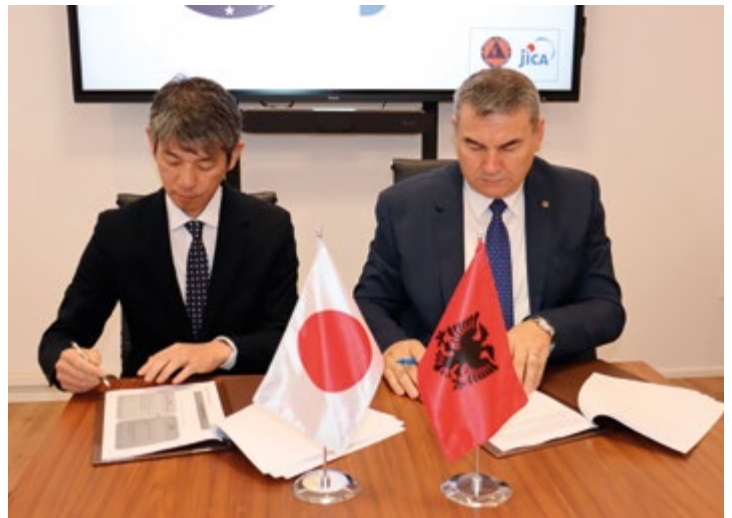


REGIONAL PROJECT ON ECO-DRR NFFIS SIGNING RECORD OF DISCUSSION IN ALBANIA

On November 14, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and National Civil Protection Agency (NCPA) signed the Record of Discussions (R/D) for implementation of “Project Capacity Building for National Forest Fire Information System (NFFIS) and Nature-based Solutions for Disaster Risk Reduction (NbS-DRR)”. The Signing Ceremony took place in the premises of the National Operational Centre for Civil Emergencies in Tirana. The purpose of the project is to create an integrated emergency management system in Albania and develop the capacities of government agencies for early warning for forest fires and other natural disasters, as well as to introduce nature-based solutions through piloting in certain areas (Bovilla water catchment area), aiming for disaster risk reduction. Through this Technical Cooperation Project, Japanese experts will be dispatched to Albania, for assisting NCPA in implementing the National Forest Fire Information System (NFFIS) and adopting Nature-based Solutions for Disaster Risk Reduction (NbS-DRR). The Project period is expected to be 5 years, starting in the first half of 2024.



Signing of R/D in Tirana

SIGNING RECORD OF DISCUSSION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

On December 21, Mr. UEKI Masahiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan office, and Mr. Mladen Božović, the Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina signed the “Record of Discussion” for the Project on Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction through National Forest Fire Information System (NFFIS) and Ecosystem Based Disaster Reduction (ECO-DRR). The purpose of the project is to strengthen the capacity of public agencies for prevention and reduction of forest fires and other natural disasters with National Forest Fire Information System (NFFIS) and Ecosystem Based Disaster Reduction (Eco-DRR). The project activities are expected to start in 2024 and the period of implementation is from 2024 to 2029.



Signing of R/D in Sarajevo



Waste management project Dissemination seminar, page 3



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Arrival of new JOCV Mr. Kogawa, page 8

ALBANIA

NATIONAL SEMINAR AND THIRD JCC MEETING FOR THE “PROJECT FOR CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IMPROVING ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT ON DIVJAKE-KARAVASTA NATIONAL PARK”



Final seminar on Project for capacity building for improving Ecosystem-Based Management on Divjake-Karavasta National Park

On November 8 and 9, the “Project for capacity building for improving Ecosystem-Based Management on Divjake - Karavasta National Park” held the Final (National) Seminar & Third JCC Meeting of the Project in Tirana. The main purpose of the seminar was to share the final progress and experience of the NAPA-JICA project and to promote understanding of Ecosystem-Based Management in Albania. More than 65 participants, representatives from the network of protected areas agencies, in national and regional level, representatives from other relevant institutions and agencies, local government, NGOs, universities and media participated at the seminar. Japanese expert team and local experts presented the results and achievements for all project components. This National Seminar concluded that the application of the Ecosystem based Management approach in DKNP is a successful model for all Protected Areas in Albania.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

FINAL STUDY REPORT HAND-OVER CEREMONY FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROJECT HELD IN SARAJEVO



Hand-over of Final study report in Sarajevo

On December 26, Mr. Ueki Masahiro, Chief Representative of JICA Balkan Office handed-over the final study report to the Minister of traffic of Canton Sarajevo, Mr. Adnan Steta at the premises of the Government of Canton Sarajevo, in the framework of JICA technical cooperation “Project for Formulation of Sarajevo Public Transport Management and Operation Capacity Development Plan” that was implemented from July 2020 to November 2023. In the report, the Project drew the recommendations on 3 issues - public transport policy for Canton Sarajevo, business management for operators and enhancement of public transport convenience. These recommendations are expected to be carried out by respective authorities for better public transport. Overall, the project has contributed to the quality of public transport in Sarajevo, through strengthening the capacity of Ministry of traffic of Sarajevo Canton, improving the organizational capacity of public transportation enterprises, giving advice on vehicle and track renewal plans, improving user services and others.

