FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVENESS OF CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRISES IN REPUBLIC OF SERBIA AND REPUBLIC OF CROATIA: CASE STUDY "ENERGOPROJEKT HOLDING A.D."

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Abstract: The business of each company is confronted with difficulties, trends, situations, circumstances and events that occur in the business process itself. The critical point of each business is precisely the analysis, because through it, the understanding and importance of all phenomena and situations in the required volume. In research discuss economic performances, the financial position and results of the business operations of five selected construction companies in order to review their real economic position. It focuses on the business of five dominant construction companies from the territory of Republic of Serbia and Republic of Croatia for the period of three business years from December 31, 2014 to December 31, 2016, with focus on enterprice Energoprojekt holding a.d. In addition, the research should determine the impact of the dynamics and complexity of market conditions on the performance of enterprises from construction sector of industry, above all indicators of efficiency, indebtedness, liquidity and profitability.

The usefulness, and at the same time, the contribution of the research is reflected in the determination of the similarity and the difference in the way and performance of the business operations of companies from construction sector of industry, which is an important segment of the country's economy, from the territory of two countries – Serbia and Croatia, as well as the presentation of the obtained results, with special focus on Energoprojekt holding a.d. company. The obtained results will be the basis for further research into the material causes of the results of their business.

Keywords: energoprojekt, financial analysis, construction, indicators, liquidity, profitability, competitiveness, Serbia, Croatia;

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry makes a significant contribution to the national economy in many countires world wide, with its close bonds with other industries, capacity to trigger other industries, positive impact on employment, with the industry encompassing a range of businesses including clients, constructors, construction enterprises, professional services and material producers, among others.

Construction sector of country's industry is often considered as the engine of the economic activity. As a consequence innovation in the construction industry can stimulate the economy as a whole and make the economy more sustainable during crisis intervals (De Sutter, 2017). However, the ongoing expansion and progress of construction companies is increasingly associated with a number of sustainable development challenges, involving various economic issues (Shen et al., 2010). Construction industry is an important generator of economic growth in developed, but also in less developed countries (Oladinrin et al, 2012). The construction sector has been affected very intensely by last financial crisis from last decade. The bursting of the so-called "real estate bubble" has caused the closing of many firms in this sector of industry and the massive destruction of employment in many economies. The importance that construction attained as an engine of the economy during the growth bestowed the large construction enterprises with the investments and commitments necessary to compete at the international level (Martinez-Roman, 2017).

Construction activity in the Republic of Serbia, and Republic of Croatia, is extremely important economic branch for the functioning of the economy as a whole. Generally speaking, this sector of economy is linked with almost all areas of human activity. With developing of science and engineering, construction has become significant economic area, connected with over 30 economic entities activities. Constructional products are inputs for other industries (Mladenović, 2013).

In all countries the construction industry is meeting with different challenges and problems. However, in countries with a delayed transition, like Serbia, these problems and challenges have their own specificities that are reflected in a special institutional setting and a chronic one lack of adequate sources of funding. If we also add to this the impact of the last economic crisis it is more than obvious that it challenges the construction the industry gets on the intensity (Mladenović et al, 2012).

SUBSTRATE FOR ANALYSIS

The value of construction works done in the Republic of Serbia in 2015 amounted to RSD 242.779 million, presenting an increase of 20.2%, when compared with 2014. In 2016 the value of construction works was RSD 261.991 million, presenting an increase of 7.9% at current prices, when compared with 2015, i.e. 8% increase at constant prices. Observed by types of constructions 38.9% (42.9% in 2016) of the value was carried out on buildings and 61.1% (57,1% in 2016) on civil engineering in 2015. The total value of works performed abroad by contractors from the Republic of Serbia in 2015 amounted to RSD 23.827 million, and in 2016 RSD 19.684 million. The largest construction activity was recorded in the Russian Federation presenting 30.5% of the total value of construction works done in 2015 business year, and in the same country in 2016 was a little less 27,3%.

