the war. There are no more big industrial facilities such as *Holding SodaSo* . They vanished in the transition process leaving people without job and perspective and the town without significant income and the instigator of development. This is the town that needs stable and firm ground, since it has been split in two parts due to the exploitation salt.

But Tuzla has Jasmin Imamović who introduces changes, who has transformed the city of “white and black miners”, famous of its coal mine Kreka, salt factory and football club *Sloboda*, into the center of culture, tourism and new intellectual energy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Jasmin Imamović was led by one idea transformed into a slogan – Tuzla, the city of open doors - indicating the candidness of this environment and readiness to accept new ideas if they are heading towards progress.

I only wanted to show what Tuzla has and other cities do not have

Thanks to the changes and innovations introduced by Jasmin Imamović during the seven years of its mandate, Tuzla has different and versatile economy and new future. Tuzla can serve as an example to other Bosnian towns looking for solutions for complicated issues of transition, development and growth. The affirmation and the Beacon Status award, that Tuzla received for local economic development in 2006, confirms that the concept advocated and managed by Mr. Imamović is the right one.

Mr. Imamović became the Mayor of Tuzla when the city had already began the process of transformation of its identity initiated by his predecessor Selim Beslagic and when the municipality was burdened with economic and fiscal problems.

As he says, this was the main motivation for his candidacy: “I knew Tuzla had good, educated and tolerant people. I knew it had great natural and cultural heritage. People, natural and cultural heritage are the basic factors for development. Therefore, I knew that if I carefully planned the exploitation of these resources I could renew one of the biggest cities in BiH. I wanted that very much, because I loved my fellow citizens and they deserved to be awarded for their goodness as well as they deserved to live in Tuzla, which would improve its situation and got better with every year.”

He describes the milestones he defined in the following manner: “I wanted to accomplish goals that were unattainable at that time. To stop one hundred-year long sinking of Tuzla, to terminate fifty-year long water restriction; do develop new technologies, creative industry and tourism; to build public facilities and to prove to the citizens that life is better and more comfortable now than before. I wanted to contribute to the unseen expansion of construction business, to open new jobs and new perspectives. I wanted Tuzla to be recognizable in the whole region; I wanted to show people what Tuzla has to offer; to emphasize to the maximum its natural and cultural heritage and to preserve the tolerance as the basic development factor.”

He used the natural accumulation of salted water to turn it into the biggest artificial saltwater lake in the Europe, Pannonia Lake, and during the summer the city resembles of any seaside town. The lake became important tourist site, daily visited for recreation or medical treatment by almost 5,000 visitors both from BiH and abroad. The lake was transformed from the saltwater plash. The water

coming out from the ground was not only the city's scarecrow but it represented a big problem for the utility company especially during the autumn and winter periods. The water was tamed by building a lake shell of polyurethane material. They installed pumps, placed the gravel around the lake to make a beach and installed the first umbrellas and benches. As the time passed, the area around the lake was surrounded by walking trails, shops and catering facilities. Last year, the city opened the Archeological Park, a replica of the ancient settlement with houses and yards, the unique ones in the Balkans. Green areas and parks are additional enchantment to this complex, which are not only the city's décor but meeting place of the young and those who are not so young any more. Memorial complex *Saltwater Bath*, with sports courts and with the *House of the Flame of Peace*, is a place for dialogue and cultural development of the youth and catering facilities of the Bosnian traditional type.

"Tourism is not a utopia anymore," says Mayor Imamović. "Tuzla could be everything but a city attracting tourists. Tourism does not go with the grey city full of smog. But everything is possible, if you wish hard enough. Slowly, ideas that used to be a utopia became reality. School buses taking children to holidays used to stop in Tuzla only at the traffic lights; however more and more novelties are being introduced making Tuzla a final destination."

With Pannonia Lake, the city started to get new identity, which, with the time, was enriched with new ideas of Mayor Imamović. He reconstructed historical center of the city with the central Salt Square, historical museum, fountain and well from Ottoman period. The old parking area became the area with old craftsmen shops, creative industry and catering.

Energy and creativity

Thanks to Mayor Imamović the best novel writers from former Yugoslavia come to the annual award event dedicated to the great writer Mesa Selimovic. The name of the event is *Cum grano salis* and the annual award *Mesa Selimovic* is the most important novel award in the South East Europe. Also, during Mr. Imamović's mandate Tuzla got the following events: Southeast Europe Amateur Theatre Festival, Dancing Marathon, International Theatre Festival, Miniature Biennale, and Traditional International Art Events. This all makes Tuzla a leading cultural city in BiH.¹

¹ During Mr. Imamović's mandate, annual budget allocations for culture increased from 0.9% to 3%. "New" old Museum of Eastern Bosnia finally got its building after 57 years.

Mr. Imamović supports projects with relation to the energy networking and creativity. Incubator of creative industry is a combination of cultural creativity, art expression and technological innovations and it is implemented in cooperation with the British Council. Design, media, fashion, music, scene and visual art became commercial activities injecting the city with life energy, strengthening the cultural scene and creating a base for new jobs.

The important focus of his work is promotion of modern industries with emphasis on information technology. BIT Center as the incubator of business innovations and new technologies helps young and perspective professionals to establish and develop their independent business in ICT. The project is developed in partnership with the municipality, Government of the Kingdom of Norway, Norwegian companies *Sintef* and *Siva* and University of Tuzla. The municipality gave a building and Norwegian partners equipped it with modern interior, communication and IT equipment. There are 18 companies in the incubator, branch offices of different companies, agencies from BiH, USA and Europe. Close to 80 people work now in the incubator, mainly engineers educated at the Tuzla University. Many of them are working on projects and products for the South-East European market, Norway, Great Britain and USA. The company *Inspire*, created by joint venture, Bosnian and USA capital, produced sophisticated bio-medical equipment for neurosurgical diagnostics. The company reached the necessary degree of business maturity and left BIT center, which was the idea behind the concept of incubator. There is to open one more incubator with the same purpose.

Kristija Smiljanića, a graduate from Tuzla University is very famous in the IT world. Young, ambitious, clever and capable, Smiljanić is a director of company *Lefor*, which has been located in the BIT since 2006. Although young, this company has many significant software projects i.e. the *Archive of Jokes*, blog-portal, *ON-line dictionary*, and many other solutions for internet trade. After one year of work, web portal www.knjiga.ba became the most visited internet bookstore in BiH.“

Obtaining ownership over the land and facilities that used former Yugoslav Army and BiH Army the city administration has moved in one of these buildings², together with Academy of Arts and laboratory of the Clinical Center. It is possible that it soon gets one of the biggest army barracks of the YNA, which would then be transformed into university campus and Technology Park.

2 For the first time after 69 years, the entire municipal administration settled under the same roof.

On the former mine land, which is 160,000 m² of land and 10,000 m² of indoor space, the municipality instigated incubator center for development of small and medium scale businesses, which currently accommodates 22 companies and 92 workers. Mr. Imamović opened the door to the mega trade centers, in which domestic and foreign investors invested over KM 100.000.000 and employed over 1.000 workers.

All those innovations, aggressive fiscal politics and Mr. Imanovic's skills in the management of land and real estate aimed at city development had an impact on financial position of the municipality. In the year he became the Mayor, budget for 2007 increased for 86% in comparison to 2001. Citizens felt that the quality of life significantly improved.

During Mr. Imamović's mandate Tuzla got five sports playgrounds, small ice ring, two new schools, water factory, which solved thirty-year long problems with drinking water. New roads are built and old are reconstructed. Three thousands of housing units got heating, and 402,216 m² of housing and business units were built. Finally, a 120-year long exploitation of the salt mine underneath the city was stopped, thus the cause of earth settling under the city no longer exist.

Citizens have the right to plan

Providing services to citizens is a very important part of the administration operations and there are numerous changes relative to that part. Public services have been radically reformed; provision of services has improved and transparency is guaranteed. Municipal officers have more responsibilities towards citizens. Municipality regularly conducts public surveys and they show that Tuzla is the example of good public and efficient work. The concept of servicing citizens called "all in one place", made municipal services available to the public, so that citizens do not have to wonder around many offices. Service Center has an information desk, 23 counters, office for free legal aid, post office and a counter with copy machine. Entrepreneurship Information Center and Physical Planning Service Center are the most contemporary ones in BiH. Their novelty is that besides those services, the Center offers a possibility to the people living abroad to send requests for birth certificate and other documents by e-mail and those will be sent to them by regular mail.

Municipality introduced open and fair procedures for public tenders. They formed a Committee of 35 members in charge of tenders and before opening of tender documentation, three members of the Committee open bids before cameras. This is how they prevent frauds.

Scholarships to gifted students, sportsmen and artists are granted based on the Decision on Scholarship, which presumes public competition and selection of the best candidates made by the Selection Committee.

Citizens have the right to plan and control the budget by expressing their objections and proposals on the public hearings via councilors and councilors' offices, local community boards, municipality website or by direct contact to the Finances and Budget Department. Mr. Imamović says: "The basic rule of my work is transparency. Representatives of executive authorities do not make decisions on their own money but on the money of their citizens received in the budget. I want more ordinary citizens to participate in the collection, distribution and control of budget funds. When we asked for their votes, this was what we promised to them."

The municipality accepted and institutionalized a practice called Responsibility Forum, where Mayor and the Chair of the Council submit their six-month activity reports, and propose action plan for the next period. In the first phase of their work, they initiated the project of e-municipalities, which has two components: the city website and citizens' charter available to all those who have computers. The Charter represents a guide for the key city services offering information on the procedures, time framework and responsible person in electronic and printed form. Municipality of Tuzla usually broadcasts meetings of the Municipal Council on TV, and Mayor answers the questions of the councilors in the VOX POPULI show. The official page of the municipality is regularly updated with new information regarding Mayor's activities and the work of the Council. Excerpts from daily and weekly press regarding the activities in the town are also posted on the website.

One man cannot be clever as all people together

Impressed by the success accomplished in the past seven years, people are coming to Tuzla trying to find a magic formula which they would copy at "their home". Tuzla, as it is now, was not built just in one day, hence the process of creating the local vision had not been developed overnight. It had its evolution, supporters

and opponents. The transition process was not simple and solutions were not easy. Mr. Imamović, just like his predecessor, had to look for solutions that would ease out the chaos people had in their heads as well as to answer their questions regarding political and civil agony brought by the transition process. One part of citizens was firmly against the changes and other asked for immediate improvement. All that put pressure on Mr. Jasmin Imamović and his work. Situation was additionally burdened by the complicated legal regulations and open attacks by political opponents.

At the time he became Mayor, he had a vision that Tuzla should become one of the BiH leading cultural centers, the city of tourism and intellect, which at the time, seemed as utopia. In order to justify development programs and vision he had, Mr. Imamović was trying to persuade others in the reality of his vision, and as the results became more visible, resistance to changes weekend.

“In the beginning, people said that our plan was unrealistic, imaginary and utopist. Then we decided to transform the three worst places into the best sites in the town. One was a swamp, which was also used as a wild dump, we have transformed into unique salt-water lake in the Europe; we have built the first tourism square in BiH in the devastated part of the city and named it *Salt Square*, and we have built *Merkator* shopping center on the place of another wild dump. This turned the collective pessimism into collective optimism and persuaded people to trust us.”

The way he has overcome resistance Mr. Imamović described as follows:” There were many political and other confrontations. However, we are here to solve problems by overcoming obstacles. Obstacles are rather usual. If you know that, you can overcome them. We conduct public surveys in local communities, party clubs, non-governmental organizations, we regularly contact media, and we try to persuade people about the truthfulness of our statements. The Saltwater Lake was the key moment. Journalists were writing that I was digging a political grave or a monument. Some 25,000 people came to the Lake opening. At that moment I knew I had succeeded. I could freely move forward. People started to believe in my ideas and accepted to follow me.”

From the first day, Mr. Imamović knew that to be the first man in the city meant managerial not political figure. Municipal administration is divided in 12 departments employing 421 public servants and together with fire fighting squad and municipal Public Attorney’s Office there are 526 people in total.

Standards prescribe less employees, 1 officer to 1,000 citizens, however, municipal management team lead by Jasmin Imamović decided to move forward without reduction and to implement the reform gradually. The concept he advocated was “step by step”, which would give equal opportunity to all who wanted to keep the job. Mr. Imamović says: “We acted gradually and slowly, got stronger and did not want nobody to lose job and cry.”

He has selected a part of his team, for he inherited some of the staff members. Mr. Imamović says: “Organizational structure was imposed by law and where there was a legal possibility I made innovations. I tried to choose people that are smarter and more capable than me, who would not be afraid to experiment and who would accept challenges.”

Young people were his choice of forty years in average. Their basic quality was not their party membership, but professionalism, honesty and enthusiasm. He placed people who are not members of any party on the most important positions. They are all excellent professionals in their respective areas of expertise and they are recognized in Tuzla by their honest and dignified life. Mr. Imamović exclaims: “Those are big *players* able to face challenges. They want to experiment. It is important to choose the right person. It is important for associates to be professional, competent and to be able to provide all services to citizens.”

He is not in favor of strict attitude to his staff, he prefer cooperation and mutual appreciation.

“I treat my associates the same as all my colleagues. I prefer team work and do everything within the team. If I have ideas I would like people first to accept them as their own and then I start with the implementation. If they do not accept it, I renounce it.”

It is important to show with a personal example how and how much you work. This is usually enough for a good associate. He simply tries not to betray the trust; we all enjoy in the extraordinary results we have achieved. And I am always there to back them up, and to protect them if necessary. Our common goal is to be the best administration in the history of Tuzla.” The quality of municipal administration work is monitored through reports and analyses, upon which he has based efficiency and quality development measures. He awards good initiatives and dedicated work with praises, travelling and sometimes with promotion.

Important success factor for Mr. Imamović is participation of citizens and civil sector in the process of making decisions that are important for the city. City administration regards the citizens as partners and beneficiaries. Mr. Imamović endeavors to engage citizens and civil sector in decision-making process and the process of creating the city's current and future urban identity. Participation of citizens in decision-making process is not just an obligation but a principle crucial for the creation of social harmony.

The concept of citizens' participation is supported by the Municipal Council which does not perceive it as a threat to its political mandate. "So far they have reacted positively. When they saw the results of the survey, and wishing to justify the trust, they accepted everything the citizens and I proposed."

In order to increase participation of citizens in the resolution of issues important for the city and to activate their responsibility for the community, Mr. Imamovic has introduced one innovation: the Council of Citizens he humorously calls "being a Mayor and counseling by nationalities and generations". Mr. Imamović explains this innovation: "Parties divided legislative and executive authority in accordance with the regulations and rules. I asked myself where are than the citizens who do not belong to any of those parties."

I found a possibility to establish the Council in the *Municipal Statute* and decided to nominate advisors of all nationalities and generations, especially the young ones. Those are ordinary citizens, specific only by being good in their professions. The Council has one member, Muhamed Mesic, who speaks ten languages. He is smarter than me and he is one of the smartest people in BiH. Why shouldn't I listen to his advice? I also took the list of the awarded students and invited one student from the list to be the member of the Council. The same is with other councilors."

Based on the suggestions given by the Council, Mr. Imamović designed his Draft Program: "When I developed a draft program I was led by the idea that two brains are smarter than one. I gave it to the Council and NGO representatives for comments and suggestions. They had good suggestions, which I accepted, and thanks to those suggestions my program will be different and better than the previous one. My initial pessimism has been transformed into optimism. Simply, after their ideas, I know what citizens think and what they want to do."

Tuzla is dedicated to the provision of good quality services. Municipality regularly conducts surveys designed to find out the opinion of all citizens on the quality

of services they receive but also on their happiness with the overall quality of life and how municipality can be an environment that everybody is proud of. "I asked citizens if they wish to build another salt-water lake. Eight thousands answered affirmatively only one said no. Therefore, we started to build another lake."

It is clear that public survey was carefully planned but the point is that Mr. Imamović wanted that citizens to feel that expansion of the salt lake complex will be their project, to feel the ownership on this development initiative. He stresses that citizens' participation in decision-making process accelerates implementation of decisions and decreases any possible risk.

"I love Tuzla"

His election slogan in 2004 was "Believe in results, not in empty words." This partnership between administration and its first man and the citizens should be placed in the context of specific political situation in Tuzla, the only city where authority has been consisted from the parties of social democratic orientation since 1990. Mr. Imamović understands very well a dynamics of political events in Tuzla and has skillfully built political partnership with citizens. He won at the last elections and his votes exceeded votes of the Social Democratic Party for 50%. When he talks to the Municipal Council and introduces new projects he usually begins with the following words: "Let me present my suggestions as well as citizens' suggestions."

About the relations with leaders of political parties he says: "Relations with leaders of political parties sometimes help and sometimes complicate things and the only option is to be patient and persistent in defending my principles and attitudes." He stresses that it helps that SDP has majority in the Municipal Council. It should be mentioned that Tuzla is a backbone of SDP in BiH, hence Mr. Imamović as a Mayor, has an important role within the party. However, this position becomes an obstacle in the Mayor's communication with higher levels of authorities run by other parties. Therefore, development of Tuzla was mainly carried out without support from the cantonal, federation or state level.

Talking about his relations with media, he says: "I say to journalists that I am not competent to evaluate their work but on the other hand, they are competent to evaluate mine. My experience with journalists is generally good. Certainly, there are some less positive examples, which is also understandable. They may like my

work or not. They may be not interested in my work at all. All three options are acceptable and reasonable. It wouldn't be good if it is different."

Amongst his fellow Mayors, Mr. Imamović is known as a Mayor with the best PR strategy. They often state that Mr. Imamović knows how to promote city and his work in media. Mr. Imamović very often plans media presentations for different events with an aim to build an image of his city. We can say that he systematically promotes Tuzla as a new brand. This process has started in 1990 with the election of his predecessor Selim Beslagić. A great advantage of Mr. Imamović's was that he was a close associate of Mr. Beslagić and has actively participated in the development of the new image of Tuzla. Mr. Imamović very often uses services of professional consultants especially in the PR business.

One of the reasons for the success of Tuzla and its image in BiH is a wide presence of very vibrant NGO community. Unlike other local communities, which have aversion towards the NGO sector, Tuzla developed a firm bond with it.

Jasmin Imamović is famous for his attention to youth organizations and their free time activities and he is always ready to accept their healthy ideas. Municipality adopted a strategy for development of youth role in decision-making process at the municipal level, and made it its priority. It also initiated comprehensive consultations with NGOs with an aim to design an adequate model of active and sustainable participation of youth in municipal activities.

There are over 30 youth non-governmental organizations, 20 demo music bands and several youth theatres. Tuzla is a seat of the BiH Youth Network. The first meeting of the network under the name "BiH New Energy" was held in Tuzla. Many Bosnians currently living in USA, Great Britain, Scandinavia and BiH attended the meeting. In the first part of his mandate, a Home of the Flame of Peace was built, the house for dialogue, where many artists, individuals and NGOs work and create independently and without disturbance. In addition to this, municipality gladly borrows its premises to young people and participates in the reconstruction of youth facilities. Youth organizations are financed from the budget. Jasmin Imamović not only supports these activities but personally participates in all activities helping to relocate young people from streets, thus giving them support in their creative and educational expression. Municipality financially supports the program of Youth Entrepreneurship and competition for a Teenager of the Year. Movement "REVOLT" was established in Tuzla as an expression of a rebellion of young people against political state and social situation in BiH.

Mr. Imamović thinks that municipal role is to create conditions for investments in the partnership with public and private sector. He has great success in construction of new housing facilities and reconstruction of the old center of the city. The following example illustrates his approach: "Let's paint fifteen facades on the buildings owned by the city and let's invite owners of other buildings to do the same."

He emphasizes that the previous professional experience helped him to be successful in his job. He especially emphasizes his knowledge and skills in the real estate management. He thinks that a good Mayor should have education and experience, to be free of class and national prejudice, to have professional experience in the functioning of the city administration and that he has proven himself in his previous posts as the best. He says that a good local administration should be able to report every year about its accomplishments and to prove that it was for the purpose of making better and more comfortable life of citizens compared to the previous year.

Messages he sends to those planning to run for candidacy for the mayor's post are: "One man cannot be clever as the rest of people together", "I do not rule but serve to people". His most favorite slogan is "I love Tuzla."

Mr. Imamović thinks he will bequeath his successor with the initiated process of life improvement in Tuzla based on the clear strategy and defined projects as well as a team of people who can implement that project. His successor will inherit a challenge to keep up with the development dynamics based on continuous work that he himself imposed, and which he finds hard to keep up with.

About his worst mistake he says: "Maybe I did not use my time well. Maybe I made mistake when I allowed to people to resign instead of replacing them on time. Consequently, I lost time with respect to a number of departments. On the other hand, I managed to avoid conflicts. Maybe I should have removed a number of people due to their inefficiency. I succeeded to find a different way to replace them and nominate new and better heads of departments. This is how I lost time."

Mr. Imamović has his faults. His leadership role in the economic development is insufficient especially in relation to small and medium scale enterprises. He could have better cooperation with local businessmen. He must improve cooperation with the business community. Cooperation with higher instances of authorities is bad. It partly ensues from the specific political relations between Tuzla and

other political options. Mr. Imamović should establish partnership relations in this area, and try to build synergy in the projects related to strategic development. He has identified deficiencies and has a plan to correct this in future. He hopes that he will be re-elected in 2008, and then in his last mandate, he will successfully follow transformation of Tuzla, a strategic project significant not only for the municipality but for the entire BiH.

“I see Berkovići as a modern, developed and prosperous little town in Herzegovina. This will come true very soon. This is my vision. However, there are more and more people who feel the same way.”

