

INDJJA ON THE RISE: THE SKY IS THE LIMIT

The fact that a small Serbian municipality of around 53,000 inhabitants such as Indjija managed to be placed 18th among the top 25 European investment destinations surprised only those who didn't pay enough attention to this ambitious and hard working town. How did it all start?

When in 2000, the new Mayor Goran Jesic with a democratic political orientation took power in Indjija, as the youngest ever Mayor in Serbia, suspicion arose because of his perceived lack of experience. Over time, he completely changed old ways of thinking and performing in the administration and brought in a number of young and motivated people. They wanted to see their town become a modern and prosperous member of the family of European municipalities, a place where everyone would want to live and work.

Reforms aimed at FDI attraction and job creation even is sometimes painful. Gradual changes in

Over seven years about 300 million EUR in greenfield investments went to Indjija, leading to an increase in employment.

the attitude of people led to an atmosphere where pro-active attitudes, a spirit of cooperation, diligence, commitment and fresh ideas abound. As

a result, a quick and client oriented administration, excellent infrastructure and application of the most advanced information technologies secured Indjija the title of the most promising investment location in Southeastern Europe.

The municipality implemented many projects which directly contributed to the improvement of the quality of life and the economic standard of its citizens. CityStat (System 48), "Public utility companies reform program", the establishment of a Citizen Assistance Center (CAC), to name just a few projects realized with the assistance of USAID programs, mostly aimed at the improvement of municipal capacities and infrastructure. In 2006, a Local Economic Development Office was established with the support of USAID's *Municipal Economic Growth Activity*. The municipality and the Program worked together on the development of strategic plans, GIS and an Educational Center.

Indjija is the only municipality in Europe which has implemented "System 48" – a timely and comprehensive citizen and business service and a very cost-effective practice, which USAID's Serbian Local Government Reform Program brought to Serbia from Baltimore.

All this hard work started to pay off: during 2006 and 2007, Indjija managed to attract around EUR 200 million of foreign investments. The Indian company "Embassy Group" is investing in the construction of an industrial park with a total value of around USD 600 million. A multinational construction company "Trade Unique" is investing around EUR 60 million in a business-residential complex and the Bulgarian company "Monbat" is investing EUR nine million in a battery production company. The estimates say that these three investments alone would create more than 2,700 new jobs.

It is quite common that people are caught by surprise when they hear of a winner such as Indjija, forgetting that every success usually implies years of dedicated work. The Indjija story rises hopes for the future. It shows other municipalities in Serbia that it is possible to change things and prevent the young from going elsewhere in search of jobs and a better life. Only when one sets goal and works hard toward their achievement can benefits be created for all as in the case of Indjija.