



EDITORIAL



Nemanja Sormaz - Director of Center for Advanced Economic Studies (CEVES)

Dear readers,

I am pleased to present the fifth issue of the bulletin of the platform for public dialogue «SDGs for ALL» Platform, with a summary of current events on our platform, which aims to establish a comprehensive dialogue on the importance of the 2030 Agenda and bring Serbia closer to achieving its goals.

On our platform, the CEVES Centre for Advanced Economic Studies works with six local organizations, and with one of them, the Timok Youth Center in Zajecar, it jointly manages the platform's economic pillar. The goals we are working on are: Decent work and economic growth (8), Industry, innovation and infrastructure (9), Reducing inequalities (10), Sustainable cities and communities (11) and Peace, justice and strong institutions (16).

To implement these goals, but also most of the remaining goals, we believe that a more rapid development of the Serbian economy is necessary, and above all of its dominant factor - small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The largest part of the Serbian economy - as much as 99.8% - are SMEs, which create 60% of the added value, 66% of employment and 45% of exports.

Unlike foreign investment, which often attracts much more attention but usually requires land and large reservoirs of available labour (sometimes thousands of staff), SMEs are able to reach every pore of society and every part of Serbia, even those sparsely populated. In this way, SMEs contribute to the key principle of the 2030 Agenda - not to leave anyone out of development. They also achieve most of the goals of the 2030 Agenda, in particular that of increasing decent employment and reducing poverty and inequality.

Over the past three decades, despite many challenges, several hundred very successful SMEs have emerged in Serbia, some of which are almost European niche leaders. These companies are also found in sectors where Serbia has a competitive advantage through its heritage, such

as food products, special machines and tools, and metal products; but also in some "more modern" industries such as the production of medical devices and equipment, electrical and optical products, and software and hardware IT solutions.

The challenge we would like to highlight lies in the fact that there could be many more such companies, while at the same time the "use" of existing SMEs is insufficient. Our analysis shows that the SME sector is unusually fragmented and has developed in isolation in the past, without cooperation or a sufficient level of support. And while this trait is sometimes an advantage, since it brings greater flexibility and less reliance on others, it can become a burden at times when growth is necessary and possible. Progress then requires connection, not only among companies, but also between companies and educational and development institutions and organizations. Connectivity is important because SMEs often have insufficient capacity to overcome development challenges on their own.

For a little over two years, CEVES has been leading and encouraging dialogue with and among key companies in Serbia on their development needs and the development of Serbian industry. So far we have discussed existing and necessary initiatives, the situation on the labour market and, of course, cooperation. One important partner so far has been the Development Agency of Serbia. Through these dialogues, we strive to identify and support the launch of initiatives that will contribute to realizing this vision by 2030, and which can best be summed up in the desire to provide a dignified life and job for all. The dialogues so far have shown that, although there is potential in Serbia, there is not enough openness nor culture of cooperation and connections. We often hear from businesspeople that they do not even know similar entrepreneurs or businesspeople from their neighbourhood. Without knowledge of other market players and openness to cooperation, one cannot expect associations to occur spontaneously.

CEVES is interested in this situation and will continue to make efforts to change it. Our idea is to promote the collective identity and strength of local industry and show it what it can do if it joins forces, uses opportunities from foreign and local funds and follows global economic trends. We also want to continuously remind the state of the importance of support for SMEs, and support initiatives to eradicate bad institutional practices and inappropriate legal solutions. In this sense, our goal is for one of the results of our dialogues to be a contribution to the new SME strategy.

Finally, at the MIND Park in Kragujevac in early June, we are preparing a conference and exhibition entitled Serbia 2030: SME 100 Expo, where we will provide an opportunity for established and successful domestic SMEs to present themselves and their achievements, their contributions to the community and sustainable development. To get to know each other better and help us to jointly shape the initiatives we will work on in the future. As part of all these activities, we want to point out the importance of SMEs in Serbia, to promote joint strength and emphasize that companies that make up the healthiest tissue of our development should network and cooperate and that their voice should be heard louder.

