

Serbia is emerging as a winner from two years of great economic crisis in the world with GDP growth and stable public finances, Finance Minister Sinisa Mali told Tanjug and said that in 2022 a responsible economic policy aimed at raising the living standards of citizens and with the goal of continuing to be one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. He reminded that from January 1, pensions will be increased by 5.5 percent, salaries in the public sector between seven and eight percent, the minimum wage by 9.4 percent and pointed out that the state will monitor the situation related to Covid this year as well, the global economic situation and, if necessary, help the economy and citizens.

Earlier, the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, announced that the state had prepared a new measure to help citizens, young people aged 16 to less than 30, who will receive 100 euros on February 1st. Health workers should receive a one-time aid of 85 euros dinars on January 15, and all pensioners should receive 185 euros on February 10th.

Mali points out that in 2022 and in the coming years, a lot is expected from the realization of the agreements reached within the Open Balkans initiative, which will increase cooperation in the region, that is, between Serbia, Northern Macedonia and Albania.

"Businessmen asked for help because of the crisis through minimum wages, a moratorium on loan repayment, postponement of taxes and contributions, and we did so. We have fulfilled every promise and there is no reason not to do it again this year, if necessary," said Mali.

In addition to increasing the standard of living, economic policy in 2022, according to him, will be focused on large capital investments, for which more than 4.06 billion euros have been set aside in the budget for next year.

"In addition, we will take care not to endanger our public finances in any way and for our share of public debt to be below 60 percent of GDP," the Minister of Finance stated.

He pointed out the implementation of the new model of fiscalization and electronic invoices as especially important for the ministry he leads in 2022, because those two systemic projects were demanded by the economy, and which will enable the state better control and mechanisms to fight the gray economy.

He pointed out the Open Balkans initiative among the projects that marked 2021, and from which benefits are expected in this and the following years.

"How good it can be for us is shown by the World Bank's projections that the regional GDP would increase by seven percent if all the agreed measures around the Open Balkans were implemented. That would be for our GDP, which is already growing at seven percent a year," Mali told Tanjug.

He added that the implementation of the agreement will be one of the priorities in the work in 2022.

"What we have done so far should ensure faster flow of goods and people across the borders between Serbia, Albania and Northern Macedonia. Customs is under the jurisdiction of the

Ministry of Finance and our wish is that we have no borders in the region because we are aware that when we perform together the region is more attractive and stronger in global relations," Mali said.

He pointed out that the Serbian economy is the dominant economy in the region and that it will benefit the most from the free flow of goods in the region.

The agreements signed in Tirana address the recognition of work permits and the easier flow of people through single work permits.

"We also have an agreement on mutual recognition of phytosanitary and veterinary certificates, so what is recognized in Skopje is also recognized in Belgrade and Tirana, so we will have another additional contribution for easier trade. The goal is not to have convoys of trucks waiting at the borders for hours," Mali emphasized and added that the decision has already been adopted that the customs offices work non-stop.

Serbia, like the whole world, faced an increase in inflation in 2021, and Mali said on that occasion that it was important to know that it was caused by external factors, that it was expected to peak in January and that it would slowly fall.

"These are the expectations of both the IMF and the National Bank of Serbia, and as the difficulties in supplying goods calm down and as the energy crisis is resolved, prices will slowly go down," he pointed out.

He added that the projection in the budget for 2022 is that inflation will amount to 3.5 percent.

Mali stated that the state responds to inflation in two ways, with the first being a stable dinar exchange rate, which, as he says, has not changed for months, and that it will not change in the future.

"On the other hand, we are going with an increase in salaries, pensions, minimum wages above the expected increase in inflation, so that in real terms we will have a rise in living standards again," he explained.

He pointed out that the economic crisis in 2022 will certainly be affected by the energy crisis and announced that the citizens of Serbia in the coming period can expect a serious program that the state is preparing to build energy capacity and invest in transmission systems to withstand higher electricity consumption and gas.

"One of those investments is the reversible hydroelectric power plant Bistrica, which Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić recently talked about, and which is very important for our energy system. The struggle for order in the economy in the coming period will be reflected in the struggle for energy capacity, stability and independence in this area and that will be one of our priorities in the coming period," states Siniša Mali.

Cryptocurrencies, as a new type of property, digital, are slowly gaining the "right of citizenship" and their existence cannot be ignored, and the introduction of the digital euro has already been talked about in Europe.

Speaking about how our country is preparing for this upcoming novelty, Minister Siniša Mali says that last year, Serbia, as one of the first countries, passed a law on cryptocurrencies in order to regulate this growing market.

“Recently, I defended the Law on the Capital Market in the Assembly of Serbia, which also opens the door to investment tokens and things without which, as far as the investment community is concerned, people and transactions that take place can no longer. We have a couple of requests for opening cryptocurrency exchange, so this business is in its infancy in our country, but unlike many countries, we already have a law that regulates this matter,” he explained.

He added that what is happening in this area in the world must be monitored and that our regulations should be improved accordingly.

Stating that some countries, such as the USA, England, Japan, China, have already announced the introduction of their digital currencies, he says that we, as a small country, can wait and see how this novelty will pass in the world.

“Decisions on the introduction of digital currencies will certainly have huge implications for the functioning of the payment system in any country. We are following what is happening, we are not late anywhere, we are keeping pace with the world,” Mali concluded, noting that Serbia would remain an attractive investment destination that keeps pace with all trends in the world, Dnevnik reports.