

# Youth Employment Portfolio Assessment

*submitted to the Embassy of Switzerland  
in Bosnia and Hercegovina*

Final Version

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AC	Assessment and certification
BiH	Bosnia and Hercegovina
CD&TID	Curricula and test items development
CNC	Computerized Numerical Control
EBRD	European Bank of Reconstruction and Development
HSI	Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
JC	Job Club
JPD	Job profile development
M4P	Making Markets Work for the Poor
MM	Market Makers
RARS	Regional Development Agency of the Republika Srpska
RDA	Regional Development Agencies
RS	Republika Srpska
SDC	Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency
SERDA	Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency
SfJ	Skills for Jobs
TD	Training delivery
TNA	Training needs analysis
VET	Vocational education and training
YEP	Youth Employment Project

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Markus Maurer and Jasmina Andric

## **Executive summary**

### ***Portfolio and the mandate of the review***

SDC's Youth Employment Portfolio in Bosnia and Hercegovina consists of three projects that aim at reducing unemployment among youth. Each of these three projects addresses one specific dimension of youth employment: The Skills for Jobs (SfJ) project focuses on the *supply* of individuals with adequate skills and motivation to engage in the labour market, whereas Market Makers (MM) aims to promote the *demand* from the labour market (particularly private sector companies) for skilled personnel. The Youth Employment Project (YEP), finally, has the objective to improve *intermediation* processes that link supply and demand for skilled labour.

The present assessment had the mandate to a) look at the portfolio's overall effectiveness, to b) define ways for improved cooperation among the three projects and to c) suggest potential avenues for the Youth Employment Project (YEP), whose second phase is coming to a close. It is based on information gathered through desk study and fieldwork. The two consultants reviewed available documents from the portfolio's three projects (Youth Employment Project, Skills for Jobs and Market Makers) as well as further documents, such as policy documents, development strategies and research reports. Fieldwork, whose main component consisted of semi-structured interviews, was conducted by the two reviewers from September 14 to 19, 2014.

### ***Key findings***

With its Youth Employment Portfolio, consisting of three projects with – compared to other projects in BiH – a relatively moderate budget, SDC achieved considerable impact, both with regard to direct beneficiaries and with regard to systemic changes with the potential to affect the lives of many more individuals. Clearly, the Youth Employment Project (YEP) has, so far, produced the most impressive results, taking into account the innovations it introduced at PES, the high number of beneficiaries and its important role in policy dialogue.

Given their shorter history, the other two projects have achieved a comparatively smaller impact, particularly in view of systemic changes. There is, however, considerable potential for satisfactory aggregate, systemic impact for both projects. For SfJ, now entering its second phase, it will be important to critically analyse how the project can spread the model developed in the first phase to many other parts of the country and how the model could be used for public VET schools, when it does not seem to be sufficiently rooted in the training centres it has supported so far.

An obvious challenge of the portfolio is the *lack of systematic cooperation* between the three projects which all run as separate endeavours, basically oriented towards the same overall objective but with different foci and approaches. The lacking cooperation between the projects at the management level is also being reflected by a lack of interaction between project partners at the local level, although interventions areas are in fact overlapping.

### ***Recommendations***

#### ***Improved collaboration***

- SDC has to increase its leverage in *portfolio governance* in order to maximise overall impact. This will also entail the allocation of *more temporal resources* to the strategic steering of the three projects.

- In order to better understand the overall effectiveness of all activities implemented under the umbrella of the Youth Employment Portfolio, a *portfolio monitoring system* should be introduced that is designed and implemented by external resource persons. The portfolio monitoring system could play a role as a tool of *formative evaluation*.
- Instead of external evaluations that focus on individual projects, *external evaluations* would need to encompass the *entire portfolio*.
- A stronger *corporate identity* of the projects as being part of one portfolio with one core objective (*reduction of youth unemployment*) needs to evolve. It could be facilitated by common workshops (moderated by external resource persons), a portfolio monitoring system and references to the entire portfolio on each project website.

#### *Design of YEP's third phase*

- Given the impressive results achieved in the last few years, we strongly recommend to continue the project with a third phase.
- The core of the project should focus on the country-wide implementation of the processes established at the two model PES offices in the second phase. Thereby, ways need to be found that the reform process can evolve also without considerable infrastructural development.
- Capacity building of PES staff will continue to be very important. It should, however, focus more strongly on the skills dimension of counselling, i.e. on the analysis of training needs of unemployed people, as well as on improving mediation processes. An option to consider would be to develop a national competence centre for youth employment that provides training to PES staff from all over BiH or even from neighbouring countries.
- At the local level, PES offices should be supported to more actively cooperate with employers as well as with training centres. The synergies with the two other projects should be used.
- YEP should help public PES in BiH to find ways to broaden the set of labour market measures even in smaller cantons. One option here would be to convince cantons to pay measures implemented in other cantons (both by public and private providers).
- Policy dialogue through the Youth Employment Forum needs to be continued. However, it will be important to strengthen ownership by stakeholders from BiH, in particular from the higher levels of the public authorities (state/entity/cantonal). The latter can be facilitated by continued capacity development at all levels.

#### *Skills for Jobs*

- The reviewers propose to carefully analyse the achievements of the first phase, before activities are expanded under phase 2.

#### *Market Makers*

- The project needs to ponder on its activities in the field of skills development, particularly with regard to the IT sector. A serious analysis of how skills for this sector could be developed on a much larger scale would be needed, the results of which might lead to stronger cooperation with Skills for Jobs.

