
Enhancing Youth Employment Project

Final Report

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Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (<i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i>)
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
BSP	Business Service Providers
CHF	Swiss Francs
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ENE	Economy and Employment domain
EUR	Euro
EYE	Enhancing Youth Employment project
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GIZ	German Agency for International Development (<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i>)
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KfW	German Development Bank (<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau</i>)
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo
MDA	Management and Development Associates
MRM	Monitoring and Results Measurement
MSD	Market Systems Development
MTR	Mid-Term Report
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPSE	Promoting Private Sector Employment project
SCO-K	Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-Based Learning

Executive summary

The Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project in Kosovo, financed by SDC and implemented by a Helvetas/MDA consortium has reached the second half of its phase 2 (2017-2020). This Mid-Term Review (MTR) was commissioned in order to 1) assess the project's progress in relation to the expected outcomes of the phase and 2) to provide recommendations for the remaining two years of the project and to give a preliminary outlook beyond 2020. The MTR is based on a number of interviews and focus group discussions held in Kosovo between 17 and 28 March 2019 as well as an extensive review of project reports and other documents.

The EYE project's overall goal is to contribute to a dynamic and socially inclusive labour market that provides more and decent jobs (including self-employment) to young people in Kosovo. The project is structured along three intervention lines, aiming to stimulate systemic change in the areas of employability, matching on the labour market and job creation. Some of the interventions are a continuation of phase 1 activities, while a significant amount of new activities was added in phase 2. During the first year of phase 2 implementation SDC pushed for a stronger focus on the formal VET sector, and mainly on expanding activities in the field of work-based learning (WBL) which led to a significant shift of resources during the second phase. Also with the start of phase 2 the matching elements have been readjusted with a stronger focus on targeting specific groups including minorities and socially vulnerable groups and the demand side pillar of the project has seen a complete refocus on indirect business development support by focusing on BDS.

Main findings of the MTR are as follow:

Relevance: Youth unemployment represents a major task for the Republic of Kosovo and is a top priority of the Government. Many other donors are also involved in VET, labour market policies and private sector development. Donor coordination seems to be limited to information sharing. The project is well-embedded in the SDC's cooperation strategy and its domain 2 'economy and employment', however synergies with other SDC projects are not systematically leveraged. The approach of the EYE project is opportunistic and broad by strategy. The project has a clear strategy for the identification of bottlenecks it intends to tackle, and the selection of potential partners based on their capacities and incentives.

With regard to the VET system, the MTR criticises an insufficient systemic change understanding in the formal VET part of the project. This mainly relates to the intended changes in the curriculum development process where there is little evidence that the VET system of the Republic of Kosovo currently has the required awareness, capacity or will to reform. The involvement of the private sector primarily through the heavy processes of standards and curricula development while other options have not been followed is, at best, a necessary but insufficient step. Also the WBL approach followed by EYE bears significant risks with regard to quality including inadequate safety provisions and the misuse of students as cheap labour. WBL is a complex issue that should not be addressed in a rush and with limited resources as it was done by EYE.

Effectiveness: In most lines of activities, the project is on track, including regarding its targets on women and minorities. Although it became visible that job creation through systemic interventions takes time, the project's predictions show that 1,000 jobs can be created by the end of the phase. Large numbers of jobs may be created through targeted support to companies in the ICT and BPO sector which can contribute to accelerated growth and thus to significant employment generation in these sectors. The Opportunity Fund enables EYE to harvest low-hanging fruit by directly contributing to growth and job creation in fast-growing businesses. On the other hand, the OF also enables systemic investments in keystone actors

and early movers, mainly in the fields of private training provision and matching services. While the project has not to a significant extent accomplished inclusion of minorities in its core activities, a number of separate activities have been successfully implemented to reach out to minority populations such as the RAE community and Serbian-speaking youth. Women have been targeted throughout all project interventions and the targets in this regard have been reached.

Efficiency: The project implementation is considered efficient. The project does not face a spending challenge and it manages its expenditure planning well. When assessing costs and benefits it has to be understood that most employment effects of EYE are expected to manifest themselves only in the coming months and years. The cost per job facilitated varies significantly, depending on the approach and the method of attribution. Based on the job creation estimates of the EYE team, a benefit-cost ratio above 1 (i.e. a positive net present value) can be achieved after just one year in employment for the participants integrated into employment and for the jobs created, which is quite impressive.

Sustainability: The project's diverse interventions vary greatly when it comes to the likelihood of scale, sustainability and employment and income effects. Among the interventions with the highest likelihood of scale, sustainability and employment creation are activities on non-formal skills development mainly through private education providers as well as support for companies with a significant growth and job creation potential. Co-financing through the Opportunity Fund is a key success factor in this regard. The interventions to strengthen private sector involvement in VET show some promising results on the basis of individual participants in terms of access to employment. Other activities such as those on social dialogue and social entrepreneurship can be seen as pilot approaches without further potential for scale and sustainability.

Conclusions: It can be concluded that the project has a good reputation due to its thoroughness and its seriousness, and it learns and adapts continuously. All evidence points to EYE being considered a reliable and strong but also independent partner. Nevertheless, the project is marked by important inherent tensions, as it strives for systemic change (which requires a long-term vision and approach) while being measured on demanding short-term targets in terms of jobs created. Working with stakeholders from the public and the private sector, the project has to apply totally different logics, while the project's DNA is clearly on market-driven approaches. These tensions led to an overly complex and broad project design that is hardly manageable within a project set-up. They also contributed to misaligned perceptions and expectations among key actors regarding what the project should really focus on. Against the backdrop of the complexity of the project design and the highly demanding targets, the project implementation team did a good job in finding a way through.

Recommendations: The MTR formulates three strategic recommendations and two operational recommendations. For more details, please refer to the main text.

Strategic recommendations to SDC and EYE

Recommendation 1: We recommend to the SDC to close the EYE project at the end of the current phase.

Recommendation 2: We recommend to the SDC and the EYE project to agree on a hierarchy of priorities/goals and corresponding targets/results for the remainder of the phase, and hence to agree on one of the suggested scenarios.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the SDC examine a possible stronger involvement in vocational education and training, more focused on the local level and based on new modalities.

Operational recommendations to EYE

Recommendation 4: We recommend that Helvetas and MDA assure a smooth handover to the new project director, including a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the project director and the project manager, that are shared with the EYE team and the SDC.

Recommendation 5: Ensure lessons learnt, good practices and assets are identified, documented and shared with appropriate stakeholders. An updated cost-benefit analysis should be done and shared at the end of the phase.

1 The mandate

1.1 Objectives of the mid-term review

The objectives of the mid-term review are twofold:

- Summative and backward-looking objective: “1) Assess the project progress in relation to phase II expected outcomes.” (ToR)
- Formative and forward-looking objective: “2) Provide recommendations for the remaining 2 years of the project and to give a preliminary outlook for the EYE project beyond 2020.” (ToR)

The mid-term review mainly serves SDC and the steering committee to orient the project strategically for the remaining time of the current phase. The thinking on how a possible continuation could be oriented serves as food for thought and as an input into the beginning discussions on that matter. Next to strategic orientation, the review report serves also for accountability and documentation reasons. It is therefore formulated and presented in a way that it could also be shared with third parties other than the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo (SCO-K) and the project implementation partners.

1.2 Approach and methodology

The methodology applied comprised of the following instruments:

Phase 1 / January-March 2019: Document-based desk review and instrument and mission preparation

Phase 2 / February-March 2019: Mission to Kosovo including

- Preparatory interviews and selected field visits realised by the local MTR team member during February and March 2019;
- Two-part briefing meeting with SCO-K and SCD regional advisor, and, in the second part, with EYE Project Management Team (Project Director, Project Manager);
- Individual and group interviews with a wide set of project partners, beneficiaries and stakeholders;
- Review workshop with the project implementation unit / project implementation team with a focus on forward looking ;
- Project activity visits;
- De-briefing workshop to orient the review and to validate findings and preliminary conclusions and recommendations, with SCO-K and SCD regional advisor, and EYE Project Management Team (Project Director, Project Manager, MRM staff)
- De-briefing meeting with SDC

Phase 3 / March-April 2019: Reporting

- Draft report sent to the SCO-K and EYE on 4.4.2019
- Feedback by the SCO-K and EYE received on 17.4.2019
- Final report submitted to the SCO-K on 26.4.2019

2 Background and context

When assessing the project, it is important to take some key contextual facts into account, because they influence its scope for operational manoeuvre, as well its ability to deliver results.

Demographic context – structurally small, focusing difficult if the aim is scale/target achievement

Kosovo is a small country, with fewer than 1.8 million inhabitants in 2017, as reported by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics.

The number of residents belonging to the project's target age group of 15-34 years is 311,000. Given that a large part of 15-24 year-olds continue into full-time education or do not seek employment, the actual target group that the project can reach may be below 100,000. While this may still seem like a high number, once segmented by region or economic sector, the numbers of eligible beneficiaries shrink further. In this context, developing a sectoral/regional approach to youth employment would pose significant challenges for the project given that it has to reach ambitious numbers within the project phase and is less focused on systemic change effects.

Economic context – modest growth, high level of risk

Kosovo has a small economy with moderate growth (4% a year) and low FDI/capita (\$140). There are few dynamic economic sectors and few private sector actors. Most of them are in 'hunting' (not farming) mode, which makes them risk-averse, focused on short-term gains and sceptical to innovation. There are signs of exceptions to this context with exporting businesses, but given their small numbers, it is still too early to conclude that there is a definite trend/shift towards long-term oriented strategic and quality-focused investments.