Ranko Lučić, Mayor of Berkovići

Development of a town

Written by: Stevo PUCAR

Histories of many towns mention very often one man who established the town in the distant past. One does not need to go too far in the history of the small town of Berkovići in the Eastern Herzegovina to find that particular person. The man who is responsible for transforming village of Berkovići into a modern town is the current Mayor of the municipality Ranko Lučić-Beli. He managed to transform the underdeveloped local community within Stolac municipality into the place where changes are faster and more dynamic than in any other place in the Republic of Srpska and BiH.

Mr. Ranko is educated and progressive man. This is obvious from his vast knowledge of history, art and culture. He closely follows contemporary developments in the world and applies them in his municipality. Berkovići municipality was always ahead of other municipalities, Banja Luka included. Berkovići was the first municipality in the RS to have an e-mail address even though they did not have good telephone connections. They established internet connection via mobile networks and today, it has wireless internet unlike majority of BiH municipalities.

He always tried to adopt contemporary European trends. In spite of the fact that his party SDS (Serb Democratic Party) considers him archaic man, he won elections not talking about past but talking about European Union.

“Very often I rely on the air”

Soon after the war ended in BiH, kilometers of vehicles were lining up every Sunday on one part of the road Bileca – Stolac, Berkovići. It was a car market, which by itself does not represent anything important. However, this market became the place of reconciliation of the conflicted neighbors, Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs from Herzegovina. Very often, this place is compared to the big market called Arizona, situated in the North of Bosnia and created under the auspices of international community. Regardless of the fact that Berkovići car market did not have international support, it was at the time the most peculiar and certainly one of the biggest car markets on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

All of this happened thanks to Ranko Lučić, then chief of police and present Mayor of Berkovići. At that time, meetings on inter-entity lines were banned, but Mr. Lučić as a chief of police gave a permission for these meetings. He was threatened by ministers and other officials but he took no notice of those warnings. He explained with wisdom known for Herzegovina people: “According to the Dayton Peace Accord, people were allowed to move freely, thus I was implementing Dayton. No one is allowed to breach such an important international agreement with an administrative order.”

Ranko Lučić thought that it was nonsense not to use such a good opportunity for trade and profit. That was the meeting place for 4,000 people from the region and 1,000 of refugees and the displaced who lived in numerous dilapidated facilities. People from Berkovići were always known as good merchants.

People started to move around freely, to earn money and use it to start up business. Taxes charged for the trade were used for the construction of a new refugee settlement.

Ranko Lučić trusts people and that quality can cost a lot in this dangerous time. “I trust people and regardless of the number of times they cheat on me I cannot help trusting people. I often rely on the air, and it is hard to recover afterwards but I mainly succeed.”

As people, who respect his work say, his accomplishments prove that when you have the right man on the right place, results are visible; there were mayors before him, but no changes were made.

It was never easy for him. He had a big tragedy in his life, his daughter died. He has been in the mourning ever since, but he still has love, strength and will for his family, people and town.

Contours of a small town

The major motive for Ranko to take the lead in the municipality was his love towards people and this area. Everything else was less important. Town of Berkovići has been neglected for years due to the political reasons. Ranko felt that, too, as after graduated from university he could not find a job, since he came from a family, which was not politically fit.

He wanted to create more opportunities for private initiative, employment and life in general, since the town lacked those prospects. And simply said, he wanted to give them a better life. Berkovići abounds with potential, both in people and natural resources.

What Ranko Lučić planned to do and what he still does is rather simple. Basic idea was to turn Berkovići, a small place, a village, into a modern little town with good infrastructure, dynamic economy and good living conditions.

“I see Berkovići as a contemporary, developed and prosperous little town in Herzegovina. This will come true very soon. This is my vision. However there are more and more people who feel the same way. There are also those who are skeptics but they have been skeptical all their lives, and those sitting in the bars and criticizing but doing nothing. Nothing can be better for them and no authority can be good enough.”

However, it is all easy to think and say. He overtook the municipality, which had neither municipal building nor urban infrastructure. Refugees and displaced persons did not have adequate accommodation, schools were destroyed, roads isolated and very often not usable. There were some areas completely disconnected from the rest of the municipality. Berkovići used to be a place made of

several houses on the road Bileca – Stolac. The center of the municipality used to be a wasteland. The municipality did not have electricity or roads, only several prefabricated buildings and that was it.

Power supply was hardly enough for one bulb per household and there was neither water supply system nor sewage system. When you consider the number of population, Berkovići is a small municipality. However, the area it covers is rather big, hence it was almost impossible to solve the issues of infrastructure, good local roads, electricity, water supply, telephone lines and TV signals. All things considered, it was a bad starting position. Nevertheless, Ranko started to turn his vision into reality, armed with optimism and energy. Everything that has been built since and what has given this place a shape of the town is to be owed to Ranko Lučić. All things said and done, he built Berkovići from a wasteland to a town.

Since Berkovići is a small municipality, its administration consisted of several public servants, who were in charge of only few departments as prescribed by the law. It remained the same and it is often stated as one of the advantages of the municipality of Berkovići. However, when it comes to development, it all depends on Ranko Lučić. Fortunately, his energy and will are enormous, helping him to carry his burden successfully. What appears to be a problem in this municipality is inability of his associates to follow his pace. Talking about this he says: "I realize that, and sometimes I slow down to let people have a rest and let them work in the way they can and not how I wish them to do."

His team depended on his abilities solely, and they were there to follow him to the best of their capacities. Nevertheless, Ranko has recently started to build a real team, who would in future be able to have independent initiative. Ranko recognized this need to have a good team; hence he was the first one who registered his municipality for capacity strengthening program.

Energy of water and wind

Development strategy was made it the beginning of Ranko's mandate. The most important objective of the strategy is implementation of infrastructure and agricultural project. This is to be a good base for future progress. When talking about strategy he says: "I think water and power are the preconditions for development of poor municipality, hence we aimed our activities in that direction. If we wish

to attract capital and investors we need to have water, electricity and roads. And there are potentials for investments in Berkovići, but so far, the big problem is a lack of infrastructure“.

They expect biggest investments in the agricultural processing industry and exploitation of natural resources, water and wind energy. They have several water springs and Ranko made a big effort to bring investors in order to start exploiting those springs. “I presented this idea to potential investors and majority of work regarding concession rights has been finalized. Now it is up to investors, and whether they are brave enough to invest in BiH. Such badly organized state represents an obstacle, because international companies fear from bringing their money here. Those projects are very profitable. Our products are cheap, and if we use cheap transport by sea, it would make them very competitive on the market. Port Ploče in Split are only 70 km away from Berkovići and we should use this advantage.“

Their strategy includes exploitation of bauxite and brick clay deposits on the municipal territory. It is a matter of time when Ranko will find and bring good investors to start business and employ local population. He intends to ensure returning of population, who left for bigger cities when this town could not offer employment possibilities.

The fact that Berkovići was the only place in RS where the RS Development Fund held two seminars on support to small and medium scale enterprises is a proof of his attempts to accomplish economic development in his municipality. After the first one, Ranko thought that more work is needed with SME, so he suggested that municipality of Berkovići co-finances the second seminar.

Also, he was the first one in the RS, who asked for the funds for green-house production of vegetables. He thought it could be a cost-effective small business, since Berkovići has many sunny days in the year. It turned out that he was right. People who started with that production had three gatherings a year. It turned out to be an excellent business and most of the production is being exported.

A pace hard to follow

When Berkovići got their municipal building and started to build first parts of urban infrastructure, everybody realized that Ranko stands firm behind his

visions and that more is to be expected in future. He quickly started to resolve the key existential problems of the municipality, one by one.

Building water supply networks in Berkovići started soon after Ranko became a Mayor. From the spring of the River Vrijeka, water was brought to the center of municipality. Other villages situated on that course also got water. However, they did not stop there but thanks to the help they continued with building water supply network in the surrounding villages at the outskirts of Dabar Polje. So far, they have built 60 km of water supply network. Water arrived to villages struggling for water since ever. Ranko does not have intention to stop with water supplying project until the whole municipality is supplied.

Good-quality power supply was equally important for Ranko Lučić. He has done a lot in this domain. They built and strengthened power-transmission line. However, they do not plan to stop there hence they plan to build and improve power network for Berkovići and its surroundings.

The next big problem for Berkovići is a local road network, since the municipality still has lots of gravel roads, mainly in the hills, hence their maintenance is hard. Ranko tries to develop road network and he plans new investments in this area.

Municipality of Berkovići has had communication problems for many years. The main reason is transmission line in the direction Berkovići-Stolac severed during the war as well as outdated telephone central station with small number of connections. Ranko resolved this issue by establishing a digital telephone central and mobile GSM network, which covers the whole territory with signal. Nowadays, several years after, the existing telecommunication system is totally satisfying citizens' needs including use of internet.

The central school in Berkovići, thanks to Ranko, is completely adapted as well as most of other regional schools; hence there are excellent conditions for schooling. Municipality also has community health center which was recently reconstructed thus allowing further development of medical services.

Circle of knowledge and circle of ignorance

Referring to the political relations, Ranko has some political opponents. He has full support from all parties except one in the municipal assembly. Ranko comments this: "Some are in opposition, and some are in opposition to both, me and

themselves. They act against mine and my team's every step. They are not good opposition, who criticize my mistakes. Instead, they criticize everything we do. That, by me, is not a good opposition."

In the last ten years he and his political party never got below 50% of votes. At the last elections the Mayor got 72% of votes, which was a confirmation of his good work.

In the little town such as Berkovići, citizens cannot be tricked with empty promises, flimsy and thin words because they follow you every day and they see the true work. Ranko says: "I do not distance myself from citizens. I am an ordinary person from the bar, from a wedding celebration, any other common life scene and always in contact with ordinary people. They know my weaknesses and flaws. This is how they vote."

In relations to citizens he always acts sincerely and honestly. If someone cheats on him, he tells to his citizens, if someone finishes job well, he informs them on that, too. He informs citizens on whatever he does via local radio station or in direct conversations. Therefore, he asked for the funds to equip local radio station and he managed to negotiate with information regulation bodies and helped this radio station to continue to exist. He is a guest in the program twice a week, where he informs citizens on the recent events in the municipality.

He brings optimism, his major quality, to other citizens, especially to young people. Certain number of people from municipality manages to keep up with him.

"I could have never managed to go forward by myself. Regardless of one's strength and enormous wish, one is a mere initiator. My citizens have never challenged a single project I did although they did not always participate and help. Under our circumstances, if people do not challenge one's work that is half job done."

It can be said that Ranko has mobilized the whole community to work and create as much as possible, and the number of people who think that more can be accomplished is growing.

Ranko has his own approach to this. As philosophers would explain, as the circle of knowledge is widening, the circle of ignorance is growing, too. The same is here; as more things are being done, the greater are the people's needs; hence there

are many happy and unhappy people. As I am not happy enough with my own achievements, citizens do not have to be happy with mine and their achievements. They should always fight for more. “

His successful communication with citizens is based on his great effort, energy and will. Although he is always mobile – he drives around in the 20-year old car, which passed over 600,000 km – he still manages to reach every local community and to talk to his fellow citizens. “I try to help as many people as I can, and if I cannot help them, I will not cause any damage or harm them in anyway.” Such job requires extreme physical and mental efforts, which Ranko invests to achieve his goals.

He sticks to the principle that one should have the same approach to an ordinary citizen, pensioner, or a peasant, who never left his village as to a president, government, minister or representative of international organization. According to him, one needs to have good approach and relation towards everybody in order to accomplish something good for his people or municipality.

Ranko named his management style a parental management or family management. He is not an autocrat, since he does not have that in his character. “I am brought up like that. I had 26 years when my grandfather died. He practically raised me and he was a great democrat and taught me how to treat people. School helped me in acquiring good managerial skills. And from the place I was born, Berkovići, I gained the spirit. We are famous tradesmen. That trading spirit helped me a lot in my job but the most important was my upbringing,” says Ranko.

With respect to the majority of projects he consults with his colleagues and for more important, bigger projects he consults everyone he can make contact with. If it is necessary to act fast, Ranko will decide without consultations with his associates.” If I come across a project that I have heard of in Banja Luka, Vienna or anywhere else, and it seems good, than I seize it with no consultations whatsoever.” If there is a situation with dilemmas, he is the one who makes final decision.

Life on the wheels

Ranko is the Chair of the Executive Council of Eastern Herzegovina Municipalities. Council or the Union of seven communities has been established with an aim to create better coordination and to find joint solutions for regional problems of

Eastern Herzegovina. Ranko is one of the people who fight for equal standpoint amongst members of the Council; because he thinks they can have influence on the RS Government only when they act together. He has always had good cooperation with the Government, no matter which political option was in power. Politics has never been an obstacle to cooperation and he always behaved as one Mayor ought to behave and that is his approach towards the prime minister, ministers and state institutions.

Municipality of Berkovići with its budget which increased from KM 50,000 to KM 1,000.000 still cannot solve their problems without assistance. Therefore, it turned to donors and tried to solve the key problems in the municipality. Soon after the war, in 1997, he pronounced Berkovići an open town. Back then, he was Deputy Mayor and Berkovići was the first municipality in the eastern part of the RS that was pronounced open. They did not get a certificate, because Berkovići did not have the status of the town at that time. In spite of that he managed, through various donations, to get KM 5 million and to invest it in the development of the town.

According to the statements of people from the RS development institutions, who tried to establish cooperation with the former mayor, there was no communication whatsoever, neither with former Mayor nor with the municipal administration even though there were irreversible funds reserved for the municipal development.

Ranko Lučić contacted development institutions soon after he became Mayor and offered them full cooperation in order to direct those funds to Berkovići. He immediately started to prepare development projects and soon they were implemented: central heating system in the primary school, street lights, etc.

He was the first in Srpska to start co-financing projects with domestic institutions and foreign donors. The principle was the following – if you give certain amount of money to the municipality, we will match with equal amount of money for project implementation. He acted very wisely. Firstly, he got more projects than other municipalities (World Bank CDP program granted 2-3 projects to other municipalities and 9 to Berkovići) and secondly, he invested municipal funds in the best possible way – through institutions having experience in the implementation of development projects. However, he did not rely only on budget in terms of co-financing but sought other possibilities to get additional funds. This

man is inexorable, and at that time he literally lived on wheels, talked to people from ministries, foreign donors and visited all those who helped development of Berkovići.

Local level is neglected

One of the wishes Ranko thinks is very important is to find his successor. He would like to find a younger man who would be able to replace him so he could peacefully retire from that position. He has not found such person yet. "There are people who can do administrative part of the job as well as some managerial tasks; however I do not see anybody who could replace me entirely. I tried, and I had one electrical engineer who was able to keep up with me and initiated many things but he had an accident and died."

In addition to the trend in which young people leave their places in Herzegovina, Ranko thinks that there is future for young people in Berkovići. "I can see that in those places one can have a comfortable life and earned good living. When you have money, you can spend it thousands kilometers away."

The biggest obstacle to development of leaders in the local self-governance, Ranko thinks is the attitude of the authorities towards local level. The existing system neglects local level and it is not adjusted to the European standards. The current centralization system exercised in BiH unable people from local levels to advocate and represent economic and social interest of citizens.

Under these circumstances, many capable people would rather be entrepreneurs and run their own business instead of investing their energy in the futile combat against higher authorities. This is the key relation and if local self-governance is not given more possibility for development and more funds, municipal administration will not be attractive place to work for capable people.

As a leader, he is aware of being the most responsible for the accomplishment of goals. By election, Mayors acquire only a formal legitimacy, whereas the power of a leader ensues from his/her ability to promote good ideas, to define and accomplish goals. A Mayor has a clear vision about what he/she wants to do, he/she is a good organizer knowing how to motivate and direct his/her team.

Leader as a Builder

Written by: Snežana LUPEVSKA

Veles is a Macedonian municipality with the highest Municipal Capacity Index¹ according to the research made by the USAID during year 2007. In the period 2005-2007, three continuous researches were made and all three put Veles to the first place. During this period, the municipality increased its index for 83%.

The previous period, from year 2000 to date, shows significant reforms in the municipal operational system. The reform and its outcome were a direct result of the efforts made by Mr. Ace Kocevski as a Mayor of Veles Municipality. This municipality is the first and the only local self-governance in Macedonia, which has a strategy for entering electronic municipality and information technology. This document is a basis for introduction of information technology in everyday operations of the municipal administration, which separates Veles from the rest of Macedonian municipalities. Electronic monitoring system installed monitoring of the Municipal Council sessions is one of these accomplishments. At the

¹ *Municipal capacity index research* was conducted three times a year in the period 2005–2007. Its basic aim was to make the results of the training and technical assistance for capacity development visible and transparent and to identify potential changes. The processed results are used for the comparison of municipal capacities, evaluation of its growth rate in the researched period.

same time, the Municipality is a center for the implementation of pilot projects funded by international donors, which are later implemented throughout the country.

Lonely among colleagues

Municipality of Veles is not a typical Macedonian municipality. In most of the cases, it sets an example to other municipalities. Under the governance of the present Mayor, it is known as an avant-garde institution moving ahead the time, as an administration not hesitating to make experiments and face challenges, successfully introducing new models of business operations in Macedonia. Understandably, it can sometimes be a deficiency. It happens that allocated funds that should have been accepted by the municipality were rejected by reason of the fact that the municipality had already “implemented the project with its own funds”.

Municipality of Veles has a small number of administrative staff (46) due to its efforts to achieve balance between the number of administration employees and the high level of services it wants to offer. This is a result of the specific model of business operations, whose basic employment criteria are defined according to situation on the employment market and the quality of candidates. Municipal administration must be moderate, whereas tax payers’ money must be spent on development projects and improvement of the quality of life.

Based on the European practice, employment structure foresees one staff member per 1000 citizens. In Veles, it would mean 55 people. However, municipal administration functions successfully with 46 employees, which is less than any other municipality with similar number of residents. Therefore, money can be used to support the development and improvement of the quality of life in the municipality, instead on salaries, and as it was said by the Mayor: “Tax payer’s money should go to water pipelines and sewage, not to the salaries of the prominent party members”.

Ace Kocevski has been involved in the “high politics” since his young days. To be a great politician or an expert requires experience. In order to bring right decisions, we need wisdom, which cannot be acquired only through formal education and diploma, but also through experience and active participation in different processes. Therefore, participation in political developments during his youth days has modeled him as a person, and prepared him for survival through many positive and negative life situations.

It is important that employees are qualified, competent and professional for their jobs in order to provide municipal services to their citizens. Only in this way, the number of employees in the municipal administration may remain low and optimal.

Due to his approach to work, way of setting priorities and model of implementation of activities, the Mayor feels lonely among his colleagues. Nevertheless, he insists on his principles and keeps his promises given during the elections led by his personal motive that it is a great honor to be the Mayor of Veles, the city which has largely contributed to the Macedonian history in the area of culture and arts and their development in general. Mr. Kocevski sees Mayor's function in Veles as a huge inspiration for self-assertion, honor and commitment at the same time. He says: "Promises given at local elections are not given to win the elections, but because we intend to implement them."

It is impossible for an individual to implement the best ideas. Even when individuals are capable of making changes, a team spirit and collective efforts are necessary to accomplish them. It is specifically evident in the Municipality of Veles, which is also emphasized by the Mayor. Success in the reform of the municipal administration is not only his success; it belongs to the whole team. The team is composed of young people, who proved themselves during the implementation of development programs at their prior jobs; they are the people who know how to acquire experience and use it, and who have courage to apply it in Macedonia.

„My success is your success“

Although he has an opportunity to be involved in politics at all levels in the country, including international level, he still prefers the role of a Mayor. As a representative in the first Macedonian multi-party Parliament, he participated in discussions related to development of a number of laws, by which he is known in the whole country. And this is exactly the greatest difference between the local and representative function. If you are a good rhetorician, you will be noticed as a good representative. If you are a successful Mayor, citizens identify themselves with you, particularly in relation to the construction of major buildings by which the Mayors are remembered. Citizens are interested in works and to be a Mayor is an ideal function through which you can prove yourself as a builder, too. And that is something he is most successful in. It means a lot to him, when it is said that the small bridge is built during the time of Ace Kocevski, and the cemetery with a new chapel was built during the time of Ace Kocevski.

As a leader, he is aware that he is the most responsible for the accomplishment of goals. By election, Mayors acquire only formal legitimacy, whilst the power of a leader ensues from his capability to promote good ideas, to define and accomplish goals. He has a clear vision about what he wants to do, he is a good organizer, he knows how to motivate and direct his team, how “to praise and how to read one a lesson”, if necessary. He is consistent in his work; he tries to put the things in the right places and to lead his team.

During his first mandate as a Mayor, he found a lethargic situation in the municipal administration. The municipality has a small number of highly educated employees, whose salaries were equal to those with lower degree. Former Mayors were preoccupied with their “real” occupation and did not try to change the existing relations in the administration, which preferred ad hoc solutions. There were huge debts over \$ 500.000, so to work in the municipal administration was not attractive and interesting for young and educated people.

In the situation of huge debts, an honorable and responsible work together with reasonable spending of municipal budget, avoiding big promises with no financial support eventually increased the trust of citizens. Municipal debt was returned during the first mandate, so Veles is the only one among larger municipalities with no debts at all. The stand point, valid at that time, is still respected: citizens are not to be lied; the coat should be cut according to the cloth, meaning that the municipality should invest according to its financial possibilities. If the citizens do not like this approach, let someone else behave irresponsibly.

