

## NORTH MACEDONIA

# HANDOVER CEREMONY FOR THE CULTURAL GRANT AID PROJECT HELD AT NATIONAL OPERA AND BALLET IN SKOPJE

**O**n September 20, a handover ceremony for Cultural Grant Aid for “Project for Improvement of Musical Instruments, Sound and Lighting Equipment for the National Opera and Ballet” (NOB) was held at the National Opera and Ballet in Skopje. The speakers at the press conference were H. E. SAWADA Hironori, Ambassador of Japan, Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office, H.E. Nikola Dimitrov, Deputy Prime Minister of European Affairs, H. E. Irena Stefanoska, Minister of Culture, and Mr. Vaso Ristov, the Director of the NOB.

H.E. SAWADA Hironori, Ambassador of Japan emphasized that within the frameworks of the Western Balkans Cooperation Initiative, Japan is seriously committed to the support of North Macedonia towards sustainable economic and social development, which is a key for the EU integration. He pointed out that since year 2001 this is the second Cultural Grant Assistance to North Macedonia, implemented by JICA.

Through this grant aid, Japan aims to support the NOB to improve the quality of



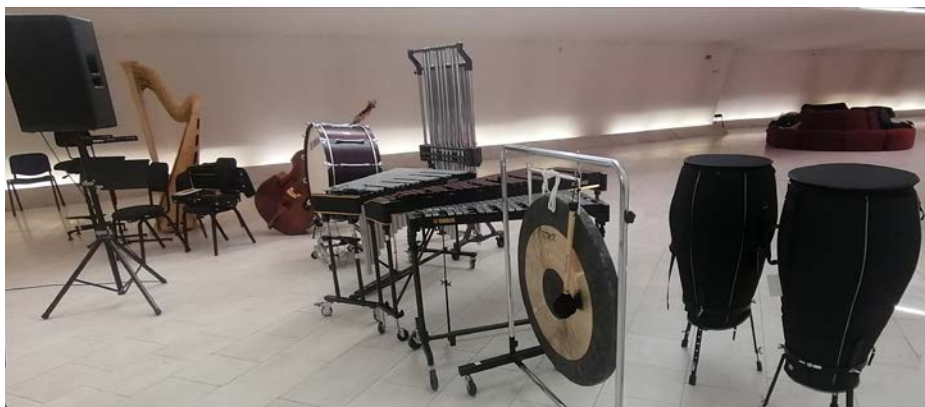
*At the handover ceremony at National Opera and Ballet*

the performance, and more largely, North Macedonia to strengthen their capacity to

support the youth. The Japanese government also expects that this project will contribute to enhance the mutual understanding of the communities through culture and art.

The total amount of the Cultural Grant Aid is 79 million yen (about 620,000 EUR). Part of the new instruments, as well as music stands and music chairs from the Cultural Grant Aid were exhibited in the foyer of the National Opera and Ballet.

At the ceremony, Minister of Culture Ms. Irena Stefanoska said “*This donation will motivate the artists for bigger creativity on the stage and passion in the performance, which, at the end, will become highest joy for the audience.*”



*A part of the donated musical instruments were exhibited at the ceremony*



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# INSPECTION OF THE FINAL STAGE FOR DRINKING WATER PURIFICATION STATION COMPLETED

On September 15, inspection of the final stage for drinking water purification station (with ultrafiltration) was held in Shtip. This station enables the stable supply of water to the people in the municipality from the dam and water intakes constructed through the Zletovica Basin Water Utilization Improvement Project.

After the inspection of the facility, Mr. Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister, Mr. Fatmir Bytqi, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, and Dr. Sashko Nikolov, the Mayor of Shtip, addressed the attendees. The inspection was also attended by H. E. SAWADA Hironori, Ambassador of Japan to North Macedonia, Mr. Milan Predan, Ambassador of Slovenia,

as well as Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office.

This Project was implemented between 2003 and 2013, based on the Loan Agreement between Government of North Macedonia, JICA and Knezevo dam when water intakes and related facilities were constructed.



Inside of the water purification station



Inspection of the water purification station



Mr. Zoran Zaev, Prime Minister of North Macedonia addressing the attendees



# PHASE 2 OF THE WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT LAUNCHED

On July 27, the first Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) of the “Project for Enhancement of Capacity for Waste Management towards Sound Material-Cycle Society Phase 2” was held at the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI).