The small scale of country means that small changes impact on the economy quickly and substantially, with new players/sectors accelerating or existing ones suddenly struggling more.

Institutional context – slow and disorganised central institutions, greater opportunities at local level

Ten years after Kosovo's independence, the state-building process is still ongoing, resulting in poorly performing state institutions that do not assume a policy-setting and leadership role. This is particularly evident at the central level, where there is no 'competition' between ministries. At the local level, especially since the last elections resulted in the loss of many 'strongholds' by incumbent parties, there is more competition, innovation and accountability – and greater potential for finding credible partners. However, systemic change at the local level is limited to creating good examples and keystone actors without the engagement of central institutions. In addition, in areas where new types of public services are being developed (e.g. work-based learning (WBL), career guidance, regional matching), the division of roles between the local and central levels is often unclear, which slows progress and threatens sustainability. However, progress is being made in WBL as a result of the new administrative instructions developed with MEST and other donors.

Donor context – everyone has the same great idea, in a still-crowded and uncoordinated space

Donors tend to jump on the few dynamic sectors – all the major donors (EU, USAID, GIZ, UNDP, LuxDev) have/had multi-million-dollar, multi-year projects focusing on private sector development and/or VET. Given the economic and institutional context outlined above, the consequence is that donors often find themselves working with the same partners and duplicating or overlapping activities. Donor coordination has more the character of information sharing on a rather superficial level. Even though the donors have an important role to play due to their financial contribution and political and technical influence, they do not agree with the Kosovan actors on key strategic developments. No commonly agreed policy positions or direction could be identified; e.g. even though all relevant donors were involved to develop the WBL instructions, approaches to support WBL are still largely distinct.

3 Findings

3.1 Overall findings

Phase II is broad by design and significantly changed from Phase I and has ambitious objectives.

Phase II has been considerably redesigned. The employability focus has been strengthened by adding important parts in the formal VET system to the project (outputs 1.1, 1.3, 2.1). These have even been strengthened during year 1. The matching elements have been readjusted with a stronger focus on targeting specific groups including minorities and socially vulnerable groups. The demand side of the project has seen a complete refocus on indirect business development support by focusing on BDS. Two intervention lines on social enterprises and on social dialogue have been added too, which has broadened the project focus even more.

Next to the extended content for phase II, the project has also seen increased expectations regarding objectives that can be reached. According to all information received, this was the result of intense negotiations between the SDC and the consortium, with the SDC requesting higher target values. An initial consideration of the facts suggests that this was reasonable; for example as this was a second phase of a successful project that could be expected to leverage its experience and relationships further in phase 2, also given the high total number of youths aged 15-34 in Kosovo is over 300.000, a nominal target of 2% (5.000 youth) employed does not seem high at first glance. In retrospect, this has to be critically questioned for various reasons: First of all, several new intervention lines and partners have been added just in phase 2; second, high numbers in terms of employment outcomes in phase I came primarily from matching and from direct job creation through the support of lead firms. In phase II, the project was re-focused on skills development and more systemic and facilitative interventions in job creation, which do not create numbers as easily quick and high as the approaches focused on during phase I; and last but not least, given the budget available, the results (in terms of employment) expected from the project are relatively high, also compared to the second project in the SDC's ENE portfolio (PPSE) or compared to other projects (e.g. USAID's). Higher ambitions as regarding targets could be expected from a systemic approach in the long run (harvesting after creating or strengthening systemic functions and actors with a time lag), but

not during the current phase. However, we could not identify any thinking about a consecutive phase.

We also found that the project's breadth – which also translates into an extraordinarily broad target group definition, as described above – is partly considered a strength, which is needed to achieve the ambitious targets set. On the other hand, this breadth is partly an overstretch, which confuses the unclear hierarchy of priorities – for example leading to an ambiguity between employability (skills) and employment (job creation) and a tension between systemic change and reaching targets at any cost. Even though EYE does, by design, not prioritize between employability and employment, we clearly found that the skills part is rather considered as an instrument to employment and not towards a sustainable long-term investment into the quality of the overall VET system. However this has not been explicitly elaborated in the Project Document.

The EYE phase II project design is planned for four years with no further outlook.

The EYE phase II project document covers a four-year period. We could not identify any hint of a possible follow-up phase nor any reflection on the necessity for such a scenario, even though such reflection is usually requested from the SDC and is the state of the art. Throughout the data collection, we did not come across credible and strong arguments or ideas in favour of extending EYE beyond phase II in a way that would significantly add value or scale to the goal of youth employment, while not compromising systemic change or sustainability and not duplicating the efforts of others.

3.2 Findings on relevance

Given the overall context in the country and the donor environment, has the project objective and the suggested intervention strategy been relevant?

The challenge EYE addresses – youth unemployment – represents a major task for the Republic of Kosovo and is a top priority of the Government of Kosovo. It is and will continue to be highly justified to support the Republic of Kosovo to address youth unemployment with high priority. The project is also well-embedded in the SDC's cooperation strategy and its domain 2 'economy and employment'.

Other donors, mainly the European Union (through its delegated cooperation mandate to Austria and through policy dialogue and accession preparation instruments), the United States (USAID), Luxemburg (LuxDev) and Germany (BMZ through KfW and GIZ) are also involved in VET, labour market policies and private sector development. The intervention lines supported by EYE are not unique or a niche to the SDC and EYE, but rather are complementary to other activities. According to long-term experts on the ground, the donor landscape is now much less crowded than it previously was. Interventions are mostly complementary; however, at central level there is potential for a more strategic donor coordination and cooperation. Although the donors say they coordinate their actions, in reality what they do is share information. Coordination is especially missing regarding strategic long-term development and investments: there is no commonly agreed policy on how work-based learning should be developed and what role it should play in the future set-up of Kosovo's education and training system (even though all relevant donors were involved in the development of the administrative instructions on WBL, donors continue to apply distinct approaches to WBL); and there are conflicting approaches when it comes to how the provider landscape should be developed and

governed, and also when it comes to strategic priorities as regards functions, resources and sectors that should have priority.

Assess the relevance of the project's interventions in relation to meeting the expected project outcomes, including selection of the sectors and target groups.

The project's target group is defined very broadly ('young women and men in transition from education to work and aged 15 to 34 years old'). Young women, less-skilled youth and minority communities are explicitly taken into account, but the project is not primarily focused on one of these groups but on youth in general.

EYE addresses the youth employment challenge from different angles, in principle applying an integrated approach to employment creation with the three pillars of labour supply (skills development), matching on the labour market, and labour demand (private sector development). This approach has the potential to create significant synergies across the different pillars (e.g. training youths in specific skills under Outcome 1 and creating jobs for them in Outcome 3), especially if the same actors, sectors or locations are targeted in all three pillars. Given the broad sectorial and geographical focus of the project, such synergies have not or have only partly manifested themselves. With the increasing focus of the project on the ICT, BPO and manufacturing sectors, namely under non-formal training and business development, such synergies between Outcomes 1 and 3 may be better leveraged in the years to come and may also complement initiatives of other donors in the same economic sectors, since ICT, BPO and manufacturing are core sectors also covered by interventions of other donors. However, this remains to be developed and attribution might be challenging and questionable as many actors focus on the same few sectors.

Regarding the exploitation of synergies between EYE and PPSE, the two projects regularly share information and refer opportunities to each other, given the difference in the focus of the projects. However, it has been challenging to develop major synergies, partly because of the sectorial approach taken by PPSE but not in EYE, but also because closer partnership would pose challenges of attribution of results for both projects.

The recent shift of the project towards WBL (Output 1.3) has clearly created additional synergies between some intervention lines, as WBL requires intense information-sharing and cooperation among different actors on both local and central levels. The career-guidance interventions (Output 2.1) have also helped in this regard as often the same schools are targeted as under the WBL (Output 1.3). However, the profiles of VET graduates only partly match the labour demand stimulated through Outcome 3.

Finally, we also find that the nine outputs do not contribute to the same extent to the project's goals. Particularly Outputs 3.2 on social entrepreneurship and 2.4 on social dialogue could not be developed and scaled beyond pilot status. Their contribution to the overarching goals remained marginal but complicated the overall setup.

Is the project approach adequate to achieve the above-mentioned goals, and does the project entail more of a strategic or opportunistic approach in project implementation?

The approach of the EYE project is opportunistic and broad by strategy. The project has a clear strategy for how to achieve its goals. This includes the identification of bottlenecks it intends to tackle, the selection of potential partners based on their capacities and incentives, and where it can add value – and it also relates to the facilitative approach of the project. Nevertheless, particularly in its work with the private sector (mainly in the activities of non-formal training, matching and business services development, also supported by the

opportunity fund) the project implementation can be perceived as opportunistic as it jumps at emerging opportunities without predefining sectors or sub-sectors of intervention. This opportunistic approach is however based on a set of underlying criteria (capacities and incentives of the stakeholders targeted to contribute to the project's overall goal, in a sustainable way), with a focus on adding value, and it can also be seen as a big strength of the project given the fast-developing context and the challenging targets set in a challenging context.

Were contextual, institutional and programmatic risks identified and adequately addressed?

