

IGOR MIROVIĆ

President of Provincial
Government



In your view, what is the greatest achievement of the Provincial Government in the past year?

The major success of the Provincial Government lies in its stability, full focus on the faster economic development of Vojvodina, which is confirmed by clear indicators and trends of economic growth and a clear and unambiguous foundation for the European character and spirit of politics that the Provincial Government is leading, and which is reflected in the development and promotion of the principles of multiculturalism, multiethnicity and respect for the rights of minority communities and groups. The three united principles provide a clear and predictable development and European framework for the future. At the same time, we have devoted additional energy to achieve significant results in defining the activities and tasks from the European Agenda. They are reflected in the opportunity to attract significant resources through concrete projects in cooperation with the regions of neighbouring countries and particularly with the most important regions of Europe. I would like to emphasise the exceptional cooperation with the regions from neighbouring Hungary and Romania, which resulted in an almost 100% financial efficiency.

What are the plans and priorities of the Provincial Government for the following period?

The Provincial Government will, through its representatives in the national bodies, participate in all phases of the negotiation process with appropriate institutions, directorates and committees of the European Union, especially in those chapters that are directly related to the interests that Vojvodina, as an autonomy within the Republic, has - regional policy, agriculture, local self-government, minority rights.

Another important priority is the creation of additional opportunities for building a better business environment to attract investors from the whole world, especially from the EU countries. I would like to remind you that the prestigious Financial Times has recently placed the Republic of Serbia at the forefront for its attractiveness for greenfield investment, in which the business ambience that we create in the territory of Vojvodina takes a tremendous share.

What has changed in Vojvodina that can influence an investor's decision to invest in one of Vojvodina's municipalities?

We have decided to invest further in the existing industrial zones and new ones and thus, in accordance with the national legislation and regional rules, be maximally competitive in relation to the neighbouring regions and regions from South East Europe. We have enhanced the institutional capacity to support investors - the Development Agency of Vojvodina has been established, whose aim will be not only the promotion of potentials, but direct financial incentives and reduction of the discrepancies in municipal development at the regional level.

Vojvodina is a stable, well-organized region with clearly growing economic development trends and a number of foreign companies that have found interest in investing in Vojvodina. I believe that the business decision of each new investor in Vojvodina in the future will be a good one for him and our community.

DAMIR ZOBENICA

Vice-President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina and
Vice-President of the Assembly of European Regions



Binding Factor for Regions

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the largest independent political network of regions in wider Europe, bringing together 150+ regions from 35 countries and 15 interregional organizations. Since May 2017, AER has had a newly elected Executive Board with a broad scope of competences.

Among its 6 Vice-Presidents, only the Vice-President from AP Vojvodina, Damir Zobenica comes from a non-EU region. His main responsibility over the course of his two-year mandate will be to help strengthen interregional cooperation. This is of crucial importance for a region whose country sits at a doorway of the European Union.

The region of Vojvodina is well placed to speak about interregional cooperation. It is a diverse region with a rich heritage and culture. Home to 26 national minorities, it boasts 6 official languages. "The Regional Broadcasting Company creates programmes in 10 different languages and is situated in South-East Europe where West meets East", said Zobenica.

Damir Zobenica sees AER's position as essential for balancing interregional relations. It connects different cultures, customs and history, creating room for discussion, sharing of good practices and experiences, and establishing good business ties. "I was born, and spent my first years in Istria, and my late school and University years in Vojvodina – two, geographically very different regions, but at the same time similar in so many ways. Finding the binding factor for regions that are spaciouly far apart and linking them by business, cultural and educational ties, finding ways to connect young people, exchange ideas and experiences will be my main interests during the two-year mandate", states Zobenica.

The AP Vojvodina has been a member of the AER since 2002, and in 15 years has hosted 5 thematic conferences, meetings of AER Committees 2 and 3, two meetings of the Executive Board, a General Assembly of the Youth Regional Network, two peer-reviews projects and one highly successful Summer Academy in 2014. In all these events, AP Vojvodina has promoted not only itself but Serbia in whole, its treasures, achievements, beauties and potentials. "Through these events, and our joint future endeavours we are opening our doors to 35 different countries, economies, cultures and traditions", said Zobenica. "We plan to integrate even more regions in Europe into the great AER family, and at the same time promote AP Vojvodina and Serbia."