#### *Improving network with competence centres in youth employment*

- There are some aspects of the Swiss approach to youth employment which are of interest to SDC's Youth Employment Portfolio in BiH. The orientation towards specific target groups as well as the inter-cantonal market for active labour market services are particularly worthwhile.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The mandate of this assessment

This report presents the findings of a mandate by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) office in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to assess its Youth Employment Portfolio that consists of three separate projects with the common objective to reduce youth unemployment in the country. The assessment is based on a ToR (see Annex 1) that has asked the reviewers to a) look at the portfolio's overall effectiveness, to b) define ways for improved collaboration among the three projects and to c) suggest potential avenues for the Youth Employment Project (YEP), whose second phase is coming to a close. Though the reviewers were asked to look into the effectiveness of the three specific projects, the review cannot be compared with a conventional evaluation that would need to aim at gathering much more quantitative and qualitative data in order to be able to assess to which degree the objectives of a specific project had been reached. The focus of this review was much more on the portfolio as a whole and on potentials for better cooperation between the three projects.

The findings presented here are based on information gathered through desk-study and fieldwork. The two consultants reviewed available documents from the portfolio's three projects (Youth Employment Project, Skills for Jobs and Market Makers) as well as further documents, such as policy documents, development strategies and research reports. In addition, websites of projects, project partners and of other important stakeholders were accessed.

Fieldwork by the two consultants was conducted from September 14 to 19, 2014. Its main component consisted of semi-structured interviews with members of project teams and with their partners and beneficiaries, as well as with other important stakeholders. Some of the interviews were with individuals, others with a whole group.<sup>1</sup> A further component of fieldwork consisted of visits to premises whose equipment was funded by the projects. In total, 11 project partners were interviewed (i.e. YEP: 6; SfJ: 3; MM: 2). Some of the interviews with project partners were also attended by Reto Nigg, regional advisor in business administration attached to the Swiss Embassy in BiH, who was interested to accompany the mission in the context of a training programme that he's currently following.

### 1.2 Background on the labour market and skills in BiH

BiH is a country with a complex political-administrative structure that is characterised by two entities (i.e. the Republic of Srpska and the Federation BiH), the latter of which is further divided into ten cantons. Though the political climate in the country is considered to be tense by many, the population is even more worried by the critical economic situation in the country, particularly since the financial crisis. Sluggish economic development affects most people by lacking access to jobs: in fact, high unemployment has been a key challenge of the labour market for almost the last two decades. But it clearly grew in the last years: According to latest statistics, 28% of all people at working age are unemployed. With an unemployment rate of 63.1 percent, young persons are particularly affected.<sup>2</sup>

Policy makers are aware that unemployment is one of the current key problems in BiH, and it is for this reason that the Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Development Strategy 2010-2014 put a strong emphasis on job growth as a key condition for the future development of

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<sup>1</sup> The programme of the mission can be found in Annex 2. One further interview was conducted in Zurich, with an external consultant of the Skills for Jobs project.

<sup>2</sup> BiH Progress Report 2013, issued by the EU.

BiH as a whole, as it is only with employment that individuals have access to a decent income.<sup>3</sup> The government's strife for job creation is also supported by a number of bi- and multilateral development agencies, one of which is SDC.

The high unemployment rate is certainly a reflection of the weak economy, whose problems consist of overburdening taxation, lacking infrastructure and support services, the non-membership in the European Union, much of which is particularly hindering foreign direct investment (FDI) to enter the country.<sup>4</sup> One further barrier for stronger economic development in the country is the lack of skills that are in line with labour-market needs. Populist education policies have constantly lowered barriers to higher education, resulting in graduates with occupational aspirations that cannot be met by the economic reality in the country. Furthermore, the country's vocational education and training (VET) system is still based on a structure that was built up in a planned state economy, where VET schools prepared the workforce of state industries that were therefore also willing to cooperate with training institutions. Today, these VET schools – as well as universities with vocationally-oriented programmes – suffer from inadequate infrastructure, staff with lacking practical experience and, particularly, from the fact that most of their programmes rather reflect the profiles of the existing teaching staff than the skill needs in the economy. Firms are also not sufficiently investing into the skills of their existing employees – and they are even less willing to invest into the skills of new ones.

According to law, all unemployed people need to register with the Public Employment Services (PES), through which they are also provided with social and health insurance coverage. Because of the high number of unemployment and the lack of infrastructure and trained personnel, PES has merely acted as an administration agency for social insurance services for long. Thus, no time could be devoted to helping unemployed to find a way into the labour market and to counsel them how it would be possible to acquire additional skills that are needed for this purpose.

## 2 Description of the intervention

### 2.1 SDC's economy and employment portfolio in BiH

Economy and employment (E&E) is one of four domains in which SDC is particularly active in BiH. According to SDC's results logic for this domain, all E&E activities are aimed at a stronger labour market integration of young women and men and – thus – at a reduction of youth unemployment in the country. SDC thereby intends to produce specific effects both on the target group (i.e. increased employability and better access to gainful and decent job opportunities) but also on the system's performance.

In the E&E domain, SDC is currently working through a portfolio that consists of three projects. These three projects focus on the three key dimensions of youth employment, i.e. (1) on the *supply* of individuals with adequate skills and motivation to engage in the labour market (Skills for Jobs, SfJ), (2) on the *demand* from the labour market (particularly private sector companies) for skilled personnel (Market Makers, MM) and (3) on the *intermediation* processes that link supply and demand for skilled labour (Youth Employment Project, YEP).

Though interlinked in terms of their objectives, the three projects have been designed individually and are not governed by a formal overarching portfolio management that is supposed to decide on the specific activities of the three projects. Clearly, the portfolio has

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<sup>3</sup> The problem of youth unemployment is recognized in the employment strategies of both entities.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Economy Rankings, BiH is ranked as number 131.

evolved over time and as a result of institutional learning by SDC, which at first decided to improve mediation processes (YEP), then secondly aimed at improving the skills of job seekers (SfJ) and then, thirdly, started to focus on the creation of employment in sectors with potential for economic growth (MM).

