



Evaluation Summaries

Integrated approach to move Serbia forward towards the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme

Quick Facts

Countries: Serbia

Final Evaluation: May - June 2010

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Areas: Employment; Social Dialogue; Social Protection

Evaluation Management: DWT/CO Budapest

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Project End: June 2010

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Donor: Italy US\$ 997,163

Keywords: Decent work, Employment Policy; Social Dialogue; Labour Market; Governance; disabled worker, labour inspection, small enterprise development

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The *Integrated approach to move Serbia forward towards the Implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme* was carried out by the ILO Sub Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe under an innovative funding mechanism - the Regular Budget Supplementary Account (RBSA) which provided a one-off boost of resources to apply the core work of the ILO (building the policies and capacities designed to achieve

decent work). Six outcomes were chosen from the existing Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for 2008-2011 to be the objectives of the RBSA:

1. Building capacity in the Employment Department of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development for active employment policies
2. Promoting employment for vulnerable youth and persons with disabilities
3. Capacity building of labour administration and dispute settlement institutions
4. Increasing service value of employers' and workers' organisations to their members and capacity for social dialogue on key labour issues
5. Improving capacity of the Labour Inspectorate and the social partners in the implementation of labour law and OSH regulations
6. Making the social protection system more effective through well managed social security and effective labour and OSH inspections.

Originally, activities were exclusively for Serbia, but further consultation between the sub-regional office and ILO-HQ in Geneva led to the decision that, though still focussing the

activities primarily (and many of them exclusively) on Serbia, other countries in the region would be involved in some activities relevant to them in order to assist peer learning and foster networks between the social partners in Serbia and those in the other countries of the region.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the work done under the RBSA and the achievement of its planned milestones and indicators; and to record lessons learned and recommendations for the future, including any improvements in the RBSA mechanism itself.

The evaluation has been prepared for the benefit of ILO's tripartite constituents, other partners and beneficiaries in Serbia, other countries of the sub-region, the Government of Italy as the member nation of the ILO providing the extra funding for advancing the Serbian DWCP, the ILO management, specialists and administrators at the ILO sub-regional office Budapest including the ILO national co-ordinator in Belgrade, and ILO HQ Geneva.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation was based on desk research of documents, as provided by the ILO's Budapest office (including project documents, training materials, social partner reports, research studies, the proceedings of seminars and round tables), and field research (missions to Budapest/Hungary and Belgrade/Serbia for interviews). The methodology used for the evaluation involved prior document study, leading to identifying the questions to put to the persons to be interviewed and triangulating all data received. The draft findings were presented at a half-day verification workshop in Belgrade on 25th June 2010.

Most limitations of the evaluation derive from those of the Programme itself and relate to the slow release of funds at the beginning of the project and delayed decisions and deferment of programme deadlines with the result that outcomes were less susceptible to evaluation.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation team concludes that the objective of the RBSA in giving a concentrated resource boost to strengthen and equip the core employment and labour relations institutions of the Republic of Serbia has been successful. Below is an outline of the main achievements:

- ***Strengthening the capacity of the MERD and the National Employment Service to implement active employment policies***

The RBSA "project" focussed on the new Employment Promotion Law gazetted in 2009, and the capacity of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development (MERD) to promote active labour market policies. This involved assisting in the functional design of the new employment department of the Ministry and providing knowledge management, staff training and other HR development inputs.

As a result of targeted assistance the Employment Department was now on the right track of enhanced employment policy delivery, having moved (as a result of the functional analysis carried out under the project) from inadequate job descriptions, inefficient ad hoc operational decisions and insufficient orientation of new staff.

- ***Promoting access to employment for persons with disabilities***

The training of trade unions and the Serbian Association of Employers (SAE) on employment of persons with disabilities was the first project of this kind carried out in Serbia. It significantly increased the capacity of workers and employers organizations in Serbia, the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the National Employment Service to implement employment policy for persons with disabilities.

ILO's involvement gave legitimacy to the Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities. In the view of the Serbian Association of Employers, "the project promoted the work of the SAE and enhanced the association's

visibility among employers, potential SAE members”.

One of the major achievements was to change perceptions among trade union members and employers about persons with disabilities, particularly their ability to carry out work. As a result of the project, UGS Nezavisnost Trade Union Federation established a division for persons with disabilities, which aims to connect occupational safety and health issues with disability as a result of injury at workplace and to cooperate with civil society organizations in focusing on persons with disabilities.

According to the Centre for Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities at the National Employment Service, “Employers are now showing much more interest in employing persons with disabilities than a year ago, when the law was adopted ... this is the direct result of the training and awareness raising activities carried out under the project.”