JICA supported the Municipality of Prizren in the implementation of the Project (Phase 1) from 2011 to 2015. The Project (Phase 2) targets 4 municipalities of the Prizren region, namely Suhareka, Rahovec, Malisheva and Dragash, to expand the outcome of the Phase 1.

At the beginning of JCC, Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan office gave his opening remarks to point that JICA had been providing continuous assistance in waste management sector in Kosovo since 2011. He also emphasized that in the Project the Japanese experience could be utilized for the 4 small and medium-sized target municipalities, all of which have limited resources.

The JCC was concluded with signing of Minutes of Meetings on approval of the Project’s Work Plan by MESPI, the 4 municipalities, JICA and JICA expert team.



Opening remarks by Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office

## ALBANIA

# CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR COUNTERING INFECTIOUS DISEASES PROJECT LAUNCHED

On September 1, Record of Discussions (R/D) for the Project for Capacity Development for Countering Infectious Diseases Including COVID-19 was signed by Dr. Albana Fico, General Director of Institute of Public Health of Albania (IPH) and Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office.

The Project aims to strengthen the capacity of Institute of Public Health, to improve its mobility related to the response to epidemiological crisis, including the



Ambassador of Japan, H. E. Takada and Dr. Fico, General Director of IPH, during the signing ceremony



Dr. Fico, General Director of IPH and Mr. TAKEICHI, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office, sign the R/D

pandemic of COVID-19, as well as to maintain a cold chain of vaccines for the storage and distribution in the country. A number of reliable means of transport, such as 4 W&D for specialists and vans with freezer for distributing vaccines against infectious diseases, including COVID-19, will be also provided to the Institute. Reliable storage such as freezers (-20 up to -80 degrees Celsius) for vaccines are also provided. The Project is worth of 91 million JPY (700.000 Euro) and will last until March 2022.

KOSOVO

## THE FIRST E-GREEN MARKET PLATFORM “AGROMARKET KS” OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

This initiative came as a follow-up cooperation of the Country-Focused training Program on Community Development for Livelihood Improvement and Confidence Building held in Japan from 2016 to 2019. Through this program, farmers from both Serbian and Albanian communities went to Japan for a study visit.

After the training, participants developed action plans based on the knowledge ac-

quired in Japan and this initiative, aligned with that plans, aimed to build farmers resilience in enabling access to markets and diversifying their products.

COVID-19 Pandemic forced farmers to lose places to sell their products, as well as highlighted their vulnerability against external shocks. To address this issue, JICA Balkan Office in cooperation with the implementing partner Kosovo Women Chamber of Com-

merce (G7), created the first online E- green market, which connects farmers and citizens directly and enable farmers to reach out wider market.

In order to ensure sustainability and continuous support to local farmers in Kosovo after the completion of the JICA project, Agromarket KS was formally handed over to the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo.



Launch ceremony



Official handover of the Agromarket KS to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development for further management of the Platform

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## WEBINAR AND TRAINING FOR ICT IN SMEs

On June 15, JICA Balkan Office in cooperation with Westport Consulting and Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA) have organized the Webinar for presenting results of the survey on the use of ICT in SMEs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

The survey was conducted from September 2020 to March 2021. The aim of the survey was to analyze the use of ICT tools especially e-Business, online promotion, sale and home delivery of SMEs products and COVID-19 impact on SMEs. The expected results of the survey would provide insight in different sectors, needs, challenges with which SMEs are facing but also with potential support in development and reinforcement of SMEs in BiH.

The main objective of the webinar was to share results of the survey among related stakeholders and SMEs in different sectors in BiH. During the webinar, the participants were informed about the results of the survey and they gave their opinion regarding



Training on the use of ICT in SMEs in Zenica

the development of future support to SMEs in use of ICT.

Following the webinar, on June 16 and 17, the training sessions on the use of ICT in SMEs in BiH was organized in Zenica. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from the wood, metal, textile, tourism, and retail/wholesale sectors participated in the training.

The main objective of the two-day training was to share results of the survey, to in-

troduce some good examples of use of ICT in different SMEs as well as to introduce different ICT tools, their benefits, costs, and best practices of use of ICT in different SMEs.

As a result of the survey and the training sessions, JICA Balkan Office, in cooperation with Westport Consulting, is preparing a brochure “Best practices and practical advice” to SMEs which are interested in introducing or advancing the use of ICTs in their companies.



SERBIA

# SUPPORTING STRAWBERRY FARMERS

The Follow-up Project for Trial Production of senga-sengana strawberry in Plastic Greenhouses aims to support Serbian farmers to increase their production and income by exporting frozen strawberries to the global market in the future.