In the following, the three projects will be briefly described.

## **2.2 Youth Employment Project**

SDC's Youth Employment Project (YEP) was launched in October 2008 and has been, since its inception, implemented by the German consulting company GOPA. In contrast to the other two projects of the portfolio, the key characteristic of this intervention has always been its aim to improve services that support young people to enter the labour market. During the first phase, YEP was working with six pilot secondary schools that introduced a concept of preparing final years students for employment. The pilot methodology introduced to the schools was expected to be further developed by a separate project<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, private employment services were strengthened and three so called Job Clubs (JC) were introduced in cooperation with PES offices.

For the second phase, the project activities stopped their previous work with schools and strongly reduced its support to private employment services.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the project began to support the public PES to render their services for unemployed young women and men more effective and to back measures that would raise public awareness on the issue of youth unemployment. The concept of the JCs was now introduced at 25 PES offices all over the country.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, a core ambition of YEP's second phase was to fundamentally reform the processes at the PES offices, whose staff has always been mainly busy with administering the social benefits (mainly health insurance coverage) of the unemployed. Therefore, the project established two pilot offices with newly designed, more effective processes of job counselling and intermediation that are to serve as role models for further replication to all offices in the Federation BiH as well as in the Republika Srpska (RS). The key of the new model is that selected officers are now allowed to devote more time to the more motivated unemployed who are willing to actively look for jobs, whereas other staff cater to the more passive ones and has to ensure that their right on insurance is being guaranteed. In addition to its work with PES, YEP increased policy dialogue in its second phase. The Youth Employment Forum certainly is the project's core instrument in this regard that brings together stakeholders from different domains and has become an important platform to discuss initiatives to reduce youth unemployment in the country. Finally, YEP decided in 2013 to provide support to different projects which developed active labour measures. Through this initiative, YEP also became active in the domain of vocational skills development, particularly with a view for self-employment and start-up of new businesses.

## **2.3 Skills for Jobs**

The Skills for Jobs (SfJ) (or: Prilika Plus) project started its first phase in 2010 that comes to an end – after a no-cost extension – in the second half of 2014 and was expected to go in its second phase in October 2014. The project is being implemented by the Agency for SME development in the RS in Banja Luka, which is an agency established by the RS government and had had – as its representative openly admits – no professional expertise in skills

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<sup>5</sup> UNDP YERP Project

<sup>6</sup> During the second phase of the project, approx. 300 young persons were employed through private agencies. Since, however, the agencies were choosing the "best candidates" only, the contracts with these agencies were phased out.

<sup>7</sup> Job Clubs are targeting the young women and men who haven't found a job for six months, they are offered three weeks long training and further counselling services, all related to personal presentation, CV writing, job seeking.

development prior to its engagement in SfJ. The agency has a liaison office in Sarajevo (formerly also one in Mostar). The office in Banja Luka is fully responsible for the administrative and financial aspects of the project, but the two offices (Banja Luka and Sarajevo) are equally responsible for planning, implementing and reporting on the project activities.

According to the logframe for its first phase, SfJ contrasts with most other donor-financed interventions in VET in three important ways: firstly, it focuses on improving “employability of job-seekers and the productivity of low-skilled employees [...] as a result of systemic changes in BiH’s non-formal and adult education sector”. In fact, most other donor projects in VET have exclusively focused on formal VET and left aside more non-formal approaches to skills development.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the project thus starts from the assumption that the improvement of skills development in BiH must come from outside the formal education and training system and has to be based on the skill needs as perceived by employers. The project therefore aims at developing a new quality label that signals to employers “the quality of training delivery”. As the new label should be awarded by a trusted entity, the project, already at an early stage, envisioned to strongly collaborate with *Chambers of Commerce* (CoC) (both at the entity and cantonal level) which have been considered to be in strong contact with the private sector. Thirdly, the project, in its first phase, mainly worked with private training centres as SDC considers them to provide more relevant services and to be more autonomous to select those occupations that are of relevance to the labour market.

Given the ambition to create a new quality label for training outside the formal VET system, the thematic core of the SfJ project became the so called Prilika Plus training model that encompasses five different steps.<sup>9</sup> These steps characterise an approach to skills training that puts emphasis both on labour market relevance as well as on providing access to a recognised certificate. During the project’s first phase, SfJ supported activities related to all these five steps. As SDC had expected project implementers to design project activities in a highly participative manner, considerable time was dedicated to exploring skill needs of diverse economic sectors (TNA).<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, a call for tenders was organised that invited interested parties to submit proposals for training centres whose development would be funded by SfJ. Based on an analysis of industry skill needs as well as an overall assessment of the submitted offers, the project, in cooperation with SDC, selected eight training centres (one of which is a public VET school) that were to provide training programmes in a total of 21 different occupations.<sup>11</sup> What is important, in this context, is the fact that most training centres were established in response to the call for tenders, with only a few existing providers that had mainly trained the existing workforce of specific firms. For all selected occupations, job profiles were developed (JPD), employing the DACUM method, in the use of which different stakeholders (including representatives from CoC) were trained. Job profiles were then taken as a basis for curricula and test items (CD&TID) that were developed by local experts from the respective sectors. The TCs then developed the so called “executive training delivery plans”, based on occupational profiles and curricula.

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<sup>8</sup> Particularly prominent has been the EU’s VET System Reform projects (implemented from 2002-2009 in 3 phases), see e.g. [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/13DE66C4FED34DBFC12579D6005E5C31/\\$file/BA%20VET%20reform%20impa ct%20assessment.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/13DE66C4FED34DBFC12579D6005E5C31/$file/BA%20VET%20reform%20impa ct%20assessment.pdf). [25.11.2014].