KOSOVO

WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT DISSEMINATION SEMINAR



Dissemination workshop

On December 15, the second dissemination workshop was held in Prizren as part of the activities of the Project for Enhancement of Capacity for Waste Management toward sound Material-Cycle Society Phase 2 to share new methods and guidance for small and medium-sized municipalities in waste management. Two municipalities, Kamenicë and Junik participated as guests. The municipality of Junik stated that they are interested in

the improvement of the waste collection system and bulky waste management. On the other hand, the municipality of Kamenicë expressed interest in environmental education and asked how the pilot schools were selected.

The Project plans to hold national seminar in June 2024 to share the result of the project.

KOSOVO

COUNTRY FOCUS TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PROJECT FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR AIR POLLUTION CONTROL PHASE 2 HELD IN JAPAN

JICA is supporting Kosovo with the Project for Capacity Development for Air Pollution Control Phase 2. In the framework of this project, the first training was carried out in Japan from November 6 to November 17. The seven trainees took part in the first Training in Japan, which mainly introduced Japan's air quality administration with a focus on automobile air pollution control measures. The purpose of the training was to focus on air pollution issues related to emissions from vehicles, the capacity development for promoting the environmental management administration by introducing methods for acquiring scientific and technological evidence which is necessary for implementing air quality management administration.

The main training destinations were the Ministry of the Environment, Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Yokohama City, Kawasaki City, Automotive Technology Research Institute, National Institute for Environmental Studies, Institute of Integrated Atmospheric Environment, Tokyo Metropolitan Research Institute for Environmental Protection, and the National Agency for Automobile and Land Transport Technology, etc. According to the trainees the content of all the training subjects was very useful,

especially the presentation of Japan's environmental improvement and conservation measures, vehicle air pollution control measures, and examples of planning for air quality conservation measures.



Chassis dynamometer

SERBIA

DONATION OF EQUIPMENT AND WORKSHOPS WITHIN WASTE MANAGEMENT PROJECT IN ŠID



JICA project team with the counterpart

On January 31, JICA donated a new compactor truck to PUC Standard Šid. Along with the truck, weighbridge, garbage containers, composters, and a chipping machine were also donated and installed in Šid municipality to enhance the waste management system under the bilateral Technical Cooperation pro-

ject. These pieces of equipment are introduced and used during daily operations and several pilot projects among the projects.

To share the Šid method (Šid model) and obtain feedback from small and medium-sized municipalities and PUCs from AP Vojvodina, a workshop was held on February 7th and 8th. The workshop involved three parts: (1) a lecture part, (2) a field visit part and (3)

a discussion part. The project teams shared the concept of the Šid method throughout the program, and participants expressed basic support for it. The project is in the final phase of the cooperation period (by May 2024) and continues planned activities to prove the feasibility of the Šid method and form lessons and recommendations for other small and medium-sized municipalities.

NORTH MACEDONIA

MENTOR AWARD EVENT HELD IN SKOPJE



Handover of the Mentor Award

On December 21, for the second year in a row, the Agency for Promotion of Entrepreneurship organized the Mentor Award event in Skopje, which is within the framework of the activities implemented with the assistance of JICA for the project "Strengthening and Expanding of SME Mentoring Services in Western Balkan Countries". The event was organized to present the best mentoring practices from each regional center after which the attendees voted and selected the best mentor for the past year. The winner of the mentor award was Mr. Salajdin Idrizi from Enterprise Support Agency Tetovo, and the award was presented by the Director of the Agency for Support of Entrepreneurship, Mr. Imer Imeri. Furthermore, at the event the first certificates were handed over for on-the-job instructors and the classroom training trainers, who were certified in accordance with the methodology for implementation of standardized mentoring services for small and medium enterprises.

KOSOVO

FINAL JCC ON PROJECT FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT OF RTK, PHASE 2 HELD, AND THE EQUIPMENT HANDED OVER.

On November 22, the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Coordinating Committee on JICA Technical Cooperation Project for Capacity Development of Radio Television of Kosovo, Phase 2 was held in Kosovo. Mr. Yasuhiro Nagasaki Project Manager briefed on the Overall Summary of Phase 2 from JICA project team by thanking all for the contribution in achieving the overall objectives of the project the establishing of the regional offices in Prizren and Mitrovica. Both branches, especially Mitrovica branch office achieved great success in covering the events in North of Kosovo. Following the JCC, the Equipment for Digital Archive System was delivered to RTK on December 20.



