

Entrepreneurship in Kragujevac

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As part of the European SME week, a two-day international conference on entrepreneurship took place on 7th and 8th May in Kragujevac, Serbia. This conference "EU Accession - Possibilities for Small Medium-sized Enterprise Development in South-East Europe", focusing on the importance of EU integration for the SME sector as well as on economic growth, was a great success.

The conference "EU Accession - Possibilities for SME Development in South-East Europe", organised by Business Start-Up Center Kragujevac and SPARK together with local partners, was one of the events that took place during the Kragujevac European Entrepreneurial City Event on account of the first European SME Week festivities. Aimed at promoting entrepreneurship, the SME Week is initiated by the European Commission and is being held throughout Europe between 6-14 May.

SPARK and the Directorate for Development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises of Montenegro signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the conference. This is how the media reported on the event. The Directorate is SPARK's partner in the Business Start-up Centers project. The latest success in their cooperation is the establishment of an Euro Info Correspondence Center funded by the European Union.

During the conference, issues related to EU accession, SME development and the economic crisis were addressed, thereby emphasizing the importance of EU accession for the sustainability of SMEs. EU-accession will contribute to the improvement of financial and non-financial assistance and will support the development of the business environment. Because of the recent financial and economic crisis, particular attention should be given to the sector of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises since these businesses depend on bank credit and have limited possibilities to alternative sources.

The following issues were addressed in discussions and workshops by international experts and professors, as well as local entrepreneurs. Sessions on six different topics were organised:

- 1) Development policy of the SME sector and EU accession
- 2) Financing the SME sector
- 3) Increasing competitive advantages of the SME sector
- 4) Entrepreneurship skills development - Workshop
- 5) Cooperation between Universities and business (support for SME development) - Workshop
- 6) Regional and national experience in SME sector (case studies) - Workshop

More information on the Kragujevac European Entrepreneurial City Event is available at www.smeweekkg.org .