Table 1. Basic indicators of construction sector in Serbia. 2014-2016

INDICATOR	2014	2015	2016
Value of construction works done in the Republic of Serbia, RSD million	201967	242779	261991
Value of construction works done in the Republic of Serbia – buildings, RSD million	86740	94539	112311
Value of construction works done in the Republic of Serbia – civil engineering, RSD million	115054	148159	149090
Value of works done abroad, RSD million	28224	23827	19684

Source: www.stat.gov.rs

Nowadays the construction company Energoprojekt holding a.d. is present and active in more than 20 countries on four continents. According to revenues, apart from the domestic market, the most important markets in Africa are Nigeria, Uganda, Algeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zambia, followed by Kazakhstan in Asia and Russia in Europe followed by Qatar, UAE, Oman, Jordan and Peru in South America. Under conditions of ever-increasing competition as we could seen through research, knowledge synergy, business competencies and experiences, supported by an impressive list of realized projects and clients in the country and abroad are the main advantages and key to the success of the Energoprojekt. Energoprojekt has developed into a world-renowned and affirmative business system in the areas of project consulting, engineering and execution of complex infrastructure and other investment projects, traditionally present on the list of the world's largest design and construction companies (https://www.enr.com/).

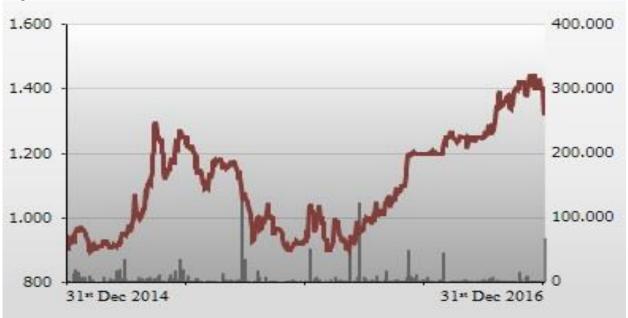
Today, the growth and development of company Energoprojekt is primarily derived from human resources as its own professional expertise, leadership and management capabilities.

The inspiration for achieving the winning goals in the future is based on the wealth of achievements over the past 65 years and always available knowledge and experience of the great the number of engineers, economists, lawyers and above all technicians and direct workers who have their highly skilled, competent and self-neglected work, successfully managed the fi elds and projects in the country and abroad, designed and built countless capital facilities and provided valuable economic and legal support in all ventures. Business stability, further growth and development of Energoprojekt holding a.d. in the current conditions, in addition to the impact of objective events and changes in different markets can not be compromised even if they occur, uncontrolled or most of the unwanted changes in ownership shares, which can significantly disrupt the management and management Energoprojekt system or to influence the de-professionalization of management. Energoprojekt started and successfully implemented among the first in the country all previous privatization cycles for more than fifteen years continuous ownership transition, so its future, based on 65 years of success, in many ways be determined by an adequate solution to the issue of ownership in the future.

STOCK MARKET ANALYSIS

Energoprojekt shares have been traded on the Belgrade Stock Exchange since 2001. In addition to the main stock exchange index - Belexline - it is included in 3 prestigious indices - Belex 15 (which makes 15 best-selling stocks), SRX (index that created Vienna Stock Exchange, made by 8 most liquid stocks), and Dow Jones Balkan 50 Equal Weighted Index (includes 50 stocks from all Balkan countries and Slovenia, except Albania and Montenegro). Construction company Energoprojekt was placed on the "A List" of the Belgrade Stock Exchange on 19th July, 2007 (http://www.belex.rs). Main investment advantage of Energoprojekt is that it's present on the markets which are less affected by the crisis. The company has operations in areas and countries where major clients are state governments. It operates in Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Peru, Middle East (Qatar, Oman, UAE), Africa (Zambia, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria), and it generates around 55% to 60% revenues from these markets. The company has a backlog of around EUR 300m so this provides safe base for the company's sales source in few next years. Investment cycle in Serbian infrastructure is far away to be closed so Energoprojekt has credibility and competences for applying in many present and future construction projects (http://www.energoprojekt.co.rs).