Selection of employees is not easy due to the party pressures related to the employment on one side, and on the other side, due to the lack of candidates. There were cases when jobs were advertised several times with no eligible candidates. He is not liable to the party pressures regarding employment. Mr. Kocevski says: “Why should I hire a director of a bankrupt company? If he had been an expert in his area, his company would not have gone bankrupt!” All newly employed staff members have previously proved their competence in different projects implemented with the municipal administration.

Highly educated staff members of the municipal administration have retrieved their dignity. Based on the old employment structure, salary difference between employees with secondary education and those with university degree was only 20%. Now, this situation is different. Highly educated personnel have appropriate compensation for their work, whereas all employees are given a chance for continuous education, training and workshops in accordance with their terms of

references. Interestingly, the municipality administration has 74 computers and 47 employees and all of them are computer literate.

It is believed that one of the basic tasks of a leader is to motivate his/her team. A leader should motivate and lead the team, whereas the members of the team should further motivate other employees regarding all the municipal strategic development goals. Employees are accordingly rewarded for their overtime work. It happens that employees save significant amounts of money for the municipal administration, which would otherwise be paid to an external company. Nevertheless, salary cannot be a motivation, since all municipalities have same salary levels based on the Law on Civil Servants.

Positive approach of a leader towards appropriate distribution of merits regarding municipal administration and other political segments in the municipality is a specific motivating factor, which is based on the motto: “My success is your success”. One of his characteristics is surely to admit and accept mistakes, and to correct them in the shortest possible time. The Mayor is proud of “his” municipal administration and thinks that it receives the credit for the major part of success. He believes that not even the best Mayor can accomplish alone as much as he/she can with a well organized and motivated team of highly professional young people.

Civil service center, which was founded during year 2006, has been functioning on the principle of “first and last” office, thus representing a model for other Macedonian municipalities. In a center like this, citizens have an opportunity to reach information and get an answer to each of their requests without wasting time through offices in search for a municipal officer. First office receives requests/inquires and forwards it to the last office where they are processed. Instead of citizens going through municipal administration, documents are put in this process.

The motto of the Municipality of Veles is: “Happy citizens are the objective of our municipality! “ The difference between the previous *modus operandi* of the state bodies and the present ones is huge; however, there are still areas in need of improvement. It is a characteristic of large municipalities that there will always be happy and unhappy citizens. But, Mr. Kocevski has gained support with this model of service provision. You should work honestly and be content, your family should be proud of you and you will get a huge support of the voters. Mr. Kocevski is particularly proud of the fact that “he has not given a single glass of water for his party”, although it is a public secret in Macedonia that political

parties are financed through public procurements. This is not the case with Mr. Kocevski, which he is so proud of. Fortunately for him and the citizens of Veles, his party still needs him, for his rating is very high, but at the moment it starts declining, he knows he will be replaced.

In this dynamic time, he cannot recall his first results after he resumed the office of the Mayor, but he remembers several projects that permanently changed the habits of people. One of them was the construction of children's play grounds on the location of waste areas, construction of a small bridge over the river Vardar, which was opened on the 100th anniversary of Ilinden Uprising, then monuments of Koca Racin, Panko Brasnar...

Despite the fact that no public survey has been ever done, it is known that Veles sets a good example relevant for transparent municipal activities. Budget is adopted in two phases. First stage is to obtain opinion of all local municipalities and other budget users, after which a draft budget is adopted, which is then presented and discussed at public hearings. Based on the comments received in this process, budget is finally adopted by the Municipal Council. Sessions of the Municipal Council are always open for the public, whereas citizens can address any representative if they previously schedule an appointment. Presently, additional meeting hall is in the process of construction in order to enable citizens to attend the sessions of the Council. Municipality makes financial reports on annual basis, which is also published on its website, which is updated on daily basis.

IN relation to direct communication with citizens, previously they had to make an appointment to see the Mayor. However, the practice showed that citizens most often want to talk to the Mayor over the issues that are not in the competency of the municipal administration: employment, social services or housing issues. Nowadays, the Mayor receives citizens with problems verified by someone from the municipal vertical hierarchy. This does not mean that he wants to avoid meetings with citizens, but the idea is to establish high quality functioning system of the municipal administration with quick and efficient service provision, whereas the Mayor should be involved as less as possible, only when administration cannot solve the problem. "Citizens should be confident in the municipal administration, for it is the duty of municipal administration to solve their problems", says Mr. Kocevski. If an appointment with the Mayor is required, it is an expression of distrust toward administration.

Last, but not the least important, Municipality of Veles is the only municipality, which has introduced educational internet portal www.veles.edu.mk, so that any interested party, including parents, students, teachers may reach information regarding education system in the municipality.

Cooperation with civil sector is very good and the municipality is a partner to the Civil Organizations Center in Veles and provides offices free of charge. As the same time, Veles is the only municipality in Macedonia, which has delegated competencies for social protection to non-governmental organizations.

Relationship with donors is a result of hard work

Development ambitions in the Municipality of Veles are huge, and there is a list of plans still not implemented. Things do not always develop as we plan, particularly by reason of slow process of decentralization. The Mayor has not managed to accomplish the following goals during his mandate: revival of economy, attraction of investors and use of municipal competencies regarding local economic development and industrial zones. Veles is in a very difficult economic situation with a large number of the unemployed. During the good times in the past, it had 22,000 employed, and now it is only 14,000, which indicates the situation in the municipality. Surely, no Mayor can bare sole responsibility, but the present Mayor has an obligation to act. The municipality is developing infrastructure in the industrial zone expecting larger number of the employed in future.

As a local leader, Mr. Ace Kocevski considers it a mistake that no capital objects were built in the past when Veles was in good economic situation. Presently, an important project is to build embankment on the river Vardar for which the municipality will take a bank loan, and which will make Veles the first Macedonian municipality to do that for the purpose of project implementation. At the same time, central authorities are going to build a theatre. Municipality has a significant role in this project in terms of ensuring exemption of utility costs and providing construction site research.

Surely, mistakes have been made during the last six years. Mistakes are normal part of a working process; no one can work without making mistakes. The biggest mistake in the last years was the implementation of a pilot project for the municipal waste area and granting construction concession to an Italian partner.

Having ambition to be the first municipality with a project implemented in a public-private partnership and with support of the Ministry of Environment, Municipality of Veles got involved in this project. Unfortunately, no checking of the partner's business credibility was made, because the municipal authorities were confident in the estimates made by the Ministry, which resulted in uncompleted job by the partner and ultimately in a law suit. But, a lesson has been learned: when entering a public-private partnership, you should always check the credibility of persons and company involved regardless of the previous checks made by the state institutions.

Municipality of Veles has excellent relations with donors and representatives of the international community in Macedonia. Partly, these relations are based on the previous experience the Mayor had in the Ministry of Local Self-governance (as a team leader for the reform of LS) and his personal relations with a number of international representatives in Macedonia. However, these good relations with donors are the result of good work of the municipal administration. Donors want successful implementation of projects, which is why they come to Veles, and it is most frequently their first destination to be visited.

Partnership approach of Mr. Kocevski is also manifested in his ability to reconcile the stand points of the leading political party and the opposition at the local level. Cooperation with other institutions and people is very important to him. It is evident through his good cooperation and paid visits, whose objective is to exchange experience and good practice with other municipalities in the country. Cooperation with international community is also important, for lessons learned in other areas may be adjusted and applied in local community, which is the practice in the Municipality of Veles. Implementation of other best practice adjusted to the local specific conditions is one of the characteristics of the Municipality of Veles.

Worthy of his famous predecessors

Surely, he would run for the elections again, says Mr. Kocevski. He is proud of and happy for knowing what it means to be a Mayor. It is a much better role compared to the role of a Parliament representative, even a minister. A Mayor has a large area for proving his competencies and capacities particularly in Veles, which is a big challenge, for one needs to be worthy of his famous predecessors and historical names of the city. He thinks that it is important that he has chosen a professional work in the municipality instead of a parallel engagement in one of the companies.

The most challenging test set before Mr. Kocevski during these six years was related to ecology and environmental issues and pollution caused by *Lead and Zink Smelting Works* situated in the city. The question was: “What is the way to encourage healthy environment without having the workers employed in the Smelting Works understand it as an attack to their jobs (1,400 employees and at least 3,000 votes) or to maneuver and give them support in order to gain their votes in the elections. He decided to remain loyal to his principles related to the protection of environment, because no profit should be more important than the health of citizens.

The biggest problem of the local leaders in the Balkans is related to the crisis of the system of values. People of insufficient qualities are valued much more than they worth, those who curry favor to their superiors telling them what they want to hear instead of truth or expert opinion. Politics may be a generator of this, because such people are on the election candidate lists. They become state officials but they are unequal to their responsibilities and feel it as a burden. Their careers have no logical gradual development and in accordance with it, they do not manage their roles very well. These officials usually do not occupy right places and cannot be expected to be good leaders. They are late in development and cannot be leaders, and if the members of their teams feel their insecurity, the question is are they going to be dedicated to their jobs.

Our social environment has produced a small number of good leaders in the past years. It suffocates these people, very often they make international success showing that they are capable of handling much stronger competition compared to the one in their local community. Successful Macedonian artists and sportsmen who have made international career are the best indicator for this. We have competent people, but it often happens that they first become recognized internationally and then locally.

Being elected as a Mayor gives him a legal legitimacy to represent interests of the citizens. But leadership does not mean election at the elections. This means a summary of characteristics. One can be a Mayor, but it does not mean he/she is a good leader. A leader must have good organizational capacities, be always determined about what he/she wants and must try to use every situation up to the maximum. Local leader should try to do something very significant for his/her local community but also for the region. Therefore, he is not content with everyday activities related to infrastructure issues; a challenge for him is to try to do make Veles developed and recognizable among other municipalities.

His vision of Tomislavgrad is related to social environment, where people live a happy life, from which they can travel everywhere in the world, which builds bridges of cooperation with other and different people...

Zdravko Prka, Mayor of Tomislavgrad

Municipality where people can live a happy life

Written by: Branka KUŠLJUGIĆ

He has found a motive to run for a Mayor in the need for changing the atmosphere of distrust, created, according to him, through ill-managed politics by his predecessors, which could not offer hope to the citizens of Tomislavgrad that this relatively small and underdeveloped community has capacity to make progress. At the time of his election, Tomislavgrad, like other communities in BH, had suffered from economic problems and inertia of the previous authority to retrieve taxes as a potential source of municipal income. Citizens did not show particular confidence in the municipal authority, resenting its non-transparent model of work. Quality of public services was not either at the expected level.

“I could see a wrong policy being implemented. I did not want to give up, for things must be improved. I saw that the existing processes could be enhanced.”

People understood that they should work

Municipal administration of Tomislavgrad has seven departments with 70 employees, out of whom 50% have secondary education. Municipal administration has a chronic lack of highly educated staff. Young people from Tomislavgrad mainly study at Split or Zagreb Universities, hence very few return to the town. Those who do return rarely consider employment in the public services as a priority. Recruitment of personnel from larger and developed surrounding municipalities in BH is not easy and simple. Before the war, Tomislavgrad had been one of the most underdeveloped municipalities in BH, and today, it is still a social environment offering moderate social activities particularly in winter season. Since old times, this has been a town to leave and very rarely to come to. It has been known of one of the largest economic migrations in the Western Europe, and in the past few years weekly migrations to the Republic of Croatia have increased. It becomes a busy town only during summer season, when a large number of emigrants arrive for summer holidays.

Young people in this municipality have no interest in social activities. Mr. Prka says: “Young people are full of energy, rebellion and indignation. Interestingly, we have allocated money from the budget for youth projects for their social activities, but they show low interest in getting involved.” The most significant source of income for the population is money transfers from abroad. According to the Mayor, living standard of the municipal households is much higher compared to the public standard.

As an employee of the municipal administration, Mr. Prka has observed all its deficiencies and weaknesses, thus he was determined to change them. His great advantage was in his previous knowledge in the administrative matters and functioning, so he knew what kind of problems he was going to encounter in his endeavors to introduce changes. The fact that he was not discouraged by it says a lot about his character: determination, courage and persistence. He emphasizes his obstinacy as his virtue.

Mr. Prka has accepted to do some serious work putting things in order, for he thought that citizens deserve authority better than the previous one. The authorities that they will not consider their enemy, but a partner with whom they will create conditions for more jobs with motivating not depressing working environment. Mr. Prka continuous: “My goal was to convince the citizens that authority was not an enemy. I have tried to create conditions where majority of changes serve to the majority of population. I put an emphasis on different programs, to renovate

school premises, so that teachers do not come to schools frowned, but have nice working conditions, and we have 22 schools. We have made large progress in the environment protection. We have positive economic growth. Private standard of citizens is rather high. We have old people's home and we provide cash benefits. GDP is still far from the pre-war level. We have 2,500 unemployed people registered by the Employment Bureau, whereas 1,500 work in Croatia. I estimate that programs related to energy and incentives for agriculture increase employment rate. Our plan is to open cheese production facility. People have realized that they need to work. Previous opinion was that they should be provided with jobs and work. Today, self-employment programs are already accepted. I am glad to see that more and more educated people decide to start up their businesses.”

His vision of Tomislavgrad is related to a social environment, where people live a happy life, from which they can travel everywhere in the world, which builds bridges of cooperation with other and different people, which preserves its specific characteristics, but respects other social environments, and protects and carefully uses its natural resources.

His vision is: Municipality where people live a happy life. I want citizens to love their social environment, and living conditions to be improved. I want to preserve environment in future, so it becomes cleaner, I want municipality to have road connections with South and North, East and West, with Mostar and Banja Luka. Municipality should be a cross-road of modern highways. I want this place to be famous of its production of organic food. I want to improve tourism in BH, including Risovac and Kupres; I want ethno tourism to be developed, so that people can live here on seaside and continental tourism. I do not want to see foreigners buy everything. I am not xenophobic, but I prefer it to be someone local, not that we sell everything we own.”

It was not possible for Mr. Prka to develop public welfare and improve quality of life of the citizens under the conditions he found upon resuming his post without defined, responsible and transparent actions of the municipal administration, so the focus of his work was modernization of the municipal administration and its services for citizens.

Citizens monitor work of municipal administration

Tomislavgrad is one of the first municipalities in BH, which accepted the concept of e-administration, which is the use of information technologies in the process

of executing administrative affairs and provision of civil services, thus today it sets an example of a contemporary model of public service. The first thing Mr. Prka, the Mayor, wants to show you is a very modern Civil Services Center. In this very nice Center, municipal servants provide services to citizens based on the very modern “all on one place” model. The Mayor will proudly show you the book of impressions containing only words of praise for the personnel and innovations applied. He considers this project together with the reconstruction of the Town Hall, which is in progress, the crown of his work. He emphasizes that his formal education in technical engineering together with the previous experience gained in the municipal administration has helped him significantly to be persistent in the implementation of this project in Tomislavgrad. He has good knowledge in information technologies, which, as he says, “helps him to involve less energy in his work, although he very often works 20 hours per day”.

Municipal information system network provides citizens and entrepreneurs with timely information and their active participation in the life of the municipality. Service provision procedures are simple, quick and efficient, they can be found on the municipal website, and documents can be obtained in electronic form. Mr. Prka says that you can check any time in the system about the case being processed.

Apart from e-management concept, the municipality has implemented *Law on the Free Access to Information* since 2003. Law on the Free Access to Information is a public welfare and all citizens of Tomislavgrad have the right to request free access to all information owned by the municipal administration. Information is enlisted in the Index and Access to Information Register. Index, Information Register, Access to Information Manual, as well as the Manual are regularly updated at least twice a year, which is the task of the information officer. This officer is responsible for processing the received requests and providing the requested information within the deadline of 15 days from the day the request was filed. Also, upon the reception of the request, the information officer is obliged to forward it to the competent service or Municipal Council within the deadline of three days. The Mayor himself, Head of Department or the Secretary of the Municipal Council is obliged to reply to the filed requests within seven days. Access to information is free of charge, except in cases when information is provided in hard copy, disk or CD. Request forms are available to the citizens in the Service Center.

Citizens have the right to lodge complaint regarding the functioning of the municipal institutions and bodies or their personnel. In case of a complaint, municipal bodies are obliged to reply to the citizens and legal persons within

the deadline of 30 days. A complaint may be lodged on the available format or a questionnaire also available in the Services Center or simply be entered in the Book of Complaints. A complaint can be also lodged through a telephone line.

The work of municipal services has been modernized with the implementation of innovations and has become completely public. Citizens have insight in the municipal activities and may participate in decision-making process. Service level has improved including the time of service delivery. Communication between citizens and municipality has also been enhanced, which increased the level of trust towards authority and its institutions.

In addition to this, all municipal services have been computerized with a unique data base enabling internal exchange of data. Mr. Prka is proud to say: “We have internet, central host receiving all cases and requests, which are forwarded electronically to the final user: department and the authorized person. The entire process of data processing is transparent.”

„Our people do not like a state that is regulated. Every change has its followers and opponents. Citizens support changes only when they see a final product, kilometers of roads, buildings in construction, or schools better equipped.” Mr. Prka has shown the quality of a true leader by introducing changes despite a significant resistance of a traditionally conservative social environment.

During the initial talks about introduction of innovations in the municipal administration, there was a certain resistance by employees, since only a small number of them understood the essence of the changes. Majority of them, already accustomed to the traditional model of work, had a dilemma about whether they were capable of adjusting to the new concept, for they were not familiar with and did not use information technologies. A number of them did oppose to the new concept pointing out that they were at the end of their years of service and it was already too late for them to change. However, the Mayor was persistent, and as the project progressed, the resistance weakened. People started training and their self-assurance and common spirit improved and the new energy flew through the building. Although the project has been implemented already for four years, there are still those who rather let the expert to carry out some more complex computer operations. This expert is an engineer of mathematics, who was brought by the Mayor from the neighboring municipality of Livno, and who is now Head of IT Project Division, and who also maintains computer system and updates municipal website.

Development of a modern archive according to the latest standards is also in progress. One big room in the attic of the Town Hall is being redecorated for this purpose. Shelves were made by the students of local schools. As of year 1990, the archive had been neglected, so a number of documents were permanently lost. Mr. Prka says that people do not understand the significance of archive. “We have designated one person who will manage archive and take care about the filing of documents, so we want to train this person in order to be able to work according to the contemporary standards.”

He motivated people with his example

As he says, Mr. Prka has a very reliable and professional team, who together with him, organizes the activities of the municipal services, draft development project proposals aiming at the improved quality of life of citizens, and implement these projects. He points out that at the time when he was elected in 2000 he was lucky that the *Law on Civil Service* was not so strict with respect to the employment procedure, as it is today, so he could select a team of people, who were devoted to his concept of changes. He says: “Today, I have a team of people I can rely on, and when I am away, the municipal administration can be equally operational as if I was here.”

The selection of high quality associates, who are loyal to his development concept and vision, is not quite an easy job. “It is a problem to find associates in small municipalities, for high quality people run away from politics. You can never be sure about the right choice. Some of them put their private interests before general interests and I had to terminate our cooperation”, says Mr. Prka.

But, nevertheless he motivated people with his own example. “I had to work up to 200% of my own capacity.” He is sorry that the municipal administration does not have ordinance on the rewarding and penalizing of employees, but he will make efforts that it is adopted in future. He emphasizes: “It hurts me a little bit, because I failed to reward people who deserved it. Their basic motive was to help me, since they had accepted my offer only as my friends, although they had capacity and chance to work in other financially better places.”

Communication with citizens is good, although he thinks that it can be even better. The level of satisfaction of citizens with the functioning of municipal services is regularly evaluated through surveys. Over 60% of citizens think that

municipal administration is well functioning. When he became a Mayor, Mr. Prka introduced a rule that twice a week (Monday and Wednesday) citizens may come to his office and inform him about their problems. “But, citizens come every day, those who have real problems and those who are not in real need thinking that the Mayor is almighty. I meet my citizens in the street everyday; I am at their disposal for 24 hours. Some of them are satisfied, some not. Those who are not satisfied may use hotline on Radio Tomislavgrad show without censorship.” Since recently, he meets his citizens only once a month aiming to convince them that his associates may equally solve their problems. He believes that he works the best way he knows, and if he made some mistakes, it was not on purpose. “My biggest mistakes are related to poor judgment about issues that should be put as priority. It is difficult to make balance. If I could, I would have annulled some projects, and include other in the budget.”

He accepts the fact that the Mayor is a person who will be first criticized by the citizens, if they are not happy, but he cannot accept if these critics are presented in a vulgar way without respecting the position he occupies. “If you open some website, you can only see spitting. I called on these people: come, Town Hall is open for everybody. The reasons for such behavior are based on different political affiliation, personal intolerance and disagreements. One can find solution for these disagreements only in argumentative conversation.”

Discussions and public hearings about capital investments are held in the municipal administration, including budget. Local communities propose infrastructure development projects. Municipal administration introduced a municipal herald and info desk.

Mr. Prka has not only introduced innovations in the municipal administration in Tomislavgrad, but he has opened it towards the rest of the world. He has influenced his citizens to elevate their views about nationally and culturally different social environments. It is a long-term job to change the way of thinking, perception and viewpoints of his citizens. However, Mr. Prka has succeeded to move things forward, which is presented in a symbolic slogan: History was written in Tomislavgrad, let us write the future.” Mr. Prka points out: “I have built friendly relations with authorities coming from different nations. I was criticized when I went to Banja Luka or Sarajevo. The municipality was overwhelmed with Croatian nationalism. I want friendly relations with other municipalities and regions.”