JCC meeting at RTK premises.

ALBANIA

THEMATIC SEMINAR ON JICA'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCING OF EXPERTISE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ALBANIA.



Attendees at the Thematic seminar

On January 22, JICA Alumni Association of Albania (JAAA) held a seminar in Tirana, on emphasizing the contribution of JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP) on enhancing the human resource capacities of the public administration in Albania. During this seminar, 8 ex-participants of JICA KCCPs who attended the trainings in 2023, made presentations on their experience in Japan,

lessons learned, professional benefitting as well as possible applications of their Japan-learning experience on Energy Efficiency, Cultural Heritage, Health, DRR, Urban Development, etc. The Seminar was attended from JAAA members, related representatives of Albanian Governmental organizations, as well as various other interested parties. Mr. UEKI Masahiro, Chief

Representative of JICA Balkan Office, held the closing remarks by appreciating the organization of the event and by appraising the importance of the JICA KCCP, not only on enhancing the capacities of the Albanian Government organizations, but as well as a very important instrument on strengthening the friendship among the 2 countries of Japan and Albania.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS OF SMALL-SCALE FOLLOW-UP PROJECT IN TOURISM SECTOR IN BRČKO DISTRICT

On January 30, a promotional event, as a part of the Small Follow-up Project (SFU) “Design and production of original souvenirs of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina to promote destination’s identity and improve visibility in the tourism market”, was organized at the City gallery of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the presence of Mr. Zijad Nisic, Mayor of Brčko, Dr Anto Domic, Deputy Mayor and Mr. Miloš Stankic, Acting Director of Tourism Organization of the Brčko District and JICA Balkan Office’s representatives. On that occasion, 224 unique souvenirs, that had been produced by the project, were introduced to the relevant stakeholders and local community.

Ms. Marica Markoljević, Senior Expert Associate for Tourism Development, Tourist Organization of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and JICA Alumni member, initiated this SFU Project in 2023 as a part of her action plan prepared in JICA’s Knowledge Co-Creation Programs (KCCP) in Japan. The main idea was branding of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to promote it as ECO-ETHNO-GREEN destination. The JICA Balkan Office (JICA) has recognized importance of this idea and supported project implementation since tourism sector is one of JICA’s priority areas of assistance in the Western Balkan Region.

The purpose of the project is to develop a unique line of souvenirs made from natural materials of the Brčko District for the needs of the Tourist Organization of Brčko District of BiH, which would contribute to the recognition and promotion of District’s identity as a sustainable tourist destination and to foster local economic growth through the sale of authentic and locally crafted products. The souvenirs are hand-crafted from natural materials such as ebony wood, ordinary wood, and stone powder, and each has historical background and tells its own story.



Ms. Markoljevic, SFU applicant and Ms. Nagashima from JICA Balkan Office

NORTH MACEDONIA

SMALL SCALE FOLLOW-UP (SFU) PROJECT ECO-LUCK SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

The Small-scale Follow-up project (SFU) in North Macedonia was successfully completed in February. The ex-participant of JICA Knowledge Co-Creation Program (KCCP), Ms. Biljana Petkoska from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, applied for SFU cooperation with an idea to raise the awareness and teach the school children about the methods and techniques for waste collection, reduction, reuse, recycling and composting through a fun board game ECO-Luck. The workshops were held in 4 schools in Negotino and Vinica in December and February for about 200 pupils of 1st and 2nd grade of elementary school. At the workshops, Ms. Roska Klincharovska, the educator, explained the concept of the pollution of our planet and the need of selecting and recycling the waste. After



Workshop in an elementary school in Vinica

the initial lecture, the educator explained the rules of the board game, which has been created by Ms. Petkovska, so the pupils could apply their knowledge about re-

cycling while playing. After the game was completed, at the end of the class, each student received one board game to play at home with family and friends.

REGIONAL COOPERATION ACTIVITY BETWEEN ALUMNI SERBIA AND ALUMNI NORTH MACEDONIA

On November 27 and 28, Alumni Serbia and Alumni North Macedonia organized a joint regional cooperation activity in Belgrade, with an aim to transfer the know-how and share the experiences on the topic of Circular Economy. Three members of Alumni North Macedonia, led by Prof. Tashko Rizov, President of the Alumni Association and professor at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, visited the counterpart institutions in Belgrade. The President of Alumni Serbia Ms. Aleksandra Vucinic, from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, organized meetings with the personnel in charge of circular economy from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, UNDP in Belgrade and the Standing conference of towns and municipalities in Serbia. The Alumni team from North Macedonia also attended the opening of the 18th International Energy Fair and the 19th International Fair of Environment protec-



Meeting at the Ministry of Environmental Protection

tion ECOFAIR 2023. Alumni regional activity is a great opportunity for the professionals in the same sector in different countries in

the region to meet, exchange opinions and discuss further regional cooperation in the respective sectors.