President

Magnus Berntsson, Västra Götaland (SE)

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AER

Assembly of European Regions



OGNJEN BJELIĆ

Provincial Secretary for Regional Development,
Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-government

Mr. Bjelić, can you present briefly the manner of work, principles of functioning and main results achieved in the past year in the domain of the overall development of AP Vojvodina and its profiling as a modern European region from the perspective of competences covered by the Provincial Secretariat for Regional Development, Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-government?

First of all, I would like to emphasize that it is my honour to present the activities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina through this media in the framework of the EWRC, organized by the CoR and DG REGIO. The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, as a territorial entity within the Republic of Serbia, has all the features of a competitive Euro-region and it is an image that we will continue to build in the forthcoming period. In the past year, we have established a harmonized, modernly designed and efficient governance structure at the provincial administration level with a significant scope of autonomous competencies and obtained, thanks to the citizens' political will, a capable management in all 45 local self-governments (cities and municipalities). Such a state allows us to affirm the policy of common approach to all the problems we are facing and, by coordinating the activities of the two levels of public management, to achieve a significant economic growth, both in urban areas and in the sphere of strengthening agriculture and rural development, as the most specific resources of Vojvodina. Our aspiration for the overall development of Vojvodina is a clear indication of the policy strategy of Serbia's accession to the EU and the creation of an institutional and regulatory environment that will comply with European standards in all aspects, and in this respect, we want to lead because we have the potentials giving us a basis for such a political stance.

The best experiences from the previous period have been preserved and improved, giving them a new development dimension based on the principle of political and macroeconomic stability and endeavour for a steady growth of key economic performances. In practice, there is an undoubted visible progress in creating good and favourable investment climate factors, as confirmed by the relevant European and international institutions, but proven, first of all, by a great interest of potential foreign investors of different profiles and a dynamic inflow of foreign capital into the productive and service sector, largely indicated by the total volume of direct investment in the form of greenfield investments. Today, almost all larger municipalities in Vojvodina can boast of at least one significant foreign investment in the production or service capacities that has been implemented successfully, which means for us, as a synthetic indicator, the creation of a large number of new and safe jobs. There is no doubt that the most important factor for each foreign investor assessing the investment climate is a stable environment in which it operates and predictability, as the most important feature of such an environment. The Provincial Secretariat gives a great contribution to the initiation and implementation of good CBC projects with Romanian, Hungarian and Croatian counties, and in this respect, we are achieving excellent results, given the number and dynamics of projects, as well as their total financial value, which is also one of the ways to improve the overall image of Vojvodina as an attractive area for foreign investors. Of course, the Provincial Government, led by Mr. Igor Mirović, does not neglect the vitality of the domestic economy and there is no difference in its treatment, but foreign investments are crucial to us not only because of spill-over effects in the development of production technology and management, but because foreign investments undoubtedly speak of our approach to European business and development practices, which is the strategic goal of the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

The role of the Provincial Secretariat for Regional Development, Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government, which I have been heading since mid-2016, in promoting and accepting European values is unavoidable and is largely achieved in two tracks. First of all, we are concentrating our efforts and resources on encouraging and mobilizing local units to maximize their resources and approach contemporary trends in the area of local development. In the context of European integration, we have done a great deal to promote a partnership approach at the local level to enhance their readiness to enter partnerships with European regions and cities and thus find new ways of financing local public needs. Particularly encouraging is the fact that more and more realistic project activities implemented at the local level with partners complementary to strategic orientations bring immediate and more visible benefits for a better life of citizens in local environments. On the other hand, the Provincial Secretariat in cooperation with the European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina is successfully organising a continuous training of local officials and other stakeholders in the field of project management, relying on the professional knowledge and methodology available to referential scientific institutions and, above all, the Faculty of Economics in Subotica and Novi Sad. I am confident that we have found an efficient mechanism that will allow the production of personnel capable of engaging in all stages of project development and management, ranging from small investment projects to major international infrastructural ones.