„I do not separate authority as county, federal or state. Federation helped us to build by pass road around the town. It expects from us to draft project proposals. Cooperation is good and we have to impose ourselves. Suburban areas are in less favorable position, because they are far from the sight. We have come closer, there is space for that. For example, we need a law on mountain areas and municipalities, for our roads are cut off during winter, and students need to go to school!”

Based on its geographical position, spiritual, traditional and cultural and religious characteristics, Tomislavgrad belongs more to Dalmatia than BH. Since it is situated in the “Bosnian suburbs” (it is connected to the BH Capital with 180 km of poor roads), and it is close to Dalmatia, through its history the population had been more directed towards the neighboring country in their everyday life, thus never succeeding to establish true links with other peoples living in BH. Catholic Church also had a significant role in the process of strengthening the ties with Croatia. Majority of population have a very strong national identity. Mr. Prka has a very good cooperation with the representatives of Catholic Church, who are the highest spiritual and moral authorities. He often works together with them on different projects related to the youth population in particular.

As he says, the interests of his citizens are his top priority, thus he never “bends his back” before any other party, including his own, and he is not ready to compromise against the interests of the citizens of Tomislavgrad. Mr. Prka points out that the relations within the Council were not good before direct elections for the Mayor. The Council was a kind of authority where only deficiencies were pointed out without capacity to be solved. “They tried to discipline me within my party, but I never allowed it, for I never wanted to be docile. I need to make decisions that are in the interest of all, so I behave accordingly... My party recognizes the fact that I did more for the party than it did for me. I contributed that the perception of my party has been changed. It used to be perceived as a very right-wing party, and I personally tried to change its course towards right center. There is no nationalism today, and the structure of membership has improved. However, the leadership of the party should show more respect.”

Mr. Prka says that mistakes are inevitable in everybody’s work. It particularly happens when you are not supported by the state, when you operate within poorly regulated and complex administration system as it is in BH. He stresses that he has tried to eliminate errors, and particularly that he did not make intentional mistakes.

According to him, dedication to his work is the most important factor of his success. He says he works 20 hours per day. He stresses that it is necessary and that without full dedication to the obligations of the Mayor, very often at the expense of his family life, nothing can happen. He thinks that the Mayor's position is one of the most challenging due to the level of responsibility it bears as well as due to the variety of tasks. "Everything needs to be subjected to this job, even family and friends. If I would start from the beginning, I would think twice whether to accept the candidacy, but I would keep the same global direction."

He explains that a Mayor in BH must be prepared to confront with even very bad perception of politicians, which is the reason that many high quality people avoid to be engaged in politics. "A big threat to this country is that criminals get involved in politics. Politics has been criminalized. Moral people are scared to be in politics. One should differentiate the truth, not make sensations. It will be dangerous, if politics is run by criminals in future."

However, he thinks that the Mayor's position brings satisfaction. According to him, it is not a job to be done, but a challenge to improve your social environment and it is a love towards your local community. Asked whether he enjoys being a Mayor, he says: "It is a nice feeling to be the first man in your municipality, not everyone can be a Mayor. I am honored by the trust I have been given. I will never intentionally do something to the shame of my citizens." His greatest success, as he believes, is the improved opinion and perception of this job.

He finds it a devastating fact that there are those who run for this position without proper references or ideas what to do. There were six candidates at the last local elections in Tomislavgrad. He believes that his previous experience in the local administration helped him a lot.

Change of mentality

The example of the municipality of Tomislavgrad, the most underdeveloped municipality in BH until 1992, shows that reform processes in local administration can be implemented with a proper leader.

Introduction of information technologies is not the greatest success of Mr. Prka, but their use to change the mentality of the employed in the municipal administration and their perception of local authority. In a traditional and conservative

social environment such as Tomislavgrad, it requires excellent knowledge in the local mentality, capacity to create local coalitions and compromise without jeopardizing basic principles. It also requires determination and persistence to implement changes at the early stage when the resistance of the community is at its peak.

The success of Mr. Zdravko Prka, as a leader in his team, is emphasized in BH and international circles as an example that “it is possible to accomplish the impossible, if you are determined to implement your vision of better future”.

However, the greatest success of Mr. Prka is yet to be achieved. The municipality has big development plans, especially in the area of tourism and energy, which is not capable of implementing on its own. Mr. Prka has built foundations: efficient and professional local administration to be a reliable partner to the potential investors. And the level of tolerance of other and different people, which was supported by Mr. Prka, will be a significant factor in the selection process of the future strategic partners. With a slogan “The history was written in Tomislavgrad, let us write the future, too” the municipality headed with Mr. Prka is trying to direct the strong national Croatian identity of the local people towards the thinking about better future. And the better future in the era of globalization, particularly in tourism, is based on the openness, tolerance and respect of other and different people.

It is evident from the statements of Mr. Prka that he wishes his citizens be the future investors, who are presently working in the Western Europe. He truly hopes that he has started a process which will make Tomislavgrad a place “that you leave, but where you return to”.

There are no results without work. His professional and private success Mr. Janev accepts as a result of a hard work based on knowledge and continuous learning. “Learning is a life-long process, you can never know everything.”

Ljubomir Janev, the Mayor of Kočani

Common success is also a personal success

Written by: Gligor STOJKOV

Kočani is a Macedonian municipality with a second highest municipal capacity index¹ according to the research made by USAID in 2007. Between 2005 and 2007, three continuous researches were made, according to which Kočani is on the second place as a result of the index line improvement for 280%. At the same time, the town was proclaimed the best regulated and the cleanest town in Macedonia, whereas according to the research made by magazine “Forum”, it is one of the most desirable places to live in Macedonia. Every third citizen of Macedonia wants to live in Kočani, if we exclude Skopje.

According to the research made for Open Society Institute in Budapest, Kočani is an example of the efficient local leadership in terms of its most effective use of international assistance. “Local leadership in Kočani is an example of a successful project planning and implementation. When a local leadership supports or directly participates in the activities of a Working Group on the Local

¹ *Municipal capacity index research* was conducted three times a year in the period 2005–2007. Its basic aim was to make the results of the training and technical assistance for capacity development visible and transparent and to identify potential changes. The processed results are used for the comparison of municipal capacity, evaluation of its growth rate in the researched period.

Development, results of this activity will be positive. In relation to this, systematic approach to the activity coordination in Kočani, combined with the existing common vision on the municipal development, maintains the activity of the Working Group on the Local Development at the high level and ensures active participation of all members.”²

Time for action

Municipal administration of Kočani has 48 employees. In accordance with the delegated competences and pursuant to the *Law on Local Self-governance*, Departments of Physical Planning, Economic Development and Tax Administration were established. These departments have taken over the competencies of the state administration, whereas the number of employees remained the same. The aim was to alter the image of the municipal administration as slow and inefficient institution, so that it is more efficient compared to the state bodies. “Decentralization will be justified only if we enhance and accelerate our services”, Mr. Janev says.

As a man coming from the economic environment, Mr. Ljubomir Janev has succeeded in gaining confidence that some of the issues that had been previously neglected would be resolved during his mandate. During his election campaign, he managed to impose his proposals relative to municipal development, which are common from today’s prospective, but at that time they were visionary and brave.

Many people found this switch from economy to politics rather odd, but as he was guided by his desire for a change, Mr. Ljubomir Janev felt that it was the right time for action. His wish to instigate changes in the functioning of municipal administration and to devote himself to the citizens motivated him to accept the invitation by political party. His intention was to improve the quality of life of the citizens with the assistance of the new relatively young people, who had accomplished something in their previous career in the economic environment and who were renown in their local communities as honest people.

² Gligor Stojkov, 2007. *How to improve implementation of strategic plans for local economic development in Macedonia*, Open Society Institute, Initiative for the Reform of Local Self-governance and Public Service, Budapest, Skopje, Macedonia

Combination of youth and experience

Experience gained in management jobs in the economic environment has formed his profile of a leader, which is very important in business operations. He made it clear to all his employees that there should not be any division to old or young staff members or any other kind of division between them. Good working atmosphere means that all employees are equally treated by their superiors, as well as it means a combination of youth with their good knowledge in modern technologies and processes, and the experience of senior administrative personnel, which is necessary in the process of making important decisions. In the beginning, the basic task was to establish rational and correct utilization of municipal potential in relation to the available human resources.

His knowledge in infrastructure development aspects, construction business operations, as well as his experience in the economic environment helps him to understand the potential of the municipality of Kočani and how to use it. He has begun to change the operational model of the municipal administration with bringing young and common people to work in the administration and with introduction of team work, where everyone has a specific role and task.

Younger team members were involved in the activities related to international donor agencies with an aim to learn their best practice. Municipality of Kočani was among the first municipalities, who set up a team for development and implementation of municipal development projects and programs. The quality of this team is proved by the fact that a number of team members now work with international organizations that are partners of the municipality. More experienced municipal administrative workers, who proved themselves in the meantime as good workers, were promoted to the positions where they were able to make best organization of activities and to improve administrative procedures and to enhance the activities of the Municipal Council.

Kočani is a good example of a successful combination of youth and experience, which was not easy to implement. A high quality combination of different people with different skills, competences and somewhat opposite way of work. There was a specific need for a manager with a strong organization capacity.

At the time when LER is not an obligation of the municipality, municipal administration detected a need for such a department and a strategic development document. This lesson was learned during the visits to other municipalities abroad, where the hosts would always present their economic development strategy documents. Hence, Kočani was the first municipality in Macedonia, which developed this strategy and the first one to present it to the interested parties. Department for Economic Development established at that time with its GIS division still provides support to the municipal development projects.

Since the municipal administration was not computerized and was without sufficient knowledge in information technologies, which was an aggravating circumstance, a decision was made to start with the preparations for introduction of GIS as an instrument of the future municipal development. Despite difficulties, mainly financial, the concept of the future development of the municipal administration included definition of the main goals related to technical equipment, adequate training and pooling. Using chess terminology, a number of good strategic moves in the beginning and an insight in the future three-four steps, made it possible to win a game.

Apart from positive working atmosphere, a good assessment of human resources is necessary for a high quality team work, so that the team members are assigned the right jobs within the team. It is very important that the employees accept this model and adopt certain way of thinking. It happened in Kočani that a number of employees ignored their colleagues for having refused to get involved in the process of developing certain documents, under the excuse that it was not in their terms of reference. Still, they soon realized that only a common success is their success, too. It is sometimes necessary that a job is done by someone who is not busy at the moment, instead of waiting for a colleague who has it in his/her job description. Everyone should complete his/her tasks within his/her abilities, but we should also help a colleague, when there is a mutual result at stake.

The third “trick” is setting an example, which has a great impact on the team work. Setting an example has a great significance regarding authority and team building, where each member of the team “is ready to die for the team”. In all his previous managerial positions, Mr. Janev had this in mind. If a manager or a team leader arrives first and leaves the last, and if he/she follows the rules, then employees will not easily breach those rules.

Additional “trick” is to show respect for staff members, because they appreciate it. Subtle approach, capacity to listen to your colleagues, avoiding arrogant and authoritative behavior ensures good team play and good quality of work.

Engineer’s approach

According to Mr. Janev, formal education has a large impact on Mayor’s position. Engineers, especially those who worked in the executive positions, have different approach to problem settlement, which is an operational approach. An engineer contemplates how to design a project and put his idea on paper, how to develop it, how to make a plan and implement this idea based on the available resources. There are a lot of checking points in this process. If the results of the previous work were positive, then we can continue. If not, the idea is abandoned and an engineer seeks for different solution. Basically, this is an engineer’s approach, which according to Mr. Janev, gives a small advantage to technical persons before social science approach, where it is more formal, and very often we look for the reasons why a particular idea is impossible to be implemented.

Brave actions

Right in the beginning, one of the main tasks put before the municipal administration by Mr. Janev was to implement programs funded by international donors. Before his mandate, there were no projects of this kind in the municipality of Kočani. The first goal was to get access to different donor programs, and so far they have been successful and they are in the process of developing a large number of projects. In the first 4-5 months there was no positive response, so they wondered if their approach was good. Then the first positive results were achieved, which was a beginning of the development of good relations with donor organizations, which created an image of a municipality with defined goals and determination to achieve them. In several cases this “positive image” resulted in additional funds for future projects.

Municipality of Kočani was among first municipalities in Macedonia, which made *Strategy for LER* in 2002, whereas it was the very first municipality to promote it. This document, developed at the time when it was not a practice among Macedonian municipalities, built foundations together with the *Local*

Environment Action Plan and *Master Plan for the Development of Tourism* for local development processes with rational utilization of resources and creation of opportunities for future generations.

Brave management actions lead to continuous positive results, and some of them are of special significance and we remember them long. Mr. Janev abandoned dilemma related to the extension of work, thus confirming the municipal development course. Appointing young people on managerial positions in the Public-Utility Company was not welcomed by the public. However, the outcome of this was excellent in terms of the improved collection of payments, and maintained or improved level of utility services. Citizens were able to participate in the company's management process through the Service Beneficiary Council.

The projects, which change the habits of people, are of the specific importance for the municipality out of several reasons. First and foremost, these projects are expected to create great public resistance given the existing habits. At the same time, significant funds are needed for these projects, which are not always available. It means that their implementation requires additional joint efforts of all participants. With respect to Kočani, this was a case with the construction of the town chapel. Despite its long construction process, it has been only recently finished. Upon the finalization of its construction, there was a fear in the municipality related to the change of the traditional funeral ceremony, which started at the home of the deceased as opposed to the newly established ceremony from the chapel. After comprehensive information campaign based on the confidence between the citizens and the municipal administration, the opposition was irrelevant and, finally, citizens accepted it well.

Communication-based solutions

With respect to the communication with citizens, municipal administration insists on the use of traditional ways. Mr. Janev uses his visits to local communities for direct communication with citizens and conflict resolution. In addition to this, Mayor Janev receives citizens once a week, and he regularly uses electronic mail to reply to the inquiries of citizens. Municipal website is regularly updated with explanation of all the procedures for issuing documents and development municipal strategic documents.

During preparation of strategic documents, municipality tries to involve as many citizens and experts from different areas of expertise as possible in order to have their positive influence on the process of developing these documents. Citizens also have access to these documents through written comments, which are published, and through public hearings. Citizens and all budget users have an opportunity to be involved in budget planning and adoption by giving their proposals and priorities.

Citizens are informed about municipal, administrative and other issues through municipal information center, which was awarded with the EU “Infopoint” award, and through newspapers “Info-Kočani” publishing local news. Information center is now one window providing entire service to the citizens.

Municipality may be proud of its cooperation with partners in many areas. In the area of culture, economy and social welfare, cooperation was established with cities in Bulgaria, Turkey, Slovenia, Ukraine and Serbia. At the same time, very fruitful cooperation has been established with a large number of international donor organizations and offices of foreign states in Macedonia. Based on this cooperation many projects were implemented in 2006 in different areas of social and economic life. Eight infrastructure projects worth of € 292,000 were implemented, and three projects related to the protection of environment and rational utilization of geo-thermal potential in the amount of € 1,500,000, three projects in the area of economic development in the amount of € 30,000, and two projects in the area of social welfare in the amount of € 20,000. Activities in this area continued throughout year 2007 during which a total of 42 projects from different areas applied for funds in the total amount of about € 2,000,000, whereas 17 projects have been approved and implemented so far in the amount of € 930,000.

Mr. Ljubomir Janev believes that there is no chance for the implementation of plans without broad cooperation at all levels. Inter-municipal and regional cooperation is presently popular in Macedonia, which is an imperative for development process, for no municipality can become developed in an underdeveloped region. Kočani is a leading municipality with respect to its participation in the implementation of various regional projects with its own funds. Mr. Janev has been appointed a president of the Regional Development Council in Bregalnica region. The trust of his colleagues, which he appreciates very much, is a result of his previous experience based on cooperation and partnership. Finally, the

cooperation with the central authority is very important. It takes a lot of work to accomplish positive changes and remove obstacles threatening cooperation and progress-generating projects as a basis of this cooperation.

Basic characteristic of cooperation is that is based on compromise. In the beginning, this cooperation requires certain sacrifice, but in a long-term perspective it contributes to the achievement of results. If it succeeds to position itself as a good region, results in this municipality will be accomplished through regional development projects. In many cases the first impression of citizens not to make compromises with other municipalities must be overcome in order to have successful project. It is clear today that a developed region cannot be composed of underdeveloped municipalities. This pressure put by citizens and the public is connected to the public positions. Decisions made by leaders are not always popular, but they need to be made, executed and defended, particularly if it settles a dispute between two parties.

Without local electronic media

Kočani is a municipality that promotes sustainable development through development of economic and production activities, and development of small and middle scale businesses with clean technologies, preservation of green and clean spaces in the town and paying attention to social issues.

New economic industrial zone covering 100 ha of urban land with 80 companies has been completed. This zone is the first one with such purpose in Macedonia and decreased utility payments are used as incentives for businesses to invest. The idea is to direct funds toward investments in production, so that businessmen are not exhausted at the first stage of production process.

Despite the efforts made by the municipal administration, economic situation is not good. Economy in Kočani is at basic level and was the first to suffer the consequences of transition. At that time, the town “saved itself” with agriculture production and small-scale businesses, and this was not possible in other municipalities. Nowadays, former big companies are returning to business but only as small scale operations and with small number of employees. Municipality did not manage to transform the existing industrial zone into tax free or free economic zone due to the lack of support by central authorities. The fact that this zone has been designed and partly constructed supports the development of the town, but

it would be better to have free economic zone. In any case, active support to the business sector could be better, which would increase their interest for cooperation. Tourism was not encouraged enough despite efforts made in the last years.

A specific situation in Kočani had particularly negative evaluation. It is the lack of electronic media. Radio “Kočani” is closed, because according to the Law on Municipalities, municipalities are not allowed to have their own electronic media. Other local electronic media do not exist in Kočani, which is beyond influence of the municipal administration.

Water energy in the Kočani region is another area where Mr. Janev wants to achieve better results. Economic utilization of geo-thermal waters could be enhanced, and the issue of drinking water in Kočani and construction of hydro-electric dam on the Orzarska River could be resolved with a little more courage and persistence. Still, it is a huge project and certainly requires support from central authority.

„You can never know it all“

There are no results without hard work. His professional and personal success Mr. Janev sees as a result of a profound work based on knowledge and continuous learning. “You learn throughout your life, you can never know it all”, says Mr. Janev. In addition to continuous learning, he has a capacity to accept other experience and apply it adequately.

It is very good for a young man to have a standard career development, for you gather experience along the way and you learn management in practice. With respect to construction business, Mr. Janev thinks it is very important that there is no place for vanity and that the construction manager cannot leave his colleagues in the lurch. His adaptation capacity enabled him to overcome the challenges of budget operations, and during his mandate as a minister he faced the challenges of treasury operations. During his mandate as a minister for environment and physical planning, he encouraged vertical cooperation with municipalities, which resulted in a large number of LEAPs.

To be very strict is not his characteristic; he believes that the progress of employees is possible without penalizing. He thinks that with good and dedicated work everyone gets what he/she deserves. He does not want to encourage unrealistic

expectations with his associates or citizens, for failing to accomplish goals results in disappointment. He is careful in relations with people and he tries to keep his promises given during the election campaign.

If he could start from the beginning, he would take the same path with a same goal, which is the affirmation of local community. Now, he would know how to act or react in specific situations when he was caught in surprise, and he would make certain changes of technical and structural nature. Management of an institution is a great acknowledgement, but also a big challenge. You always wonder if you could meet the requirements of your position. But, the fate is knocking on your door, and only if you open the door, you can find out if you are up to your tasks. If you do not open them, surely you will not be able to meet those requirements...

Not always from the beginning

The objective of every country in the West Balkans is integration and active membership in the EU. The name designating the territory of the former Yugoslavia is not important and that is the present state. If we all aspire after the same goal, we should eliminate mortgages relevant to this territory. We all have the biggest challenges ahead of us in removing these mortgages and imposed conflict situations. It is particularly important for all of us, for we shall surely meet at the same place, where all these differences will have to be overcome.

Based on the mentality and experience, we are very close. To find strength to go along this path together and to promote ourselves at the world market is very important, but also very difficult on this territory. Common problems should bring us together instead of drifting us apart; good neighborhood approach in the process of expanding cooperation together with settlement of disputes. The progress of a border municipality contributes to the development of the municipalities on the other side of the border.

How to enhance local leadership

Flow of information on the accomplishments of the local leaders is of great significance for raising awareness about leadership. Exchange of experience is important, for present leaders use experience of others. Different forms of integration, interactive cooperation, study tours and learning from each other would

contribute to development of leadership. Leadership benchmark would also help us to realize if someone is a good leader or not.

Leadership requires motivation. When a leader makes progress, there is a whole team of people behind him, which is a proof of his/her success and of the fact that people trust this leader. If a leader makes progress, with no team to back him, something is wrong with the leader and with his team. Perhaps, we are still in a thrall to old habits. The previous rule was: gather incompetent people around you, and you will be a competent and successful leader. Today, it is not like that anymore. It is important to have competent and professional people on the team united in common goal and ideas.

Young people should be given a chance to get involved in the system. Previous years have created a vacuum in the promotion of leaders and managers. Before, the companies were the source of leadership, and then they were transferred to the social sector. Nowadays, we have stagnation in this area, and often we make mistake in starting up something from the very beginning instead of continuing from where our predecessors stopped. We should base our work on the results of our predecessors, not to start each time from the beginning.

A direct recommendation for leaders would be: take a challenge and solve the problems! Resolution of issues is what matters. If we do not face the problems, we will not meet requirements of the citizens and will not try to settle local issues. You should improvise, if there is a need, but resolve the problems. Straight solutions are not allowed in this territory, so improvising and compromising are very important for successful work. It creates favorable conditions for good links between all levels and ultimate change of local mentality in relation to the quality.

