

High Representative and Head of the EC Delegation visit successful start-up business

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Head of the European Commission delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, HansJoerg Kretschmer, today visited the firm of P.V.S.H. Alplast in Ilijas, where they viewed production facilities and met the staff, many of whom are returnees.

P.V.S.H. Alplast is a beneficiary of the EU Quick Impact Facility (QIF), and is featured as a positive example of a successful small to medium-size business in the radio/TV series "Od ideje do biznisa". The firm produces and sells plastic and aluminium doors and windows. Unable to secure start-up capital commercially, the company received a grant from QIF to purchase 13 specialised machines. Alplast started operations in June 2000 and was able, within four months, to rebuild production facilities, install the machines, start production and begin securing markets. It now employs 22 workers, of whom 15 are returnees, and having successfully launched its business in a very short space of time has plans for expansion. Alplast uses modern technology and management methods, and it is hoped that its example will serve to attract further investment to Ilijas.

The QIF programme is a grant and technical assistance project, established with the primary objective of creating economic sustainability for returning refugees. One of QIF's core activities is providing grants and consulting/training directly to small and medium-size businesses to enable them to expand. Any request for support from QIF, whether it be for a start-up or the expansion of an existing business, must promote the development of private enterprise, show a

commitment to fair employment practices and multiethnicity, create a minimum of 20 new jobs, and be directly linked to return or returnees.

Alplast is one of many businesses featured in the 10-part TV and radio series “Od ideje do biznisa”. The series provides a step-by-step guide on how to start or improve a small to medium-size enterprise, from making a business plan, registering a business, getting a loan, and hiring employees, to managing finances and finding and keeping customers. It was produced by the Office of the High Representative and the EU QIF programme in co-operation with 19 radio and 7 regional TV stations across BiH, and will air between now and December. The written guide that accompanies the series is available free from participating radio and TV stations, OHR and QIF offices.

Sustainable economic development in BiH depends on encouraging and supporting the growth of small and medium-size businesses. The message of the series, and of this visit, is that you can do it too – “Vi to mozete”.