The main risks have been identified and outlined in the project's ProDoc. The two programmatic risks that have been considered highly probable are on the one hand the lack of political leadership and technical capacities of public stakeholders and on the other hand donor competition and oversupply of funds. Both these risks still seem to be valid and do affect project implementation negatively. The mitigation measures particularly with regard to the public stakeholders' capacities have not proven to be sufficient to allow for a smooth and efficient implementation on provider level (schools, municipalities) or on national level (MEST). A long-term approach and significant investments would be needed to effectively strengthen the capacities of key institutions in the VET system. This however, would ask for a project dedicated explicitly to VET systems development – what EYE is not by definition. Another option would have been to work base on clear conditionalities and on a broader basis, as also suggested further down in this report.

The institutional risks relating to the partners' understanding of the MSD approach and willingness to cooperate, and to quality assurance in a lean project structure with a high number and wide spread of activities, have been rated 'low' and 'medium' probability. Both these aspects have, however, been mentioned as challenges by a wide range of stakeholders interviewed. Project representatives partly blame the partners' limited understanding of the approach and the complexity of the approach and project design for the difficulties met in implementation. This obviously raises questions, as the approach should be a tool to make the project function properly, rather than an obstacle to cooperation. The project steering and operational implementation are particularly demanding as they have to involve a large number of partners from the private and public sectors – who apply a totally different logic in their daily work. The large number of partners involved and the only indirect control of developments, e.g. in career guidance or work-based learning, lead to serious quality control challenges that are beyond the project's control but are potentially damaging to the overall aim and sustainable functioning of the system.

Box 1: Kosovan labour market demand and the policy of post-compulsory education for all at a high cost

The Kosovan labour market – not accounting for the significant level of international labour migration – demands only a limited number of qualified staff, as currently only a very limited number of services and goods are offered that focus on quality, in companies that are in so-called "farming" mode rather than geared towards short-term benefits and mere survival. Therefore, many jobs offered after VET training pay poor salaries and offer poor working conditions that are the same as those available to those without relevant training. Companies for their part could easily train their own staff at little expense.

At the same time, Kosovo, like other Western European countries, follows a policy of de facto compulsory post-lower secondary education, i.e. "education for all" on the level of post-secondary education. In the case of Kosovo, this results in VET schools offering a wider range of narrow and often irrelevant directions and profiles as a second-chance type of training for

those youth who did not make it into the gymnasias. Only a minor part of the offer is really geared towards labour market relevance, as often the labour market does not demand and cannot absorb all the trained youth. These VET courses, however, produce graduates at an elevated price compared to general education, as they require additional staff (practice instructors, professional theory teachers), space and equipment including consumables (workshops). As the state of Kosovo finances these schools alone and does not share the burden of qualifying future workforce with economic operators, this results in an expensive but poorly performing second-chance system.

Exceptions in labour demand are the light manufacturing, ICT and BPO sectors; however, these sectors prefer to meet their labour force needs using university graduates and have only a limited number of positions for qualified VET staff.

In the long run, the Republic of Kosovo will have to strengthen its initial and continuous VET training system by increasing the quality of VET training, namely through broader and more labour-market relevant profiles, and through intense cooperation modalities with the private sector that build on the known tradition of work-based learning. To do so, the Government of Kosovo will also have to open and develop other more labour-market oriented pathways to higher qualifications, namely on the post-secondary and tertiary VET level, and, at the same time, the requirements for transition from VET to university education must be increased. The SDC is well positioned to support strategic investments that lead in this direction. Meanwhile, the most appropriate solution to the challenge of poorly or under-qualified graduates lies in active labour market measures that include training (e.g. non-formal *and* formal language or specific technical skills) but go beyond training only. However, in the longer term, these measures cannot replace the necessary reforms in the field of vocational education and training.

Insufficient systemic change understanding in the formal VET part of the project.

The shift of EYE towards a stronger involvement in the formal VET system has significantly changed the nature of the project and may also require different approaches. The evaluation team would like to highlight some observations in this regard:

On curriculum development (Output 1.1.): There is little evidence that the VET system of the Republic of Kosovo currently has the required awareness, capacity or will to do what is required to reform it. For example, in the case of curriculum development, the underlying reasoning that occupational standards and curricula are main bottlenecks and that reviewed occupational standards and curricula alone would lead to better skills development does not hold – and nor would it hold in Switzerland or elsewhere. It is generally known that the implementation of curricula takes time, effort, resources and structures. Their implementation requires assertiveness and support in institutions, schools and companies. Otherwise, revised curricula remain nothing more than pieces of unread paper. In addition, local key experts as well as other donors do not support the assumption that a new curriculum development process is the most relevant support to the Kosovan VET system at the present time. Other factors are considered more relevant, such as the provider landscape including their status, the quality of the offers including the scope of the profiles (today often totally irrelevant) and accreditation, the development of systemic capacities for vocational teachers and instructors, pre-service and in-service training, and quality assurance at school level, to name but a few. The total focus of the activities under Output 1.1. on standards curriculum development is, moreover, questionable against the background of the actual objective of improving cooperation with the private sector under this output. There are many good options to involve the private sector beyond standard setting and curricula development. These options have also been identified

by EYE (ProDoc) but, according to the annual reports, not been further developed and the project totally focused on the given indicator. The involvement of the private sector primarily through the heavy processes of standards and curricula development – and even within that process on a rather superficial level – while other options have not been followed with the needed rigour is, a n option, but not sufficient.

On WBL (Output 1.3): Aware that, at the request of the Ministry, the project has adopted a "light" WBL approach focusing on improving cooperation with the private sector, we find that the approach followed by EYE bears significant risks with regard to quality including the potential misuse of youth as cheap labour and insufficient safety provision, as youth have been placed for practice in companies that often do not meet minimal quality standards regarding decent work. The project today covers around 24 profiles in WBL, which is a number simply beyond control within the framework of the WBL output. WBL is a complex issue that cannot be addressed with limited resources as it was done by EYE. Furthermore, the current regulations and practice at school level do not allow for a proper WBL approach as a strategic instrument for the promotion of skilled workers and economic development, as they do not create and allow for clear ownership and clarity of roles and responsibility on the level of steering and implementation. The incentives and resources of the involved actors are not properly developed and used in that framework, and the therefore the private sector will most likely not see their return on investment (incentive) in the given system.. It has rather the character of an educational measure and builds on CSR; only in selected cases is WBL understood as a strategic investment in future workforce development by both sides, the school and the companies involved. As Switzerland is widely considered as the most competent partner in WBL, the chosen approach bears the risk of reputational damage, and, more importantly, jeopardises the potential that WBL has with regard to the promotion of skilled workers and, therefore, economic development.

On career guidance (Output 2.1): The project has so far applied a direct-support approach and helped to develop structures and resources at local level. The conditionality imposed on the local partners (e.g. that at least one school staff member is designated and paid to run career guidance activities indefinitely) gives some credibility that career guidance will continue beyond the project cycle. However, the project has, according to the project team, only began to facilitate the creation of support structures at national level that would ensure the sustainability and quality of work at school level. Even though this is done in concertation with other donors, it is unlikely that this will be achieved within the remaining timeframe of Phase II.

These observations are not intended to cast doubt on the applied method, MSD, per se. Rather, they reveal the partial and technically poor analysis with regard to the VET system. In principle, MSD as an approach and toolbox of good development practice can be applied, as the SDC propagates, in a system that functions according to public sector logic. However, the analysis, which must necessarily include an analysis of the political economy and based on that a clear idea of drivers and restrainers of change, must also be technically – VET in this case – sound and cannot be only based on the logic and behaviour of actors in a market-driven system.

3.3 Findings on effectiveness

Is the project on track with achieving the expected results as per targets of the current project phase?

In most lines of activities, the project is on track, including regarding its targets on women and minorities. In assessing the intermediate results and comparing them with the targets for the phase, it has to be understood that the second phase of EYE is in relevant parts a new project with new partners and therefore cannot be considered as a mere continuation of phase 1 of EYE. This particularly applies to the skills development activities on lower skills levels (Outputs 1.1 and 1.3) and the activities on indirect job creation via business development services (Output 3.1).

During the first two years of implementation of phase 2 it became visible that job creation through systemic interventions takes time. The annual targets for job creation have not been reached in 2017 or 2018. Nevertheless, the project's predictions show that 1,000 jobs can be created by the end of the phase. Large numbers of 'jobs created' (Output 3.1) will be achieved mainly through targeted support to companies in the ICT and BPO sector which can contribute to accelerated growth and thus to significant job creation in these sectors (as the example of the Bambus group supported in 2017/18 proves). Interventions of this kind can be seen as going for quick wins or harvesting low-hanging fruit. Nevertheless, besides the facilitative, systemic interventions in the business development services sector, these kinds of more direct interventions (including subsidies through the Opportunity Fund) are a legitimate approach to reaching targets within the duration of this second phase. These direct interventions may partly also have a systemic character as they strengthen early movers and keystone actors and thus stimulate other actors to adopt and respond to the changes in the market. In the cases the evaluation team had the opportunity to examine in greater detail, the contributions of the project have been timely and effective in removing bottlenecks to growth, and attribution is thus justified.

In its YPO 2019, the EYE team suggested a change in the targets on Outcome level, reducing the target value of jobs created (Outcome 3) from 1,500 to 1,000 while increasing the target for youth in employment after training (Outcome 1) from 1,000 to 1,500. Given the SDC's deliberate push for an enlargement of activities under Output 1.3, the evaluation team would support this suggestion as a legitimate adaption of the initial logframe.