I must emphasize that an important impulse in all our activities is given by our representative office in Brussels, whose work, organizational, technical and human resources have been raised to a higher level, and which is contributing to the increase in the number of inter-regional contacts and expansion of the range of regional networking projects, which is a basis for concrete cooperation agreements that are implemented in practice. Here, I have in mind, above all, the cooperation with the Italian, German and Austrian regions whose frameworks of cooperation have dynamically been filled with content in the past year. Finally, cooperation within the EWRC is treated as one of the important priorities in our activities because of the fact that the tradition of organizing this event has confirmed its value and that such an event is an excellent way for Vojvodina to present its development potential, and by presenting good results, create a platform for a more versatile connectivity with European regions and cities with which we share common interests.



VLADIMIR SANADER

Mayor

Civitas Sancti Demetrii—City of Sremska Mitrovica

The City of Sremska Mitrovica has been ranked among the top 10 cities for the past three years according to the Foreign Direct Investment publication. In 2016, the city took its place on the list of micro-cities of the future with economic potential. The city's greatest potential is a very good geostrategic position, i.e. direct access to the E70 motorway, indirect access to the E75 motorway via Belgrade and direct access to the Vienna-Thessaloniki international railway. Moreover, the distance from the Nikola Tesla Airport is only 50 kilometres, and the border with the Republic of Croatia is about 40 kilometres away, whereas with Bosnia and Herzegovina about 35 kilometres. In addition, one of the basic economic potentials is the educated and available labour force.

The city is recognizable by the Sava River, which runs through the city centre and is of great significance, both in terms of sailing and tourism. The industrial zones are fully equipped, and when investors come to the city, they have the support of the employees of the Office for Local and Economic Development and the City Administration for Urban and Spatial Planning and Construction of Facilities all the time, from the first contact and onwards. The first foreign investor came to the city in 2005, and currently there are 14 foreign investors operating in Sremska Mitrovica.

In addition to the economic potential, i.e. great investment destination, Sremska Mitrovica has a great cultural and historical significance. The city was built on the remains of the former Roman city of Sirmium, which during the time of tetrarchy was one of the four centres along with Rome, Triem and Milan. Six Roman emperors were born in the former Sirmium, and because of that, the city has special energy and charm.



Vladimir Sanader, Mayor:

The City of Sremska Mitrovica is moving in the right direction, which is the direction of development. We want to continue the policy of attracting investors, it is our main priority. Moreover, to provide employment and improve the quality of life for our citizens. My wish for Sremska Mitrovica is to be a city that will increase the number of inhabitants on the basis of economic development, as well as balanced development of rural areas and the city in the next ten years' time. I see Mitrovica as a city where it will be easy to live, and the citizens will have access to most of the facilities that large cities have.





VIDOSAVA ENDERIĆ

Director of the European Affairs
Fund of AP Vojvodina

The European Affairs Fund of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina monitors, analyses and implements the European integrative processes and builds and strengthens the institutional capacities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, aiming at faster integration of the Republic of Serbia into major European political and economic processes, as well as establishes economic, scientific, educational and cultural cooperation with European cities and regions and their institutions.

The third generation of the Programme “Management of Regional Development through EU funds“

The third generation of the Programme “Management of Regional Development through EU Funds” is being implemented by the European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina, in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics in Subotica, Department of Novi Sad, whereas the complete Programme is funded by the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The overall objective of the Programme is information dissemination on EU processes and regional policies, as well as on the importance and opportunities for accessing EU funds, so as to obtain an adequate analysis of regional development in the framework of EU integration, with the aim of making relevant decisions and bringing conclusions in terms of project management and programme and project documentation development in the EU accession process.

The Programme is aimed at the employees of local self-government units, provincial administration, development agencies, public utility enterprises, educational and cultural institutions, civil society organisations, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs, faculties, research institutes and other institutions that may be beneficiaries of EU funds.

Lecture of Prof. Dr. Franz Schausberger within the Programme

Within the framework of the Programme “Management of Regional Development through EU Funds”, Prof. Dr. Franz Schausberger, Chairman of the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) and Special Advisor of the European Commission for EU enlargement countries held a lecture “Present Status on Serbia’s way to Europe” at the Department of the Faculty of Economics in Novi Sad on 24th June 2017.