<sup>9</sup> The five steps are the following: 1. Training needs analysis (TNA); 2. Job profile development (JPD); 3. Curricula and test items development (CD&TID); 4. Training delivery (TD); 5. Assessment and certification (AC).

<sup>10</sup> The method used in this context was the Participatory Market Chain Approach, which had been previously applied in SDC projects for the market development for agricultural commodities.

<sup>11</sup> Though the project management states that training has been conducted in 21 occupations, data made available to the reviewers includes only 13 (i.e. CNC Basics; CNC Operator in metal; CNC Operator in wood; Cook; Interior designer; Manufacturer and installer of PVC and aluminium joinery; Metal Varnishing; Painter; Shoemaker; Vegetable greenhouse production; Waiter; Welder; Wood Varnishing).

Though it would have been envisaged by the implementers that the training certificate would be awarded by a recognised authority, notably by the CoC, this aim was only achieved in some of the training centres.

Phase 2, which was set to start on October 1, 2014, will have the same objectives as phase 1 and plans to expand the use of the Prilika Plus model in many more occupations and in the entire country. Furthermore, the project intends to support systemic changes not only within the non-formal VET system but also in its formal part and therefore plans to more strongly cooperate with public VET schools which are engaged in initial VET. Furthermore, the project will more strongly involve employers' associations (in addition to the CoC).

## 2.4 Market Makers

The Market Makers project started its first phase in May 2013 that is expected to last until April 2017. It is implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) in collaboration with Posao.ba, a private employment agency that is based in Sarajevo and was one of the project partners in YEP's first phase. MM has, similar to the other two projects in the portfolio, the ultimate goal of improving "access to gainful and decent job opportunities for young women and men" (*impact*) and has the project-specific ambition that the "private sector in supported markets expands and invests into job creation" (*outcome*). One of the first economic sectors that was supposed to be supported was the IT sector, with the two other sectors decided upon during the implementation of the project. Every sector has been supposed to be mainly supported, at least during the first project phase, only in one geographical area (in the Federation BiH: two cantons; RS: entire entity).

In order to contribute to economic expansion and job creation in selected sectors, the project envisages the following three outputs:

- More service providers offer better and needed support to the private sector in selected markets;
- The policy and regulatory framework is more conducive for business investment and growth in selected markets;
- Regional Development Agencies play a strategic role in identifying and facilitating development in markets with growth potential.

Given the instability of project management in the first couple of months, most of the achievements were reached since October 2013, when a new project manager finally took office. Since then, two additional economic sectors (tourism and food production/processing) have been selected, and the first activities related to all three sectors were rolled out. Every activity of the programme is being executed in strong collaboration with those RDAs, in which selected economic sectors are supported through the project.<sup>12</sup>

The approach to private sector development used by the project is M4P, which is a generic approach to market development that has become very prominent in development cooperation and is the starting point of many of SDC's interventions in the economy and employment domain. The approach strongly emphasises the need for careful analysis of the a) institutions and b) services and infrastructure that support the functioning of specific markets. MM clearly has the ambition that this perspective on market development could be firmly established as an approach to economic development within the RDAs. So far, an analysis based on M4P was conducted for the IT sector, resulting in the key finding that the

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<sup>12</sup> IT sector: focus on Sarajevo Canton (through SERDA); food sector: focus on Tuzla Canton (through NERDA); tourism sector: focus on Republika Srpska (through RARS) and on the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton (through REDAH). In contrast to initial plans, representatives of RDAs are based in the Market Makers project office. The project considers this to be a means to guarantee maximum effectiveness.

lack of qualified manpower is one of the core barriers for the further development of this economic sector.

### 3 Effectiveness of the interventions

The following section discusses findings on the effectiveness of the three projects. In contrast to a formal evaluation, the elaborations in this section are not based on any quantitative evidence but on results from those interviews that had been organised by SDC for the two reviewers. The section consists of three subsections that discuss the results related to the projects as well as one concluding section that assesses the portfolio's effectiveness from a more overarching perspective.

For each of the three projects, the following questions have been addressed:

1. What has been or is the likely impact of the interventions on the BiH employment market, do the impact hypothesis and its assumptions hold and are the implemented activities relevant to the overall project goals? ("Aggregate impact, impact hypothesis and relevance")
2. Are crowding in, empowerment of the private sector etc. likely to happen? ("Crowding in")
3. What has been or is the likely impact of the interventions on the target group of young people, especially young women? ("Impact on target group")
4. How sustainable are the created institutions and procedures? How could it be improved? ("Sustainability")
5. How effective is the monitoring of project activities being organised? ("Monitoring")
6. How efficiently were the interventions planned and implemented? ("Efficiency")

The section on YEP provides a somewhat more detailed analysis compared to the other two, as the mandate of this review has a specific focus on this intervention.

#### 3.1 Youth Employment Project

##### 3.1.1 *Aggregate impact, impact hypothesis and relevance*

YEP had a strong impact on the quality of those organisations which were supported in the project's second phase. Most importantly, supported PES offices are, thanks to YEP, about to become organisations that play a key role in the intermediation of young unemployed to the labour market. By establishing two model offices that have been refurbished and technically equipped and provided with intensive capacity development, the project has been able to demonstrate a new approach to providing employment intermediation services in BiH. The new approach allows focusing much of the work on those who are willing to actively look for jobs and providing them with counselling and mediation services. It has, in these two locations, clearly increased the efficiency of the services, and there is considerable potential to implement it in many other parts of the country. In fact, the two offices have gained considerable attention among PES in the entire country, so that there are other cantons interested to introduce the new approach in their PES offices along with the necessary legal changes. In addition, the 25 JCs that are attached to PES offices in different parts of the country have become important models, too, with the RS and Canton Sarajevo planning to introduce the JCs in practice in all PES offices in their respective jurisdictions. Furthermore important was the policy work through the Youth Employment Forum established by the project. In fact, this platform has enormous potential to sensitise policy makers and the general public on the issue of youth employment. However, the reviewers feel that the forum is not sufficiently owned by local stakeholders as yet.