VOICE OF THE KCCP PARTICIPANT, MS. AFERDITA VULJAJ FROM MONTENEGRO

“Embarking on a journey with JICA for the “ Small and Medium Enterprise Development Policies training” held at JICA Kansai Center proved to be a transformative experience. Accepted alongside a diverse group hailing from Macedonia, Zambia, Moldova, Ukraine, Ghana, and Cote d’Ivoire, we ventured into a world of knowledge and cultural exchange. The lectures we attended were nothing short of enlightening. From delving into Japanese history and language to exploring the intricate balance of tradition and modernity encapsulated in the concept of “Waken Yosai,” each session offered valuable insights. What resonated deeply were the Japanese virtues of punctuality, humility, discipline, and cleanliness, which underscored not only individual conduct but also societal norms. Moreover, the pre-study presentations highlighted shared challenges among our represented countries regarding SMEs, from financing to technology infrastructure. Through vibrant discussions and study visits to Japanese SMEs, we exchanged perspectives and solutions, enriching our understanding of SME development. Beyond the classroom, immersing ourselves in Japanese culture was an unforgettable experience. From tea ceremonies to exploring vibrant cityscapes, every moment was a lesson in cultural appreciation. Receiving diplomas at the end of the training was a testament to our dedication and newfound knowledge. But perhaps the most valuable takeaway was the bonds forged within our group and the collective learning that transcended borders. Our time with JICA not only empowered us with skills but also instilled a deeper appreciation for international collaboration in driving SME growth. As I reflect on this transformative journey, I’m reminded of the words shared with my fellow participants: our time with JICA wasn’t just about acquiring knowledge; it was about forging connections, embracing diversity, and fostering global collaboration for a brighter future.

Arigatou gozaimasu JICA.”



Ms. Vuljaj receiving the certificate of completion.

VOICE OF THE KCCP PARTICIPANT MR. SASA SIMOVIC, REGULATORY AUTHORITY FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA, SERBIA

"It was an incredibly educational, and once in a lifetime, experience to attend the seminar "The Role of Media in Democratic Countries" and to visit the most beautiful country in the world-Japan. The seminar, which explored the complexities of Japanese media culture, set my focus on the country's media structure and self-regulation in radio and television system. Besides, the most interesting part was to examine the coverage of political campaigns by the media which revealed similarities to Serbian law, but also differences in practice. My professional perspective has been enhanced by my profound comprehension of Japanese media practices.

I not only learned a great deal about Japanese legal systems, but I also acquired a comparative perspective that helped me evaluate the dynamics of the media in my own country. When I got back, I excitedly imparted these insights to my coworkers, encouraging a cooperative sharing of ideas. Knowledge sharing has the potential to improve how we all approach media-related tasks. In closing, I want to express heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in the seminar. The experience not only broadened my professional horizons but also touched me on a personal level. This journey has left an indelible mark, and I'm sincerely grateful



Mr. Simovic at the handover of Certificate of completion

for the shared knowledge that will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors." Sayōnara, mata aimashō"

ARRIVAL OF NEW JOCV MR. KOGAWA

Hello everyone. I'm Shotaro Kogawa. I arrived in Serbia on January 24, and I will work at the Serbian Judo Federation and will be dispatched to Niš as a Judo instructor. I started Judo when I was 10 years old and have continued to practice ever since. I'd like to introduce Japanese traditional Judo to many people, and I'd like to learn new things from Serbian Judo players.

Drago mi je.



Mr. Kogawa during Judo practice

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM MS. MIYATA (JOCV AT EMERGENCY RESPONSE DEPARTMENT IN UB MUNICIPALITY)

I have already returned to Japan. In Serbia I was assigned to the emergency response department at Ub's city hall. Ub is a small town, but it is close to Belgrade and has some shops and sports facilities, making it a very comfortable place to live. At work, I explained evacuation drills to schools and supported them. Teachers and students conducted them seriously. Over the past two years, I have been blessed with wonderful colleagues, friends, JICA staff and my family. Thank you very much.



Ms. Miyata

FAREWELL MESSAGE FROM MS. SAKAI

The time has flown so fast and my two years of stay in Zlatibor came to an end. It was great to have such wonderful Serbian colleagues at work and we spent a lot of time together both on and off time, including business trips. We have also worked together in the preparation of projects and events, such as various travel fairs, destination promotions in other cities, and applying for the Green Destinations. Life in the mountain gave me the opportunities to learn a lot about unique local culture, customs and foods of western Serbia. I hope to use this experience to contribute to the further development of tourism in the future. Hvala mnogo!



Ms. Sakai (in the middle) with her colleagues and friends



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