



Enhancing Serbia's Market Competitiveness

Challenge

Serbia's furniture and home construction materials sector was traditionally recognized for its premium hardwoods and craftsmanship. But after ten years of sanctions and isolation, Serbian industry needed help re-establishing its reputation and getting back into the international marketplace. "Our biggest challenge is to regain our position in the international market we lost some fifteen years ago," says Djuro Krneta, representative of one of the leading Serbia's furniture manufacturer, Eurosalon.



Photo: USAID/SEDP Project

Furniture Cluster presentation at the Cologne Fair.

"USAID's project in Serbia is providing our industry with an invaluable incentive to increase its export potential to the world market. The services and assistance of your program will ensure that we realize such potential."

- John Walker, Export Manager of Agroekonomik

Initiative

USAID's Serbia Enterprise Development Project (SEDP) is bridging that gap and helping six sectors become more competitive, with the ultimate goal of increasing economic growth, jobs, and prosperity for Serbians. The program provides support with expert analysis, marketing consultation, and development of networks that allow businesses to reduce costs and project a strong, national brand. In addition, SEDP has reached an agreement with the Serbian Investment and Export Promotion Agency to establish an export database with information on specific sectors and trade links.

Results

After almost fifteen years of absence, Serbia's furniture and home construction materials sector is once again gaining recognition by international markets. In January 2004, the Serbia Furniture Cluster displayed their best work at the International Furniture Fair in Cologne, Germany — one of the industry's most important annual events. A surprise hit, the Serbia booth attracted more than 2000 visits and led to hundreds of sales leads. Within a week of returning from the Cologne Fair, cluster companies hosted more than half a dozen delegations of international buyers. Companies are now negotiating deals to enter markets in Italy, Denmark, Germany, and throughout Europe. Over 190 companies are benefiting from their work with USAID's SEDP.