Though the number of beneficiaries reached through the project is quite high (see 3.1.3), this number is still small in view of the enormous scale of unemployment in the country. If, however, the approaches developed in the first two phases of the project can be expanded

across the entire country and if these approaches are also being increasingly reflected by legal changes, a more aggregate impact is likely.

Though the reviewers are of the view that the project has contributed considerably to the improvement of PES in BiH, there is still room to add even more value to the system – which is also a justification for a further intervention in this regard. In our view, there are different potential roads to this value-addition:

- *Easier access for employers to adequate labour:* It is possible that, in BiH, many firms are hindered to create jobs because of high recruitment costs. These costs can be high if it is difficult to find adequate employees for the job profiles in a specific company. If now PES offices, with the help of YEP, support firms to find the requested labour more easily, this can lead to a reduction of recruitment costs. This even occurs if PES can motivate people to contact those firms that are looking for their profiles; a further important element of PES service then is to provide up-to-date information to the beneficiaries on economic sectors that have vacancies and look for specific skills.
- *Motivation of unemployed to accept employment that is below their aspiration:* Many young people in BiH, particularly university graduates, are not ready to accept employment which they believe is below their social status. If PES offices can convince such persons to accept other alternatives, including self-employment, the effect is similar to what has been described in the paragraph above.
- *Counselling on skill needs and training opportunities:* If PES offices dispose of information on skill needs in specific economic sectors, they can counsel young unemployed on the most promising training opportunities that even pay off in case they are costly. The availability of a sufficient number of skilled personnel alone can also positively influence job growth.
- *Access to funds for training:* Often, training with very good employment prospects is costly. If YEP can contribute to better access to such funds, including loans, or can also convince job-seekers to invest into skills on their own, this similarly leads to a reduction of skills shortages – and potentially to employment growth.

Insights from fieldwork are not sufficient to answer whether or not these types of value are being added by the project. In our understanding, most value is currently added with regard to the first two types, but it would be important to more strongly look at the two other ones, too. These would be enormously relevant for the overall objective of the project, too.

It is against this backdrop that the reviewers question whether the work of all NGOs supported since 2013 is so relevant to the project's goal, all the more as many of the activities have little potential to sustain without donor support.

### **3.1.2 Crowding in**

Though SDC supported private employment services in the first phase of the project, it now believes that the support to public employment services will have greater overall impact – and we think rightly so. This does not imply that YEP does not have any effect on private employment providers altogether. In fact, PES officers in model offices and Job Clubs are proactively contacting private companies at the local level, to which they are now offering more professional services adapted to their needs. According to PES statements, an increasing number of private companies react positively to this change, increasingly contact PES and ask for their services. The services to private companies are also free of charge since the institution is funded by the taxes collected from companies. This puts PES into a better position than private companies that are charging their employment mediation services. Given, however, the fact that most private employment services are not attracting

the same type of job seekers as the PES offices, we don't believe that the improved positioning of the public offices leads to unfair competition in the market. Nevertheless, PES offices might, sooner or later, reflect on whether or not they want to provide their recruitment services for free.

An important dimension of increasing private sector contribution could be opened, if PES funds are more systematically used for training purposes. As for instance in Switzerland, there would be more opportunities for private training providers whose costs would then be covered with public funds reserved for the unemployed. The reviewers understand that exactly this would be one of the aims of linking YEP and SfJ. Unfortunately, this link is still weak, as PES funds are not sufficient to cover the high training costs charged by the training centres supported by SfJ.

### **3.1.3 Impact on target group**

YEP activities have real effects on the target group at the local level, in the communities where model offices or JCs have been introduced. Two model offices are fully functional and are planned to be replicated in 62 municipalities in RS and 9 in Canton Sarajevo, based on legal recognition. While three JCs were established in the first phase already, there are now a total of 25.

In the first phase, the project reached 1521 young women and men (targeted were 1200), with the expected percentage of women and disadvantaged persons. At the end of two phases, YEP has now supported 3022 young unemployed to access the labour market, men and women both on virtually equal terms. Additionally, a total of 100 young people are being trained to start businesses, through two programmes launched in cooperation with FBiH PES and the Tuzla Canton government. Similar initiatives are launched through a programme that supports a total of 13 initiatives (NGOs or TCs) who help PES beneficiaries to become self-employed or to acquire vocational skills to enter the formal labour market. One of these initiatives is focusing on TCs that have been established with the help of SfJ.

Though these achievements are impressive, two important reservations need mentioning: though the annual reports claim that disadvantaged (including disabled, minorities) persons are being reached as planned, the reviewers cannot confirm this statement based on evidence gathered at the local level. Given the difficult labour market situation, the objective to give specific emphasis on strongly disadvantaged persons might be overambitious.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly even, the focus on active job seekers comes with the risk to discriminate against those who would be motivated to find a job but lack specific skills that would help them to be easily intermediated to employers. Trying to imitate private employment services, the newly trained PES staff consider themselves as being service providers to the employers by helping them to recruit the best. *Public* employment services, however, would definitively need to aspire to help the others, too, at least those who are motivated to enter the labour market on realistic terms. It would be particularly in this regard that collaboration with SfJ would need to be strengthened.

### **3.1.4 Sustainability**

Undoubtedly, YEP is currently contributing to a reform of PES in BiH that is highly likely to have sustained effects even after a potential phase-out of SDC support in a number of years. JCs – now numbering 25 all over the country – have become places where PES actively supports unemployed people to find a job by mainly providing them with skills on how to present themselves on the labour market, to write CVs etc. Through good promotion,

e.g. TV shows that are presenting success stories, JCs now seem to be in a better position to demonstrate that it can be worth for young people to ask for the services of PES.

