

**Entrepreneurship**  
**Business for beginners**

*Mirjana Prljevic reports*

**Zenica, Bar, Bitolj and Kragujevac are four cities of the former SFRY region where the “Business Start-up” program, which brought 1.5 million euros to Kragujevac, is applied**

Ivana Vukicevic, the owner of the company "Medina +", which produces propolis drops, is one of the participants of the seminar organized by the Business Start-up Center (BSC) in Kragujevac in August. “Through these lectures I have become familiar with numerous fields, primarily marketing, and what I found particularly useful was the knowledge about the development of products and services.

I got a lot of useful advice from the presenters, both about running business and the relationship with clients. What I expect from this program is not only financial support but also the advice I can get daily from the BSC staff,” said Ms. Vukicevic in a short interview for EM. Uros Tomic, another participant of this “little business school” is on the way to carrying out his idea for the production of ear protectors with filters made according to the surrounding noise level by founding a daughter company of his parents' family business. “The BSC program is a safer way to start or develop business. This is highly significant, particularly in the unstable market conditions in our country. Acquiring new and improving existing knowledge in different business disciplines is the first and primary benefit of the BSC program. What we also expect, apart from the aforementioned, is concrete help in the form of micro-credits or the like,” says Tomic.



Branko Ratkovic is one of the young people gathered round the project of on-line trade “Euromarket”. In an interview for Ekonomist, Ratkovic says what he thinks about the BSC program: “The greatest value of BSC training is that we have been shown how to develop business using some practical things in addition to the theoretical knowledge that we acquired at the faculty. This is about making a business plan, marketing plan, various simulations of business situations... . Besides, stimulating young people to develop their ideas and thus find a job on their own is an important step towards solving the unemployment problem, and the bank loan, offered on favorable terms by the BSC to the most successful participants, is an additional strong incentive for us to support such ideas,» concludes Branko Ratkovic.

What is this about? This is about an unfortunately little-known program for the development of private sector specialized to encourage business start-up and supported by SPARK.

Phillip Hoster, regional manager of the program, emphasizes that the BSC has a budget of 10 million euros, 1.5 million of which has gone to Kragujevac. The program, which started on January 1 this year and will last until December 31, 2010, is intended for young people, 18 to 35 years of age, who would like to start their own business. On the basis of the awarded business plan, ten best participants will receive up to 10,000 euros of credit funds, free firm registration, four places a year in the Business Innovation Center in Kragujevac as well as 100 lessons of personal coaching for developing their business.

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## **SPARK**

SPARK is the new name for ATA (Academic Training Association), which became popular throughout Europe for organizing summer universities on the basis of specialized courses. It was founded in Tuzla in 1994. Since two years ago, SPARK has moved towards developing private sector, through the so-called PSD program. It was intended for the selected cities in Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The advantage of the PSD program was its cooperation with already established local development associations. The program ended this year, but as its (natural) continuation, a new program was born under the name of BSC - Business Start-Up Center. What is particularly interesting about the program is the fact that it is implemented at the same time in the four cities of the former SFRY: Zenica, Bar, Kragujevac and Bitolj.

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Nebojsa Simic, the director of the BSC Kragujevac says that Kragujevac was chosen to implement this program because of the good “offer” made by the City (which opened a business innovation center) with the support of local partners: the Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Regional Agency for Economic Development, the University and two associations of entrepreneurs: Sloga and Sumadija. The BSC Kragujevac is preparing a study on the situation in the SME sector of Sumadija region that will also serve as a guideline for planning future training programs. The study will be updated every year during the project and thus be an ideal «checker» of all the activities and their results.

In the interview for EM, Dragan Rankovic, in charge of the implementation of special projects on behalf of Kragujevac authorities, says that the city has already tried to move

the Business Start-Up Center onto a higher level by turning it into a Business Innovation Center. Therefore, the city has provided a building of the old Zastava clinic, for whose adaptation it received 26 million dinars from the funds of the National Investment Plan. «Meanwhile, several organizations offered to cooperate in the implementation of their projects where we, as a partner, would express our needs and then together build the Center and improve the innovative idea. Thus, from the American non-governmental organization USAID, i.e. its programs VOCA and MEGA, 60,000 dollars was received for the purchase of office supplies and computer equipment, and 90,000 dollars for repairing and enlarging business premises.»