

European Association of Development Agencies

Regional Development Agencies in
Serbia

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Introduction

Regional Development Agencies in the Republic of Serbia are established by the Law on Regional Development (the Law) with a mission to support regional development, SMEs, and Local Self-Governments (LSGs).

The main role of accredited Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) is twofold. Firstly, is the fact that they act as catalysts for local and regional needs and resources, directing them to relevant institutional and financial structures with the national and international level. Secondly, they participate in the implementation of relevant national policies, programs, and projects on the territory of their jurisdiction. In this way, RDAs represent a bridge between the two levels of government in the Republic of Serbia, national and local, facilitating the communication and coordination of development policies and programs.

At the national level the Republic of Serbia, through the Development Agency of Serbia (DAS), accredits Regional Development Agencies in order to perform national programs, tasks, and activities that contribute to balanced regional development. The process of accreditation is defined by a regulation adopted by the Government. The regulation determinates the conditions, the criteria, and the process of accreditation for the performance of regional development, as well as procedures for the withdrawal of accreditation. As of now there are 16 RDAs in Serbia:

Founders

The Law on Regional Development (2009-2010) and Regulation on accreditation define the framework for founding a RDA. The majority of founders are Local Self-Governments, while some other founders are chambers of commerce, institutes, universities, association, and enterprises.

Founder structure of all RDAs	
LSG	126
SME	15
Regional chambers of commerce	11
NGO sector	17
SME associations	9
Institutes	1

Sources of financing

Membership fee – predefined fee in accordance with Regulation on Accreditation

Realisation of national support programs for SME's

Realisation of national and international programs and projects

Activities

General activities

Following activities of ARDA's are defined as mandatory by the Law:

- Preparation and implementation of development documents and monitoring of the implementation
- Cooperation with autonomous provinces and LSG's in the preparation and implementation of local development plans
- Representing the interest of the region
- Preparation and implementation of programs for professional development for SME's and LSG representatives
- Monitoring and implementation of regional development projects
- International, cross-border and inter-municipal cooperation
- Other tasks.

In the Republic of Serbia, RDAs are considered focal points for:

- the strategic development of the regions,

- the European integration process,
- the coordination of funding sources and activities for the realization of projects,
- strong support to SME sector.

Main activities

Realisation of national support programs

Non-financial support to the SMEs - Standard set of services for SMEs - SSS - agencies implement a standard set of services defined by the Ministry of Economy. The standard set of services consists of the following 5 standard services for SMEs:

- Information
- Training
- Consulting
- Mentoring
- Promotion.

Financial support to the SMEs – RDAs are partners to the Ministry of Economy and the DAS in implementing programs of financial support to SMEs. RDA activities include promotion of such programs among SME representatives, consultancy services to SME representatives for the preparation of a project applications, and evaluation of the applications.

Realisation of national and international programs and projects

Standard set of services for regional development – through this program, RDAs assist LSGs in the preparation and implementation of development projects. The primary activities involved in this are:

- Research and monitoring of available sources of funding
- Networking and partner search
- Project preparation and implementation.

Role of development agencies in the European integrations of Serbia

RDAs are recognized by the Ministry of European Integration as an actor in the process of programming Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds and also as a future significant element of the cohesion fund management system when Serbia eventually becomes a Member State of the European Union. In addition, RDAs are an inevitable factor in the negotiation process under Chapter 22 of the membership negotiations - Regional Development.

Development of regional strategic documents and action plans

In order to provide the essential prerequisites for regional development and economic growth of the regions, the role of RDAs is to initiate and assist LSGs in the development of regional strategic documents and action plans.

Taking into account the importance of their role in the process of balanced regional development and the European integration process, RDAs have established their own association; the Serbian Association of Regional Development Agencies (SARDA). Set up in 2016, SARDA represents a joint effort of the agencies to remain relevant not only in implementing public policies, but also in creating them.

