

Operation **Innovation**: a catalyst for Serbia's economic competitiveness

In the current era of rapid technological development, innovation is considered crucial for a stable and knowledge-based economy. Serbia has been quick to realise this and in 2011 launched "The Innovation Fund" to promote innovation in the fields of science and technology.

A key component of this Fund is the capacity building "Innovation Serbia Project", which is funded by the European Union's pre-accession funds and was set up in 2011. This project is supporting Serbia's emerging innovative entrepreneurial sector and is filling in the gaps that will prove vital for the country's longer term, economic growth prospects.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR START UPS

Innovation Serbia Project has two financial instruments that are helping Serbia's budding entrepreneurs realise their potential.

The first is the "Mini Grants Program" which provides grants of up to €80 000 for essentials like prototype production, proof of concept, intellectual property protection and business plan preparation.

The second is the "Matching Grants Program" that offers grants of up to €300 000, enabling micro and small companies to partner with the private sector and R&D organisations. This programme also helps to attract investors with the ultimate aim of bringing innovative products and services to the market.

In 2012, €2.77 million was awarded to 25 projects from over 200 applications. One "awardee"



is the hydrodynamics company "BSK" LLC Obrenovac that is developing a unique and innovative technology of air harvesting of fruits.

Once commercialised, the "Air Berry Harvester" will imitate windy conditions when harvesting fruit from plants. The technology will pick only the ripest berries from the plant's branches through intermittent yet controlled bursts of air – a unique and innovative process that will avoid both contact and damage to the fruit.

