

**ROAD TO ATHENS WINDS THROUGH 10 PERFECT PLACES**

*Ten perfect places along Corridor 10 in Serbia: Palic, Zobnatica, Salas 84, Carska Bara, Lozovicka cesma, Aleksandrovac – Vinery Radenkovic, Sokobanja Spa, Restaurant Amerikanac in Nis, Motel Predejane, and Wireless Internet in Vranje.*



*Entrepreneurs from South Serbia recognized Corridor 10 as a priority for further economic development in Serbia*



*Sokobanja Spa is situated 35km from Corridor 10. It is well known for its clean air, medicinal herbs and unblemished nature*

BELGRADE, SERBIA – On April 6<sup>th</sup> 2004, USAID and CHF organized a workshop in Nis gathering South Serbian businessmen and women of several municipalities participating in the CRDA program. "Corridor X" was identified as an economic opportunity to be further explored. This proposal reflected an expected increase in transit tourists passing through Serbia on their way to the Olympic Games organized in Athens, August 2004. Corridor 10 refers to the uninterrupted road journey that can be made between Salzburg and Thessalonica. This corridor stretches 2,360 km with 800 km of that running through Serbia. Studies estimate that on average around 10,000 vehicles a day travel long stretches of the so-called Corridor X in Serbia. In the summer months that number is estimated to rise to between 15,000 and 65,000 vehicles. Business people from Southern Serbia recognized this road's significance in 2004 as a real opportunity for economic development.

On July 6<sup>th</sup> 2004, two months after the business leaders' workshop in Nis, USAID and CHF publicly announced the initiative to identify the best places for transit tourists to stop along Corridor X in CHF's AOR. By identifying and attracting transit tourists to these destinations it was anticipated that micro-economies within the greater Serbia economy would receive a welcome boost. With strong national interest arising to participate in this competition, other CRDA partners (ADF, Mercy Corps and ACDI/VOCA) were invited to join the competition and expand the Corridor 10 initiative to the whole of Serbia. Thus from a local initiative,

the "Ten Perfect Places" competition was born. Over 200 entrepreneurs entered the national competition with a jury made up of Serbians and Internationals, making the selection of the 10 perfect places.

USAID, through CHF and its other CRDA partners helped the winning entrepreneurs develop the selected perfect places. Some \$10,000 was invested in each of the selected sites in order to prepare them for the expected tourist influx throughout the duration of the Olympic Games.

"Considering a significant increase in traffic before, in the course and after the Olympics, the project is an excellent opportunity for entrepreneurs to offer to transit tourists unique experiences that will make them consider returning to Serbia some day in the future" declared Keith Simmons, USAID Mission Director, when declaring winners of the competition.

Addressing the Serbian entrepreneurs Brian Holst, CHF Serbia Director, emphasized that "we should not forget that an individual entrepreneur, united with his local community, is the one who is responsible for launching local actions to lead Serbia towards a prosperous future". All ten of the "Perfect Places" were highlighted in a special map-guide which was then distributed at all Serbian border crossings.

There is now hope that transit travelers who passed through Serbia this year will have been impressed enough to choose Serbia as their final holiday destination in the near future.