The example of the Platform itself indicates not only the importance, but also the need for joint action and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in dialogue - from decision makers, through civil society organizations and academia to the media and the public - so we believe that in the local business, cooperation and networking are the best way to realize the economic development potential, and thus overall sustainable development.

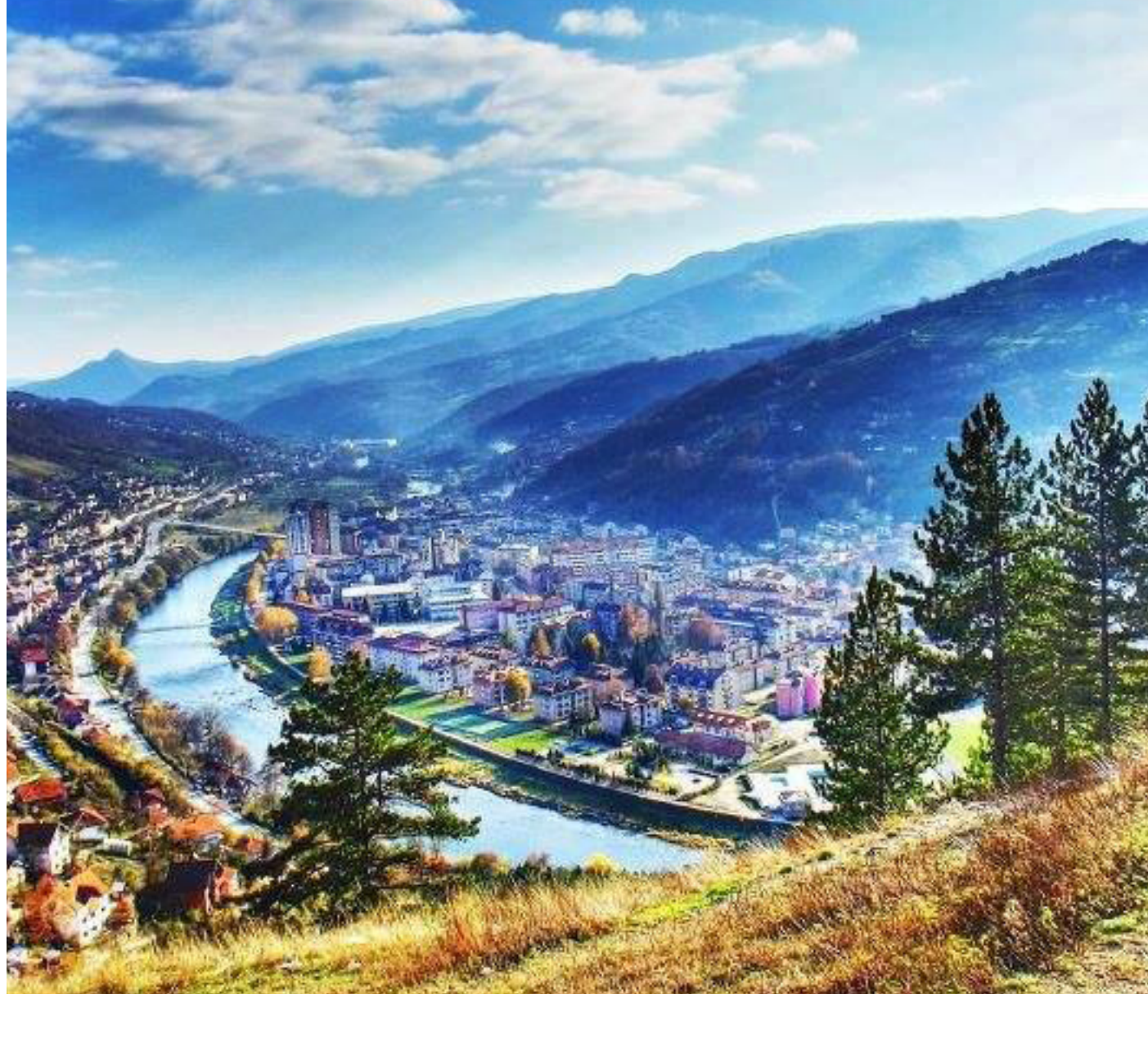
NEWS



ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ADVISORY THEMATIC GROUP "ERADICATING POVERTY"

Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation and the Centre for Democracy held a founding meeting of a thematic group "Eradicating Poverty" in order to more systematically facilitate dialogue and coordinate work on policies that improve conditions for achieving Sustainable Development Goal No 1 - A World Without Poverty. The meeting brought together decision makers, independent experts in this field, civil society organizations and the media. The participants discussed the key issues and relevant public policy documents that this group will be addressing during its future work.

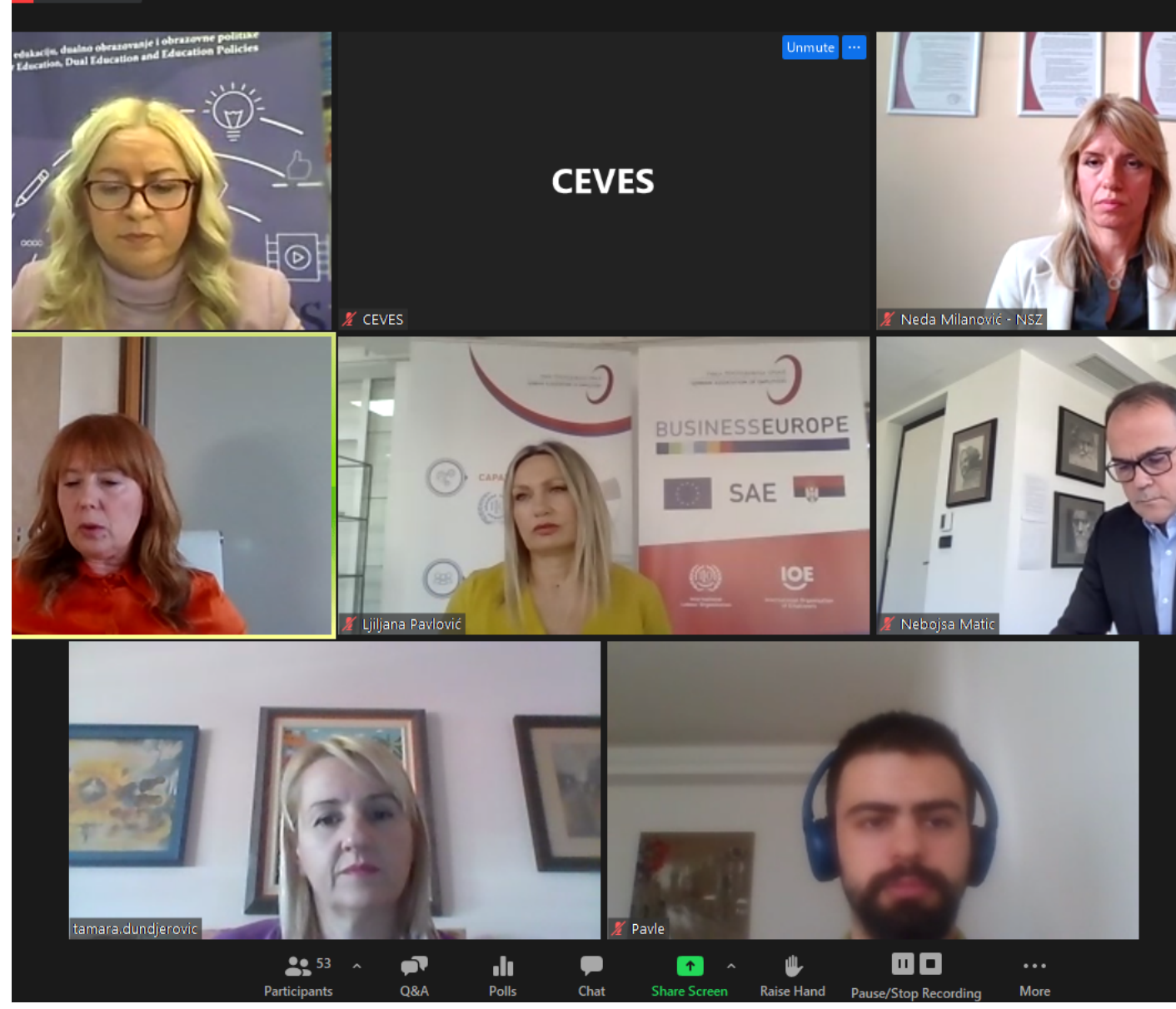
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PRIBOJ MUNICIPALITY ADOPTS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