The broadly defined interventions on public-private dialogue for VET (Output 1.1) have during the first two years of project implementation been focused exclusively on curriculum development. This is in line with the indicator of this output. However, the ProDoc suggested a much broader approach to public-private dialogue that has not been tackled at all so far – and it is not planned to do so. Given the highly challenging institutional context currently present in Kosovo, narrowing the focus on central level collaboration only to topics critical for completing core project interventions seems justified.

Does the project work with the right partners that show a potential to influence the expected change contributing to a better VET system that produces skills relevant for the labour market?

In general, the project applies a smart and comprehensive method to partner selection, based on these stakeholders' capacities and incentives. In its activities in non-formal training (Output 1.2) it is highly involved in developing new and sustainable business models (e.g. involving companies, mainly from the service sector, in co-financing specific training programmes for potential employees).

In the area of public VET, it can be observed that the piloting and scaling of the approaches as demanded by the SDC have been implemented at very high speed, starting from the second half of 2017. The initial “small piloting” approach to WBL under Output 1.3 was rushed. This went along with compromises on the quality and resources of partners (see also findings under relevance).

Is Project Outcome 3 aligned enough towards the main aims of the EYE project? How does it contribute to achieving the project results?

As discussed above (and confirmed by recent studies of the ILO and the World Bank), adopting an integrated approach towards employment creation is in general more effective than implementing standalone interventions on either labour supply or labour demand. However, in the EYE project the systemic approach applied in strengthening business service providers (Output 3.1) is not fully aligned with the aims and targets of the phase, as its approach is a very indirect one and therefore does not deliver results quickly and closely targeted enough to contribute to significant job creation within the duration of phase 2.

The direct (opportunistic) support measures for individual companies (as in the case of the Bambus group) on the contrary have a very direct and immediate effect on job creation. However, these results would also be possible without the framework of Outcome 3 through direct contributions of the Opportunity Fund alone.

The interventions to strengthen the social enterprise sector (Output 3.2) have been timely in responding to an intensively discussed topic. However, the results show that transforming NGOs into social enterprises is an almost impossible task in an environment where donor money is easily available for NGOs. The number of jobs created in the supported structures is very limited and at the moment no systemic effects are visible. This output does thus not add significant value to the main aims of the project.

How does the project stand in achieving the expected results related to social inclusion and quality jobs?

During the first two years of phase 2 the project has not to a significant extent accomplished inclusion of minorities in its core activities. Nevertheless, a number of separate activities have been successfully implemented to reach out to minority populations such as the RAE community and Serbian-speaking youth. Women have been targeted throughout all project interventions and the targets in this regard have been reached in most outputs.

The activities towards conducting social dialogue on decent work issues (Output 3.2) have been implemented on a small scale and have not significantly contributed to systemic changes in this area. With regard to employment creation through the other activities of the project, no data on the quality of jobs created is available. At the current stage of development and given the high rate of unemployment, job quality does not seem to be a high priority for most of the stakeholders involved. However, a shift towards better-paid jobs (wages that are above the legal minimum wage of 200 euros per month, which can arguably be found without possessing any skills at all) should be considered in order to sustainability bring young people into employment in the country. This is even more important if one considers the quite high reserve wage of young women and men, who can also survive on transfer payments mainly from the diaspora (remittances).

What is the value addition from having an OF in the project? How far are the OF proposals contributing directly to achieving the expected project outcomes and final aim of job generation?

On the one hand, the Opportunity Fund enables EYE to harvest low-hanging fruit by directly contributing to growth and job creation in fast-growing businesses. On the other hand, it also enables systemic investments in keystone actors and early movers, mainly in the fields of private training provision and matching services. It is thus a crucial instrument to complement the facilitation approach of the overall EYE project and thus to ensure the right mix of technical assistance and financial support to key labour market actors, mainly in the private sector.

3.4 Findings on efficiency

Is the initially estimated cost-effectiveness of the project still valid?

After the first months of phase 2, at the demand of the SDC, significant project resources were reallocated from Outcome 2 to Outcome 1 when WBL interventions had to be scaled up. Taking the subsequently suggested changes in outcome targets into consideration, the cost-efficiency ratios mentioned in the ProDoc are still plausible.

What is the cost benefit of the project?

Most employment effects of EYE are expected to manifest themselves only in the coming months and years, partly and likely also after the end of the phase, especially for systemic effects that are supposed to last beyond the project interventions. The cost per job facilitated varies significantly, depending on the approach and the method of attribution. As with most MSD projects, measuring the concrete attribution of changes in employment and income is challenging and the underlying assumptions should be defined jointly between the project's principal and agent. One could ask if (for interventions of this kind) it wouldn't make more sense to base the reporting on indicators covering concrete results (outcomes) directly attributable to the project – measuring indirect and induced employment effects for communication measures only.

The benefits also vary greatly, depending mainly on the estimated wage levels. As the table below shows, based on the job creation estimates of the EYE team, a benefit-cost ratio above 1 (i.e. a positive net present value) can be achieved after just one year in employment for the participants integrated into employment and for the jobs created through the activities of Outcome 3. However, all these estimates are based on the assumption that the youth brought into employment through EYE activities would be unemployed without the project. Unfortunately, there is no counterfactual (control group) available. A possible option to resolve this challenge would be to take the youth unemployment rate of around 50% (depending on sources) and thus to assume that 50% of participants would have found a job without the project. By attributing 50% of the benefits to EYE, a positive cost-benefit ratio is still achieved within one year of employment.

[in CHF]	Outcome 1: Labour supply	Outcome 2: Matching	Outcome 3: Labour demand	Total
Cost Part 1-3	1 269 000	2 170 000	1 269 000	4 709 000
Cost Part 4	799 000	1 312 000	699 000	2 810 000
Total cost per Outcome	2 068 000	3 482 000	1 968 000	7 519 000
Participants employed / jobs created	1 000	2 500	1 500	5000
Cost per job	2 068	1 393	1 312	1 504
Estimated yearly income benefits, based on minimum wage (€130) for VET graduates and average wage (€370) for HE graduates	1 740 (70% VET) 4 920 (30% HE) Ø 2 694	1 740 (50% VET) 4 920 (50% HE) Ø 3 330	1 740 (30% VET) 4 920 (70% HE) Ø 3 966	Ø 3 394
Benefit-cost ratio after 1 year in employment	1.30	2.39	3.02	2.26

Table 1: Expected cost and benefit per Outcome (based on targets in ProDoc)

[in CHF]	Outcome 1: Labour supply	Outcome 2: Matching	Outcome 3: Labour demand	Total
Participants employed / jobs created	1 500	2 500	1 000	5000
Cost per job	1 379	1 393	1 968	1 504
Estimated yearly benefits	Ø 2 694	Ø 3 330	Ø 3 966	Ø 3 394
Benefit-cost ratio after 1 year in employment	1.95	2.39	2.02	2.26

Table 2: Expected cost and benefit per Outcome (based on targets of 2019 YPO)

These results are quite extraordinary compared with SDC programmes in other regions where employment effects over 5 years and more have to be taken into account to come up with a positive NPV of the relative interventions.

Nevertheless, to have an even clearer picture of costs and benefits – and to learn for future projects in the country and the region – towards the end of the phase the project might be asked to compile a rather simple cost-benefit calculation for each of the relevant Outputs, taking into account the actual resources (parts 1-4) used for activities of each output.

Are the administrative procedures of the Opportunity Fund followed by the project during the process of proposal selection and is this process efficient?

The project has found the right balance between flexibility and rigour in managing the Opportunity Fund. Project ideas and proposals are vetted by several EYE team members within EYE before deciding which ones are sent to the SDC for approval. EYE does a good job of managing partner expectations and commitments, and has built an administrative process that is well-aligned with the progressive stages of the process (concept note, full proposal, due diligence). The project has clear criteria and high quality standards. While the

full process is demanding for applicants, they generally express their satisfaction and consider it as a capacity building exercise. While some OF projects have taken longer than planned to be implemented, the evaluation team is satisfied that this was a result of external factors. Where relevant, EYE has learnt its lessons and adjusted its partner/criteria selection accordingly. At this mid-point of the project however, it may benefit from sharing lessons learnt with the SDC and jointly adjusting criteria/process to optimise performance for the rest of Phase 2.

Spending progress

The project does not face a spending challenge and manages its expenditure planning well.

3.5 Findings on sustainability

Assess the likelihood of significant scale, sustainability, employment and income generation of the project interventions.

The project's interventions (clustered in nine outputs contributing to three outcomes) vary greatly when it comes to the likelihood of scale, sustainability and employment and income effects. A subjective assessment covering all nine outputs is presented in the table below. This representation is extremely condensed and does not always do justice to the individual interventions, some of which are very different, in the respective project parts.