His motive to run for candidacy was his belief that deeds are better than words and to do something good for his town. "I did not need a job. No money can compensate the fact I am so detached from my family."

Zoran Tegeltija, Mayor of the Municipality of Mrkonjić Grad

A feeling that we can

Written by: Stevo PUCAR

Mrkonjić Grad was almost completely destroyed during the war. Since then up to year 2005, and despite the fact that it was reconstructed, you could hear about this town in media only in relation to snowing or red rain. Apart from this news, this mountain area was known of the problems its citizens were facing. Low economy, high unemployment rate, poor education structure, bad health protection, and generally low living standards would describe life in Mrkonjic Grad in the post-war period. But, that was not the worst part. The worst part was the complete lack of optimism and initiative to change this situation. New Mayor Mr. Zoran Tegeltija, who was elected in 2004, has instigated this initiative. As the citizens of Mrkonjic Grad say, social, economic and cultural renaissance of this town has started with the election of the new Mayor.

Moral obligation

At that time, Mr. Zoran Tegeltija was already an established political figure. He did not need detailed analysis in order to comprehend situation in Mrkonjic Grad, even more so since he originated from this area. Almost total absence of perspective as well as an overall despair was the alarming situation. Young people were leaving the town as soon as an opportunity would arise. The biggest cause of dissatisfaction of the citizens was low employment rate and low living standards together with the lack of sports and cultural events as a consequence of the overall economic situation.

His motive to run for candidacy was his belief that deeds are better than words and to do something good for his town. "I did not need a job. No money can compensate the fact I am so detached from my family." However, he felt a strong moral obligation towards the town he was born in. Mrkonjic Grad was generally avoided, there was no initiative of any kind from the municipal administration, and that had to be changed.

Initial vision was "to make Mrkonjic Grad a real town again". He wanted to include Mrkonjic Grad in the group of towns where people are optimistic about their future and are proud with their town; a town with an intensive development of economic, social and cultural life; the town like Mrkonjic Grad used to be.

He put four key objectives before himself:

Change of depressive atmosphere in the town; Reform of local administration. Namely, there was not a single internal document defining rules and procedures for operating municipal administration, there was only one computer"; Support to private businesses; Affirmation of young people, more correctly, training for about 10 young people in about 10 areas, "because we did not have people of such profile".

The worst problem was to find professionals

The first step made by Mr. Zoran Tegeltija was to form competent management team in the municipal administration. As he says: "The worst problem was to find professionals. It will remain the biggest problem for another 100 years. Young people had to come to the municipal administration, whereas there was a surplus

of personnel with secondary education, and this problem is still present. There is a number of staff members, who have some knowledge based on experience; there is no real professional competition...I did not believe it was such a huge problem.

There are several students with municipal scholarships, who are to graduate this year. This is the area we should invest in, because people are capable of any creative work. Money cannot replace people, and people can find money.” We have brought professionals to the municipal administration, but this profile is still insufficient.

Municipal administration in Mrkonjic Grad was, as many other units in this environment, in a very bad shape. For example, there was not a single legal document to regulate the activities of the municipal administration, including employment structure. Services were provided in a totally bureaucratic manner, so the citizens “wondered” through the building, for they did not know whom to address. There was only one computer as a result of a donation, so requirements were processed manually, with no electronic database and software. This tells that there was no will to enhance the functioning of the municipal administration.¹ Law based deadlines for the processing of requirements filed by legal and physical persons were often exceeded especially with more complex services (e.g. housing issues).

Upon his election, Mr. Zoran Tegeltija has started a profound transformation of work in the municipal administration. He says: “With respect to the process of developing local administration we have done everything from technical point of view. And it took one year to accomplish it.” At that time, he had huge assistance from the USAID GAP “Administrative Accountability Project”. The changes were made in several directions: to improve services for citizens and to improve municipal, financial and human resources management. Services to citizens have improved through establishing modern IT center – window room for civil services, where citizens receive information about municipality and services it provides, etc.

In relation to the review and development of internal procedures and introduction of new solutions we have reduced waiting time for issuing town-planning, construction and land permits, thus creating the environment eligible for business development.

Municipal administration is well equipped with 40 computers and IT system and LAN network. Also, budget planning and its implementation have been

¹ It was possible to purchase computer equipment on the market, particularly second hand, under very low prices.

improved, and new accounting standards have been introduced in the public sector. This process was followed by continuous training for personnel working in the administration services.

Change of atmosphere

The first results of Mr. Tegeltija's work were visible already after several months following his election. He intended to accomplish first results very soon and to show that the time of change was coming. "In the beginning, we encouraged development of infrastructure in urban areas, and municipal administration and the construction of a sports hall." These first results had a significant impact on the life of people in the municipality of Mrkonjic Grad (infrastructure, municipal administration, sports hall, etc.), but the greatest impact was on the atmosphere in the town. Construction of the sports hall was a breaking point, when people noticed that things were started to change.

Long time paralysis of the town in the process of resolving the biggest problems was a consequence of a passive approach of the part of people, who primarily took care of their own interests having neglected development of their town. Resistance to the initial changes and distrust in their accomplishments did not come from the local community but from a number of people, who occupied influential posts in the previous period. Mr. Tegeltija says: "Ambitions that we brought and our projection of capital investments of about twenty million in five years seemed unreal for all those people, who used to be the authority for so many years." However, when it became obvious that these investments will be implemented, people understood that it was possible to make progress when you put some effort. This helped, that those who had doubts in the beginning, have recognized enthusiasm and energy of the new municipal leadership and have made a sort of compromise over the issue of development of the town.

Results are in compliance with the objectives

The work of the local administration improved significantly. Window room was open to provide all services in one place, training of the personnel was organized, IT equipment and network was established, whereas financial operations were modernized with a specialized software and budget planning.

Significant capital investments were made. About 37 km of local roads were covered with asphalt, several villages received water and sewage pipelines, street lights were installed everywhere, schools were reconstructed, and a sports hall was also built, etc. “We have built the street lights that no place in the Republic of Srpska has, not even Laktasi, Gradiska, Banja Luka. The whole town has lights now. Water pipeline has been constructed, roads in rural areas, and for less than two years we a sports hall was built: from a zero to the new building”, says the Mayor Tegeltija.

About 300 new jobs were created. Since 2004, municipal administration in cooperation with the Agency for Economic Development of Mrkonjic Grad gave incentives through several programs with direct or indirect measures for opening of 300 new jobs.

Young and educated people affirmed themselves. Municipal administration put efforts to employ all young people with university degree; hence there are no unemployed people with university degree registered at the Employment Bureau. Also, the municipality pays scholarships for about 150 students.

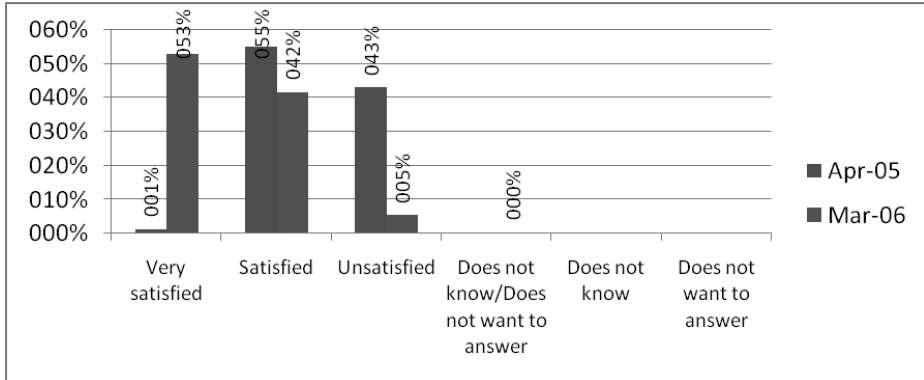
“The most important success of my team and me was that we have managed to change the atmosphere. The price of land has changed; many investors have appeared looking for locations to build shopping malls, factories, etc... The feeling that we could make change was the most important.”

Encouraging work

In addition to his goal to bring back optimism to the municipality of Mrkonjic Grad, Mr. Zoran Tegeltija had another goal to change the perception of the public in this town. The basic idea to make “this place a town again” was related to the wish that this municipality develops its attributes as an attractive cultural and tourist place eligible for economic investments, and known of its sports accomplishments and tradition. His plan was to achieve results first, and naturally the change of perception would follow as a logical consequence of this work. According to him, “when people see that you are working hard, they start paying attention and showing interest for the place...Development Bank used to have its branch in Mrkonjic Grad before, but it was not operating well. In the meantime, three other banks have opened their branches, and the fourth one arrives soon.”

New municipal leadership has introduced a new model of communication with citizens. In the past, majority of citizens had negative experience in contacts with municipal servants. With the election of Mr. Zoran Tegeltija for the Mayor, the attitude of citizens towards municipal administration significantly changes. Public survey on the opinion of the citizens towards municipal administration proves this.

The level of satisfaction of the citizens of Mrkonjic Grad with the municipal services



„Apparently, municipal administration of Mrkonjic Grad was closed towards media and citizens. We have opened it towards the citizens. We have informed them about every activity, and it is evident that they accepted this information with appreciation.”

Despite the initial great distrust between political parties in Mrkonjic Grad, a minimum respect of mutual interests related to the development of the local community has been gradually achieved. “The issue of the relations between political parties is always present. If you have unfavorable municipal structure, you have an obligation to allow a number of political parties to monitor the work of the municipal administration.” Up to what extent the development of local community is important for Mr. Zoran Tegeltija is evident from the fact that he has put much effort in achieving consensus between political options in Mrkonjic Grad. For example, his political party SNSD (The Union of Independent Social Democrats) is in coalition with SRS (Serbian Radical Party) at the local level, although these parties are severe opponents at the higher levels of authority. His deputy belongs to this party.

It was a similar situation with the representatives of local economy. “We have gained confidence of the representatives of local economy, who are mainly members of SDS party (Serbian Democratic Party), despite the large distrust in the beginning... Their trust is now so great that one man renovated locker rooms at the local stadium with his own funds, because he now wants to live here and his children to live here.”

In the period prior to mandate of Mr. Zoran Tegeltija, the crucial problem of the municipality of Mrkonjic Grad related to its relations with the entity level was a passive attitude of its leadership. Regardless of whether the members of their political party participated in the entity bodies or not, the municipality received very small funds from entity level. This particularly had an impact on the development process, but other problems existed as well such as utility problems, low level of cultural life, etc. Mr. Tegeltija decided to be more efficient in this area. The fact that members of the opposite political party participated at that time at the entity authority was not an obstacle to him. His approach was to design and initiate projects and offer partnership to the Government. As he says: “We expect from the Government only to participate, because we can allocate major part of the funds.”

This approach did not change when members of his political option came in power; however it is easier now to implement projects: “I am more relaxed now when it comes to the relations with the Government and other institutions, since the Prime Minister Mr. Milorad Dodik is a member of SNSD. The previous situation was very different.”

The only international project implemented in the Municipality of Mrkonjic Grad in the period 2005–2007 was GAP – “Government Accountability Project” funded by USAID. As far as Mayor Tegeltija is concerned, this project was on time; for it helped that the changes and positive results became visible soon. After that, there were no many other donors working seriously with local communities, so Municipality of Mrkonjic Grad did not receive major funds any more. Only small projects up to € 10,000 were approved. However, Mr. Zoran Tegeltija has an interesting point of view on this: “...their assistance is not so important to us from financial point of view, it is the trust we gain with this project that matters... Czech Government donated KM 20,000, whereas this money does not change much for us, what is important is the fact that the Check Ambassador comes to the opening.”

The power of personality

A road to success of Mr. Zoran Tegeltija, as of all good leaders, is different and unique. One of his attributes is that he was a good economist during his entire career – he always had a good balance between costs and benefits in all his businesses. He has continued to work the same way after he became the Mayor of the Municipality of Mrkonjic Grad. Also, the fact that he is a tolerant man and an optimist, but determined and focused on his goals probably contributed to his success.

However, he considers independency, integrity and powerful personality the best attributes of a good leader: “I even think that lack of knowledge is the least of problem. If you have an anonymous Mayor, who is not recognized in any institution, or in any area of the social life, than it is not good..., I had had a political position before I became a Mayor. It is my great advantage: when you do not have certain obligations, when you have an absolute support to be the Mayor, not that people have to fight for your position, so you are in debt to them. Those people who succeeded in building their position have great advantage.”

About what he leaves behind, he says: “When you choose a specific person, you need a year to prepare him, so that he understands that he is the candidate. He needs to contact the Government. You cannot propose a man for a Mayor who never entered the Government building, a man with no stature.” Evidently, this process is already under way for Mayor Tegeltija. What he will definitely leave to his successor is a small town with regulated infrastructure and a prospect to dedicate his/her work to the economic development of the Municipality.

“If I could start from the beginning, I would have the internal organization plan the first day of my mandate. I would fire surplus staff in a very short period.” The rest would be the same, because, as he believes, this is a maximum, which was possible to attain given the circumstances.

Mr. Zoran Tegeltija states the three key issues he had to face. The first issue was the lack of high quality and professional people. Persons who have capacity to be leaders are not born leaders but need to develop themselves up to the extent depending on their natural capacity and talent. If you do not develop yourself, you can have anything you want, even sufficient funds, but everything is in vain without highly profiled people.

The second issue is related to the political interactions within municipal administration. It often happens that Mayors have huge problems in their local assemblies regarding political obstructions, which threatens to paralyze the development of these local communities. True leaders, according to Mr. Tegeltija, are recognized by their capacity to reconcile different interests for the benefit of local community, and what they do to resolve this problem is useful information for everybody else.

The third problem is connected to the relations with the higher levels of authority. Governments still have a lot of competencies that they use as an instrument toward local self-governance. For example, they have a discretion right to allocate extra funds to municipalities. Without big autonomy, local self-governances remain dependent on the higher authorities. Bigger autonomy would mean bigger development opportunities.

Decision of Mr. Predrag Mijic to try to settle the issue of the constant lack of professionals with university degree by employing external associates is politically accountable act and intelligent strategy for capacity development of the municipal administration.

Predrag Mijić, Mayor of Čoka

Discreet Authority

Written by: Dušan DAMJANOVIĆ

During the nineties of the 20th century, Mr. Predrag Mijic answered the numerous problems through his political activities in the opposition Democratic Party of Mr. Zoran Djindjic. He simply wanted to have a constructive influence on his environment, which was a big challenge in the years of a great general despair in a small town in Vojvodina.

In the turbulent time of national contrasts, a fear prevailed that the situation would escalate in a wrong direction, which was one of the most important motives due to which Mr. Predrag Mijic decided to run for the office of Mayor. Although he was supported by his family, Mr. Mijic did not have great expectations due to the fact that he lived in the local community with the majority of Hungarian population. At the local elections for the office of Mayor, he won 60 votes more than the SRS candidate in the first run; hence he entered the second run against the former Mayor from SVM party, who was his age. He gained double votes against his political rival in the second run, today; Mr. Mijic paraphrases his citizens with a smile: “Serbs voted for me, but Hungarians elected me.”

Scenography

Entering the office of the secretary of Mayor, its interior design suggested immediately the unconventional approach to the municipal administration of Čoka. Red color of the entrance door, as a very bold choice regarding the typical administrative design of the building together with intensive blue color of the wall, tells us about the informality of the users of this space.

The office of the Mayor Mr. Predrag Mijic, is painted in pastel colors. As he admitted, even the furniture in his office is a result of deliberate choice and lack of funds to purchase new wood furniture. Mr. Predrag Mijic deliberately chose authentic furniture of the former Secretary of the Communist Party in the last century, which was scattered around the offices since eighties of the last century. Considering that this specific preference for furniture will be understood differently – and in conformity with the existing disputes with the recent history - we shall only say that the author of this text thought that the Mayor's working environment reflected discreet authority.

On the main wall of his office Mr. Predrag Mijic keeps only a small cast court of arms of the Republic of Serbia. The Mayor wants to put a big painting with abstract motives under the court of arms, which will attract the attention of everyone entering the office. Pictures of an impressive devotee and a big white egret, an example of the Čoka fauna are placed on the side wall.

Appointment of staff without staff

When Mr. Predrag Mijic assumed his duty as a Mayor, two lawyers, one was public defender and the other was secretary of the Assembly, were the only staff members with university degree. Since then, Mr. Mijic has been trying to reorganize personnel structure for the last three years, and 15 municipal officers already left their jobs. They either retired or left with severance pay. There were employees at that time, who are today practically social cases: deliveryman with a monthly wage of about DIN 6,0000 or € 75. Regardless of the fact that they were employed on political basis, their dismissal from service, although legally feasible, would not be a popular measure, and it would also threaten to jeopardize the existing political consensus which was achieved with a lot of difficulties. After the last several elections, there were about 60 employees, and today apart from those already discharged, it is necessary to dismiss another fifteen persons in order to establish efficient local administration.

Mr. Predrag Mijic resolves problems like this with a brave managerial decisions and creative approach. It is clear why the Mayor has decided to remove a number of municipal officers from the top of the hierarchy to the lower positions, whereas their empty positions of the heads of departments are fulfilled with new highly educated persons.

The first appointed associate of Mr. Mijic was a municipal manager, economist by profession. She remained on this position very shortly from December 2004 till March 2005, because she afterwards resumed the position of the Director of the Development Directorate. Deputy Mayor worked as the “Head of the People’s Office”¹. She receives clients, deals with social policy issues, makes contacts with associations of citizens, pensioners, chairs the Commission on Gender Equality, provides support to women’s associations in rural areas, and participates in distribution of parcels for new born babies in the entire Municipality.

The lawyer who works today in the Sugar Refinery TE-TO in the neighboring town of Senta, who was previously employed by the Tax Administration in Senta, first commuted to Čoka to resume the position of the “afternoon Head of Office”, because he could not work in the Municipal Administration as the Head of Administration or Secretary of the Assembly. So, in the beginning while he was still a member of the Municipal Council, he actually performed several different legal jobs. Upon Mayor’s invitation, the Head of the Municipal Administration had come from the Municipality of Novi Knezevac, and when he wanted to terminate this cooperation, it took him even six months to find an adequate replacement. He replaced her with the Head of Department with whom, as he says, the cooperation significantly better.

He appointed the Head of Treasury in the local Tax Administration to the position of the Head of Finance and Budget. He managed to appoint the Head of Social Affairs with a 2-year university degree in economy, who was previously employed as a bookkeeper in a primary school.

In the course of time, Mr. Mijic managed to compose a small but competent team of associates, who were ready to face the administrative challenges. The fact is that after some time, people were appointed on the basis of their formal education, thus it happened for the first time in 20 years that a graduated technologist was managing agriculture in Čoka. Construction engineering inspector in the Municipality is a graduated construction engineer.

1 Implication on the People’s Office of Mr. Boris Tadic, President of Serbia, established on 1 October 2004.

Utility and environment inspector has university degree in Agriculture, with major in crop-farming, whereas Head of Department for Issuing Construction Permits worked previously as utility inspector, and also has university degree in agriculture, major in crop protection. An architect has been engaged to perform various duties for the Municipality, although he is not officially employed as the Chief Architect in the Municipality.²

Under the circumstances, a decision of Mr. Predrag Mijic to try to substitute the chronic lack of personnel with university degree with external associates was a responsible act and intelligent strategy for capacity development of the Municipal Administration. This professional insufficiency should not be viewed as a local phenomenon, since it is a general rule in the post-conflict and transitional Serbia that people with university degrees most frequently decide to build their careers in urban centers or in private sector, where they receive better salaries.

The logic behind distribution of prey

Head positions in public enterprises in Čoka, as at other management levels throughout Serbia, were distributed according to the political membership, so the Mayor has small competencies with respect to the public utilities. Political party of Mr. Predrag Mijic has appointed directors of the Cultural and Educational Center and Development Agency. All other companies (Public Utility Company, Kindergarten, Health Center, etc.) try to be exempted from the Mayor's team, which is a logical consequence of overall partocracy-based logic of the distribution of prey.³

Asked about the strategies for establishing new public utility companies, Mr. Mijic points out numerous political obstacles, but he also mentions the example of Padej, which is the most Southern local community in the Municipality of Čoka. It generates income from a ferry on the river Tisa, which connects Padej with the Municipality of Ada. With respect to Padej, there is a plan to establish a company

2 The Law on Local Self-Governance, Articles 54-56, from 2002, includes the position of the Chief Architect and Municipal Manager

3 "The difference between our partocracy and the one in the states with "developed democracies" is evident in the quantum of post-election prey of the winning parties. In one case, power has acceptable boundaries – in uncorrupted democracies, politics and profession is clearly defined; we know what is changed with the change of power, and what is left to the professional competence. In our case, these boundaries do not exist; if someone is interested in the position of even "a toilet cleaning lady", the nomination will be subjected to the party opinion", Srečko Mihailovic, "Partocracy in Serbia", daily newspaper *Politika*, 24 April 2007.

based on the model used in the Municipality of Titel. There is a company with limited accountability in Titel established as a combination of a private capital and public utility company, which provide utility services based on the appropriate decision of the Assembly.

Citizens of Čoka had serious problems with the Public Housing Company, which was a big investor during the nineties of the 20th century in the bankrupt shopping mall, having made a debt of DIN 150 million. Nonetheless, the Municipality has found a model to service this debt from its budget in the following three years. Director of the Public Housing Company, as the only official employee of this company, works on temporary contract basis for the Development Agency. Although it *de facto* does not exist, this company will merge with the Public Utility Company, which already provides cleaning and maintenance services in housing units in the town. Due to the merging process, their mutual liabilities will be annulled.