This is a project for group-focused training program “Promotion of SATOYAMA initiative” held in 2019.

Through this project JICA has financed purchase of 6 plastic greenhouses 500m<sup>2</sup>,

necessary pesticides and fertilizers, 18,000 strawberry seedlings and also provided technical support to farmers to educate them how to grow this type of strawberry in plastic greenhouses. Loznica is one of 3 locations and the other 2 are Pozega and Vranje.

Strawberry seedlings will reach a peak in growth in the beginning of summer of the year 2022 and after the harvest of the fruits, the quality of strawberry will be analyzed and cost-effectiveness analysis will be performed

to compare benefits to open-field strawberry production. The result of this trial project, if turned out to be positive, might lead to expansion of production of this type of strawberry in plastic greenhouses and increase export of frozen senga-sengana strawberries from Serbia.

This type of strawberry is especially valued by Japanese customers because of its sweetness and distinctive flavor. Currently frozen senga-sengana, grown at open-field in Serbia, is already exported to Japan.



Mr. TAKEICHI Jiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office in front of plastic greenhouse in Loznica



Senga-sengana strawberry grown in plastic greenhouses in Loznica





# SUPPORTING SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) and National Federation of Farmers (NFF), JICA Balkan Office has implemented a follow-up project in agriculture with an aim to support small-scale farmers in North Macedonia. The initiative came from 2 experts from MAFWE, Ms. Elena Novachka and Mr. Igor Despotovski, who participated in JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Programs (KCCP) in Japan “Development of agricultural cooperative and improvement of management capacity” and “Developed market-oriented export promotion strategy/marketing strategy”, respectively.

The project included interventions in different agricultural sub-sectors in 5 locations in the country as well as a set of training sessions prepared and implemented by the participants of KCCPs from MAFWE.

The objective of this project is to improve the competitiveness of small-scale farmers and women agricultural organizations in target areas by branding and adding value to the local produces. It is also expected to contribute to expand the accessibility to the new markets.

The groups of small-scale farmers, who received small machines in order to improve their production, labeling and packaging, include farmers’ association, members of NFF. The beneficiaries include farmers who are engaged in production of cheese from the village of Budinarci, Berovo area, farmers focused on honey production and cultivation of fruit and vegetables from the village of Samokov, Makedonski Brod, and the As-

sociation of women “Shira” in the village of Timjanik, Negotino area, which is engaged in processing fruits and vegetables. 2 more groups of beneficiaries include agricultural association “Farmer”, cereal producers, from the village of Mazhuchishte in Prilep region and the agricultural association of apple farmers and cooperatives “Blagoj Kotlarovski” from the village of Bolno, Resen area.

After the handover ceremonies were completed, Ms. Novachka and Mr. Despotovski

from MAFWE held 2 training sessions each on the cooperative principles for producers (cooperatives, producer groups etc.) as well as on marketing and sales for the beneficiaries of this project.

The second phase of this follow-up project will be implemented by the end of 2021 and it will be expanded to 2 more focal groups from two other regions in North Macedonia: Tetovo and Dojran.



Mr. Hoxha, Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Water Economy and Mr. Takeichi, CR of JICA Balkan Office handing over the keys for electric stacker and pallet lifter to the representative of apple farmers in Resen



Handover of trailer and set for label printing to cereal producers in Prilep



Handover of vacuuming machine, duplicator, set for label printing and fruit and vegetable milling machine in Makedonski Brod



# WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

On August 17, 2 JICA volunteers arrived in Serbia. After a month of attending intensive Serbian language lessons in Belgrade, they moved to their host organizations in Novi Sad and Nis.

With more than 10 year experience as food sanitation inspector in Japan, Ms. TERASAWA Akiko is dispatched to Development Agency of Vojvodina, where she is

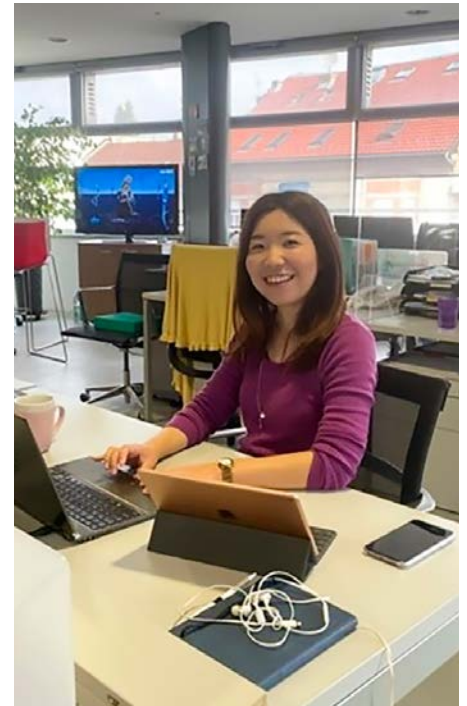
engaged in advising agricultural manufacturers about 5S in food processing (KAI-ZEN). "Although I was a little nervous when I started to work at my new office, all my colleagues have been really kind and friendly, which made it a lot easier for me to adopt", Ms. TERASAWA says.

