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PRESS RELEASE

Helping Municipal Authorities Match Industry and Workforce Needs

A new partnership has been established between the USAID Competitiveness Project, the Association of Units of Self-Government (ZELS) and municipalities throughout Macedonia to support the efforts of local authorities to supply industries with a highly qualified workforce. The center piece of this partnership is closer cooperation between the Competitiveness Project's My Career Program and the Local Economic Development Units in the municipalities. At a conference on April 12th, representatives of municipalities and Coordinators of Local Economic Development Units learned about the successes of the My Career program, and the experiences of Gazi Baba and Shtip, two municipalities that have already adopted the program.

"USAID provides assistance to Macedonia to build strong municipalities and competitive businesses" said Michael Fritz, USAID Mission Director. "With this partnership, local governments will have the opportunity to upgrade the skills of the local workforce and build the competitiveness of local companies to compete in regional markets."

"With the decentralization process, local governments gained increased authority in planning and facilitating local economic development, making this one of their highest priorities" said Dusica Perisic, Executive Director of ZELS. "With this new partnership, local governments will have the opportunity to help local businesses hire the best skilled workforce available in their municipalities."

The availability of an employable workforce is of crucial importance in fostering the growth and competitiveness of Macedonia's companies. The USAID Competitiveness Project is committing significant resources to assist Macedonia in developing a skilled workforce that will meet the needs of growing industries. The project's National Internship and Job Placement Program, launched in February 2009, has already facilitated over 700 structured and organized internships, 130 of which resulted in employment. To date, over 6,400 students and 290 companies have registered at the program's www.mycareer.com.mk portal.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.