Municipality of Čoka has constructed gas pipeline and sewage pipeline in 95% of its rural areas, whereas the project of filters installation is in progress. Water pipeline is already built, together with the wireless internet and cable TV. Streets are covered with asphalt, town waste dump was reconstructed, and rubbish is disposed regularly, which is not the case in rural areas. Mr. Mijic mentions these results offhandedly emphasizing that any other municipal administration would act similarly, hence it is not the example he would like to point out in relation to the Municipality of Čoka and its comparison to other municipalities.

„This is to inform you“

The first and most important accomplishment of Mr. Predrag Mijic was creation of good atmosphere in which no one is neglected. This is most evident in the fact that tension between different nationalities decreased. Also, citizens receive high quality information now.

As he admits, when he resumed his position he did not know that in his municipality in 21st century three drummers announce village news in the villages around Čoka. In the meantime, this specific phenomenon has been turned into a tourist attraction, and this year the second international festival of drummers “This is to inform you” was held.

Spreading news and information is now done in a modern way through local newspaper, a free monthly bulletin published by the Municipal Assembly. The bulletin is distributed through newspaper and cigarette stands free of charge, as well as it is distributed through the party members. It is published in 2500 copies every month, which meets the local needs.

Depending on the part of the town they were born in, Serbian or Hungarian, citizens of Čoka use the other language relatively well. Mr. Predrag Mijic was born in the Serbian part and he admits that his knowledge of Hungarian is not so good, although he can understand it pretty well, so he can read newspapers or have basic conversation. Bilingual nature of the residents of Čoka, as in many other areas in Vojvodina, is spontaneous. While he was practicing veterinary medicine, Mr. Mijic used Serbian language, whilst Hungarians would answer in their native language. This was totally natural and acceptable. A number of villages with 95% of population with Hungarian origin are the exception, meaning that they almost do not speak Serbian language (villages of Jazovo, Vrbica) regardless of their age.

Bilingual Čoka – During public hearings in villages around Čoka (e.g. on budget priorities), Mr. Mijic spontaneously speaks in Serbian language, whilst the audience use Hungarian language. Sometimes, it is necessary to interpret a specific term, and yet sometimes you can hear: “I haven’t heard Serbian for some time, I have forgotten a lot”. With respect to male population, speaking Serbian language originates from military service, but since then, they have not had an opportunity to travel outside their villages, so these citizens of Čoka linguistically-wise remain “prisoners” of these micro-communities isolated from the influence of other language.

Čoka got frequency for its local radio, and the Municipal Administration provided equipment for the “deaf room” and provided all necessary infrastructure prerequisites, whereas a local entrepreneur who wins tender will provide radio equipment. So, soon this local community will be able to listen to their local radio on top of the local newspapers. Local TV station is not planned, for needs of Čoka are not at that level.

Upon resuming his position, Mr. Mijic got interested in the issue of the information of his citizens, thus a public survey was conducted two years ago in relation to the level of information of the citizens about municipal activities, which covered even rural areas, since a separate survey was conducted in small communities.

In addition to the aforementioned local bulletin and radio, communication with citizens is provided through a message box where citizens may leave their messages for the Mayor. These boxes are established in all communities in the Municipality of Čoka, and as explained by the Mayor, they are widely used.

The level of direct communication with citizens including provision of services in the Town Hall has increased: reception office has been modernized, instead of the old window room. Partly, out of psychological reasons, changes begun at the entrance door including the building of the ramp for pregnant women and people with disabilities.

Changes are obvious in the Town Hall: windows have been replaced, heating system has been reconstructed and switched from fuel oil to gas, and the courtyard of the building was decorated as well. After many years of negligence, municipality has invested significant funds in the maintenance of its premises and environment.

“Prozor does not have to fall tonight”⁴ – Gas heating has been installed in all schools in Čoka now. The replacement of windows in the part of the building of the school “Jovan Popovic” as well as fitting of hydro isolation in the other part of the building was also done. The school has external class in the village Sanadu², which was heated with firewood. Although there is no gas pipeline in Sanadu⁵, central heating has been installed, windows have been replaced in one part of the school building. Capital Investments Fund has provided prefabricated school building in the local community of Crna Bara.⁶ This small local community, which has fifty children, will not have probably a need for school building in 50 years.

Ambitious development plans

Municipality has enough sensibility to support so-called man-to-man projects thanks to which the people from Serbia, Romania and Hungary meet on basketball and football fields, or at the culinary events, which certainly contributes to better inter-national and general human relations. Other examples of active

4 “Prozor” (Serbian: window) the name of the small Bosnian town. It is an allusion on the famous sentence from the WW2 related to the night when this town was liberated from the German army.

5 1314 residents, according to Census 2002.

6 568 citizens, according to the Census from 2002.

support of the Municipality are additional training of its employees and other budget users through courses, professional literature, study tours and scholarships, which is less complex but surely worth of initiative.

One of the significant indicators of successful local governance is surely a concern for the municipal strategic development. In December 2005, a decision was made to establish Strategy Development Council, and in June 2006, development of this strategy begun. After a year, second Draft Strategy Paper was completed.

One of the most important future projects, which ensue from the Development Strategy of the Municipality of Čoka, is construction of the huge industrial park, which was designed by a team of architects from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, between the bridge over the River Tisa and local communities of Čoka. This project will connect agglomeration of Čoka and Senta both in morphological and infrastructural sense. The project would create prerequisites for different contents from industry through trade, services, education to housing.

Ambitious development intentions of the Čoka leader are to develop Food Innovation Center in this place, which would employ technologists available in this municipality. Namely, there are numerous companies in Čoka, which are dealing with primary food processing (winery, dairy, meat production, production of spices, teas and medicinal herbs), and the aforementioned center would provide standardized procedure as well as it would guarantee for the quality of products, so that they could be placed in huge commercial chains of hypermarkets and supermarkets.

Industrial park project was funded from the National Investment Plan (NIP) through joint participation of Municipalities of Senta and Čoka.⁷ After the adoption of the Municipal Physical Planning, the designing of the Detailed Regulation Plan follows, which will incorporate the idea of industrial park in all municipal physical planning documents, thus becoming a priority for the actual as well as for the future administrations.

Social Welfare Development Strategy has been adopted, too, whereas facilities of the Center for Social Work have been renovated and equipped through the program “Exchange”. This includes opening of a separate adjusted entrance to the Town Hall. Whilst previously all visitors to the Magistrate’s Office or Center for Social Work had to walk through the entire Town Hall building, now they have a direct access. A lot of elderly and socially vulnerable people live in Čoka,

⁷ For each of these two municipalities NIP allocated €400,000 for the implementation of joint project.

so any kind of attention and respect may be interpreted as an introduction to the sincere social inclusion and promotion of solidarity.

Mr. Predrag Mijic has used his acquaintance with the Chairman of the Executive Council of Vojvodina, or with the President of the Provincial Government, his classmate from the Grammar School in Senta, as said in a more popular way. In this way, Čoka managed to apply for funds to the Capital Investment Fund in time. Entire Street lights network in the municipality was reconstructed. Streets, roads and local roads in rural areas were reconstructed with the funds granted by NIP and Capital Investment Fund. Municipality allocated funds for designing of project documentation in local communities, who made their own decisions on the priority projects. Municipality covered 70% of costs for the project designing, thus a large number of projects were ready when a national level tender for NIP was advertised.

Political grounds

DS (Democratic Party) in Čoka is not based on one man any more, but it has significant infrastructure and educated membership and activists, so Mr. Predrag Mijic is confident that it will have good results at the future local elections. Mr. Predrag Mijic was aware of so-called “fly over” cases and did not allow that members of SVM switch to his party thinking that it was good to have opponents with whom you can talk and with whom it is possible to achieve political census.

Mr. Predrag Mijic will begin the next election campaign as authority in position. Since the new law on local elections has been adopted, which prescribes indirect election of Mayor, after only one election when Mayors were directly elected, Mr. Predrag Mijic thinks that this is a potentially very bad solution, which is the reason he is questioning his plans for the time being. Considering his 37 years of age, Mr. Mijic is aware that he can “wait on the bench” for future elections to be conducted under more favorable circumstances.

Believes that a municipality should be managed the same way as a company, otherwise you will simply lose the market race. In terms of technology, communication and development of infrastructure local level of authority has undergone incredible changes, thus the central level of authority should be more flexible, if it wants to accomplish economic competitiveness.

Goran Ješić, Mayor of the Municipality of Indjija

www.goranJešić.net

Written by: Dušan DAMJANOVIĆ

Enthusiastic development of this municipality in the rigid system of local self-governance in Serbia sends forth a powerful message of encouragement for many representatives of local authorities, as well as it surely nurtures huge quantities of doubts unavoidable in poor and closed societies as Serbia is today.

One author of the blog on the B92 website has recently written about his confidence that everything positive what happened in Serbia, did not happen as a result of system or tradition but as a result of the opposition to a system and tradition. Although many will oppose to this thesis, which could be successfully tested on scientific basis, also on artistic basis, we are transferring it to the area of local self-governance in Serbia, where Mr. Goran Ješić, Mayor of the Municipality of Indjija, has had a prominent position for years. Although Mr. Goran Ješić has overgrown his role of the Mayor since long time by creating a specific brand, we see his extraordinary successful actions as the fight against rigid, unreformed system, slow administration and corruption. His public appearances are articulate illustrations of the appropriateness of the real decentralization of Serbia, which would ensure quality evaluation with respect to the provision of public services in different places, and which would increase competitiveness. Since Indjija has

undoubtedly become a political and economic phenomenon, appearance of this thirty-year old man, the Mayor of the Municipality in his second mandate, provoked big attention at public hearings.

The youngest Mayor in Serbia

Prior to the local and state elections in September 2000, Mr. Goran Ješić, when he was only 26 years old, became a coordinator of anti-Milosevic DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia) for Indjija. At that time, he did not want to be a Mayor, for he was not familiar with the internal system, and with regard to politics he did not aspire after personal promotion, but, like a huge number of young people, he only wanted to see the end of a destructive regime.

From 24 September 2000, at the time of the elections, until 5 October 2000, when Milosevic's regime finally recognized the election debacle, a large number of citizens of Indjija proposed Mr. Goran Ješić for the future Mayor. Since he was a part of a very young team of enthusiasts, who had never executed power, Mr. Ješić faced the issue of meeting the needs of a complicated pre-election coalition. It turned out that key posts in the municipal administration were usurped by those who could not be recommended for those posts on the grounds of their quality and efficiency.

Determined to make changes

The first serious crisis happened only after a year upon he had resumed his post. Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) of Vojislav Kostunica and Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) of Slobodan Milosevic tried to replace him from the local parliament, but he remained the Mayor based on one vote only. This event, which made Mr. Ješić realize that changes in Serbia are like putting a finger in the eye of a number of political structures, was sobering to him, and induced him to think about the way to get rid of the political burden in the form of a coalition at bitter odds.

Considering that voluntarism, political loyalty, and consequently an overwhelming influence of political parties on the decision-making process are still in force in Serbia, representatives of local authorities rely on the informal channels within their parties as well as on the private connections in their intention to resolve the existing problems in their municipalities. Therefore, very often, examples of good practice in local self-governance are made by those municipalities, whose leaderships succeed in settling the complex issues regarding competence, property and/or fiscal decentralization in a creative manner, and those are municipalities not waiting for instructions and approval from the state level.

Reforms, that Mr. Ješić courageously instigated, were worth of it at the next elections in the autumn of 2004, when Mr. Ješić was directly elected, and his list was on the second place in the local parliament, whilst Democratic Party was the first one. These two lists gained absolute majority in the Parliament.

As many other decision-makers, Mr. Ješić has an aversion to so-called “administrative workers”, whose attitude towards work, employees, superiors, clients (citizens) is well known. In relation to this, administration reform is difficult, this has to be firm. In order “to ride roughshod over” the changes, it is necessary to have very strong political will supported by political decisions. Since reduction of the number of employees in public administration is not legally based, Indjija also faces a problem of long-term negative selection, together with the fact that a number of the inherited people in the administration have no duties whatsoever.

A group of people has been identified through training process, who understood the need for administration reform, and those people were the main stakeholders of further reforms. Needs for a change, improvement and innovations are not based any more on *top down* approach, but they are articulated by the employees themselves. This process can never be completed, thus certain authors think that crucial reforms are necessary every seven or eight years, otherwise we have manipulation, corruption, slow administration ...

In the meantime, representatives of 180 domestic and international municipalities have visited Indjija; media are also very interested in the success accomplished in this relatively small Srem municipality. Today, work in municipal administration and public enterprises are viewed in totally different, better way.

Indjija, a place for investments

The first visible result in Indjija is, according to Mr. Goran Ješić, a setting up a small team of people capable of channeling and absorbing the EU assistance, which started to pour in Serbia in significant quantities after the October changes in 2000 (“Oil for democracy”, Schools for democracy”)... First significant assistance relative to Indjija was a donation of the Austrian Government in a number of public utility trucks, 54 ambulance cars, police cars, etc. Instead of one-off aid, Mr. Ješić wanted technical assistance in form of external experts. “We need to be thought how to fish.” People employed in administration, justice, public companies, police and other public bodies participated in study tours to Austria and had an opportunity to see on reforms implemented in a regulated system, which resulted in initiatives for the improvement of their own professional work and even living environment.

In relation to the favorable conditions for investors, Mr. Ješić says: “We can offer services not available in other municipalities: registration of company, free-of-charge premises to be used during the construction period of their factories, technical personnel to monitor project implementation, so that a supervisor can follow the process of obtaining documentation from Germany or Austria via internet, whereas a municipal officer is obtaining approvals, permits and other documentation. We are applying for the state incentives, to which they are entitled to as investors, and on top of everything, we train our future labor force. And all that is free-of-charge for them.”¹

One of the municipal priorities was to simplify all procedures, which was done very soon through establishing one window system and electronic management, which had an unequivocal support of citizens. It took one year and four months to start administration reform and introduce e-management in the end, aiming to stop corruption, inadequate approach, slowness and non-functional administration. According to Mr. Ješić, today, Indjija has “the best organized municipal administration in Serbia and maybe in the region.”

Six years ago (2001), there was only one computer in the municipal administration, whereas today, Indjija has a three-year contract with Microsoft, and its solutions for e-administration raise interest outside national boundaries.

In addition to the enhanced functioning of the municipal administration and introduction of contemporary standards, as a Mayor of this municipality, Mr.

¹ Interview with Goran Ješić, *Politika*, 14 March 2008.

Goran Ješić has implemented a large number of projects: Increased participation of citizens in decision-making process (in partnership with OTI), Reform of the public utility companies (in partnership with DAI and USAID), Interregional cooperation program with Tirol in Austria (in partnership with NGO *Serbian Forum, Wien*), Electronic city/municipality project – so-called “System 48” (in partnership with DAI).

With the last of the aforementioned projects, as a short-listed municipality, Indjija has joined the project “Award for the local self-governance best practice example in Serbia” (Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities, Holland Association of Local Authorities, 2006).

Objectives of the “System 48” implemented back in 2004 are as follows:

- To meet all requirements and public utility issues of citizens within 48;
- To join all public companies and services into one system, so that the interaction between them and citizens is made through one communication channel;
- To ensure control over spending of municipal funds both in public companies as well as in municipal administration;
- To provide more feasible control and coordination of the work in public companies.

Based on the use of “System 48”, about 12% of the total budget was saved. This model has been copied from Baltimore (USA) and at the time of its introduction it was not used anywhere in Europe. Here is an example of the Baltimore model applied in the reality of Vojvodina lowlands:

On a December morning, an embittered citizen of Indjija, named Nikola Vojnovic, sent a letter to his municipal administration with the following text: “I would like to inform you that garbage collectors damaged my garbage bin and I would like you to replace it with a new one.” Tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock he received a reply with an instruction what number he was to call in order to have his problem solved.

Manner in which the usual living problems of the citizens of Indjija are solved (functioning of street lights, garbage collection, appearance of stray dogs, etc.) is unique in Serbia.

Claim

10 December 2007 at 10:12 hours

My neighbor Mr. Ivan Sreckovic has planted seedlings behind my house some 80 cm away from my house, so now they are almost 3 m high damaging my house. I would like to know what the allowed distance is in this particular case. Also, he places garbage in the street in front of my house. I kindly ask the relevant inspection to undertake appropriate measures.

Status: solved; Type of claim: Public utility inspection

Replies: 10 December 2007 at 14.17 hours

Inspector went to the spot, accessed the situation and advised the claimant to claim damage redemption at court. With respect to the disposal of garbage, an instruction on the removal of garbage from the public area will be issued. Inspector Milicevic.

Example taken from the „System 48“ website – claims review, www.indjija.net

In September 2007, deputy Prime Minister of the Serbian Government Mr. Bozidar Djelic appointed Mr. Goran Ješić a consultant for direct investments, but the Republican Parliament Committee on the Resolution of Conflict of Interests quickly made a statement on the conflict between Mr. Ješić's two functions. This reminds us of the many-time quoted thought that in Serbia “we never miss a chance to miss a chance”. We can see the benefit that the state might have from this cancelled appointment, through the information on the last significant success of Mr. Goran Ješić and the Municipality of Indjija. It is about the signing a *Memorandum of Understanding* between Ministry on Economics and Regional Development and the Indian company “Embassy Group” on the construction of the information-technology park in Indjija. At least \$ 600 million will be invested, the park will be built on 270 ha of land and it will employ 25,000 workers already in the first year. Intel and IBM have already stated their interest. Housing unit will be constructed a few kilometers away from the IT Park with all necessary programs such as kindergarten, shopping mall, etc. Construction of IT Park should begin already in spring 2008 and it will start a huge expansion of computer business, and there is a possibility that Intel starts production of “Serbian” laptop in Indjija, meaning that its major part (60%) would be produced in Indjija.

Indjija has shown its leading capacity to attract investments again at the recently held international investment fair BelRE (Belgrade Real Expo) in Belgrade. It is estimated that the value of investments in Indjija only in 2007 is about € 100 million. New shopping mall “Mercator”, “Henkel” production facilities, including several other companies, such as „Tera Productions“, „Monbat“, „Izoterm-Plama“, are presently building their facilities, and should start their production process in the following year.

Indirect benefit from investments of the world renowned brands in IT industry in Indjija is a chance to retrieve a number of IT experts, who left Serbia during the last decade. Local and regional businesses will also benefit from this excellent initiative. Furthermore, Indjija will manage waste in Srem, since municipalities of Indjija, Ruma, Irig, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova and Sid made an agreement to build joint regional waste dump. Srem regional waste dump will be opened in Indjija in the vicinity of the high-way Belgrade – Novi Sad. Physical plan is to be designed, which would be followed by detailed micro location plans, including detailed regulation and division of land into lots, which will take about a year. In the meantime, basic design and main project for the regional waste dump should be completed. Since the value of this project is €5 million, it would be easier for these municipalities to get financial support considering that they are united.

Projects relative to the reconstruction of regional sewage pipeline, water supply, joint secondary education, and secondary health protection are at the stage of discussion. Municipalities from the region are directed to each other, whereas Indjija is most directed to Stara Pazova. In most of the projects Indjija is partner to Stara Pazova, despite the fact that Serb Radical Party (SRS) is in position in this municipality. Numeral legal limitations represent obstacles to regional integration – the state is slow in the implementation of its reforms, hence it fails to meet the needs of progressive and dynamic municipalities.

According to the selection of the Magazine “fDi”, issued by *Financial Times* of 27 February 2008, municipality of Indjija was on 18th place on the list of the 25 best European destinations for foreign investments. Basic selection criteria comprised economic potential, most significant investments in the last two years, level of investments and number of newly open job posts, GDP growth, economic reforms and priorities, and Indjija is positioned before Amsterdam, Warsaw, Madrid, Frankfurt and Budapest.

Municipality as a company

With reference to strategic targets, it is necessary to have high quality leadership, but professional attitude of the whole team members and experts is equally important to accomplish success in this process. Two municipal development strategy plans have been adopted to date.

Basic strategic goal is to sustain and improve the quality level of public services in Indjija: primary health protection, kindergarten, water supply, cleaning, garbage recycling... Second strategic goal is to move away from the classic *Greenfield* investments in the context of industrial production towards services (tourism, cargo-centers) and education (the objective is to have 1,000 university degrees annually; to build a university campus; to open IT park). Abandoning the classic *Greenfield* investment concept is the pillar of development in the following 10-15 years.

Increased percentage of highly educated people in Indjija is the basic prerequisite for the successful EU integrations. The fact that the number of internet users in Indjija is much higher as opposed to the rest of the country speaks in favor of its good positioning: twice more than Vojvodina, and three times more than the Serbian average.

Problems that local self-governances have in Serbia are similar to those of the regional units of self-governance. With his excellent knowledge in development processes in the region (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Romania and Bulgaria) Mr. Ješić warns about the cases of apparent decentralization. For example, in Macedonia, Mayor is directly elected, whereas building permits are issued by the state.

„...there is a prejudice that local self-governances do not have enough experience and that they do not know how to govern. I guarantee that at this very moment each municipality in Serbia has made bigger step forward towards their citizens in practicing democracy and transparency in work than any other ministry. Decentralization is necessary, for decentralized systems are more flexible and quicker. Certainly, the level of democratization cannot be equal for everyone including Belgrade and Razanj, since their capacities differ.”²

2 Interview with Goran Ješić, Politika, 14 March 2008.

Mr. Ješić thinks that municipality should be managed as a company; otherwise you lose the market race. In the past few years, in terms of technology, communication, infrastructure development, local level of authority has gone through incredible changes, thus the central level of authority should be more flexible, if it wants to achieve economic competitiveness.

