

## BUSINESS FORUM

Bosnia and Herzegovina | Housing Sector

B2B

Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Widder Hotel, Rennweg 7, 8001 Zurich

The **Business Forum | Bosnia and Herzegovina – Housing Sector** was held on Friday, 10th November 2017 in Zurich. More than 80 participants attended the Forum including representatives of BiH and Swiss Companies as well as members of the BiH Diaspora in Switzerland.

The Business Forum has been initiated by the association i-dijaspora within the initiative “i-platform – Diaspora for development of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and was organised in close cooperation with the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Republic Srpska, Swiss Import Promotion Programme, the company SEE Investment Solutions from Switzerland and the *Diaspora for Development* project supported by SDC and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH and United Nations Development Programme.

### Objectives of the Business Forum

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The main objective of the Business Forum focusing on the housing sector was to enable companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina to create new, sustainable export sales of housing products in the Swiss market. In order to achieve this goal, **B2B meetings between producers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and potential buyers from Switzerland** took place during the Forum.

A total of 15 companies from the wood processing and home furnishing sector operating throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina attended the Forum and presented themselves in compliance with the highest professional standards. On the other side, representatives of 11 Swiss companies, as Möbel Pfister AG and swisswindows AG, and of the Swiss sales office of the German company Hornbach were present at the Forum and demonstrated particular interest in Bosnian and Herzegovinian companies.

Welcome speeches at the opening of the Forum were held by Edin Dacić, member of the Steering Committee of i-dijaspora, Anđelko Grahovac, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Switzerland, Ahmet Egrlić, President of the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jelena Rodić, Expert Associate of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Republika Srpska, and Franziska Eggimann, SIPPO Programme Manager. The Forum was moderated by Taner Aličehić, owner of the company SEE Investment Solutions.

During his opening speech Edin Dacić pointed out that “this is **an initiative coming from the diaspora** in order to contribute to the economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina“. Furthermore, he also emphasized the **bottom up approach** of the Business Forum starting from companies that produce high-quality products and arrange for contacts between these companies and potential partners and business institutions in Switzerland.

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The ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Switzerland, Mr. Anđelko Grahovac, stressed also “the importance of the diaspora as a promoter of the potential of Bosnia and Herzegovina in foreign countries”.

In addition to this, the president of the Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH, Mr. Ahmet Egrić, stated that he hopes that the Business Forum “will boost the interest of the Swiss market for BiH products and services in the housing sector”. He also added that “this activity represents a good test and **roadmap for further activities**” in order to improve the foreign trade as well as to strengthen and foster the economic cooperation between Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“The feedback from the contacted companies within the SIPPO business network was very positive”, highlighted Ms. Franziska Eggimann, Programme Manager of the Swiss Import Promotion Programme, referring also to interested companies who were not able to attend the Business Forum and B2B meetings due to other appointments. Nevertheless, all contact information of the companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina have been forwarded to interested companies within the SIPPO business network to enable the establishing of contact and match-making besides of the Business Forum.

## Companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and DACH-markets

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After a short presentation focusing on the housing sector in Europe and the potential and forecasts of companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding their entry to the DACH-markets, Hasan Hasić and Tatomir Jovičić, two entrepreneurs and also members of the BiH diaspora in Switzerland, presented their companies with a special emphasis on their individual approach to the DACH-markets.

Hasan Hasić, co-owner of the furniture design company Whiteoak Group concluded “that the market is rapidly changing and therefore a **fast adaption to the market is needed** in order to establish a successful cooperation”. He also emphasized that he did not wish that the interest of Swiss partners be focused on a cheaper offer from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but rather on **“the high quality and service offered by producers from Bosnia and Herzegovina**, which are certainly able to provide top-notch products and services”.

The main part of the Business Forum was dedicated to direct communication and exchange of information, i.e. **matchmaking between representatives of companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland**. They exchanged their business cards, catalogues, brochures and product profiles and engaged in an animated discussion, intense communication and good exchange of information.

Once all discussions and bilateral meetings were held, the Business Forum was closed with the concluding remarks of Merima Avdagić, a UNDP Project Manager of the SDC supported project *Diaspora for Development* and Nenad Stojanović, the Co-Chairman of i-dijaspora. “Partnerships are key elements of the success of this story, transfer of knowledge, communication, new investments, and I hope that this will assist companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina in positioning themselves in the Swiss market. This is a large group and some participants are highly satisfied, because they established contacts and already arranged visits, which constitutes a great potential for prospective cooperation and buyers. This is already the first step that we planned within the framework of the project and that has been successful”, said Merima Avdagić.

The Business Forum was also attended by representatives of Swiss media as *Berner Zeitung*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Basler Zeitung* and *Blick*.

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## Follow-up

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During the next six months, the association i-diaspora will in cooperation with all its partners contact the companies individually, that attended the Business Forum. The main aim of this activity is to accompany the further development and progress of the first established contacts between the companies and to elaborate the match-making results of the Business Forum.

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