Even more crucially, the new operation manuals that were introduced at the two model PES offices change the entire approach of PES to their clientele, by distinguishing active and passive beneficiaries.<sup>13</sup> Though this distinction comes at the cost of discrimination against those who are less likely to find a job (see 3.1.3), this screening is important in view of the massive unemployment in the country. Like this, PES can dedicate its resources to those who are comparatively more likely to find a job. Until today, the respective legal changes that are necessary to make the distinction between active and passive beneficiaries could be achieved in RS as well as in the canton of Sarajevo and they are underway in a number of cantons in the federation. Such changes are also supported by the “Strengthening Job Brokerage Function Strategy” that is currently being formulated at the federal level.<sup>14</sup>

Such legal changes will enormously facilitate to expand the new model across the country, a process that, in fact, has started already now, even without SDCs direct support. Given that this expansion is, according to SDC, not supposed to come with comparable infrastructural investment, one core challenge, here, will be to ensure that the processes at the heart of the existing model offices will evolve without new buildings that attract good beneficiaries, potential employers and PES staff alike. This may not be easy.

A further important element with a potentially strong future effect is the collection and analysis of quantitative data on the labour market situation, currently in the PES of the Canton Sarajevo. However, the reviewers haven’t received sufficient insight into how this information is being used and how it currently affects the services provided by PES or how it will do so in the future. Particularly relevant use of this information could be made, if active job seekers can be motivated to acquire additional vocational skills in growing economic sectors.

Though the reviewers see that the support, provided to 13 projects to develop active labour measures, addresses a very important issue, it is also clear that the short-term funding will not lead to initiatives that automatically sustain. However, the ambition to also involve municipalities that have funds with which they can support training measures for unemployed clearly deserves highest support. If this initiative is to be followed-up in the third phase, then certainly with the clear objective to raise such public funds – including those from PES.

Also somewhat critical are the reviewers with regard to the prospects for the sustainability of the Youth Employment Forum that is enormously relevant to take forward the issue of youth employment in the entire country. Unfortunately, the forum so far is not sufficiently owned by local stakeholders. Further capacity building, particularly of high-level PES staff and professionals from other public agencies involved into youth policy, would be needed to ensure that the future development of this platform does not solely depend on SDC support.

### **3.1.5 Monitoring**

The project monitoring seems to be based on a regular, commonly accepted rhythm and meets the standards set by SDC. As part of its activities, the project also contributes to a

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<sup>13</sup> Though the project management emphasises that the PES approach of screening active candidates does not discriminate against those who are or would be motivated and that it merely screens out those who are not interested in finding employment at all, the reviewers encountered, during their visits of PES offices, a tendency to mainly focus on those who are comparatively likely to find employment.

<sup>14</sup> RS PES (ZZZRS) has systematised the JC leader post in the existing 10 locations (but does not plan to introduce it in all PES offices). The Canton Sarajevo introduced the rulebook and plans to have it used in all bureaus, while cantons in Middle Bosnia are planning to employ the concept throughout.

better monitoring of processes within supported PES offices. An interesting dimension of the project's monitoring activities is also their ranking of JCs with the best results. This ranking clearly stimulates competition between the offices and thus provides a simple incentive to improve the quality of services.

### **3.1.6 Efficiency**

If one compares, on the one hand, the number of relevant innovations developed by the project, its influence through policy dialogue, the high number of direct beneficiaries of the project as well as the potential for aggregate impact and, on the other hand, the total investment of CHF 5'960'000 for two phases, efficiency of the project can be rated excellent.

Only in one instance, the review team had the impression that funds could have been used more effectively: in the case of the call for initiatives for active labour measures, it might have been adequate to define more qualitative implementation criteria. Otherwise, all investments into capacity building, infrastructure and equipment were found to be made wisely, keeping in mind that the infrastructural development at the model offices was also meant as an incentive for the authorities to initiate the entire reform process. The virtually-for-free service by SECO to consult PES offices on a labour market information system is a further element that underlines the high efficiency of the project.

## **3.2 Skills for Jobs**

### **3.2.1 Aggregate impact, impact hypothesis and relevance**

The project was, from the outset, designed to build a basis for systemic change in NFAE that could eventually lead to higher employability of trainees from centres and VET schools that are not directly supported through the project. This focus on NFAE is highly relevant to the BiH context, where the formal education and training system hardly prepares young people for the labour market. Similarly, an approach to VET that is built on strongly involving employers in labour market analysis, definition of skills standards, curriculum development, testing and – if possible – also in training itself, is enormously needed in a context where VET schools are hardly linked to employers.

The project has been clearly successful in producing key outputs: training needs analyses were conducted and skills standards and curricula were developed for 21 occupations which were then implemented in eight TCs whose staff was trained and whose infrastructure was developed with the help of the project.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, most of the eight TCs were developed as a result of SfJ and its call for proposals that led private entrepreneurs to set up TCs in partnership with private companies and sometimes in consortia with public institutions. The fact alone that a number of new TCs with strong involvement of the private sector have emerged and will continue to operate can be considered a significant outcome of the first phase.

Based on these efforts, 329 beneficiaries were trained under the project and 75 percent of them are in employment now. Given the extent of youth unemployment in the country, the project's impact at an aggregate level is still small but if its approach to skills development could, indeed, contribute to an increasing number of young people with relevant vocational skills through NFAE, the project could potentially have a very high aggregate impact. For this to happen, the project will not only need increase its outreach but, in particular, find

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<sup>15</sup> As mentioned above, the reviewers found substantial information related to training in 13 only occupations. The project management states the number is 21.

sustainable funding mechanisms that will help to cover the training costs, namely for the unemployed.