Mr. Ješić is advocating essential decentralization and application of the principles of subsidizing, for he is able to recognize people at the state level, who do not understand procedures and who have difficulty in interpreting real needs at the local level.

Representative of numerous municipalities from Serbia as well as from the region and international community come to Indjija: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Jordan, Iraq... But, Mr. Ješić concludes regretfully that the level of political will to apply best practice in other local communities in Serbia is very low. Paradoxically, positive experience is somehow easier transferred to the colleagues from e.g. Slovenia, as opposed to the Mayors in local self-governances in Serbia. Mr. Ješić interprets this unwillingness towards transfer of positive experience as the reluctance of the Serbian politicians to commit themselves to the changes that would inevitably generate conflicts.

Administration as a product

A huge credibility is necessary to implement a project, and it is acquired through just and transparent action. In case municipal authority decides to close central streets in the town and turn them into pedestrian and shopping zone, it is known in advance that it will cause huge resistance. Local authority in Indjija supported this initiative and created small public pedestrian zones free from vehicles, thus having archived that the number of people walking through this zone and the prices of real estate increased. In order to gain credibility, it is very important to eliminate any form of clientele. Construction of the street connecting the housing units with the town cemetery was a similar challenge for Mr. Ješić and his team, since it meant leveling many units that were built illegally as so-called “unauthorized building”. Despite the strong political pressure, municipal administration succeeded to persuade a local tycoon to tear down his fence, which was in the way, and which was worth tens of thousands of Euros. This was an example that the law is equally applicable to everyone.

Generally, Serbia has a poor marketing strategy. Municipality of Indjija has intentionally created a product called efficient administration and good system management, and in addition to this, it has worked on its image. Only a superficial insight in the internet presentation of the Municipality of Indjija is enough (www.indjija.net) to realize the efforts made in this area. Surely, you cannot invent a good brand in a long-term run with low quality resources. Making Indjija a brand is a result of a serious strategic approach, which has been developed through presentations at fairs and other events.

Solid foundations

Today, Indjija has solid foundations, since it has resolved its problems in a systematic manner. It has profitable companies, instead of subsidized public enterprises. “System 48” is functioning well and it cannot be annulled with an administrative decision, for its benefits for the citizens are obvious. Strategy to invest in education is a continuous process supported by local authorities in Indjija. Social accountability and professionalism have deep roots in this local community.

Political ambition of Mr. Goran Ješić is to maintain Indjija on a good course, and although his next run for the Mayor seems to be inevitable, Mr. Ješić points out that other talented people should be recognized in his immediate professional environment.

Mr. Ješić remains lonely, even inside his own party (DS), in his belief that Mayors should be elected directly – otherwise we hurtle towards a party state. He says regretfully that parties made a hasty agreement on the annulment of direct elections for local leaders.

Mr. Goran Ješić has a clear view on the principles of democracy that should be considered objectives. He believes that we have to fight to empower middle class and support the spirit of entrepreneurship, and that it is necessary to request direct elections for the Mayor’s position, majority election of parliament representatives, reduction of impact of political state on the life of citizens, that privatization of public enterprises is necessary, including establishing of independent agencies, which would have capacity to bridge long political crisis caused, for example, by exhausting negotiations on the government composition.

It seems that BiH and the Balkans are destined to bad news. Furthermore, it seems that everyone has become reconciled with this almost fatalist statement. Nonetheless, each of these twelve research stories proves that it does not have to be that way. Moreover: collected in a book and joined, they imply incredible power as in that old story from the old elementary reader, when a father showed to his son how easy it is to break a rod, but impossible to break a bound sheaf of brushwood.

Unusual research

A collection of good news

Written by: Zdravko MIOVČIĆ

We have been working with the municipalities in BiH for ten years already, since the principles of good governance were promoted through introduction of quality management system, to planning and implementation of local development strategies. It was a pioneer work, and I am not sure who learned more in this period; people from local administration learned from us, or we learned from them. One thing I know for sure: wherever we found or achieved good results, we worked with a good Mayor. Wherever there was a good Mayor, we worked with a good team of his associates. In places which did not have good Mayors, we rarely found a good team, and achieved good results with many difficulties. In time, we more and more understood the basic, very simple rule: with respect to local level, municipalities and cities, the story about success or failure was actually a story about the first man, his competence, aspirations and inspirations. Simply, the practice showed that the connection between the accomplished progress in local community and the quality of the first man and the community is much stronger than presumed by researches, elaborated by theory and acknowledged by the creators of new policies. Those who unmistakably see this and respect this are the citizens, who demonstrate it at the elections with their unreserved support to the one whom they recognized as the *first one*.

We, who had first conceived this research project and this book, and then did it, are a strange combination of consultants-practitioners and researchers, if not centaurs. As consultants-practitioners we use without hesitation a winning combination with the good local leaders. We work with them, closely follow their work and way of thinking, promote them and they promote us. As researchers, we have to stop for a while and disown ourselves: *these twelve research stories about successful local leaders in the Western Balkans should not be considered a proof, but an illustration of the main idea of the crucial link between the quality of leaders and the quality of the results achieved in a local community.*

not even comparable

Many will not approve our choice. We know that we did not include all Mayors who belong to the first class. Variety was more important than number and coverage. We wanted to show that person is the most important including his/her commitment to the environment, whereas a party color is only a part of the inevitable political colorism. Therefore, we follow notes about those left-sided, right-sided and centered with the same respect and curiosity. Without a single thought about God-sent leadership nation, among inevitable Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, we opted for two Macedonians and one Hungarian in this Balkan selection. Our intention was to show that division on young, mature and old cannot be applied to real local leaders. Therefore this presentation together with the thirty-year old ones (by all criteria, the youngest belong to the *funky* class of leaders of the 21st century), includes those in the best of age between 40 and 50 years and those over 50, but also one energetic and tireless sixty-five year old. Variety is particularly relative to their professional profile: from expected lawyers and economists through engineers of construction, agriculture and veterinarian to social worker. One lady from this list is a social worker. And she is the only woman due to the generally small number of women at the elections for public posts in the Balkans.

Their background social environments are also heterogeneous: two-three larger towns, one central urban municipality, several municipalities average by their physical and demographic characteristics, but different in geo-strategic location, several mainly rural and less populated communities. Each of these communities has its problems and unique challenges. Our intention was to show that each of them had its chance, if there was somebody to recognize and use it.

Careful reading and studying reveals the whole range of different personalities: from consummate politicians to financial wizards, from exquisite individuals to perfect team players. We can see that even masters of small matters have a clear and challenging vision, that masters of huge matters in the course of time learn how to deal with small matters in a filigree-like manner; that typical individuals become team-winning leaders, and that typical team players take over the risk and burden of making difficult and important decisions.

When we distance ourselves a little from individual stories-pictures, we realize the difference between the ways they overcome unavoidable obstacles: from those who literally break resistance in their readiness to *swallow first the biggest frog* without hesitation as Zoran Djindjic used to say, to those who gradually crack the resistance and *cook the frogs over a low fire*. As in an ancient story about a world of a perpetual darkness, and its people who regretted because they did not bring the jewels from a cave, and those who regretted because they did not bring more – here as well, Mayors are those who regret most: some of them because they could have chosen an easier path-way, and some because they could have made a quick decision and save themselves from slow and painful process under the expense of shuttered nerves and unpopularity.

self-made

Good local leaders in the Balkans are not a result of a permanent social care, systematic public policy and organized efforts. They are self-made, a result of a fortunate democratic event. They happen to us in this chaos called system. They appear despite the first resistance of social environments, which do change in spite of party, political and mafia leaderships, who would like to control, re-educate, adjust and use them for their petty or huge interests. And when they appear after all and when they show what they are capable of, neither party, nor policy or society in general show willingness to use them in a proper way and offer them an opportunity to do something at the large-scale, state and entity terrain, where an auto goal is made almost every day, and an important game is lost almost every month, due to the lack of good players.

experts as well as workaholics

I do not know how it happened, that a delusion about leaders as universal ignorant, those who know-it-all but have no real competence and knowledge, no profession, who are masters without craft, undisciplined experts...sneaked in the thick and heavy books about leadership. When you read these stories, the fact, that they are people who have already proved themselves as professionals in their respective areas, is simply an eyesore. What is not so evident, but not less interesting, is the fact that they apply their best experience from their professional often sports or artistic backgrounds, and use it in a creative way in their new job. So it happens that a Mayor, a geodesist by profession, introduces a very efficient data management system, that a Mayor – lawyer is the first one to introduce quality management system, a Mayor – economist accomplishes the best cost-benefit balance, a Mayor – writer makes a new artistic image of his town, a Mayor – social worker easily resolves difficult problems with an honest, open and caring communication, etc.

It is even less clear why common people think that leaders do not work much. If you read all above written, it is *as clear as day* that good leaders work much, work all the time and work when nobody else works. One of them arrives at work almost before bakers and bus drivers, the other one works so long that his associates think he works 24 hours, and the third one drives hundreds of thousands of kilometers in a car that could have its own ID card, and so on. Some of them are ascetic, some are aesthetes, but all of them are workaholics. Only a huge work of competent people, which is then followed by others, may lead to these results, which are more than significant under the local circumstances. However, these results would not be less important in even much bigger, happier and developed communities.

without academic gloves

Only when you read these stories, you can realize how shallow and artificial from academic point of view are some of the current dilemmas among experts and designers of public policies. One of these dilemmas is whether Mayors and local self-governance should deal with local development at all, or should it be a “concern” of the higher level of authority, since the key instruments regulating economic development are in the hands of higher levels. The proper answer is: who will instigate, bring, and pull up...if not a Mayor! Look at the economic

miracle made by the youngest Mayor in our selection and in the Balkans, whose municipality was selected by *Financial Times* in the beginning of this year among 25 most attractive investment destinations in Europe.

Risking that we incur displeasure of our colleagues in the academic and expert community, we have to ask ourselves: up to what extent each of us contribute with our research work and professional authority to the quality of local life – in order to have as many good Mayors as possible and as many content citizens as possible? How much do we work and fulfill our research mission? Too little, if we dare comparing ourselves with the leaders from our list.

artists of transformation

Leaders from our list do not have difficulty in understanding and fulfilling their mission. When they were deciding to accept their post, they knew that to be a leader in poor times of transition means a special challenge requesting extraordinary solutions. They knew that it meant to enter a depressive ambiance with open eyes in physical, psychological and social sense; to get to grips with decadence, pessimism and distrust; to clean, renovate and build at the same time.

They have known from the beginning that their first task is to improve the situation, to transform communities in its every aspect in the literal sense of the word: from physical renovation and construction, through psychological creation of new energy and optimism, to social development of mutual trust and confidence in the authority and institutions. They do not beat round the bush but go *in medias res*, in the heart of a problem, thus elevate and accelerate the most important changes. Some of them build almost up to the sky, because they can hardly grip to anything else. Some of them change the image of the town: from a town where you only worked without thinking to the town in which you *think* and you *think differently*. But all of them, at the same time, carefully preserve and add to the unique identity of their place. Therefore they are the artists of transformation.

there is no recipe

This somewhat relaxed research and this collection of stories indicate that there is no recipe for good management of municipalities and towns in the Balkans. They show that it is not a matter of recipe. It is not the matter of a recipe even

in culinary art. Again, it is a matter of people: are there or there are not proper people. Infect this collection of good news shows that the right people exist everywhere, in big cities and in small rural areas far away from big highways. So, it is not a matter of apt people (there are everywhere), but a matter of electing a right man for the right job. The right job to change things in one social environment is the job of a Mayor. This is more than clear from these stories. It is up to political parties (it is still early to expect the real effects of the direct election for Mayor's office) and citizens. Both of them should recognize the right people, parties are to nominate and citizens to elect them. Is it so difficult, as it seems in the first sight?

One should read this collection of good news again. And look for the characteristic that is common to all these people. They are all dedicated to their work; they are all workaholics and incurably in love with their job. They all have a clear and challenging vision, superior aspirations and inspirations. They all build their winning team. They all make a fruitful alliance with citizens and renovate disintegrated and destroyed public capital in their respective communities...

Nevertheless, the most important recommendation for good selection would be as follows: candidate and elect those, *who have proved superior to others in their previous jobs*, to paraphrase one of our leaders. Among the promising ones, elect those who have already proved that *they know how to achieve results, to be better than others, to compete and to win*, regardless of their sports, administration, business, art, public, private or non-governmental background. This seems to be the only *recipe* for success and progress.

About municipalities

Kneževi Vinogradi (Prince's Vineyards)

Kneževi Vinogradi is just one of the Baranja municipalities, mainly agricultural area known of its good wine, as the name says. According to the Roman documents, the first vineyards had been planted at the time of Roman Empire, and interestingly, the name Baranja means «the wine mother» in Hungarian. With its space of 246 km², Vinogradi is one of the biggest municipalities, for it covers 22% of the Baranja area.

It is specifically positioned in the north-east part of Baranja. Municipality of Kneževi Vinogradi is situated along the river Danube and Baranja Mountain, whereas one part of its area extends to the other side of Danube. With regard to its natural resources, it has even 16,000 ha of first class plough-field. The municipality stretches to the south slopes of the Baranja Mountain. It is abound in orchards and good wine. The proximity of Kopacki Rit (marsh) is one of the preserved oases with variety of flora and fauna offering numerous possibilities.

According to the documents from 1775, Kneževi Vinogradi had over 200 households. Based on the census from 2001, 5,090 residents lived in the territory of this municipality, which is considerably less compared to 1991, when 6,848 residents lived there. In relation to its national structure, there is 41% of Hungarians, 31% of Croats, 20% of Serbs and 8% of other nationalities.

Only 10% of population work in this municipality composed of seven local communities. There are almost 200 beneficiaries of social services. Agriculture, grape and some fruit-growing and only recently hunting and «wine» tourism are the basis of income generation in this area.

Municipal budget is in permanent growth. In year 2006, it was HRK 9,090.739 (€ 1,245.300), and in 2007, it was even HRK 22,085.570 (€ 3,025.420), mostly based on the increased capital incentives from the state budget.

Zenica

Zenica is a town, «which is not too big to interrupt bonding between people, nor it is too small to decrease diversity and chances at the elections», says Mayor Smajlović.

Zenica has 150,000 residents, which makes it the fourth town by size in BiH. It is a center of Zenica – Dobojevi canton. It is situated in the central part of the River Bosnia, «the apple of the eye» of BiH, and that is how it was named, according to the legend.

Citizens of Zenica are emotionally tied to the fortress Veranda, the center of the middle age Bosnian kings. During the mandate of Mr. Smajlović, this complex was declared cultural lore of very important significance for the municipality. It was restored and decorated with traditional contents, and today, it is an interesting tourist destination.

Arrival of Austria-Hungary in the beginning of 19th century was a particularly important period for development of Zenica. Capital objects were built at that time, which would form the life and destiny of the town: railway Bosanski Brod – Zenica, coal mine, paper factory and iron and steel works.

After the World War Two, Zenica was the one of the most important centers of the former Yugoslavia in the area of steel production and metal processing industry.

In the introduction of the publication *New Face of Zenica*, Mr. Smajlović says that it is a «town of laboratories in the state of perpetual experiments. Stretched thin loveliness of the scenery diminished by industry, which, in exchange for beauty and health, offered safety of work and survival».

London *Financial Times* and its magazine *Foreign Direct Investment* declared the Central Bosnia region with Zenica as its economic, administrative and cultural center, a European region of future for year 2004/2005 in the race with regions from Eastern and Central Europe. Zenica has exquisite geographical position; it is situated close to the capital and has well organized road and railway communication with the rest of the country, Adriatic Sea and Central Europe countries, whereas through Sarajevo airport it is connected to the whole world. The first highway in BiH, corridor C5, should be soon built through this region. Zenica has significant industrial infrastructure developed in the former Yugoslavia, which could be used for development of small and medium scale enterprises. Zenica has a university, which is among bigger universities in BiH.

Sarajevo Center

Municipality of Sarajevo Center is an integral municipality of Sarajevo, and it is a cultural, political, economic, and commercial and health center of this city. It covers western part of the historical part of Sarajevo, including Ciglane, Kosevo, Marijin Dvor and Skenderija. It borders with the municipality of Ilijas in the North, Stari Grad in the East, Novo Sarajevo in the South, and municipalities of Novi Grad and Vogosca in the West. It covers 33 m², where, according to the estimates from year 2002, live about 68,000 people. In the 15th century, wider area of the municipality of Sarajevo Center was a junction of Roman roads and that was the place where the foundations of the City of Sarajevo were laid. Intensive development of craftwork and trade made this area rich, and a cross-road of religions and cultures, trade and travelers. As a part of Sarajevo, municipality Center is situated in the geographical center of BiH. It is located in the Sarajevo basin, which stretches from East to West mainly covering Sarajevo field. From East to West, River Miljacka flows through Municipality of Center, which emerges from several wells at the foot of the mountains Romanija and Jahorina. The center of Sarajevo is placed at the altitude of 511 m above sea. This area is surrounded by the Olympic mountains of unique beauty, whose height reaches 2,000 m: Bjelasnica, Jahorina, Igman, Treskavica and Trebevic.

Municipality Sarajevo Center is a winner of 23 prestigious international awards for quality of services provided to citizens. Some of them are:

- Century International Quality Era Award, awarded by BID Business Initiative Directions from Madrid;
- *Worldwide Quality Award XXI Century*, awarded by director of the international organization *Worldwide Marketing Organization* from Mexico;
- Association Other ways Management & Consulting Paris – France decided to award municipality Center with Diamond Eye Award for Quality Commitment & Excellence for year 2007;
- International Award For Commercial Prestige (Next Millennium Award) for 2001 and 2002, awarded by Spanish publishing house Trade Leaders Club and magazine *Mercando* from Madrid;
- *Actuelidad 21.Century* – for excellent business management, quality and prestige in service provision for 2003 and 2004 (two times), and another 18 international awards.

Šibenik

Historical sources do not testify about the accurate time when the Dalmatian fortification had been established, which later on became the Town of Šibenik. However, it is estimated that it was in IX century. In the year of 1298, based on the Pope's decree, Šibenik got the status of the town. Several times in 16th and 17th century, Turks attempted unsuccessfully to conquer the town. In the end of 18th century, upon the fall of Venetia, Šibenik was under the Austrian and French governance, but it kept the status of the municipal and district center with municipal administration and a Mayor. The town was growing and developing and it got water pipeline in 1879, a hospital in 1883, hydro-power plant in 1895 on the river Krka. In 1900, it already had 10,000 residents. Between the two worlds wars, grew its role of a harbor and transit center, and it became one of the most important centers of industry and a large port in the Adriatic Sea.

Today, it is the capital of Šibenik-Knin County, and based on the census from 2001, it has 51,553 residents, whose average age is below 40. It has a status of a city with specific authorities. It comprises 29 urban and rural communities, whereas the narrow city area has around 37,000 residents. It is a huge difference compared to the number of residents of the former Municipality of Šibenik before 1992 when it had total of 82,000 residents. Its national composition is very homogeneous with

even 94.02% of Croats, and less than 6% of other nationalities. The city area is divided in 15 districts and 27 local communities with a certain level of autonomy and defined scope of activities.

In the course of years, the budget of the city has between in permanent growth regarding receipts collected from tax payers. Budget increase from HRK 96,590.000 (€13,231.500) in year 2004 to HRK 146,132.000 (€20,018.082) in year 2007 was also a result of the positive economic trends and increased income of its citizens. In the end of July 2007, Croatian Employment Bureau – Branch in Šibenik, registered a total of 3,086 unemployed persons, meaning that in comparison to September 2006, the number of the unemployed decreased for even 19%.

Tuzla

Tuzla is the third city by size in BiH with over 160,000 residents. It is situated 110 km from Sarajevo in the north-east part of BiH.

During the last century, Tuzla became administrative, business, educational, cultural and religious center of Tuzla Canton. It is the seat of the Government of Tuzla Canton, Tuzla Mufti, Tuzla-Zvornik Orthodox Eparchy, which was temporarily dislocated to Bijeljina in 1992. Franciscan monastery in Tuzla has existed since 17th century.

The city has one of the oldest and biggest universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and one of the best health institutions in the South-East Europe. Today, University Clinical Center Tuzla is a leading center in BiH in the area of cardio-surgery, cadaveric transplantation of kidneys, liver and bone marrow. The BiH donor network is situated in Tuzla, and soon it will get the most contemporary private clinic for heart diseases and metabolism disorders.

The city has a history long almost 7,000 years, composed of traces left by various peoples and civilizations in search for their “grain of salt“. Salt and coal were crucial for Tuzla to be assigned a role of the industrial center in the last century, with big companies operating in mining industry, production of electric power and basic chemical industry. New businesses brought new people with new customs, habits, ideas and cultures. The city welcomed them and cared for them as a part of its wealth.

Numerous scientists, artists, revolutionist, entrepreneurs, diplomats were born or grew up in this city: Uskufije, Đorđe Mihajlović, Haim Pinta, Meša Selimović, Derviš Sušić, Ismet Mujezinović, Mirza Delibašić, Emir Hadžihafizbegović, Selim Bešliagić, Razija Mujanović, Svjetlana Kitić. All of them participated in the creation of the Bosnia and Herzegovina spiritual quality and international identity.