“European Village” event in Zrenjanin

Marking Europe Day, the “European Village” event was held for the sixth time in the City of Zrenjanin on 5th May 2017, together with the EU Project Fair “EU and Serbia at Work”, when preschool and school age children presented and promoted the EU Member States, their culture, customs, tradition and interesting facts in their stalls and on the main stage and when the most significant ongoing projects in Vojvodina financed by the European Union were presented. The event was opened by Jadranka Joksimović, Minister of European Integration, Oskar Benedikt, former Acting Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia, and Čedomir Janjić, Mayor of Zrenjanin, and it was supported by the Provincial Secretariat for Regional Development, International Cooperation and Local Self-Government, European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina, Embassies of Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and the French Institute in Novi Sad.



NOVI SAD 2021

European Capital of Culture



Following positive experiences of other capitals, the project Novi Sad 2021-European Capital of Culture is envisaged as a platform for development of cultural and creative potentials of the city, whose goal for the following period is to strengthen cultural vitality of the city, enable urban regeneration and improve international image and tourist offer of Novi Sad. Novi Sad 2021 is therefore, a platform for development of creative potentials of Novi Sad. This project should, above else, motivate and inspire both cultural workers and all citizens to re-examine current values and set new goals towards democratic cultural development of the city.



For a relatively short time, since Novi Sad won the European Capital of Culture title in October last year and since the 'Novi Sad 2021' foundation was founded early this year, cooperation has been established with numerous international organizations and institutions. However, the first year after winning the ECOC title has been focused on increasing the participation of citizens and their further involvement in projects and programmes. Moreover, the first year is dedicated to the 'Hope' thematic bridge, i.e. raising infrastructure and human capacities. In addition, some of the projects that were initiated successfully in the year of 2017 are listed below.

Decentralization of culture by opening 'cultural stations' outside the center of Novi Sad is one of the actions that will have been implemented by 2021. 'Novi Sad 2021' project wants to inspire artists from Novi Sad to connect with European artists and inform about contemporary trends in art. Establishing new international connections, partnerships, and joint projects, as well as creating possibilities for our artists to sojourn in other cities and host artists from Europe are bases for the Plants - Artists in Residence programme, which was initiated early this year.

Furthermore, members of the City Assembly of Novi Sad have adopted the Proposal of the programme that implements measures for technical protection of buildings within the cultural-historical space of Upper and Lower Fortress with the Suburbia in Petrovaradin. The crucial initiative of the 'Novi Sad 2021' Foundation, was to establish communication with expert public and citizens, resulting in harmonized conclusions on further development of the former industrial complex 'Petar Drapšin'. This was the first time that an open and comprehensive dialogue was used to articulate clear guidelines for transformation of industrial heritage in Novi Sad, into the "Youth creative polis".

This year, the 'Novi Sad 2021' Foundation also initiated the implementation of the 'Urban Pockets' programme for restructuring public spaces. As stated in the Bid-book of the 'Novi Sad 2021' project, one of the Foundation's tasks is to implement the project for painting public wall surfaces, in order to improve public spaces and strengthen street art and local artists. In this way, holding the title of the European Capital of Culture in 2021, the City of Novi Sad will develop its local concept and strategy of sustainable development of the cultural sector. The main focus remains on strengthening institutions of culture, preserving cultural heritage, improving cultural participation, developing cultural and creative industries, decentralization and inter-sectoral cooperation.



NOVI SAD 2019

EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL  opening doors

NOVI SAD – EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2019

When Novi Sad was proclaimed as the European Youth Capital for 2019 at the ceremony held in Varna on 16th November 2016 there was a moment when nobody could believe what had just happened. Two titles in only a year! And, then it all sunk in. The title was celebrated; congratulations were appreciated, but then came the question – now what?

“The thing is, the ball was rolling long before we got the title. From the first moment the team was created, we sat down and started dreaming of Novi Sad as we see it in 2019”, so begins the team coordinator Vukašin Grozdanović, adding that, “During these first six months, our team was completed, we’ve employed new young people in both OPENS2019 and youth sector in Novi Sad. This year, we’ve already doubled the budgetary resources for young people than there were last year in the city budget. Novi Sad Youth Forum is now in session and it’s actively participating in decisions which are affecting young people. And in all this, I must mention, we had the support of the entire City and its leaders”, concludes Grozdanović.

