

Zagreb, 18 March 2015

To whom it may concern

Re: Open Letter of Reference for Dr Ricardo R. Pinto

Dr Ricardo Pinto was the Team Leader of the European Commission (EC) / Republic of Croatia-funded BIZimpact II (Improving Information to the Croatian Business Community) project implemented during 12 March 2013 - 11 March 2015 on behalf of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts (MINPO).

I am pleased to say that the project was so well implemented, that it is now considered to be the most successful and sustainable IPA funded project that our ministry has ever carried out. It is a measure of how highly we regarded the BIZimpact II project that it has been nominated by our ministry (or other state institutions) for for three separate EC awards and a further UN award during 2014-5 (see www.bizimpact.hr).

Dr Pinto has proven to be a capable and well organised Team Leader in charge of an exceptionally experienced and committed team of international and national experts. Having previously worked on the BIZimpact I project, he was well-placed to move rapidly ahead with the project and to push the boundaries of what is possible to achieve in a project with a two year timescale.

One of the biggest challenges of the project concerned that fact that it was implemented not only for MINPO, our ministry, but also for a set of five other institutions, namely HAMAG-BICRO, HGK, HUP, HOK and HSZ. On top of this, since small business development is a cross-cutting function touching upon the policy remit of many other state institutions, the BIZimpact project sought to engage numerous others in order to make progress with the methodology for impact assessment / SME Test, mini guides, public private dialogue, communication activities, etc. This required an exceptional capacity to communicate and persuade others to contribute to the project activities, even if they do not always consider the small business sector to be their top priority. Dr Pinto displayed a great capacity to engage with and generate interest and commitment on the part of a large number of state institutions throughout the two years. The small business sector has benefited greatly.

Perhaps the most innovative and impressive achievement of the project concerns the eTools. As part of the project, Dr Pinto led the process of developing three sophisticated electronic tools, namely:

- Economic Impact Assessment centre of excellence: this allows impact assessment on new laws and regulations to be carried out electronically.
- eConsultation: this tool enables consultations to take place over the internet.
- Business Test Panel: 400+ small businesses can be accessed directly in order to assess the likely costs and benefits of new laws or initiatives.

The eTools package is cutting edge in nature and incorporates international best practice derived from the EC, as well as advanced countries such as Estonia. The team took these as the starting point and developed pushed the envelope of development further back. Through effective project management they succeeded in specifying the eTools accurately and managing the programmers to deliver on time and budget, something which cannot be taken for granted in complex ICT projects.

The eTools were piloted in our Ministry and have already proved to work not only according to expectation, but to be easy to administer and to be intuitive for the end user. The consequence is that they are already an established part of the way MINPO undertakes its regulatory, policy, grant and other work. This reflects the quality of the project management led by Dr Pinto.

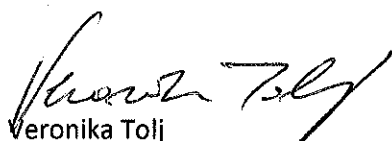
However, one of the biggest impacts of BIZimpact II was not actually part of the original terms of reference of the project. Although the eTools were only meant to be for our ministry, Dr Pinto recognised very early that they had the potential to be expanded to all ministries, not just one. As a result, he and his team ensured that the eTools specification had the technical capacity to be expanded to the government-wide platform (www.gov.hr). Furthermore, they persuaded the government to adopt the eTools across all 20 ministries and a further 30 other state agencies. This represents a remarkable project achievement, way beyond the original expectations.

Dr Pinto coordinated the numerous other project activities and outputs, all of which were delivered to the necessary standard and quality, as well as managing a large team of national and international experts. This required technical competence, good organisational skills and sound people management. The result is the most effective IPA project implemented in relation to the SME sector.

To conclude, Dr Pinto was not only professionally committed to adding as much value to the BIZimpact II project as possible, but he was also a pleasant person to work with and the project beneficiaries feel that they have gained a friend as well as a colleague.

We wish him great success with his future consulting and related activities.

Yours faithfully,



Veronika Tolj
Senior Adviser/Project Manager
Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts (MINPO)