Graph 1. Energoprojekt holding a.d. (ENHL) stock prices on index Belex 15 for period 2014 - 2016



Source: www.belex.rs

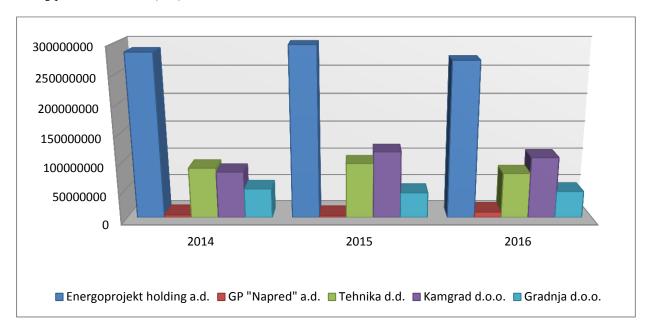
At the company Energoprojekt holding a.d. despite the decline in revenues in 2013 by about 10.35%, other parameters of the internal fundamentals analysis showed EBITDA growth, EBIT growth, significant decrease in indebtedness and significant liquidity growth, and by the second half of 2014, the company realized a secondary growth trend of stock prices (Dželetović & Milošević). In the observed period from the end of 2014 to June 2015, the stock price showed a growth trend from RSD 905 to RSD 1267, after which the remarkable downward trend in the stock price, which lasted for eight full months, followed by the end of February 2016 year, which was indicated by the revenues themselves. For the next 10 months, from February to the end of the observed period, December 31, In the same year, significant revenue growth was registered, and at the same time an impressive primary trend of equity growth, with prices rising from RSD 915 to RSD 1431.

ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AND BUSINESS RESULTS

Nowadays world is moving rapidly toward globalization, and the fact is that business performance evaluation of construction companies through financial analysis get its importance. Many multinational companies are awarded business in other countries in which they are competing with local companies, so in order to maintain international reputation both multinational and local construction companies should seriously look forward to improving their performance (Rajasekhar R. 2017). The financial ratios involved in this research, provide useful quantitative and qualitative financial information so we can evaluate the operation of a construction enterprice and analyze its financial position within a sector. This type of analytic financial research brings awareness to

managers as to which features they have to focus on. All the ratios involved each play a crucial role (Jieh-Haur et al., 2016).

Graph 2. Business income of Serbian and Croatian enterprises during period 2014-2016 (in €)



Source: Author's calculation

The construction sector of industry is essential for every country in order to recover from economic crisis, especially the last economic crisis from last decade, and strengthen their financial position. In this regard, financial ratios are an invaluable tool towards planning a sustainable development strategy for a country. It is certainly interesting to identify the most representative financial ratios for each industry, and especially for construction (Apostola et al, 2013). Financial ratios analysis is used to address three main purposes. At the first place, it is used as an analytical tool in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the firm as well as to assess its viability as an ongoing enterprise or to determine whether a satisfactory return can be earned for the risk taken. Second, financial ratios are useful as monitoring tools for ensuring the company objectives are compatible with its resources. Third, financial ratios play a very effective role in planning to achieve the company's goals. Financial ratio is a relationship that indicates a firmsactivities. Financial ratios enable an analyst to make a comparison of a company's financial condition over time or in relation to other enterprises. (Moyer et al, 2017). Financial ratios not only allow the comparison of a company's financial performance with its rivals within the same industry but also allow that of the industry itself over time. Financial ratios are useful indicators of a enterprice performance and financial situation(Rajasekhar R. 2017), and because of these facts it is used for this research.

The current research focuses on the use of composite factors composed from financial ratios of financial statements for studying the performance of dominant construction enterprises in Serbia and Croatia. The sample is made up of five competitive firms that have proven to be the most successful in the region for the last three years in the field of construction sector. The indicators for financial analysis were calculated according to data from the annual financial statements of companies from last three business years (31.12.2014. – 31.12.2016.), with special emphasis on the operations of the Energoprojekt holding a.d. company.

By analyzing balance sheet items, liquidity indicators, financing, economy and business efficiency, profitability there would be a clear insight into the sustainability of competitors in the financial position of the company on the market. The subject analysis will show are the measures of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia were efficient or short-lived, without any particular impact on the improvement, even more so that they became the cause of the insolvency and economic collapse of this sector of business. The analysis will also show which company has a dominant role in initiating the economic activity of the construction sector.