The European Youth Capital title has been running since 2009, beginning with the City of Rotterdam. Since then, cities across Europe have worked to boost youth participation – to hand over the reins and empower young people to shape their societies. In 2019, therefore, Novi Sad should become a hub for the entire region, hub that would motivate young people to act and to become a sort of agents of change in the region. On the one hand, that is a chance for the local youth to better connect with European values, but at the same time to deliver the values, heritage and culture of our region to Europe.



It’s still the first year, however, given the work and enthusiasm of young people it’s clear that the *doors are open* to all; that there is a place where their desire to work together, to create content and future programs, will be heard. First of activities organized to support that was the Conference “Novi Sad opening doors” where young people had a chance to interact with city officials, representatives of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Youth Forum and Council of Europe.

Apart from creating sustainable mechanisms of local youth policy, OPENS2019 implemented different activities which are influenced by young people’s needs. New youth club has been opened, a place where young people can implement their ideas or simply participate in its activities.

Also, in cooperation with EXIT festival, OPENS State of EXIT Zone was organized as a part of the prestigious EXIT festival third year in a row. Zone is a unique place dedicated to youth activism and apart from more than 100 youth organizations from Serbia, this year it hosted 10 organizations from the Western Balkans region. All there to celebrate love and peace that was this year’s theme of the festival.

OPENS2019 has two very important years ahead, filled with different activities that celebrate young people’s energy and if what is left in the end are just young people who are independently co-managing all youth processes and are continuing to build our society in a positive direction, open to new cultures, new people, tolerant and above all a society where we respect each other, the European youth capital indeed chose the right city.

VOJVODINA EUROPEAN OFFICE IN BRUSSELS

The Vojvodina European Office in Brussels, situated in the building of the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, has been established to present, promote and increase the economic, scientific, cultural, educational and tourist capacities of the AP Vojvodina, as well as follow the policies of the European Union brought in Brussels and referring to regional authorities. The AP Vojvodina pays particular attention to interregional and cross-border cooperation, as well as to the implementation of priorities defined within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

The AP Vojvodina has a long industrial tradition, well-developed educational system and innovation stimulating environment. As a result of its advanced hi-tech culture that positively supports an aptitude for quickly applying new technologies, it continues to contribute significantly to the Serbian GDP creation. The cultural and natural diversity of the AP Vojvodina contributes to its image outside the Republic of Serbia. The Vojvodina European Office in Brussels presents the AP Vojvodina as a successful multicultural European region in the Republic of Serbia, where high standards are applied in terms of the protection of the rights of national minorities – national communities.

The Vojvodina European Office has been established with the aim of allowing a two-way communication with the regions present in Brussels and the EU institutions regulating the activities of regional authorities in Europe. The provincial administration should be familiar with the EU policies implemented on the regional level, therefore, it is important to maintain regular contact with the key decision-makers and representatives of regional partners.

In this respect, the Vojvodina European Office in Brussels has the following tasks:

- to present the priorities of the AP Vojvodina to the EU institutions and regional representative offices,
- to promote the AP Vojvodina, as a region for investment in particular, as well as its tourist offer, in addition to networking within the internationalisation of the university, and cooperation in the domain of culture, energy and environmental protection,
- to establish partnerships to develop EU funded projects jointly,
- to disseminate information and provide technical assistance in relation to the opportunities for participation in the EU programmes available to the Republic of Serbia and receiving funding from the EU budget,
- to exchange information on the EU integration and EU regional policy.

In addition, the Vojvodina European Office in Brussels maintains contacts with the organisations gathering regions, such as the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Assembly of European Regions (AER) and think-tank organisations.

In February 2017, the new staff of the Vojvodina European Office, **Srdan Mačkić, Head of Office** and **Đorđe Cicović, Counsellor**, started their terms of office with a strong commitment to contribute to the achievement of goals of the Provincial Government, especially in the area of economic development of the AP Vojvodina.

In that sense, a number of meetings and presentations were held with regional partners from different European countries and EU institutions, such as Italy, Austria, Germany, Poland, European Committee of the Regions, European Parliament and many others. For the first time, AP Vojvodina participated, among more than 30 different regions, in the "Festival of Regions and Cities" in the European Committee of the Regions, celebrating the Inter-institutional Open Day on 6 May 2017. All the activities of the Vojvodina European Office are aimed at developing further strong partnerships, as well as establishing a basis for common future work on specific topics and projects.