Outputs	Likelihood of...		
	...significant scale	...sustainability	...employment + income
1.1 Public-private sector dialogue	Low	Low	Not applicable/attribution
1.2 Non-formal skills	Fair	Fair	Fair
1.3 WBL	Low	Low	High
2.1 Career guidance	Fair	Fair	Not applicable/attribution
2.2 Media	Not applicable/attribution	Low	Not applicable/attribution
2.3 Matching	Not applicable/attribution	Fair	High
2.4 Social dialogue	Fair	Low	Not applicable/attribution
3.1 BDS	Fair	Fair	Fair
3.2 Social enterprises	Low	Low	Low

Table 3: Likelihood of significant scale, sustainability and employment + income effects

Rather high likelihood: Among the interventions with the highest likelihood of scale, sustainability and employment creation are the private sector-oriented Output 1.2 on non-formal skills development mainly through private education providers and Output 3.1 on business service development and direct support for companies with a significant growth and job creation potential. Co-financing through the Opportunity Fund is a key success factor in this regard.

Fair likelihood: The interventions to strengthen private sector involvement in VET and mainly in WBL (Outputs 1.1 and 1.3) show some promising results on the basis of individual participants in terms of access to employment. The likelihood of scale and sustainability is however rather low. Ongoing support would be needed to sustainably establish these new approaches in the VET system.

The career guidance interventions (Output 2.1) after the shift from Higher Education to VET were mainly built on a promising approach with School-Based Career Centres, as developed by a DANIDA-funded project in 2010. EYE supported the successful replication of this approach in other VET schools. These activities may be sustainable, if the highly motivated staff (teachers, allocated part-time to the centres) continue to be so committed and receive more support from school principals and municipalities. However, the overall likelihood given the current contextual situation is critical.

The support for public and private matching providers (Output 2.3) is extremely broad, including interventions with many different actors from the public, private and NGO sector. It's scope and likelihood of scale is thus impossible to assess overall. What can be said is that the cooperation with private matching services has contributed to the development of new and promising business models – also with regard to the labour market integration of youth from RAE communities. The likelihood that these activities will be sustained without project support is fair.

Low likelihood: Media campaigns under Output 2.2 reached a large number of youth all over the country. Significant crowding-in and adaptation of such business models by other stakeholders is however not very likely. Output 2.4 on social dialogue has fostered some discussions on the qualitative dimension of employment in the country. However, its sustainability is rated low. We do not expect any follow-up once the project stops its support. Output 3.2 on social entrepreneurship can be seen as a pilot approach strengthening the capacities of a dozen organisations, without further potential for scale, as the legislative framework and overall context are not favourable to the emergence of a larger social enterprise sector. The contribution of all these outputs to the overarching goals remained marginal.

3.6 Findings on project organisation

Is the project management and steering set-up adequate to guarantee efficiency and effectiveness of the project implementation? Are the resources (both human and financial) adequate to meet the project targets?

Regarding the project management and steering set-up of EYE, there are two main dimensions to assess: a 'business as usual' state, and a transitional state. Bearing this in mind, there are several levels to assess:

1. EYE team in Kosovo

Business as usual: overall, the flat reporting structure, combined with experienced and skilled staff, seems to have created a high-calibre, dynamic, agile and results-oriented team. Project management has achieved a good level of communication and collaboration across the team, which is especially crucial in such a complex project, where synergies between outputs can be lost if the team is not working together well. However, there is room for improvement in clarifying, formalising and disseminating the project leadership roles, especially those of the Project Director and Project Manager, as well as processes and criteria under which the broader consortium resources can be utilised.

Transition: given that both Project Director and Project Manager were new to EYE in Phase 2 and, in the case of the Project Director, new to Helvetas, the sheer volume of new things to learn had an impact on project ramp-up. In hindsight, the strengthened focus on VET during Year 1, the strong redesign from phase 1 to phase 2 and the new staff on project management level would have necessitated a greater backstopping role for EYE by Helvetas HQ, especially since the PD was not a VET expert, nor a long-time employee of Helvetas with strong networks at HQ. Meanwhile, the project did not make use of major parts of the budgeted backstopping resources from Helvetas HQ in the first two years (in total, EYE had three visits from HQ VET experts, in addition to regular visits from backstopping support, during 2017 and 2018. In addition, EYE had two visits from SFIVET which were not initially planned). We have not found convincing explanations for the project not making full use of these planned resources, given the obvious needs. Helvetas agreed that there had been some bottlenecks as regards availability at HQ. However, these could have been overcome by cooperating with partner organisations and buying external backstopping services (SFIVET services were mainly service oriented for developing in-company teachers training). As the project will soon have a new PD, lessons learnt should be taken on board, including a greater presence and support of HQ in the remainder of Phase 2.

2. EYE's use of consortium partners and other SDC projects

Regarding the use of and value added of consortium partners, there is an overall recognition that resources have not been optimally used, but there are strongly diverging views on the reasons for this. We found a rather dysfunctional and conflictual situation, where cooperation is mostly reduced to administrating the project. Rather than deciding on the relative veracity of each claim, we rely on the principle that the stakeholder with the greatest power in the project and who designed the partnership is ultimately accountable for the project's success. As such, it is up to Helvetas HQ to negotiate, claim and support the optimum input of consortium partners and other partners at the project steering level to ensure EYE's success. Regarding collaboration with other SDC-funded projects, while there seems to be a good communication and referral process with PPSE, arguably EYE could have leveraged Demos's network and insights into local government, while looking for partners for the VET-related outputs and while trying to develop sustainable solutions and investment priorities by local governments.

3. EYE communication and project steering with the SDC

The project was particularly challenged by changes in key leadership staff at both EYE and the SDC in the initial stages of Phase 2, with the legitimate adjustments that such circumstances require. However, given the complexity of the project, and the inherent tension between some of its goals, it can be argued that EYE project management could have shown greater leadership in discussing and aligning priorities with the SDC. Considering the recent and upcoming changes in project leadership, the lessons learnt should be taken into account and reflected in the joint definition of the hierarchy of priorities, goals and targets; discussion and agreement on roles/responsibilities of key stakeholders in EYE (including consortium

partners, as needed) and the SDC; and an optimum communication process for both parties. Ideally, these would be agreed while the outgoing and incoming PDs are present in Kosovo.

Regarding resources, overall, they seem to be adequate to meet the targets. One notable exception was VET/WBL, where in hindsight the strengthening required during Year 1 was inadequately resourced within the team on the field, as well as through backstopping support from HQ. Another dimension to consider in terms of resources is in the relative (low) influence it provides EYE when dealing with partners, compared to some other donors that provide greater monetary support with fewer requests from their partners.

Regarding MRM, we found that the project makes good use of its internal collective know-how, it has a good and open culture of challenge, collective and participatory decision-making. It makes good use of its MRM system, relying on facts and results to further develop and fine-tune the project's approaches.

4 Conclusions, scenarios and recommendations

In this chapter, we will look at the conclusions and develop selected scenarios for the remainder of the phase and beyond the current phase. The conclusions are structured by main statements, each of which we underlay with more details. This approach will allow us to develop relevant recommendations reflecting different options the SDC and EYE have at that point of project implementation.

4.1 Conclusions

The project has a good reputation due to its thoroughness and its seriousness, and it learns and adapts continuously.

Actors and partners in Kosovo highly appreciate the EYE project for being a demanding but also serious and energetic partner in capacity and system development, as part of a joint effort. All evidence points to EYE being considered a reliable and strong but also independent partner within the framework set by the project design. However, some stakeholders are more critical of the cost/benefit of engaging with EYE, of the perceived changes from phase 1 to phase 2, and finally also of what they perceive as a reduced exposure and role in VET, which is perceived as a Swiss strength. Especially when it comes to support for public actors at the central level, EYE, through its facilitative approach, result-measurement orientation and as a consequence of being engaged in a wide range of elements, has become a comparatively small and demanding partner at the same time. Last but not least, we find that the project has a well-developed culture of learning.

The project has strong inherent tensions by design, which have resulted in high level of complexity.

The EYE project is marked by important inherent tensions, namely:

systemic change vs. measuring jobs only: The project applies an MSD approach and strives for systemic change, while it measures jobs (created, matched and filled) on the level of

outcomes. The systemic changes and their quality in terms of pertinence and sustainable long-term effects are not considered on that decisive level.

long-term vs. short-term: systemic change by applying a facilitative and capacity building approach takes time to develop and deliver. This is true for developing systemic resources and change in a private-driven market and maybe even more in a public-driven system. However, the project has demanding short-term targets – annual targets but also end-of-phase targets – to be achieved.

quality vs. quantity: the project has high targets to reach while it also strives for quality regarding both the way it works – facilitation and systemic change – and its results: quality of jobs, decent work, social inclusion targets.

market-driven vs. state-governed logics: The project acts both in fully market-driven systems (e.g. business development services, private matching services, private education providers) as well as in state-governed systems (e.g. WBL, career guidance, public matching and training) that apply totally different logics. We found that the project's DNA is rather a market-driven logic.

social vs. economic objectives: The project combines social policy and economic development objectives as well as effects on the public VET system and effects on productivity and job creation.

We conclude that the dimension of these in-built tensions led to an overly complex and broad project design to be properly manageable within a project set-up. The consequences have been that EYE had to compromise as regards the systemic approach; the project has left the path of facilitation in various areas and switched to the mode of direct implementation, in an effort to meet its targets and because the design logic only partially coincided with reality. Although such direct interventions can also have a systemic character (keystone investments) and in some cases have had one, the main motivation for these direct interventions was the fulfilment of the jobs target within the given time frame. Also, EYE could not properly streamline its social inclusion policy and activities regarding minorities but kept these rather isolated, because they partly conflict with the highly ambitious targets to be reached and partly because the size of minority communities in Kosovo poses legitimate challenges to a systemic, scalable approach. The underlying analysis and logic applied in the VET parts of EYE have not been adequate (as shown above), and the resources available to deliver the quality requested have not matched the approach and set-up of the project. Finally, the inherent tensions and the breadth of the design contributed to misaligned perceptions and expectations among key actors regarding what the project should really focus on, which necessitates important and continuous communication and clarification efforts.