Table 1. Comparative financial analysis of the dominant Serbian and Croatian construction companies in the interval 2014-2016

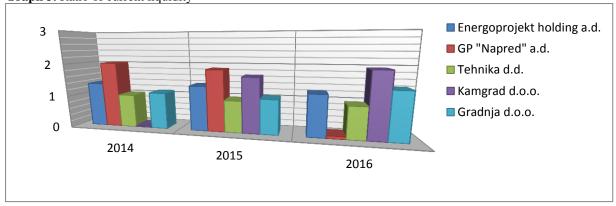
	panies in	the interval 2014-		2	4	5		
No.			2	3	4	5		
Country		Serbia Energoprojekt	Serbia GP "Napred"	Croatia	Croatia Kamgrad	Croatia		
Company		holding a.d.	a.d.	Tehnika d.d.	d.o.o.	Gradnja d.o.o.		
INDICATOR		RATIO OF CURRENT LIQUIDITY						
Business year	2014	1,360042283	2,013058252	1,019438835	0,037563213	1,115203783		
	2015	1,372121259	1,868951796	0,971244549	1,676391823	1,054717801		
	2016	1,253711645	0,085032781	0,961443587	1,944865221	1,426191564		
INDICATOR		BUSINESS PROFIT RATIO						
Business year	2014	0,031898218 (+3,19%)	0,019546082 (+1,95%)	-0,009415775 (-0,94%)	0,048564126 (+4,86%)	0,010232107 (+1,02%)		
	2015	0,052157472 (+5,22%)	-0,08455304 (-8,46%)	-0,000406464 (-0,04%)	0,0641039 (+6,41%)	0,039781642 (+3,98%)		
	2016	0,021695733	0,083880082	-0,006696354	0,038530661	0,030774338		
INDICATOR		(+2,17%)	(+8,39) RATIO OF TOT	(-0,67%)	(+3,85%)	(+3,08%)		
INDICATOR	2014			l	1.777005061	0.00764675		
Business year	2014	0,847903643	0,15219043	0,546835814	1,777285261	0,92764675		
	2015	0,832039958	0,095022106	0,633476325	1,938466741	0,979468645		
	2016	0,686232782	0,331501534	0,58840695	2,189287253	1,015280962		
INDICATOR		DEBT RATIO						
Business year	2014	0,451100564	0,421439659	0,265106284	0,247166661	0,169485974		
	2015	0,461301278	0,435566932	0,282572175	0,241084682	0,137127948		
	2016	0,439734956	0,46064001	0,322178307	0,328078214	0,14116095		
INDICATOR		LEVERAGE						
Business year	2014	2,216800596	2,37281893	3,77207203	4,045853088	5,900193246		
	2015	2,167780682	2,295858403	3,538918863	4,147920101	7,292459463		
	2016	2,274097125	2,170892623	3,103871295	3,048053654	7,08411215		
INDICATOR		ROE (Return on Equity)						
Business year	2014	0,05717036	0,020672391	0,003972442	0,296669593	-0,170045673		
	2015	0,05333359	0,047134254	0,0015188	0,444898851	0,040994609		
	2016	0,055116389	0,021352331	0,002847816	0,237526121	0,042300943		
INDICATOR		ROA (Return on Assets)						
Business year	2014	0,027046615	0,002974727	-0,005148883	0,086312305	0,009491781		
	2015	0,0433971	-0,008034408	-0,000257486	0,124263279	0,038964871		
	2016	0,014888323	0,027806376	-0,003940182	0,084354685	0,031244599		
Source: Author's calculation								

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RESULTS

In scientific research, through systematically conducted financial analysis includes a review of the impact of the competitive advantages on many ascpects of the performance of the construction sector in the Republic of Serbia, and Republic of Croatia, with special focus on construction company Energoprojekt holding a.d. Results of research will show influence of structural and dynamic changes in the balance sheets and income statements on business of researched subjects. Ratios as reliable indicators will show certain trends in the movement of business operations and signals for making certain business decisions in the company.

