

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The overall purpose of the IPA 2010 project on Human Resources Development in Albania was to improve the functioning of the labour market and the quality of human capital. The project strategy centred on three interlinked components aiming at: i) **modernizing the State Labour Inspectorate**; ii) **modernizing the National Employment Service**; and iii) **reforming the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system**.

### Summarising the main impacts of this Action, it can be stated that it has contributed to:

1. a sound and comprehensive policy framework for better jobs and higher skills together with reinforced working conditions, as expressed by the adoption of the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020 and submission of the Occupational Safety and Health Action Plan 2015-2016;
2. a legal framework aligned to the EU Directives and Guidelines for Occupational Safety and Health, for Vocational Education and Training governance and its operational mechanisms and for the Employment Promotion Programmes and NES modernisation, expressed by the 21 legal acts on OSH (Directives and regulations), on the amendments to the VET Law and on the preparation of 21 by-laws for operationalising the transfer of competences over VE schools and NAVETQ from MoES to MoSWY;
3. a strong and better prepared Public Administration, through the delivery of training to labour inspectors, NES staff, as well as others from NAVETQ;
4. a series of innovative models implemented, such as the new Service model delivery and the Quality Assurance mechanisms for Public Employment Services, the piloting of the Recognition of Prior Learning mechanisms, implement Tracer Systems on TVET providers, the institutional reorganization of NAVETQ;
5. the expansion of TVET programmes, namely through the four frame curricula designed; the modernization of public services through ICT systems, the raising of awareness on OSH, TVET and Employment topics;
6. Social reinforcement of Dialogue, not only with specific activities involving the National Labour Council members, but also with a continuous cooperation undergoing with social partners on different outputs of the project;
7. the establishment of regional partnerships and cooperation, mainly through the bilateral agreements established between Labour Inspectorates
8. the viability of evidence based policy-making processes, using the findings and recommendations of studies and surveys;
9. the use of participatory, lively and widely approaches, based on several consultation workshops, validation seminars, national and regional conferences, which have involved more than 1500 participants over the project's lifetime, in a tripartite basis.

Additionally to all these developments and improvements in human capital, other “collaborative dynamics” can be mentioned as outputs of this Action. As for example, the strengthening of cooperation between businesses and public employment services through the establishment of public-private partnerships for the opening of the new offices. A steady cooperation between the IPA 2010 project and other international agencies was established and encouraged. Furthermore, effective partnerships with social partners were established, namely for the promotion of OSH conditions at work and for the development of new VET curricula and standards.

The IPA 2010 Project met the entirety of the planned objectives and goals, and reached the expectations of the main beneficiaries and partners far beyond the initial plans. All 34 planned outputs were completed, contributing for the achievement of the specific objectives of the three technical components. ILO gives thus evidence of being an effective and constructive partner of its constituents - the Government of Albania and the social partners. Thus, the implementation arrangements made by the European Commission demonstrated to become very effective and efficient.



### Impacts identified from the independent evaluation carried out are the following:

**Component 1** on *Modernization of the State Labour Inspectorate* will most probably have less measurable socio-economic impact as the legislative changes brought by this component will need to be further consolidated by other structural changes. In spite of the important progress in improvement of the OSH legislation some pre-conditions (e.g. awareness on OSH, earmarked budget, inter-institutional cooperation etc.) necessary for the continuity of progress in practical implementation of OSH measures are not in place.

**Component 2** on *Modernization of the National Employment Service* which created the premises for increasing the match between labour supply and demand will result in a better functioning of the labour market and a reduction of social inclusion gaps in the country. In very practical terms this component proved so far a stronger policy and institutional impact than a socio-economic impact. In order for the socio-economic impact to occur the country needs more structural changes to be done in a strategic and sustainable manner.

**Component 3** on *VET Reform* aimed at systemic changes which were largely met within the frame of the project's objectives. The emerging impact of the systemic changes can be defined as a contribution to an emerging increased availability of a skilled labour force.

### Main good practices identified from the independent evaluation carried out are the following:

1. The project has developed a wide and solid partnership with relevant national and international stakeholders, which may have increased the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions beyond the limits of the project.
2. A project that aims at implementing a systemic change needs to have a coordination body to ensure cooperation among the stakeholders, interests and agendas. The project Steering Committee provided a good forum for sharing information and ideas, as well as for planning joint actions.
3. The project's high level of quality and transparency (including a well-structured and rich in information website<sup>1</sup>) built a high level of credibility and mobilized many resources around its wide scope.

### Main recommendations from the independent evaluation carried out are the following:

1. There is a strong need for the Government to find a **better balance between the national and donors' agenda** in the continuation of the employment and VET reform process. There has to be a higher level of integration with the economic strategy of the country and more sequencing of the reform. At the same time, the Government has to be encouraged in **making progress in increasing its capacity for sound policy analysis and for rigorous data collection and analysis** in order to ensure real time and evidence based monitoring of the progress.
2. For the next steps of the reform the Government will have to consider more in depth the **reduction in gender skills gap to increase women's employability**. Also, **other vulnerable groups** (e.g. minorities, persons with disabilities, rural population, formally convicted persons etc.) **have to be addressed** in order to ensure their inclusion on the labour market.
3. ILO may consider for future projects a **stronger focus on social inclusion for the interventions aiming at reforming employment services**. Also, ILO may **consider the exit strategies in the earlier stages of the projects** in order to increase the national ownership and sustainability of the respective interventions. This may involve a stronger message to the beneficiaries to increase their commitment to move from beneficiaries of international funding to beneficiaries of transfer of competences allowing them to perform functions independent of international assistance.
4. The **development of internship programmes need to be considered by MoSWY in cooperation with social partners**; providing incentives may increase the attractiveness of the vocational education. This has to be combined with more efforts in raising the awareness on credible opportunities offered by the labour market. Nevertheless, in the process of getting inspiration from functional dual VET systems that are found in EU member states the national dual system should be designed in a realistic manner in such a way that it will be adjusted to the country social and economic context.
5. In order to ensure the consolidation of employment and VET reform the Government will have to **strengthen the capacity of the social partners in the design, monitoring and evaluation of VET policies and programmes**. Also, policy coherence and coordination across ministries needs to be improved and the **understanding on what is involved in the European approach to employment and VET reform will need to be increased**.

On the whole it can be stated that the reform of the vocational education and training system, the promotion of employment opportunities and the improvement of the working conditions are some of the highest priorities on the policy agenda of the Albanian Government. Further technical assistance is needed to increase the capacity of NAVETQ, the NES and the SILSS in this regard in the upcoming years, as envisaged in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills.

With the closure of this IPA 2010 project in January 2015, it would be recommendable that a second phase of a technical assistance project on HRD would start, in order to avoid gaps in the assistance provided and to answer positively to the identified areas of technical cooperation. It would also assure sustainability of the achieved results as well as continuity of intervention in the country's structural and ambitious reform path to EU accession.

**Duration:** September 2011-January 2015

**Implementing agency:** International Labour Organization (Decent Work Team for Central and Eastern Europe - Country Office)

**Beneficiaries:** Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and Ministry of Education and Sports

**Contracting Authority:** European Union Delegation to Albania

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ipa-hrd.al>