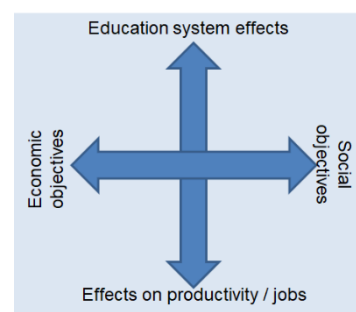


Figure 1: VET coordinate system based on the SDC's VET Typology Tool (2019).

Against the backdrop of the complexity of the project design and the highly demanding targets, the project implementation team did a good job in finding a way through.

The project team has found the right balance between the opportunistic and strategic approaches given the framework within which it has to operate. The decision-making is strategically oriented in order to reach the targets set. However, there is room for the SDC and the EYE project to focus on and agree a hierarchy of priorities that would, depending on decisions taken, also imply adapting goals and targets for the remainder of Phase II (see scenarios and recommendations).

If VET, then quality VET at local and regional level as a strategic investment in workforce development and economic prosperity.

Based on our findings above, if a stronger focus on VET should be chosen, EYE and the SDC should aim for significant qualitative improvements of the training offer as a strategic investment in future workforce development. This would then also result in higher wages and the increase in productivity and competitiveness of which Kosovo's economy is in dire need. Within such an approach, one should also strive for new modalities in definition and delivery, as EYE has done, however with a much more strategic focus and deeper follow-through.

We find that there is ample room to invest in VET, be it WBL or other facets, even though the current and likely mid-term dysfunctionality of central level institutions makes it difficult to predict consistent progress with any certainty in these areas. However, there is greater scope to find willing partners at the local level as compared to the central level, and the provider landscape is not over-covered, and much can be done at this level without the decisive engagement of the central institutions.

Closure of the project at the end of the phase.

Based on our findings we conclude that the best option for the SDC and EYE is to close at the end of Phase 2 for various reasons as elaborated in more detail above. We would like to summarise the most important arguments here:

- a) the project was planned as a one-phase investment with no consideration of a possible follow-up or phasing-out engagement;
- b) the project is overly complex by design and has strong inherent tensions;
- c) based on the yearly progress report, the concurring statements from stakeholders and reasonable, comprehensible projections of the project, it is likely that the project will reach close to its overall targets in numbers by the end of the current phase;
- d) where the project performs strongly and has strength in terms of approach and team resources, namely in all private-sector led market logics, it is likely to have penetrated the market and created sustainable resources by the end of the phase. Also, the SDC has another project, PPSE, up and running in this field;
- e) even though on the private sector side, there could be opportunities to support job creation through targeted investments, primarily in growing export-oriented sectors (including BPOs and ICT), we do not see how EYE could make a significant impact with an added phase here, given the slow pace of economic growth in Kosovo and the crowded donor landscape in this area;
- f) while the project will likely struggle to reach the full target contributions and while sustainability will be at risk by the end of the phase in the parts driven by public-sector logic, namely VET, career guidance and public matching, we do not consider it a sensible and recommendable idea to – once more – transform the project into a fully-fledged VET project, as the project's strengths are not in the VET sector – which is not to be mistaken as a rating of individual staff members' capacities;
- g) the current consortium does not generate much relevant apparent added value for the purpose of the project, and the problems revealed to us among the consortium partners have the potential to jeopardise the success of the project if aggravated.

4.2 Scenarios for EYE

In this chapter, we identify three possible scenarios for further development of EYE in the remainder of the phase. The first scenario suggests only minor changes to the existing plan, while the two other options put forward more focused options that imply considerable changes in targets, project organisation and spending.

Scenario 1: Consolidate and capitalise

Scenario 2: Private-sector led employment focus

Scenario 3: Public-sector led employability focus

We will describe the scenarios and assess them according to three main criteria: a) potential/opportunities, b) challenges/risks, and c) strategic relevance for the SDC and the Government of Kosovo.

We apply the following working assumptions when developing the four scenarios:

- We build the scenarios on the existing project framework. The MTR does not assume the mandate to totally redo and radically rethink the project or to design a sketch of a new project, but to take it from where it is and support its further development within the remainder of the phase.
- It is feasible that the project achieves most of its targets within the remaining two years.
- Regarding ending the project after phase II, one should be mindful of exiting gracefully. An SDC-financed development project is more than just a project, it is also a Swiss commitment and as such part of Swiss foreign policy in Kosovo. The commitments entered into should be fulfilled and exiting should not damage the SDC's, or Helvetas's and MDA's reputations.
- The scenarios discussed represent strategic options that should be developed in more detail before they are carried out; this particularly applies to the more far-reaching scenarios. It should also be noted that the scenarios have certain interdependencies and intersections.

4.2.1 Scenario 1: Consolidate and capitalise

Description of the scenario

The first scenario is about consolidation, capitalisation and attribution within the remainder of the phase and exiting the project thereafter.

The reasoning behind this scenario is as follows: It remains most closely aligned with the Phase 2 project design, and it focuses on outputs that deliver the greatest results in fulfilling the project's existing targets. It assumes that the project will be able to achieve a good part of its objectives by the end of this phase, and that the big majority of activities developed under the private-sector driven outputs can be ended by the end of the phase with a good likelihood of sustainability. The more critical parts focusing on the public VET provision system will most likely not be fully finalised by the end of the year, but provide valuable lessons learnt and good examples that can be documented and shared with all actors involved. There is a certain likelihood that others will build on it.

This means that outputs 2.4 and 3.2 are stopped (light blue in the graph below), as well as 2.2 as the media campaign activities do not directly contribute to the results to be reached by 2020. As regards the other outputs, scenario 1 would imply the following:

- Output 1.1: continue and finalise the already committed occupational standards and curriculum development reform, but reallocate the other remaining resources to output 1.2.
- Output 1.2: push to achieve the targeted numbers and make sure the keystone investments are sustainable.
- Output 1.3: follow up and finalise the administrative directions, no new activities or increase in outreach, consolidate and communicate the lessons learnt, including the few good practice examples developed that are a strategic investment in quality workforce development and economic development.
- Output 2.1: support MEST and the local partners in developing sustainability models for career guidance
- Output 2.3: capitalise on the matching efforts and support sustainability wherever needed.
- Output 2.4: stop further activities and strategically reallocate resources.
- Output 3.1: capitalise on the matching efforts and support sustainability wherever needed.
- Output 3.2: stop further activities and strategically reallocate resources.

Output 1.1 Public-Private dialogue for skills	Output 2.1 Career Guidance	Output 3.1 BDS
Output 1.2 Non-formal Training Providers	Output 2.2 Media LMI	
Output 1.3 WBL	Output 2.3 Matching	Output 3.2 Social Enterprises
	Output 2.4 Social Dialogue	
OF		MSF

Figure 2: The EYE Box – Scenario 1 (dark blue = focus)

Evaluation of the scenario

Potential/Opportunities

With this option, it is likely that the results achieved will be close to the initial targets set. This scenario does not require a major reorganisation and only minor reallocation of resources, while it ensures smooth exit. It does not request target adjustment. It is the closest scenario to the EYE 2019 YPO.

Challenges/Risks

The main challenge lies in the main difficulty of the project as designed: the focus will still remain very broad for the two remaining years to come, and as the objectives are challenging,

the project is likely to run after any job, to put it bluntly, rather than to focus on systemic change effects and sustainability.

As under all other scenarios that opt for exiting after the current phase, the project is most likely not in a place to guarantee the sustainability wished for in the interventions that deal with public sector institutions and organisations, namely under the outputs 1.1, 1.3, 2.1 and 2.3. The project would leave unfinished business behind, assuming that there would be no follow-up phase or project building. However, as these issues are all by and large covered by other donors too – however not necessarily with the same actors! – it is likely that the assets developed will be taken up.

Strategic relevance for the SDC and the Government of Kosovo

The strategic relevance is given, as this scenario remains what has been defined and what all involved partners agreed as compliant with their strategic objectives.

The lessons learned can inform future strategic choices for the SDC.

4.2.2 Scenario 2: Private-sector led employment focus

Description of the scenario

This scenario suggests focusing on the core strength of EYE, namely on private-sector-led employment based on the development of private market systems that are also considered as the elements that most directly deliver results. Skills development elements are considered rather as instruments to promote employment or to enable target groups to find employment.

Under this logic, the EYE project would refocus its efforts for the remainder of the phase towards non-formal training, matching and business development with an even stronger focus on direct support to firms along with indirect business development services support. The OF and MSD remain instrumental in this regard and would be strengthened with resources from the non-focus outputs.