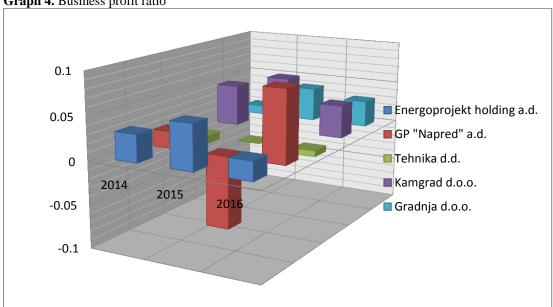
Graph 3. Ratio of current liquidity



Source: Author

The main indicators that show construction enterprises were undercapitalized and experienced financial problems in business are liquidity ratios. In situation where level of liquidity ratios is low, construction company's capital and cash would be insufficient to finance it's building and construction projects. (Rajasekhar R. 2017), and that's the case with Croatian firms – Tehnika d.d. and Kamgrad d.o.o., where ratio of current liquidity is quite low, especially in Kamgrad d.o.o. in 2014. The level of liquidity ration in company Tehnika d.d. has decline trend, and this may indicate that the company is barely able to cover the obligations with cash, and it should make changes in business. In 2016, value of the liquidity ratio in Serbian company GP "Napred" a.d. after two years of constant high level, had decreased, which can be reflected in future business and transactions. Company Energoprojekt holding a.d. had a downward trend in liquidity during the years under review, but higher than other two companies.

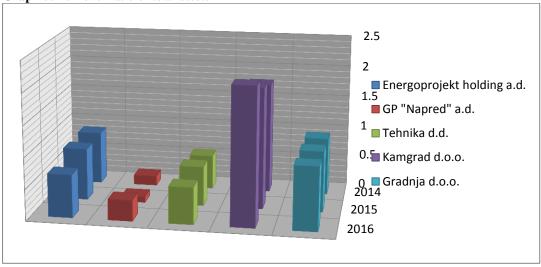
Graph 4. Business profit ratio



Source: Author

Indicator shows the share of business profits in business income. A difference of up to 100% is the participation of operating expenses, and one of the possible ways to maximize business profits is to reduce certain types of operating expenses. In some of the investigated companies the analysis of the rate of business profit indicates a low profitability of business, especially with the companyTehnika d.d., with constant negative value of indicator, and company GP "Napred" a.d. during 2015 had a high fall, but already next year the company accelerated the business that was immediately reflected on business and indicators. Energoprojekt holding a.d. had constant value of rate of business profit, with a slight level of decline trend which can not endanger profitability of company. Croatian companies Kamgrad d.o.o.and Gradnja d.o.o. had high value of indicator, with some variations during observed years.

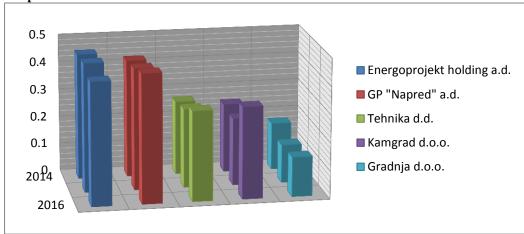
Graph 5. Turnover ratio of total assets



Source: Author

The turnover ratio of total assets or total business assets is the general indicator of the business activity of the company, which shows the efficiency of the management of total assets. It is a synthetic indicator of all partial ratios of efficiency indicators. All studied companies generally have a mild upward trend in this indicator, which is satisfactory for future business.

Graph 6. Debt ratio

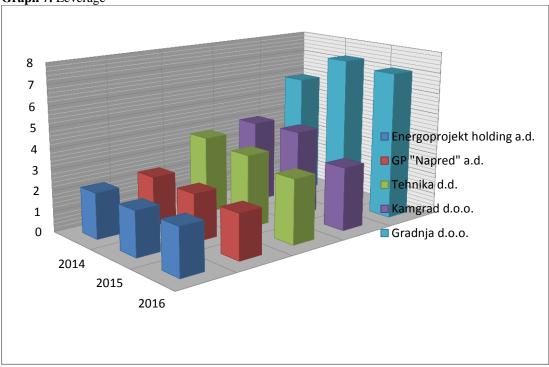


Source: Author

The indebtedness coefficient actually shows the financial structure of the observed company. This is an indicator that shows to what extent the company is financed by borrowing. A higher degree of indebtedness for banks and other creditors means increased credit risk and vice versa, a lower level of indebtedness of the enterprise indicates to the bank and other creditors the reduced credit risk of the company. The highest value of coefficient have Serbian enterprises Energoprojekt holding a.d. and GP "Napred" a.d., because of occasions on Serbian market, which shows that there is a certain credit risk – but it has downward trend which is extremely important

because it shows reducing of Energoprojekt's credit risk, but increased risk in company "Napred". In Croatian companies level of indicator is lower compared to Serbian companies, but all these companies have the trend of the growth of indebtedness, which also increases their credit risk.