At the session of the Municipal Assembly of Priboj held in December 2021, the Local Development Plan of the Municipality of Priboj for the period from 2022 to 2028 was adopted. "SDGs for All" Platform contributed to the development of this strategic planning document through the activities of its environmental pillar, which has organized consultations with all key local actors over the past two years. The local development plan is the most important document for the local self-government (LSG), created to establish a vision for the development of the LSG and offer a map for its implementation.

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CONFERENCE "SERBIAN SMEs 2030": SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS A CONDITION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC INDUSTRY

The economic pillar of the SDGs for All Platform organized an online conference "Serbian SMEs 2030: Skills development as a condition for the development of domestic industry", 3 March 2022. The event launched a discussion on skills that will, on one hand meet the growing needs of industry and, on the other, provide people with decent employment, and a high quality life. The conference was part of broader discussions within the «SDGs for ALL» Platform, which aims to develop recommendations for improving the position of small and medium enterprises within the local economy, which will further ensure sustainable development and dignified work in line with the 2030 Agenda.

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WORKSHOP CHAMPIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR COMPANIES FROM SOMBOR AND APATIN

Smart Kolektiv and the Forum for Responsible Business held a workshop in Sombor on the contribution of the business sector to the Sustainable Development Goals. The workshop was attended by local companies from Sombor, Apatin and the surrounding areas that wanted to learn about connecting the Sustainable Development Goals with everyday business, and to learn more about opportunities for further joint work under the «SDGs for ALL» Platform.

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TEXT OF THIS ISSUE



«SDGs for ALL» Platform at the Kopaonik Business Forum: Balance between environment and overall development is basis of 2030 Agenda

The "SDGs for All" Platform at the Kopaonik Business Forum: Balance between environment and overall development is a basis of the 2030 Agenda

This year's Kopaonik Business Forum, the 29th in a row, gathered more than a thousand participants. Under the central theme Serbia 2030: Agenda for Sustainable Development, they tried to provide answers to the most important economic challenges facing Serbia today. In addition to economic and geopolitical analyses, the forum addressed energy and the green transition, agricultural sustainability, environmental protection and education, as some of the key factors for sustainable development.

Between March 6 and 9 more than 30 panels were held, some of which were organized and facilitated by the representatives of the Platform's partner organizations.

Milorad Bjeletić, Executive Director of the Belgrade Open School, which coordinates the Platform's activities in the field of environment, designed and moderated a panel entitled Environment as a Priority of the Highest Level.

This topic was discussed by Dr Dragana Đorđević of the Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy of the University of Belgrade, Boris Erg, Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of

the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Mitsuki Harada, Director of Beo Clean Energy, Professor Aleksandar Jovović of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the University of Belgrade and Roland Kokai, director of the Public Company Vojvodinašume.

The participants emphasized that the issue of the balance between environmental protection, on one hand, and overall economic and social development, on the other, is at the core of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As it was pointed out at the panel, one of the key issues is that Serbia does not have a comprehensive development plan at the national level. This means that the country's strategic development priorities are not determined by a comprehensive public development policy, although this is a legal obligation under the Planning System Law. It was emphasized that in the absence of consistent national environmental policies and priorities, the recent opening of negotiating chapter 27 could be a great opportunity, which should be accompanied by accelerating the process of Serbia's European integration. In conclusion, the panel participants agreed that the environment is certainly a priority of the highest level, which through the concept of sustainable development, can be harmonized with society's overall need to progress.

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