### **3.2.2 Crowding in**

Though private sector participation is of relevance to all five steps of the Prilika Plus model, crowding in of the private sector is particularly relevant for the fourth step (delivery of training), where most costs are involved over the long run. This fourth step was, during phase 1 of the project, mainly paid by SDC, even though some of the TCs have also managed to raise funds from other sources. The WMTA training centre in Srbac, for instance, uses its training infrastructure to offer courses for the existing workforce of some firms which also cover the course fees on behalf of their employees.

Given the considerable lack of training opportunities, there are clear signs that companies are ready to pay for the further training of their own workers. As the growth of a small private training market in BiH suggests, young people are even ready to invest into their own skills, given that this investment is highly likely to pay off and that they have access to sufficient funds to cover immediate training costs.

However, it is quite unlikely that firms will invest into skills of unemployed young people, as there is a considerable risk that rival firms will finally hire the trainees, particularly as skills are scarce. Thus, it will be crucial for the second phase of the project to develop sustainable funding mechanisms for this segment of the target group. Here, the most promising, potentially long-time source of local revenue for the training centres are PES and municipalities, which, however, have difficulties to cover the high costs per trainees. For this reason, TCs are, currently, turning to other donors to cover training costs.<sup>16</sup>

### **3.2.3 Impact on target group**

During the first phase of the project, there has been a strong focus on the first three stages of the Prilika Plus approach to skills development (i.e. TNA, JPD and CD & TID) as well as on capacity development. Therefore, training programmes in most of the eight supported training centres only started in the latter part of 2013. Still, more than 329 persons were trained between April 2013 and September 2014, out of which 32 percent were female.

Given that an important segment of the target group is young, unemployed people, the expected key impact for them is access to employment. In fact, in total, 75 percent of all trainees are now in employment – which, compared to the average figures available for public VET school is an extraordinary high placement rate. However, it needs to be taken into account that a number of beneficiaries had already been employed prior to enrolment – and that the data made available to the consultants do not contain information on the employment status of beneficiaries prior to enrolment.<sup>17</sup> The expected key impact for the other segment of the target group, employed people, is increased productivity – which either leads to increased profits of the employer, increased wages of employees or both. The data made available to the consultants do not contain information in this regard.

Until now, the training programmes were not intended to be tailored to the needs of the formerly two (phase 1), now three target groups (phase 2). Skill needs of experienced staff may, however, be considerably different from those of persons who lack sector-specific work experience. Depending on the requirements of the specific sectors, it might be important to

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<sup>16</sup> Training costs differ between the centres: the JUB training centre provides training for painters at a price of BAM 1500 (covered, e.g. by Swiss Caritas), WMTA requires between BAM 978 (for wood varnishing) and BAM 1173 (for CNC operating). This amount is still high for PES to get involved to a substantial degree.

<sup>17</sup> It would be important to systematically monitor this

organise more tailor-made training programmes. If we take the welding programme as an example, there could be three different types of it (i.e. for experienced staff, for unemployed, for VET students). All three programmes could be oriented towards the same job profile but differ in terms of their contents and organisation. Whereas the types for the unemployed and for the VET students might cover the entire job profile, the experienced staff could have some of their competencies recognised (recognition of prior learning) and undergo shorter programmes or undergo programmes that go beyond the agreed job profile.

### **3.2.4 Sustainability**

The work on an NFAE system in BiH has not been finalised but rather initiated. It is, therefore, not surprising that the models and processes initiated by the project are, currently, not sufficiently rooted in the organisations so that they could sustain without donor support. Three aspects are of particular importance:

Firstly, the Prilika Plus model – that is core to the project's identity – does not seem to have established itself as a label for high quality training yet. Though it would be an exaggeration to expect such development to happen in the course of only few years, it is not entirely clear how the project plans to increase the credibility of the label in the next phase. The core challenge, here, is that some of the supported TCs, at least the Agricultural School in Banja Luka and JUB in Blazuj that were visited by the reviewers, do not seem to be organisations with strong professional VET capacities that value the Prilika Plus model and its approach to skills development. In these cases, the reviewers had the impression that the Prilika Plus model was mainly about inputs into TNA, JPD and CD&TID that did not lead to training processes which represent the model in an ideal way. A better example in this regard is the WMTA TC in Srbac: Here, the project has helped to create an organisation that offers a broad set of training services for both segments of the target group (unemployed/employed) and thereby clearly refers to the Prilika Plus model as its DNA. In this case, the model is reflected by practice. In our view, it would be a critical mass of organisations like this that would be necessary to establish the credibility of a training label that is also recognised by employers.

Secondly (and as already mentioned above), the project will need to help training providers to develop sustainable funding mechanisms, keeping in mind the different target groups. This may require specific technical assistance at the level of training providers. Whereas it is somewhat easier to provide training to experienced workers on a commercial basis as companies, even in BiH, seem to be prepared to financially contribute, funding of training for unemployed and of VET students is a different issue altogether. The reviewers understand that it will be an important part of project's second phase to secure funding from public sources in this regard, notably from PES, municipalities as well as VET schools. Depending on the occupation, it might also be important to experiment with contributions by trainees. In any event, such forms of sustainable funding will, in the opinion of the reviewers, evolve only when costs per trainee are sufficiently moderate. During their visits to the TCs, the reviewers had the impression that these costs, currently, are clearly too high to be covered by the PES, the municipalities but also by trainees.