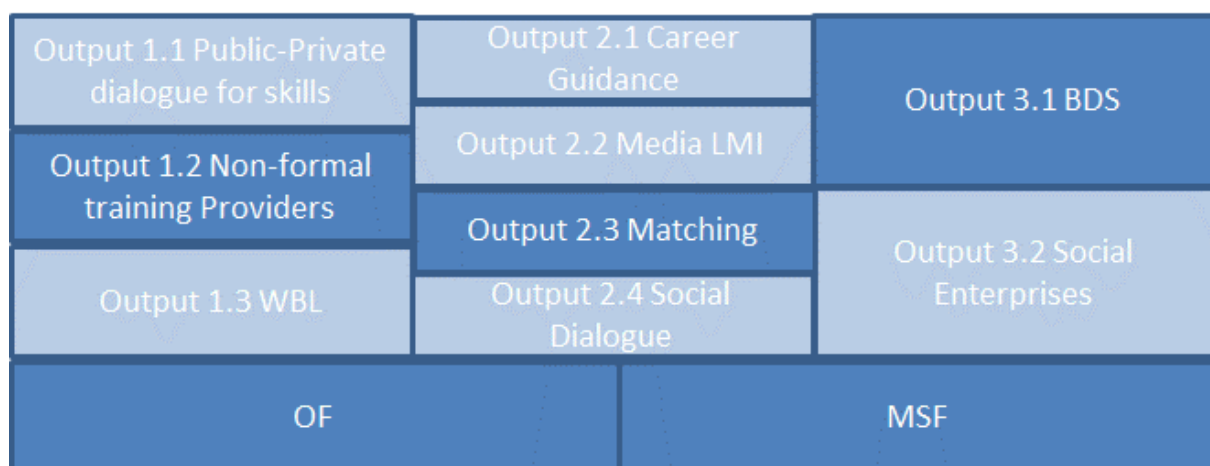


Figure 3: The EYE Box – Scenario 2 (dark blue = focus)

Evaluation of the scenario

Potential/Opportunities

The strength of this scenario lies in the fact that the focus would build on the strength of the project and that the logic would be much simpler, with a clear hierarchy of objectives. Furthermore, a focus on the private-sector led employment measures could help accelerate employment numbers, if resources are reallocated accordingly. Crowding-in in these activity lines is possible, however also depends on the development of the market. Last but not least, there is a quite positive degree of likelihood of sustainability in these interventions to be reached within Phase 2.

Challenges/Risks

The markets under the outputs 1.2 and 2.3 as well as under 3.1 are likely to be highly penetrated and exploited and covered by other donors. A limit of innovation seems to be reached within the project period. An even stronger focus on these outputs could lead to overserving the market and wrongly incentivising the market, jeopardising sustainability in the longer term.

The replanning and reallocation this would take is quite considerable, including challenges in reallocating staff to fields they do not suit or feel comfortable with.

There is an obvious challenge of sustainability in all VET-related parts and a reputational risk from leaving behind unfinished business.

Strategic relevance for the SDC and the Government of Kosovo

This scenario focuses on job-creation and job-matching (also by short training inputs). This partly meets the strategic priorities of offering more jobs in Kosovo; however it does not support the young state of Kosovo in building a strong and labour market-oriented skills development system; nor does it serve minorities and special needs groups in first place.

4.2.3 Scenario 3: Public-sector led employability focus

Description of the scenario

This scenario suggests an employability focus rather than employment and jobs focus as in scenarios 2 and 3. It also suggests focusing on the public-sector activities in order to have a more harmonised project set-up. Based on the results of this MTR, this scenario addresses the weaknesses of the project and aims to address them over the remaining life of the project.

Under this logic, the EYE project would therefore refocus its efforts for the remainder of the phase towards properly finishing off what has been started under outputs 1.1, 1.3 and 2.1 especially. The curriculum process reform would receive more power, the project would heavily invest in refocusing and safeguarding what has been started under WBL, including reaching an agreed approach to WBL among donors and the MEST (beyond the current administrative direction). Furthermore, the project would, under this logic, invest in a sustainable local or regional set-up for career guidance, and maybe initiate the development of central support functions, and it would continue to support public and private matching. The OF and MSD funds would remain instrumental in supporting strategic investments and in reaching the job

targets for the phase, and in strategically supporting activities under 3.1 and 1.2, which would however receive only reduced attention. Activities under 2.2, 2.4 and 3.2 would be stopped.

This scenario implies, however, that the project would need to considerably strengthen its internal VET resources and receive the needed backstopping support. If the SDC and EYE opt for such a scenario, they should consider having a PD or PM with a strong VET background.

Output 1.1 Public-Private dialogue for skills	Output 2.1 Career Guidance	Output 3.1 BDS
Output 1.2 Non-formal training Providers	Output 2.2 Media LMI	
Output 1.3 WBL	Output 2.3 Matching	Output 3.2 Social Enterprises
	Output 2.4 Social Dialogue	
OF		MSF

Figure 4: The EYE Box – Scenario 3 (dark blue = focus)

Evaluation of the scenario

Potential/Opportunities

A strengthened and strategically better-framed investment in the public-sector driven parts of EYE would certainly increase the chances of leaving behind better models which others – potentially also the SDC – could build on. It would also help avoid reputational damage.

Challenges/Risks

A refocusing on these elements would most probably result in lower employment numbers and therefore reduced targets and impact. There is also a considerable likelihood that the interventions will not achieve the target sustainability milestones within the remaining two years.

Strategic relevance for the SDC and the Government of Kosovo

Such an approach would continue to be in line with the SDC's priorities and the GoK strategic outline.

4.3 Recommendations

Strategic recommendations to SDC and EYE

Recommendation 1: We recommend to the SDC to close the EYE project at the end of the current phase.

We refer to the conclusions for the justification of this recommendation. With rapid decision making at SDC, the project has 19 months to complete its work. This is enough from our point of view and based on the planned activities and the results forecasting of EYE. However, the last year of project implementation would have to focus on capitalisation of results and learnings, not only on administrative project closure. Measures would have to be taken to assure that the project staff commits to their contract until the end of the project and that the projects is kept up and running until the end. If needed and justifiable, we consider it an option to add a short period for proper administrative closure, documentation and communication measures. Depending on the financial situation and planning, this could be designed as a no-cost extension or come with minimal costs only.

In making such a decision, it is important to demonstrate the continuation of SDC's commitment, as an important development partner of the Republic of Kosovo, and to start defining new ways of engagement from now, building on the EYE learnings, on the experience with other SDC project in the ENE domain, on other SDC projects in the region, and on other donor's interventions in Kosovo. This would allow SDC to build on the experience and create smooth grounds for a new engagement (or other modalities of support) that could start after EYE closes or soon thereafter.

Recommendation 2: We recommend to the SDC and the EYE project to agree on a hierarchy of priorities/goals and corresponding targets/results for the remainder of the phase, and hence to agree on one of the suggested scenarios.

While we recognise that any project has to accommodate some degree of conflict between goals, given the relatively short period of time until the end of the project, it is crucial that the SDC and EYE agree on a hierarchy of priorities/goals for the remainder of the phase, and hence on one of the strategic scenarios described. This should be reflected, as relevant, in resource reallocation and in the adjustment of corresponding targets/results.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the SDC examine a possible stronger involvement in vocational education and training, more focused on the local level and based on new modalities.

The VET sector, understood as a strategic investment in the development of qualified workforce and hence in the competitiveness and economic development of Kosovo, offers room for engagement for the SDC, given that the SDC enjoys a great reputation globally in this field and given that the donor landscape in VET has been more crowded than it currently is. However, such an engagement should be carefully evaluated and prepared, and possibly focused on the local level rather than relying on central-level activities, as these are crowded spaces and as there is more risk of stalemate. If it opts to develop a new project, the SDC should also consider appropriate new modalities for its engagement. These should not only include a careful assessment of the question with and through whom to implement. The SDC should also opt to follow a much more conditional approach and not hesitate to outline key requirements of Kosovo's institutions, and provide support based on their fulfilment, on an ongoing basis.

Operational recommendations to EYE

Recommendation 4: We recommend that Helvetas and MDA assure a smooth handover to the new project director, including a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the project director and the project manager, that are shared with the EYE team and the SDC.

A smooth handover is critical to guaranteeing a successful remainder of the phase and potential exit. The implementing consortium should give priority to, and strongly invest in, the best possible transition so as not to waste time and lose orientation. If the SDC opts to exit, a solution with the existing staff or backstopping should be considered instead of bringing in a new person. Once the new project director is chosen and based on the capacities of his or her profile, clear roles and responsibilities should be defined within the project management team.

Recommendation 5: Ensure lessons learnt, good practices and assets are identified, documented and shared with appropriate stakeholders. An updated cost-benefit analysis should be done and shared at the end of the phase.

While the project will most likely be absorbed in integrating a new leadership and achieving the challenging targets, it should already start to capitalise on the results achieved and the rich tacit knowledge within the team during 2019 and strengthen these efforts during 2020. Towards the end of the phase, EYE should compile a cost-benefit calculation for each of the relevant outputs, taking into account the actual resources (parts 1-4) used for the activities of each output.