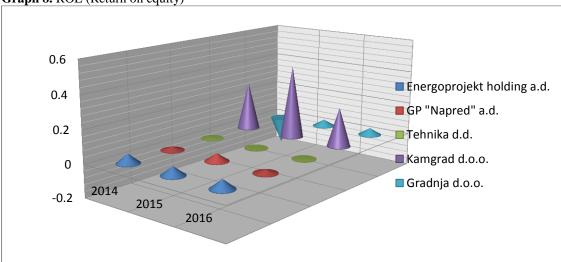
Graph 7. Leverage



Source: Author

The financial leverage coefficient shows the value of total capital (total liabilities) supported in a monetary unit of shareholder or own capital, and at the same time the purposefulness of the same is reflected in the fact that it limits the excessive reliance on borrowing to minimize risk taking in the search for higher yields. Coefficient values in enterprises GP "Napred" a.d., Kamgrad d.o.o. and Tehnika d.d. have downward trend, with with a small level of variation of value. High variation level of value has Gradnja d.o.o., which indicates on some changes in business, but in Energoprojekt holding a.d. a constant trend of growth of this coefficient was observed.

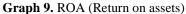
Graph 8. ROE (Return on equity)

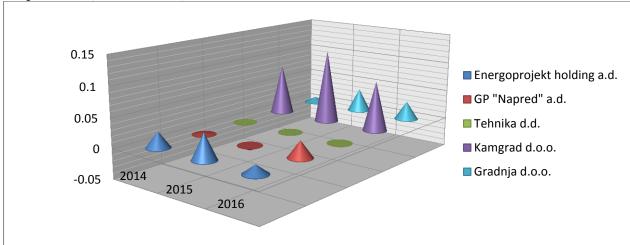


Source: Author

The rate of return on equity is the return on capital invested, which is obtained when the operating result is allocated to the capital, ie it is an indicator of the profitability of own capital. This coefficient shows how much

profit is generated on the invested equity capital, or how much the company will earn by investing the invested funds of the shareholders. The highest level of ROE has entreprice Kamgrad d.o.o., but it also has great variations of indicator during researched period. The lowest value has Croatian firm Gradnja d.o.o., with even negative results (-17%) during 2014. GP "Napred" a.d. and Tehnika d.d. have certain variations of ROE level, and Energoprojekt holding a.d. lower value of indicator than Kamgrad d.o.o., but constant growth trend over the years.





Source: Author

The rate of return on total assets is the return on the invested assets, ie the total assets involved, ie the degree of efficiency. This indicator shows how much the company's management manages effectively in order to maximize profits. Enterprice Tehnika d.d. has lowest values of ROA, during observed period 2014-2016, it had negative results, which means that the management of the company manages bad and ineffective with the assets. A return of the company's reinvestment is negative, ie ROA shows that a negative business benefit has been generated by investing the company in its development. The highest of ROA was noted in 2015 in company Kamgrad d.o.o. with some variations during 2014, and 2016. GP "Napred" a.d. had negative value of indicator during 2015, but value of ROA has increased during 2016. The level of ROA during period 2014-2016 of enterprice Energoprojekt holding a.d. had variations in value, and had decreased by lower business profit in 2016, compared with rate in 2015.

Energoprojekt, construction firm, which was examined in this research is enterprice which have established a broad spectrum of activities all over the world. Financial ratios and their examination provide useful information regarding the viability and performance of researched enterprises in this paper. The evaluation of these ratios highlights the enterprises' policies and their efficiency and performance. A detail examination of the ratios' values, competitiveness and results of business, showed that here was clear to identify a Energoprojekt, as company as being in a better financial position in some aspects than the others - but it has plenty of room to improve its business features, for a better future perspective.

DISCUSSION

Most companies of construction sector of industry are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and seem to be very far from having the appropriate position to innovate and compete in the international market. In the construction industry highly competitive and profound changes are forcing construction executives to continuously improve the performance of their companies, so construction companies as business organizations that exist to accomplish tasks in the large environment have two classes of objectives which are widely recognized: economic and non-economic. The most common corporate economic objectives concern profitability, return on investment (or equity or net assets), and growth (Ali et al, 2013).