Berkovići

Municipality of Berkovići is situated in the south part of the Republic of Srpska and BiH. It covers one part of the municipality of Stolac belonging to the Republic of Srpska. Local community Berkovići is the center of this Municipality. It covers 256 km² or 15,6 per km², inhabited with 4,000 residents. Municipality of Berkovići comprises the following local communities: Berkovići, Bitunja, Brštanik, Dabrica, Hatelji, Ljubljénica, Ljuti Do, Meča, Predolje, Strupíci, Suzina, Šćépan Krst, Trusina and Žégulja, and parts of the local communities of: Burmazi, Do, Hodovo, Hrgud and Poplat.

Municipality of Berkovići has one elementary school and a filed class of the secondary economic school from Trebinje. Elementary school comprises seven junior field schools. Municipality has one Health Center with the capacity for further development of medical services. It has one medical doctor – GP, one specialist in family medicine and one dentist.

With its surroundings, Berkovići has many cultural and historical monuments like remains of the St. Elias Church originating from 14th or 15th century, the old town of Kostrum (camp), built in 10th century at latest, including it among the oldest towns in the Republic Srpska and BiH. There is a significant number of interesting medieval Bosnian standing tomb-stone necropolis on the territory of this municipality. Some of the bigger ones are in Dabrica (Crkvine), Hatelji, Predolj, Potko, Ljubljanica, Dol, Koritnik, Bračići, Blaci, Ljuti Dol, Suzina.

Economy is underdeveloped in Berkovići. The fact that this municipality was one of the local communities of the municipality Stolac before the war, and that all factories remained within municipality of Stolac, which belongs to the Federation of BiH, contributes to this situation.

Veles

Veles is situated in the central part of Macedonia, about 50 km south from the capital city Skopje. It is located on the cross-road of road and railway cargo corridors, which are very important for domestic and international traffic. It connects Europe with Near East or North Africa.

Municipality of Veles consists of 29 local communities and covers the space of 427 m² with 55,108 residents or 16,959 households. The town of Veles is the administrative center of the Municipality and the center of the Vardar region. Population is mainly composed of Macedonians (84.86%) with minor participation of other national groups: Bosnians (4.37%), Albanians (4.17%), Turks (3.13%), and Roma people (1.45%). The municipality has 16,688 unemployed residents.

The most significant economic sectors are industry, agriculture and trade. Industry covers 50% of the total added value, and industry of nonmetals, food-processing, metal-processing and production of construction material are in the forefront. In the last years, production of colored metals and chemical fertilizers has stopped due to the problems they cause in relation to the environment. Agricultural land covers 34.5% of the total territory. Main stakeholders in agriculture and cattle breeding are individual farmers previously belonging to the state agricultural company „Lozar“. Municipality of Veles has nonmetal mineral raw-materials.

Tomislavgrad

Tomislavgrad, previously called Duvno, is relatively small town in the south-west part of Herzeg-Bosnia County. It is situated on the border with the Republic of Croatia in the Dalmatian hinterland, with 4 border crossings with Croatia. According to estimates, it has about 28,000 residents mainly Croats (over 95%) and Bosnians. The number of residents is decreasing, because in 1992, this municipality had 32,000 residents. Population density is 32 residents per 1 km², which makes it one of the rarely populated municipalities in BiH. Migration is the biggest problem of this municipality – about 1,500 workers leave for Croatia every Monday. Return rate of highly educated people, mainly from universities in Split and Zagreb is irrelevant.

Tomislavgrad is mountain area at 1,200 m above sea. It is a geographical connection between BiH and Dalmatia and a road junction between Mostar, Banja Luka, Split and Sarajevo. Through border crossing Kamensko with Croatia you can reach Adriatic highway for less than one hour, which is a direct connection to the Western Europe.

Lake Buško Blato is situated on the territory of this municipality with the largest accumulation in Europe. During the former Yugoslavia, governments of BiH and Croatia built the hydro-power plant Olovac in Rud. As a subsidy for this power-plant, municipality of Tomislavgrad receives about KM 1,500.000 annually, whereas its total budget is KM 3,000.000.

In the past, Duvno area was the main supplier of Dalmatia and Herzegovina with agricultural products, whereas today, majority of population live on their work in Western European countries. This municipality has the largest number of foreign pensioners per capita in BiH.

Cattle breeding, agriculture, crafts and services and small and medium scale enterprises, mainly producing for local market, are the basis of economy in this area. The biggest production facility is the cable factory *Kapis* with 280 employees. Potential development sectors in this municipality are: production of organic food and medicinal herbs, ecological, ethnic and religious tourism, coal, water and wind resources. Municipal impact on the development of energy production facilities is irrelevant. Favorable geo-position towards Croatia is another development potential for this municipality.

Kočani

Kočani is situated in the eastern part of Macedonia, about 120 km from Skopje. It is a road junction of several regional roads. It is connected to the neighboring towns - regional centers Štip and Strumica and with the capital through main highway Veles-Štip-Kočani and through railway Kočani-Štip-Skopje. This municipality is the second regional center in the Eastern Macedonia with 38,092¹ of residents. Population is mainly Macedonian (93.12%) and Roma people (5.12%).

Municipality of Kočani consists of 28 local communities covering area of 382 km² and town Kočani is the administrative center. It stretches along Kočani valley

¹ Census 2002, State Bureau for Statistics, Republic of Macedonia

at the foot of Osogovska Mountain. About 80% of its territory is mountain area with only 20% of flat area, where the town is situated.

Majority of its arable land is used for cultivation of rice as the most important product of the region. Traditionally, through several centuries, the quality of rice has been proved with different awards. Textile, wood-processing and construction industry are also present in this territory. Majority of production capacity in Kočani is located in two industrial zones: new one and the old one. These two zones are the largest ones in the Bregalnica region.

Municipality has two thermal resorts with thermal-mineral wells. Water from these wells is used for industrial heating, agricultural production in greenhouses and in medical purposes due to its useful chemical composition. Despite partial utilization of thermal wells, there is still enough capacity for development of additional thermal resorts.

Citizens of Kočani are proud of their town vegetation, river bed and banks of the River Kočani. Neatness and cleanness of this town have been at the high level for years, which is why the town of Kočani is known as one of the cleanest towns in Macedonia.

Mrkonjić Grad

Mrkonjić Grad is located in the Western part of BiH and south-west part of the Republic of Srpska. It got its name in memory of Petar I Karađorđević, who stayed in this area under the name Petar Mrkonjić during the Bosnia and Herzegovina uprising in 1875. According to the oldest preserved documents, this area was originally inhabited by people from Varcarevo and Majdan. However, in 17th and 18th centuries, the time of comprehensive migrations in the Western Balkans, large number of new residents came to this area.

According to the census in 1991, municipality of Mrkonjić Grad had 27,395 residents living in 38 local communities. The town itself had 11,225 residents, which is 40.97% of the total number of population. Based on the Dayton Peace Agreement, one part of the municipality was annexed to the Municipality of Jajce.

Municipality covers land of 68,455 ha and it is located on 591 m above sea. Today, it has about 21,000 residents. This municipality is known of the first session of

ZAVNOBiH (First Anti-Fascist Parliament of BiH) on 25 November 1943. It is also known of its sickles and its famous harvestmen.

Major part of Mrkonjić Grad municipality is mountain area with the following mountains: Lisina (1,467 m), Dimitor (1,483 m), Manjača (1,239 m) and Čemernica (1,338 m). Plateaus Podraško Polje and Podovi are situated between these mountains, whilst its valleys are relatively small along the rivers Vrbas, Crna Rijeka, Korona and so on. This area is intersected with smaller or bigger water flows. Generally, there are two hydrographic units: the first one, whose waters gravitate towards River Vrbas (about 85%) and the second, whose waters gravitate towards River Sana (about 15%). Small waters on the slopes of the mountains Dimitor and Lisina are valuable water resources in the local scope.

Area of Mrkonjić Grad has moderate continental climate with micro-climate characteristics of the mountain area with cold winters, moderately warm summers, and distinguished transitional seasons, and regular snow. Also, Mrkonjić Grad has very rich flora and fauna.

Čoka

Municipality of Čoka (in Hungarian language *Csóka*) is situated in the North Banat, in the Autonomous Province Vojvodina covering 321 km². Whilst Čoka as a local community has about 4,700 residents, the whole municipality comprises seven villages² with little less than 14,000 residents. According to the last census from 2002, here live Hungarians (51.56%), Serbs (37.63%), Roma people (2.43%), Yugoslavs (1.64%), Slovaks (1.45%) and others. In five out of eight local communities (Čoka, Padej, Jazovo, Banatski Monoštor and Vrbica) majority population is Hungarian. Although citizens of Čoka drive their cars with Kikinda plates, this place has natural gravitation toward Subotica, which is the center of North Backa. However, its closest agglomeration is Senta and the River Tisa in between.

The old name of this municipality is Čaka, which was most probably a personal name transformed later on in Čoka. Čoka was first mentioned in the documents dated from year 1247.

2 Padej (*Padé*), Jazovo (*Hódegyháza*), Banatski Monoštor (*Kanizsamonostor*), Vrbica (*Egyházaskér*), Crna Bara (*Feketető*), Sanad and Ostojićevo.

The municipality of Čoka was inhabited in ancient times, which is proved by the remains of material culture before Christ. Thanks to the most famous locality called Kremenjак, so called Čoka culture is recognized in archeology.

In 1753, Čoka was designated as Serbian settlement with 192 registered households. When the sale of state assets was agreed upon in Wien, Čoka was bought at the public auction by Marcibanji Lerinc in 1782, which brought Hungarian people – workers. In 1797, Čoka gained the status of the small town with appropriate commercial privileges. In the beginning of XIX century, Hungarian and Slovak families migrated to Čoka over the River Danube.

Since 1945, Čoka has developed very fast. The state farm „Čoka” was founded on the remains of the former estate of the family Lederer, and local community of Čoka became the center of the municipality.

Indjija

Municipality of Indjija is situated in Srem, on the southern slopes of Fruška Gora. It is located in the half way between Belgrade and Novi Sad, on the cross road of the two important European corridors 10 and (highway E-75) and 7 (River Danube).

Municipality of Indjija covers the space of 384 km² with its 11 local communities: Indjija (27,389 residents according to the census from 2002), Beška, Novi Slankamen, Novi Karlovci, Krčedin, Čortanovci, Maradik, Ljukovo, Stari Slankamen, Jarkovci and Slankamenački Vinogradi, with about 53,000 of residents of different nationalities (based on census from 2002, there is 1,455 registered residents).

Many cultural and historical monuments from prehistory to date have witnessed about eventful past of this area. Although the first settlements originate from prehistory, the very first written data on Indjija originate from the middle of XV century. Remains of the Roman and medieval fortifications and the monument to Slankamen Battle³ indicate the significance of this area along the River Danube, which was a border line between different empires throughout the course of history.

³ Battle at Slankamen or Slankamen Battle is a famous battle between the St. Roman Empire (Austria and Baden) and Turkey in 1691, which ended the Great Turkish war.

The River Danube flows through the municipality in the length of 27 km along the slopes of Fruška Gora creating lively scenery. Along the river banks from Čortanovaci, through Beška and Krčedin to the river mouth of the River Tisa to Danube at Slankamen, in the ecologically preserved rural area you can find beautiful beaches, fish restaurants, weekend houses, sand islands and other lovely sceneries, which attract lovers of nature and nautical tourism, fishing and eco-tourism.

Indjija is a center of one of the most developed and most regulated municipalities in the country, whose leadership has created an image of a modern European town based on its development strategy.

Dominant economic branches are agriculture, industry, entrepreneurship (crafts and services), trade and tourism.

Data, which can be found on the municipal website, illustrate its dedication to the ideas of modernism: founding of post service in 1800, arrival of railway in 1883, introduction of telegraph in 1850, beginning of money transfer through post service in 1886, opening of the first bank in 1897, first power plant in 1911, first contemporary road in Serbia (Novi Sad – Belgrade) through Indjija in 1939, and so on.

Leaders' biographies

Deneš Šoja was born on 8th of April 1943 in Kneževi Vinogradi. He is married and has two sons. He holds Masters Degree in economics. By nationality Hungarian, for a number of years performed a duty of the president of the Executive Council of the former Beli Manastir municipality, the single municipality that had covered the entire territory of Baranja. He used these circumstances, reputation and attained acquaintances since he assumed the duty of the Mayor in Kneževi Vinogradi. He is knowledgeable with Baranja region. In 1967, in his student days, he was elected a member of council, with the 98% support by citizens of Kneževi Vinogradi.

That created the obligation for him as an intellectual to ensure some lasting values for his people and his region. He had chances and opportunities to get employment in Osijek, or leave for Germany where he would live in regulated and much richer country. He even got the job in Osijek where he worked for some time, but soon he returned and accepted the new position in the Tax Administration

of Beli Manastir. He remained in Baranja, in governing structures and bodies, and managed public finances. Upon his return to Baranja in 1997, he got nominated and won plebiscitary majority in local elections. He has been running his second mandate as the municipality Mayor.

Husejin Smajlović was born in 1952. He holds a degree in law. Prior to his election to the Mayor office, he worked in Zenica Mines, in Zenica Department of Housing and Constructions, in the Investment and Commercial Bank Inc. Zenica as the deputy general director. In period 1996 to 2001, he was the secretary general of the Zenica-Doboj Cantonal Government, and the managing director of “*Instalacije*”, Inc. Zenica. Immediately prior to his election for the Zenica Mayor, he was the president of the Cantonal Assembly. He was elected Zenica Mayor in direct elections held in 2004. He is a member of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA). For his contribution to the development and transformation of Zenica, Husejin Smajlović received the award for the “FBiH top manager” on several occasions. He is married and has two sons.

Ljubiša Marković was born on 26th of February 1954 in Sarajevo, where he grew up, received education and graduated from the Law School. Prior to becoming well-known as a successful Mayor, Ljubiša was famous as a very successful athlete. His basketball club “*Ilidža*” literally bloomed from the school team to the premier basketball league of the former Yugoslavia. In parallel to his basketball career, he was also very successful in another sport – fly-fishing (fishing with a fly). In one of disciplines of that sport Ljubiša was a world champion. To put the long story short, he was good at everything.

Nedjeljka Klarić was born on 17th of October 1954 in Šibenik. She graduated from the Law School of Zagreb University, the department of social work. She has nearly 30 years of working experience, of which she spent 25 in the Centre for Social Welfare in Šibenik. For 11 years she was the Centre Manager, and at the same time, a head of the Regional Refugee Office at time of war and post-war years. She is married and has two children.

In 2004, she was appointed a Government's commissioner, and in 2005 she won the trust and votes in regular local elections, as the party list leader. She often says that she could not stay at side since matters concern her home city and future of her and other children. She is a first female Mayor in Šibenik's history. She is a member of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) since its establishment, and a member of Government's Commission for Decentralization since 2004. She is the vice-president of Cities Association in the Republic of Croatia, which is a national organization of 80 cities.

Jasmin Imamović was born in Brčko, in 1957, but Tuzla is his main city. He graduated from the Law Schools, and published three books and some twenty papers on property records and entitlements. He commenced his career in legal and property affairs. He worked as the assistant regional public attorney, secretary general of Tuzla municipality and is a member of several state expert teams for the development of legislation. He is a member of the Presidency and the Main Board of the Social-Democratic Party of BiH.

He was elected Tuzla Mayor for the first time in 2001. At first direct local elections in 2004, he won the record 63% of citizens' votes.

He published three novels (*A Moment Admirer, Killing of Death and Immortal Deers*) and several short stories, scripts for documentary movies, radio-plays, many of which were award-winning and translated into many foreign languages. "Dani" Magazine, Radio "Kameleon" and "Croatian radio Salt", declared him a BiH Person of the Year 2003. Also, he was declared a Person of the Year 2006. He is a laureate of many awards for contributions in tourism. He received the "Top Manager" award in 2007, and the Association of Multi-Ethnic Cities in South-East Europe "Philia", presented him with the "Inter-entity Tolerance Charter" for 2006. He is married and has two daughters.

Ranko Lučić was born in 1958. He grew up in the spacious estate in vicinity of Berkovići, where he got used to working hard since his childhood. "At age of 7, I used to work 16 hours a day, it was same when I was 15, and nowadays I work days and nights, with all my heart in everything I work", said Lučić. He graduated from the School of

Economics in Sarajevo, but could not find the employment in the territory of earlier municipality of Stolac, thus ran a private business. In that period and during the war, he got a reputation of a capable, honest and brave man, who always says what he thinks, who firmly stands by his promises, and who turns his ideas into work. Everything he did after the war (head of police, municipal Mayor) confirmed to his people that he is a man of high stance.

Ace Kocevski was born in 1961 in village Martolci. He is married and has two children. By profession, he is a civil engineer. In period 1990 – 1993, he worked in the Ministry of Defence PE Veles. In period 1994 – 1998 he was a member of the Macedonian Parliament, coordinator of the LDP caucus and the president of the Urban Planning Commission in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. 1999 – 2000 he worked as the under-secretary of the Ministry of Local Self-Governance and was responsible for development of the local self-governance and Euro-integrations. He received many awards for civil society actions. He is one of the main creators of the *Strategy for the Reform of local Self-governance System* in the Republic of Macedonia.

Since 2000, he has been the Mayor of Veles municipality, both times elected in the first round with a great majority. During his engagement, he attended the training at EU Colleague of Europe in Bruges; he was the head of the Macedonian local self-governance delegation that participated in USAID project in Poland; he was a member of study delegations to USA and Germany and is the only Macedonian representative at the II World Summit of Cities and Local Authorities on the Information Society, Bilbao 2005. As a result of his successful work in Veles municipality, the Council of Europe hired him for the education and training of Mayors, as well as in the development of the leaders' standards for local self-governance in Macedonia.

Zdravko Prka was born in Vranjače, municipality of Tomislavgrad, in 1962. He lives and works in Tomislavgrad, married and has two children. He completed his secondary education in Bjelovar (mathematics and IT gymnasium), and graduated from the Faculty of Geodesy in Zagreb. Following the graduation, in 1987, he returned to Tomislavgrad and

started working in municipal department for geodetic, property and legal affairs. In period 1990 – 1992 he was a head of the land register.

In 1999, he was appointed the head of county administration for geodetic, property and legal affairs, but due to the local election this appointment remained only “on paper”. In April 2000 elections, he was elected to the municipal council at the “compromise” list of HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union), however did not receive the approval of the presidency or the commissioner to assume the position of municipal Mayor. At that time, HSP BiH nominates him as the candidate for a Mayor. At local elections in 2004, when for the first time Mayors were elected directly, he won as a candidate of “HSP Đapčić-dr Jurišić”.

Ljubomir Janev was born on 24th of December 1962 in Kočani, where he completed his primary and secondary education. He graduated from the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Skoplje. He started working in construction company “Beton” in Kočani, as a facility engineer, but progressed to the position of general manager. In year 2000, as one of candidates of the SDSM who should introduce some freshness, youth and new ways of thinking, he won the local elections and became the Mayor of Kočani municipality. In October 2002 he became the minister in the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Urban Planning. He remained in the position of minister until December 2004, when he became the director of the Agency for Underdeveloped Regions. In April 2005, he run for the second mandate of Kočani Mayor, and won the elections. He is still performing this function. He is married and has two children.

Zoran Tegeltija was born on 29th of September 1961 in Mrkonjić Grad, where he completed his primary and secondary education. In 1986, he graduated from the School of Economics in Sarajevo. His professional career commenced in municipality of Mrkonjić Grad. He worked in Oil Refinery, Tax Administration and Republican Customs Administration. From this position he became the Mayor of Mrkonjić Grad municipality. Also, he was a member of the parliament in period 2000 – 2002 and the president of the BiH State Commission for Borders. He is married and has two children.

Predrag Mijić was born in 1970 in Senta. He graduated in 1997 from the Veterinarian Faculty of Belgrade University. His father was a doctor of veterinarian medicine, who started his private practice in 1962. As the existence of many locals depended on their livestock, citizens of Čoka knew Mijić family very well as they turned to them every time they needed an advice or assistance. Since the very beginning of his professional work he disagreed with the concept of public veterinary services, thus Predrag decided to expand the business and to develop it through the private practice. When he came to the position of the head man in the municipality, such mistrust towards public services was in a way copied to the found models of public utility companies.

Following good results in local elections, he resigned from the veterinary practice and ventured into something he was not familiar with. Of all the municipal competencies, he only knew the way in which the election commissions function. Memories of the days when his father was a municipal veterinarian inspector helped him not to lose his way on the first day in his new job.

Goran Ješić was born on 3rd of August 1974 in Remake Monrovia. He graduated in 2003, from the Faculty of Agriculture in Novi Sad, at the department for cattle breeding. He has been politically active since 1996, when he founded the municipal organization of the Civic Alliance of Serbia in India. He is one of cofounders of the students' movement "Resistance" in Vojvodina in 1999. End of October 2006 he joined the Democratic Party. In addition to improvements in the municipal administration and introduction of leading world standards in municipal administration, as a municipal Mayor he participated in completion of numerous projects, such as: Increasing citizens' participation in decision-making processes, Public Utility Company Reform Program, Program of inter-regional cooperation with Tyrol province in Austria – in cooperation with NGO "Srpski forum Beč" and EU program for refugee assistance. The most significant of them is the "System 48" – project of electronic city-municipality, gasification of the municipality and improvement of the local infrastructure. He is married and has two children.

We should add to his biography that he tries hard to spend his free

time with his family, that He is a weak character since he allowed himself to gain few extra kilos and he is a smoker. When his responsibilities allow him, he tries to take his family for a trip out of Inđija, at least once in a month or two, which becomes increasingly hard when the pre-election campaigning starts. Prior to the last republican elections, he visited 60 municipalities in Serbia and barely spent three full days at home. Once preparations for local elections commence, there will be a lot of work again.