- ***Building capacity of the government and social partners***

From anecdotal evidence, it was obvious that decisions are being made more quickly and with more certainty than earlier. The officers of all social partners and agencies that were involved in the programme commented that they had resources (manuals, notes, contacts) to ensure that they could continue to carry out their duties with greater efficiency. New laws and regulations are now in place or pending and each agency has access to more trained staff. Within the Government this is particularly true of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development.

Training activities for women-members of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia (CATUS) resulted in greater confidence and competence of women negotiators. Women’s position at TU branch level was strengthened.

The Serbian Association of Employers (SAE) was equipped to provide a range of new services and take action including enhanced social dialogue on a number of key legal and policy issues. Particularly impressive was the vastly enhanced public image of the SAE. The

large number of activities carried out under the RB SA created several news stories. The SAE used this opportunity to good advantage with a wide range of policy statements and information about employer issues. In all types of media in 2007 there had been 342 media mentions of SAE; in 2008 this rose to 1409 and in 2009 reached just under 5000.

- ***Enhanced capacity of labour inspections and social partners to implement labour law and OSH regulations***

The Government is developing a strategy and is moving towards the ratification of Convention 187. The employers’ association adopted OSH as one of its two principal services to be developed for members under the RB SA and this was reflected by significant changes in the behaviour of employers on safety issues. The SAE noticed that there are an increasing number of employers interested in attributing the role of risk assessors to one of their employees, as intended by the Law (instead of paying agencies to assess risks in companies).

Another positive development as a result of ILO engagement in the project is the Government of Serbia’s introduction of Serbian OSH Day, which took place on the 28th April 2010 for the first time. With respect to their own capacities, all the partners noticed improvements. CATUS trained 100 of its members in OSH law, the role of labour inspection and the role of collective agreements. In the trade union UGS Nezavisnost, 150 members were trained to further educate their members in the field. The seminars were aimed to reach the members who work in production and as a result the number of reported injuries increased.

- ***Formulation of the social security policy through technical assistance and social dialogue***

The project succeeded in raising the knowledge of social partners to the same level on the key issues of a pension system. It introduced to Serbian parties different types of social security system reforms carried out in

the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The project remained focused on outlining different policy options, without aiming to point at a single preferred choice.

The special value of the project was its technical side: the pension modelling for policy advisers was assessed highly by all participants.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. ILO, with the Serbian partners, needs to develop a set of simple objectives and feasible activities to guarantee the retention and development of capacity built up under the RBSA.
2. Support is also needed for a better process of dialogue among government and the social partners; in particular six-monthly meetings - with ILO Budapest involvement - should monitor how all three partners are moving towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in their dealings with each other, including sensitive but honest analysis of where opportunities have been gained or lost.
3. While the ILO Budapest office does not have an enterprise specialist, the next stage of some programmes advanced under the RBSA is likely to need inputs on individual or social enterprise development. This is particularly true for persons with disabilities, but also for women and young people. ILO should evaluate gaps in existing enterprise development programmes in Serbia and identify where it can assist its partners towards these goals.
4. Deficiencies in the availability of credit may also require ILO inputs on social finance and forms of mutual savings and loans systems.
5. The Serbian Association of Employers needs to benefit from ILO expertise in advocacy to help it contribute to an enabling business environment in Serbia particularly by evaluating the impact of current and projected regulation on the cost of doing business in Serbia, and by setting up a system of briefings to journalists to bring depth and breadth to media coverage of business issues.

Important lessons learned

1. The model of a CTA staying on as an in-house advisor-trainer within the Ministry maximizes the skills investment that had been made through the more structured training activities. The slow phasing out of that role, the expert being away for weeks and then months at a time until a final cut-off date, has the potential to lessen the dependency on the expert.
2. Parallel awareness and training events for all social partners and built around a particular piece of new legislation or policy mutually reinforces the capacity of the key partners whose co-operation is vital to the effectiveness and speed of implementation of these new measures.
3. While most of the agencies interviewed were cautious about their ability now to run their activities on their own (partly perhaps because such an admission would work against further external assistance), several observers including the ILO specialists judged that something like a quantum leap has been made, and this was confirmed in most situations for the evaluation team by the commitment and competence of a number of key managers within the partners.
4. However this competency is spread thinly, is vulnerable to staff turnover and to the ease with which an inherited culture of distrust can be triggered. All parties need to find ways to build trust, and the leader in that has to be the government. Long term policies of advocacy need to be in place for the bureaucracies and the politicians both those in present positions of leadership, (and those who influence them) and those with potential for leadership in the future.
5. The ILO can bring considerable authority to the social partners of a country by the provision of world-class experts, by the local production of quality information tools, and by the facilitation of international forums to make available other countries' experience while validating much of that country's own, but local agencies must develop their own advocacy expertise and not expect the ILO to be an advocate on their behalf.