Mr. NISHIMAKI Yuto is dispatched to Faculty of Sports and Physical Education in Nis

as Judo instructor. At the University club Kinesis, he is practicing with Judo players of different age, from children to university students. "What surprised me the most was their physical strength. In Nis, I especially enjoy delicious food. Children I teach do not speak English well, so I am doing my best to learn Serbian", Mr. NISHIMAKI says.



Serbian Championship 2021 (Mr. NISHIMAKI, first from the left)



Ms. TERASAWA at her office

## SERBIA

# JICA VOLUNTEER'S COLLEAGUE WON A GOLD MEDAL AT TOKYO OLYMPICS

Ms. Jovana Prekovic from Serbia won a gold medal at Tokyo 2020 Olympics in women's karate 61kg Kumite. She is the colleague of Mr. YUJI Kazuki, who is a JOCV to Karate club "Knjaz" in Arandjelovac, practiced with her. Mr. YUJI says, "My counterpart (Ms. Prekovic's coach) and I told Jovana how important mental health is and I was cheering and encouraging her during the practice. It was such a memorable moment for me to be here in Serbia when she competed at the Olympics in my home country and won the gold medal."



Ms. Jovana Prekovic, Ms. Roksanda Atanasov, coach, and Mr. YUJI Kazuki, JOCV

SERBIA

# JICA VOLUNTEER FOR MARKETING, RETURNED TO SERBIA

In July 2021, Ms. OMAE Yuka, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV), was re-dispatched to an NGO “Decije srce” (Child’s Heart) to work in the field of marketing, after leaving Serbia in March 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic. In her previous stay in Belgrade, she engaged in the activities related to the event organization and public relations at the café restaurant “Zvuci srca”, which employs persons with developmental difficulties. At this café restaurant, employees are encouraged to work independently and gain work experience.

Ms. OMAE says, “I am grateful to be able to return to Serbia as a JICA volunteer. When I went back to Japan in March 2020, due to COVID-19 pandemic, I kept studying Serbian for the first 2 months, but as the days went by, I was gradually losing motivation. In the meantime, many changes happened in workstyle and lifestyle in Japan and we had to get used to them. On the other hand, in Serbia, Child’s Heart faced with many challenges but also made some progress during the year. I have followed their Facebook page and I was impressed by the activities they were posting daily. I got the impression that NGO staff has the power to develop their activities, even in the circumstances caused by COVID-19. On September 1, H.E. KATSUMATA Takahiko, the Ambassador of Japan to Serbia, visited the café and made a big impact on the cafe workers and NGO staff. Together with my colleagues, I created a plan for a collaboration project with Japan for the next year and look forward to the implementation.”



Visit of H.E. KATSUMATA Takahiko, the Ambassador of Japan to Serbia (Second from the right), to the café “Zvuci srca”. Ms. Omae (Second from the left)

## INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Dobar dan! Kako ste vi?

For now I know these Serbian phrases. I have learned them since I started working at JICA Balkan Office in Belgrade in June. I also hope I can learn this kind of basic phrases from each country which JICA Balkan Office covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

My name is IIDA Noriko and I am in charge of accounting, so my work is widely related to every country mentioned above. Before I was assigned here, I had worked and studied in several countries in North and Central America, Caribbean and Pacific islands and Africa, and now I am in the Balkans. How exciting! Life is full of wonder! I am very happy to be here and I like working in JICA for JICA's vision (Leading the world with trust).

Honestly, the accounting work is difficult because each country has different bank system and governmental regulation. However, I am very happy because I can learn many things about Balkan region through my job, such as people, language, culture, history, geography, arts, craft, music, nature, agriculture, food, industrial products and so on.

My job is background of JICA work. So I could do anything to support JICA activities. I will do my best! HVALA (another important phrase to know!)



Ms. IIDA Noriko, Assistant Resident Representative (Accounting)