



## SUCCESS STORY

### Kosovo Companies Seal Deals for Millions in New Export Sales

Firms across seven sectors find runaway success at international trade fairs



Enrad has created 11 new jobs following the company's participation in the 2015 Energetika Fair in Zagreb, Croatia, and will offer 75 internships over three years.

Photo by: USAID EMPOWER Private Sector

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January 2017—When Taulant Rexhepi's family in Kosovo bought a newly privatized radiator company in 2012, their primary goal was to reduce the need for imports into the fledgling country and possibly meet the growing domestic demand for biomass stoves. Three years later, their company, Enrad, had already surpassed their domestic expectations, so they set their sights abroad.

With USAID support, the company attended their first international trade fair in Zagreb, Croatia, in April 2015.

"The response at the fair was incredible," says Rexhepi as he walks across Enrad's production floor, where workers are busy filling orders for five new contracts formed at the fair with companies from four different countries. "We now have the exciting challenge of increasing and streamlining our production capacity to meet this windfall of new export contracts."

With a simple \$3,900 investment from USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector project, the company attended the fair and made over \$500,000 in sales from new contracts secured there. With European markets beginning to recognize the ability of Kosovo's companies to produce European Union-standard products at highly competitive prices, USAID has worked to ensure the companies have a seat at key trade events over the last two years.

Since February 2015, USAID has supported 78 companies across seven different sectors to attend nearly 30 regional and European trade fairs. With an overall investment of just \$240,000 from USAID, beneficiary companies anticipate over \$14 million in total sales from the new deals made.

Among the beneficiaries was furniture company KoBA Sh.P.K. After 25 years of manufacturing movable partition walls in Switzerland, owner Zenun Bajrami knew that by moving pro-

duction to Kosovo, he could not only pass on the cost savings to his Swiss and German buyers, but also create jobs in his home country.

However, he did not anticipate that his novel product would be such a success with regional buyers as well. KoBA signed six new contracts at the International Furniture Fair in Tirana, Albania, in March 2015.

“I knew the demand was there in Switzerland and Germany, but it was a pleasant surprise to find new markets in the Balkan region as well,” Bajrami explains. With the contracts, he has been able to double his staff and begin construction on a new 3,500-square meter production facility.

While the potential for new business relationships from the international fairs seems endless, the experience has also been a great educational opportunity for Kosovo companies just dipping their toes into the export market.

“We’ve been in business since the mid-1980s, so the biggest benefit from the trade fairs for us so far has been learning new trends and seeing our international competition,” says Agim Mustafa, executive manager of Arta Tex, a uniform and sportswear manufacturer.

Thanks to his participation at fairs in Tirana, Düsseldorf and Bern, he is now planning to join three other Kosovo apparel manufacturers to open a showroom in Switzerland.

The five-year USAID EMPOWER Private Sector project, which is also funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, has been working since July 2014 to stimulate large-scale job creation by elevating the competitiveness of Kosovo firms in the growth-ready sectors of apparel, wood processing, ICT, renewable energy, tourism and metal processing.