

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Banca Intesa widened cooperation with Guarantee Fund of AR Vojvodina on the promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship**

**Novi Sad (12 July 2007)** – Banca Intesa and Guarantee Fund of AR Vojvodina today signed an Agreement on Long-term financing of START UP projects for unemployed women and projects for equipment purchase of women entrepreneurs with working up to three years of service, on territory of Srem and Bačka.

With this Agreement, the cooperation between Banca Intesa and Guarantee Fund of Vojvodina, within the project for support of women's entrepreneurship development until now, was widened on entire Vojvodina. In pilot stage of the project, favourable loans for starting up one's own business were only available for women entrepreneurs from Banat, where women's unemployment is a bit more expressed.

Press Conference was held in the presence of Mr Dejan Tešić, the EB member of Banca Intesa; Mr Goran Vasić, Director of Guarantee Fund of AR Vojvodina; Mr Bojan Pajtić, President of the Executive Council of AR Vojvodina and representatives of partner-institutions in this project: Regional Centre for social-economic development – Banat, Academy for Female Entrepreneurship in Kikinda, Zrenjanin Educational Centre from Zrenjanin, Regional Agency for Development MSP – Sombor, Regional Agency for Development MSP "Alma Mons" Novi Sad.

Along with RSD 50 million so far, Banca Intesa allocated further funds in the amount of RSD 100 million, intended to finance the start up of one's own business for the unemployed women and promotion of business operations of women entrepreneurs with up to three years of service in Vojvodina.

Long-term loans are approved in the amount of up to RSD 2 million, with repayment period of up to 6 years and possible grace period of up to 12 months. Owing to support of Guarantee Fund of Vojvodina, that with its guarantee potential provides adequate risk protection, these loans are approved at considerably more favourable conditions in relation to the market ones, with fixed annual interest rate of 6.95% and EIR of 7.52% with FX clause.

Due to mutual dedication to the development of small business, Banca Intesa and Guarantee Fund of AR Vojvodina started the realization of the first project of this kind in the country in the middle of November 2006, with objective to enable women entrepreneurs to get a loan at extremely favourable conditions for start up and development of their own business.

Pilot stage of the project, which was limited on Banat territory only, showed that there is interest, will and initiative in women to do entrepreneurship. This is confirmed by the number of approved loans being 25 in the amount of RSD 31 million, and it is very interesting to note that almost all loans were approved to finance the start up of one's own enterprise.

*"Based on the experience so far, we have realized that the greatest obstacle for women towards the achievement of their own business ideas is a lack of support within the*

*family, as well as insecurity and fear of failure. Therefore, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the project in cooperation with Regional Chambers of Commerce and municipalities, we shall attempt to put much higher emphasis on the promotion of the project with women, already using these loans, participating in it. Their role will be to share their experiences and encourage all women with a good business idea, but still not enough courage to try to realize it",* said Mr Dejan Tešić, the EB member of Banca Intesa.

Signing of this Agreement represents the continuation of successful cooperation between Banca Intesa and Guarantee Fund of Vojvodina, that has already resulted in financial support for more projects, in those areas that are relevant for further development of Vojvodina.