



## **EMPOWER THROUGH JOB CREATION!**

### **FAST FACTS**

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, EMPOWER issued a call for grant applications (APS #3) to finance innovative activities that create jobs and advance economic development. The deadline for applications is December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

EMPOWER announced a call for applications on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for the Solar Roofs Pilot Project, to promote the installation and use of solar panels in small businesses and residential houses in collaboration with Jaha Solar. The call ended on June 13<sup>th</sup>, however a new call is expected to be opened soon.

EMPOWER signed an MOU with DokuFest to promote Kosovo's tourism during the festival through a variety of activities with 7,500€ sponsorship and two press trips in Kosovo.

Formon company was awarded a grant of 9,000€ to support CE mark certification for their 3D printers. This will enable Formon to export their printers to the European market.

EMPOWER supported fashion designer Lia Stublla with 4,430€ to expand her production capacity and transition from a micro to small business, enabling the creation of eight new jobs within three years.

Kivo, a producer of bread bags, printed films and garbage bags was awarded a grant of 25,000€ to purchase new equipment that will increase production capacities and enable the creation of 50 jobs within three years.

Iliria company was awarded a grant of 18,000€ to purchase new equipment that will allow the company to increase its processing capacity and workflow efficiency.

### **Kosovo Connects to the Via Dinarica**

On a sunny day on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017, in the beautiful mountains of Rugova, Kosovo officially joined the Via Dinarica. US Ambassador Greg Delawie, USAID Mission Director James Hope, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Swedish Embassy Goran Paulson and President of the Kosovo Mountaineering and Alpinists Federation Arben Lila, inaugurated the Kosovo segment of the Via Dinarica trail. This event sealed the connection of Kosovo's tourism to the Via Dinarica global platform, and the expansion of tourism arrivals and tourism-related employment.

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*Today we inaugurate the 120km Kosovo portion of the trail, joining Kosovo's incredible natural beauty to seven other nations, and ensuring that more people will have the opportunity to witness the beauty of Kosovo, and enjoy its landscape, mountain ranges, culture, heritage, and incredible food" - US Ambassador, Greg Delawie.*

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The preparation leading up to the event began in August 2015, when Thierry Joubert, one of the creators of the Via Dinarica trail, led a group of experienced Kosovo mountaineers to mark and physically map the Kosovo segment. Weaving through the most scenic landscapes in Kosovo, the trail starts from the village of Reka e Allages in Rugova Valley, through Bjeshket e Nemuna National Park, to Gjeravica the highest peak of Kosovo, and finally to the Sharr Mountains. For the President of the Kosovo Mountaineering and Alpinists Federation Arben Lila, making the trail paths user-friendly through proper marking and mapping was crucial "This will enable individuals and families to hike and navigate alone to the various mountain peaks without any fear or need to be guided by a professional guide or association," said Lila.

The Via Dinarica platform was initiated ten years ago by Bosnian adventure tourism operators and is now mapped and opened to hikers through eight Balkan nations from Slovenia to Albania. Activities throughout Via Dinarica include world-class hiking, cycling, skiing, kayaking, and rafting. The trail promotes rural tourism, highlighting the traditional lifestyles and cuisine of the region and was recently recommended by the National Geographic as one of the top five nature trips to take in 2017.

USAID EMPOWER Private Sector in partnership with SIDA and Kosovo Mountaineering and Alpine Federation initiated and supported the development and promotion of Kosovo's segment of the Via Dinarica. This included training local tour operators to build their capacity to provide adventure travel services along the Via Dinarica segment in Kosovo. The USAID EMPOWER Project continues to promote the Via Dinarica trail in Kosovo and to support Kosovo's adventure tourism.



Unveiling of the Via Dinarica plaque in Rugova



MOU signing between the Albanian Diaspora Business Network and USAID EMPOWER Private Sector



Te Naseri company employee using the new equipment at the company's new production facility.



The US Deputy Chief of Mission Colleen Hyland speaking at the International Girls in ICT Day



USAID Mission Director James Hope and Rroni Fer owner Labinot Kameri inaugurating the new equipment

## Diaspora Businesses to Support Kosovo Businesses

On April 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, USAID Mission Director James Hope was joined by representatives of Diaspora businesses at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Albanian Diaspora Business Network (ADBN). USAID EMPOWER Private Sector in partnership with SIDA will work together with the ADBN on common objectives for sustainable economic growth in Kosovo, and to support the expansion of Kosovo businesses through market linkages with businesses in Diaspora. Through this collaboration, a variety of activities will be conducted to strengthen the export potential of Kosovo businesses.

## Te Naseri Company Inaugurates New Production Facility

On May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017, Te Naseri furniture company inaugurated its new modern 5500sqm production facility in Suhareka. Fully equipped with new machinery, storage space and large showroom, the new facilities will enable the company to further expand its production capacities, meet increased demand from its Kosovo retail network, expand exports, and create new jobs. In 2015, USAID EMPOWER Private Sector in partnership with SIDA, awarded the company a grant of 58,000€ for the purchase of two essential pieces of equipment. As a result of the new investments, the company was able to increase employee numbers from 36 in 2015 to 115 in May 2017, with another 35 interns expected to be employed in three months; bringing employee numbers to 150.

## International Girls in ICT Day Celebrated in Kosovo

The International Girls in ICT Day was celebrated in Pristina, on April 28<sup>th</sup> 2017. The US Deputy Chief of Mission Colleen Hyland spoke at the annual event, organized to empower and encourage girls and young women in Kosovo to consider education and careers in the fields of information and communication technology. "This is a timely and urgent issue in the U.S., just like here in Kosovo...so let's keep working together to ensure that all paths are open to Kosovo's daughters, and that every girl in Kosovo benefits from the entire universe of possibilities." said US Deputy Chief of Mission Hyland. The event was supported by USAID EMPOWER Private Sector in partnership with SIDA, and organized by Ipko Foundation and AUK Training and Development Institute.

## Rroni Fer to Double its Workforce

USAID Mission Director James Hope, joined Rroni Fer owner Labinot Kameri on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2017, to inaugurate the company's new electrical transformer substation. The electrical substation will enable Rroni Fer company to increase their production capacities, expand exports and double its workforce. Rroni Fer, established in 2007 in Gjakova, is the main Kosovo producer of cold drawn wire and cold rolled narrow strips used in construction and as elements of fences. In 2016, USAID EMPOWER Private Sector in partnership with SIDA awarded a grant of 40,000€ to Rroni Fer to co-finance the acquisition of the new 630 kW electrical transformer substation for the expansion of its wire rolling line. The investment will contribute to the creation of over 70 new jobs within three years.

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**USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector, which started in July 2014, is a five-year project designed to stimulate large-scale job creation by elevating the competitiveness of Kosovo firms. The project is funded by USAID and Sida, and is implemented by Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd.**