Annex 1 Relevant resources

SDC

- Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Kosovo 2017 -2020
- List of ongoing ENE projects
- EYE Phase II credit proposal
- SDC policy paper: Vocational skills development: key to employment and income

EYE project documents and sources

- EYE Phase I, report of the external review (by Roel Hakemulder, March 2016)
- EYE Phase II Project Document 2017 -2020
- EYE Phase II Logframe 2017-2020
- EYE Yearly and Half yearly progress reports 2017, 2018
- EYE Yearly Plan of Operations 2019
- EYE intervention guides by Output
- EYE Monitoring and Evaluation data including expenditure analysis and jobs projections
- Skills Gap Analysis, 2017 (prepared by the American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo for EYE)
- Kosovo Consulting Market Survey, 2017 (prepared by UBO Consulting for EYE)
- Perceptions on VET summary reports, 2018 (prepared by UBO Consulting for EYE)

Online data sources

- ILO Kosovo country profile, ILOSTAT:
<https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx>
- Kosovo Labour Force Survey 2018: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/en/kosovo-agency-of-statistics/add-news/labour-force-survey-in-kosovo-2018>

Other sources

- LuxDev MTR report "Support to Vocational education and Training Reform in Kosovo", 2013
- National Development Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo, 2016.
- Draft ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION (MEST) NO_ / 2019 FOR THE DUAL EDUCATION SYSTEM - THE WORK BASED LEARNING IN VET INSTITUTIONS
- EYE Analysis of VET institutions involved in curricula development process
- Opportunity Fund documentations - including Concept Note and Proposal templates, infosheet, timeline overview.

Annex 2 MTR agenda / list of people met

Mon 18.3. (Jehona only)

TIME	ACTIVITY
14:00-17:00	Reading of 2018 report, intervention guides

Tue 19.3. (Jehona only)

TIME	ACTIVITY
10:00-11:00	Vushtrri - head of MED (confirmed) Afrim Namani
11:00-12:00	Vushtrri - VET School/Career Guidance Centre and WBL companies (confirmed) Meeting with Bashkim Kovaci - Director of VET school "Bahri Haxha" and Zehra Kovaci - Career center coordinator (Businesses confirmed: Autoservis Ridvani, DPZ"Vllezrit Bunjaku", Restaurant Shega)
	LUNCH
14:30-15:30	PRISHTINA CAREER CENTRE VISIT (confirmed) Ridvan Islami Udhëheqës i Qendrës Qendra për Këshillim në Karrierë Career Counselling Center

Wed 20.3. (Jehona only)

TIME	ACTIVITY
08:30-10:00	EYE MRM (confirmed) Meeting Muamer Niksic and Vlora Kastrati
10:00-11:00	Meeting with DEMOS (confirmed) Ertan Munoglu, Project Manager at DEMOS offices
11:00-12:00	PPSE (confirmed) Meeting Argjentina Grazhdani - Project director and Fisnik Recica- Project manager
	LUNCH
13:00-14:00	KIESA (confirmed) Nol Buzhala - Acting executive director
14:30-15:30	Meeting Koperativa (Confirmed) Arianit Dedi
17:00-19.00	MISSION TEAM PREP MEETING

Thu 21.3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
8:45-9:00	WALK TO OFFICE	All MTR team			
9:00-10:30	MISSION BRIEFING MEETING SDC Arjeta Lleshi SDC Katrin Ochsenbein SDC Patrick Etienne	All MTR team			
10:30-11:30	CONTINUATION OF MISSION BRIEFING INCL. EYE	All MTR team			

	Tim Sparkman, Project Director Albina Berisha, Project Manager				
11:30-12:30	MTR TEAM LUNCH	All MTR team			
13:00-14:00	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY Jehona Rexha - Head of vocational training department Shpetim Kalludra - acting head of labor market department	Franz/ Jehona	13:00-14:30	BUSINESS SERVICE PROVIDERS CONFIRMED: Group meeting 1) Gemb Shehu - Prishtina Consulting Group 2) Arion Rizaj - Human Power 3) Arben Gashi - Finacco 4) Myesere Hoxha - SIGMA BMC	Roman
14:30-16:00	MEST (confirmed) Arlinda Beka - Advisor Valbona Fetiu Mjeku - acting Head of VET division	Franz/ Jehona	15:00-16:00	SOCIAL ENTERPRISES SH.G.F. Krusha e Vogel Dile Prekpalaj	Roman
17:00-18:00	MDA MEETING (confirmed) Driton Dalipi - managing partner	Franz/ Jehona	16:00-17:00	LENS NGO - CONFIRMED VALMIR XHEMAJLI (EYE CONTACT PERSON) DRITON ZHUBI (LENS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR)	Roman
18:30-19:15	MTR TEAM WRAP UP	All MTR Team			

Fri 22.3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
9:00-10:30	EYE MGMT INTERVIEWS - PARALLEL Tim Sparkman - > Franz/Roman Albina Berisha - > Jehona	All MTR Team			
10:30	INTERVENTION MANAGERS "SKILLS" Majlinda Rizvanolli Lea Shllaku INTERVENTION MANAGERS "JOB MEDIATION" Dren Selimi Visar Rexha Valbona Rraci	Franz Jehona		INTERVENTION MANAGERS "PSD AND JOB CREATION" Albina Berisha Niklaus Waldvogel Drenusha Miftari Fatlinda Muiko	Roman
	Lunch				
14:00-17:00	EYE WORKSHOP	Franz/ Jehona		Company not working with EYE	Roman

	Looking backward: identifying strengths and achievements Looking forward beyond current phase			Meeting Zenel Dinaj, owner at DECON (confirmed)	
18.30	Dinner MTR team with Katrin (SDC)				

Sat 23.3.

15.00-19.00	MTR team Internal work session
19.00-22.00	Informal dinner with Erich Gutmann (INBAS) – Franz and Roman only.

Mon 25.3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
09:00-10:00 reschedule is confirmed	SOCIAL DIALOGUE D4D (CONFIRMED) Valeza Zogjani-Project Coordinator/Policy Researcher Gersi Gashi-Research Program Manager	Franz	10:00-11:30	Ferizaj region WBL Companies Group meeting with 6 companies providing WBL.	Roman/Jehona
10:30-11:30	VET DONORS - Group meeting Daniele Passalacqua- LuxDev - Chief Technical Advisor - confirmed Julia Becker and Edona Nahi - GIZ confirmed Albulena Zaimi - ADA confirmed	Franz	11:30-12:30	Visit VET School (confirmed) Director VET school "Zenel Hajdini"- Abdullah Imeri Career Center Coordinator-Prof. Hyzri Imeri Career Center Staff- Prof. Nafije Beqa Career Center staff Prof. Remzi Ademi	Roman/Jehona
11:30-12:30	Leonora Kusari - EBRD confirmed Artan Loxha - Empower USAID confirmed				
	LUNCH				
13:30-15:00	WBL Companies Prishtina <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aztech (confirmed), Muavi Rexhepi, HR department director Kivo - (confirmed) Ariel Shaban Altrade - Artan Ramaj (confirmed) Bonevet - Rina Fetahu - Chief Technology Officer (confirmed) 	Franz	13:30-15:00	PRIVATE TRAINING PROVIDERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEISTER (confirmed): Hysni Imeri - Founder and Diedon Llapjani- Instructor ECK, Labinot Bajgora, Coordinator (Confirmed) Cactus Education (confirmed) - VETON XHELILI - TRAINING DEPARTMENT MANAGER AUK TDI-Visar Jasiqi - Chief operation and 	Roman/Jehona

				outreach officer (confirmed) • JCODERS-ARTA SHEHU, CEO (confirmed)	
15:30-16:30	EYE MRM	Franz	15:00-16:00	TRAINING PROVIDERS NOT WORKING W EYE OR CROWDED-IN Group meeting Riinvest (confirmed) - Ali Sahin, Ph.D., Head of Computer Science and Software Engineering PBC Academy - Erblina Idrizi (confirmed) ICK - Shpend Lila (confirmed) Bit Academy (confirmed)- Korab Osmanaj and Albert Berisha	Roman/Jehona
17-18.30	Team Wrap-up		17-18.30	Team Wrap-up	
19.00	Informal Dinner with Dukagjin Pupovci, Kosova Education Centre	Franz Roman			

Tue 26.3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
8.30	leave by project car		8:55		
10:00-11:00	GJAKOVA Municipality Meeting with Flutura Kepuska	Franz/Jehona	10:00-11:00	SERBIAN BENEFICIARIES <i>TV MIR</i> , Mitrovica Nenad Radosavljevic,	Roman
			11:00-12:00	<i>LINK NGO</i> , Mitrovica Marko Rakic	
11:00-12:00	GJAKOVA VET SCHOOL "Nexhmedin Nixha"				
12:00-13:00	Meeting school Director Mr. Neshet Kepuska and Career Center Coordinator Mr. Leonard Shehu and WBL COMPANIES				
3 separate interviews					
	LUNCH				
15:00-16:30	BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATIONS Group meeting Kosovo Chamber of Commerce - Director, Berat Rukiqi (confirmed)	Franz/Jehona	14:00-15:30	RAE BENEFICIARIES Suad Butic from "NAIS" and Gezim Zeka from "Chicken Farm"	Roman

	American Chamber of Commerce Vllaznim Osmani - Kosovo Manufacturers Club (confirmed) Business Consultants Council (confirmed)-Jehona Lluka confirmed STIKK-IT association (confirmed) Vjollca Cavolli - Executive Director				
17:00-23.30	Team Wrap-up / De-briefing Preparation				

Wed 27.3.

TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO	TIME	ACTIVITY	WHO
Morning	Review team preparation of debriefing	All team			
11:00-12:30	DEBRIEFING MEETING SDC Arjeta Lleshi SDC Katrin Ochsenbein SDC Patrick Etienne Tim Sparkman, PD Albina Berisha, PM M&E Team	All team			
12:30 - 14:00	SDC and review team Lunch				
14:00-15:00	Team Wrap-up: take aways and organising report writing				