Changing of business conditions due to process of globalization, transformed demands, improved technology, needs of customers and etc. gives a rise to increase a competition in construction industry. In this context, in order to survive and sustain in the long term, construction companies should progress in the field of technology and innovation. Thus, innovation approaches such as information technology (IT) used in construction is one of the most essential in terms of competitiveness for the construction industry's success (Aladag et al, 2016). The bigger enterprises, in principle, appear to take more advantage of innovation in terms of profitability, so they are more competitive both at the regional market, and world market (Seaden et al., 2003). In construction firms as a fact, innovation increases competitiveness (Crossan and Apaydin, 2010), and that is one of many factors which

directly had influence on competitiveness of Energoprojekt company. On other side, the factor of product innovation level contributes to increasing the percentage of sales at the national and international level, while growth of contruction enterprises is aided by a gain in process innovation. In the case of products of this sector of industry, an appropriate strategy for survival of construction companies, which Energoprojekt is using during the depressive phases of regional demand, is the introduction of novelties and improvements. Larger companies that have solid sources of internal knowledge are creative and have collaborative agreements with suppliers will be in better initial conditions to face this challenge. Also, public support, on the other hand, can stimulate innovative behavior in the this sector with tax policies and other indirect measures (Manley, 2008).

Nowadays many construction enterprises have a corporate mission that focuses on the customer, so environment of construction business is characterized by a high number of competitors who competes over the customers on market (Soviar et al, 2017). How a company is performing from its customers' perspective has become, therefore, a priority for top management. The results indicated that the customer perspective encompassed three indicators, namely, quality of service and work, external customer satisfaction, and market share. Quality of service and work comes second in importance after profitability. Quality measures the defect level of deliverables as perceived and measured by the customer. This indicator affects many other indicators such as profitability, external customer satisfaction, market share, growth and financial stability. Accomplishment of fundamental parts of successs of competitiveness both regional and world level, such as effective leadership, involvement of people, good process management, customer and market focus, and good supplier relationships are easy to achive because quality is managed by Energoprojekt (Ali et al, 2013).

In order to provide an efficient performance for the construction industry in the long term, leading companies adopted some of new management techniques, tools and technologic improvements. In this way construction company can provide sustainable competitive advantage both in national and international markets. (Aladag et al, 2016). Energoprojekt holding ad is company that is competitive and have a strong cooperation basis, and this type of companies are characterized by frequent activity, high performance, long-term interactions, adherence to the supply and construction terms (Soviar et al, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Enterprises in the construction industry should follow the example of Energoprojekt holding ad, to compete in a more extrovert and market-driven way and they will have to reconsider their capabilities. Specialization and diversification on various subjects are probably the most important strategic choices. Innovation creates possibilities of achieving competitive advantage, but only when managed properly (Pries & Janszen, 1995), which is exactly the case with Energoprojekt holding ad. To operate successfully the construction enterprise must concentrate its future objectives on its strengths, while averting tendencies related to its weaknesses. It is one of the methods finding wide application in economic activities, involving specifying the objective of the enterprise venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieve that objective. Responding to internal strengths and weaknesses is therefore an essential component of the strategic management process (Zavadaskas et al, 2011). Entering the world and cooperation with the developing countries Energoprojekt holding a.d. started to transfer technical and technological knowledge. The versatility of Energoprojekt's experts, ability to investigate, design, consulting, engineering, construction, selection, delivery and assembly equipment - has brought the preeminence and renown of the world company. There are no such engineering organizations in Serbia or Croatia that, like Energoprojekt, have an integrated, multi-disciplinary activity, huge experience gained on various projects and implemented facilities, at in various markets.

Energoprojekt should be an example to the construction sector as a globally competitive and efficient company, because in the world market quality becomes a new culture of behavior, with a focus on product quality, but also the quality of the process and organization, then integration with other systems, and it becomes the fundamental factor of competitiveness to be pay special attention, and these segments of business are owned by Energoprojekt. Continuity in activities concerning the needs of both the global and the regional markets, and the direction of production and services of the construction sector as one of the main and leading components of the economy, according to the needs demanded by the market, should also be kept.

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