Thirdly, it does not seem to be sufficiently clear yet which organisations, apart from the Agency for SME Development, stand behind the Prilika Plus model. Initially, the project mainly focused on the chambers of commerce (CoC). But even though the project has invested considerable resources into capacity development, particularly in terms of TNA, JPD and A&C, they are not in any position to professionally perform the intended responsibilities in skills development as yet. Given the fact that CoC are semi-public bodies, they tend to be reluctant to accept new responsibilities that are not defined by law (at

cantonal or entity level). A particular challenge is to ensure that CoC engage in the certification process. As, during the first phase of the project, the lack of contribution by CoC to the overall aim of the project has become evident, a revised version of the logframe for the second phase now also mentions employers' associations as stakeholders equal to CoC.<sup>18</sup> In case, CoC turn out – during the second phase of the project – not to be the best partners particularly for certification, the project might think about bringing in authorities at the cantonal level in this regard. In Switzerland, for instance, the public authorities (cantonal / federal level) are in charge of issuing the certificates, even though job profiles and curricula are mainly developed by employers. If the educational authorities wouldn't be in a position to engage in this kind of certification in the NFAE domain, there might be other authorities (e.g. in the field of labour, economic development) or the RDAs that might be partners in this regard.

### **3.2.5 Monitoring**

The annual reports of the project document the key achievements in the respective years. All relevant aspects are thereby covered; however, there would need to be a more thorough and more realistic analysis of the potentials for impact without constant financial support by the project. Furthermore, the important issue of actual training quality is largely absent in the reports, leaving open to which degree the quality of training delivery is influenced by the considerable efforts with regard to TNA and CD.

The project systematically collects basic quantitative information on the students, different dimensions of training delivery as well as on access to employment.<sup>19</sup> All data are being gathered through project partners. Data on access to employment is based on information on labour market access immediately after training and does neither reflect how many of the beneficiaries were employed already prior to training nor how many students will have access to jobs sometime after training delivery. In order to better understand the value addition by the training programmes, it would be important to plan for tracer studies that interview former beneficiaries six and twelve months after the conclusion of training. Given that SfJ's ultimate target group of beneficiaries also consist of employed persons, it would be necessary to collect data on productivity or at least wage increases.

### **3.2.6 Efficiency**

Considering, on the one hand, the key activities of the project and the number of trainees and, on the other hand, the total funding of CHF 1'200'000 by SDC, efficiency was good. Among many other things, the project stimulated and supported the establishment of eight new specialized TCs with strong private sector involvement, TNA were conducted for six economic sectors, curricula were developed for 21 occupations, equipment and capacity development was provided to eight training centres (BAM 150'000 per centre) and training was conducted for 329 graduates.<sup>20</sup>

Still, the reviewers found, based on the visits during fieldwork, that some of the funds could have been used more efficiently. In the case of the Agricultural VET School in Banja Luka, for instance, four large, technologically highly advanced greenhouses had been funded through the project, though the focus of the training was clearly on agriculture as a basis for

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<sup>18</sup> It is an open question in which way a regional development authority (in this case: RARS) or, more specifically, an entity *under* it (Agency for SME development), has the necessary political leverage to promote changes in education policy.

<sup>19</sup> There may be, indeed, scope for such lobbying work through the project.  
E.g. number of male/female students per economic sector and locality, formal education of the graduates, duration of training programmes, market price of training programmes etc.

<sup>20</sup> Given that training was provided during 32'764 hours during the project's first phase and that the total market value of all training is BAM, 438'000, the average price of the training hour is BAM 13. This, again, is a sign of good efficiency.

self-employment. In the two other training centres visited in the context of this review, similar observations could be made.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.3 Market Makers**

#### **3.3.1 Aggregate impact, impact hypothesis and relevance**

To assess this project's overall impact is too early, and we therefore concentrate on a brief assessment of the impact hypothesis:

Market Makers has set itself ambitious targets in a highly challenging environment. How to best facilitate economic growth in a context of economic and political transition is a difficult question even from a theoretical perspective – and all the more in practice. Many of the key barriers that seem to hinder economic growth not only in selected sectors but in the overall economy, e.g. high taxation of private firms, limited access to investment capital, lack of a critical mass of vocational skills etc., are probably outside the reach of this project, rendering it difficult to make tremendous progress with regard to output 2 (“more conducive policy and regulatory framework”). Still, individual members of the project team are involved, in an impressive way, in multi-stakeholder policy-level discussions with the potential to bring about changes in the policy and regulatory framework. To which degree the project is likely to strengthen private sector actors in such a way that they start, themselves, to lobby for relevant legal changes, has not become sufficiently clear in the context of the review.

Similarly challenging will be to fundamentally change the role of RDAs in economic development (see section 3.4.4).

It is, however, absolutely justified to focus – as it actually came about in the implementation process – on sector-specific needs for more and better service provision (output 1) and to support sector-specific economic growth and job creation in this manner. In this context, MM rightfully invests considerable resources in market analysis, as it would be wrong to focus on short-term growth in specific sectors that is likely to vanish once the project has phased out.

#### **3.3.2 Crowding in**

The overall aim of MM is exactly that private sector growth in selected sectors is being boosted by crowding in of entrepreneurs that are interested in new profit-generating activities. Given the early stage of implementation, it is not the time to review this aspect based on sufficient evidence.

However, when it comes to commercial ventures related to skills development, a substantial degree of crowding in of private businesses is only going to happen if there are attractive margins per student.<sup>22</sup> Such margins can, ideally, be generated when training costs are largely borne by students who have access to sufficient funds (own assets, training loans or grants) and who can be sure that their investment into skills will pay off.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In the WMTA training centre in Srbac, a room-filling CNC operating machine for wood had been procured; the reviewers wondered whether it wouldn't have been possible to go for a less pricy model. Possibly, there was an interest of a partner of this training centre in this type of procurement, as some of the partners are involved into the trading of respective machinery. In the JUB training centre in Sarajevo, the centre did not document in a transparent way what the funds had been used for. Rather, the reviewers had the impression that funds were used for infrastructure and equipment that had been developed and purchased independently from the project.

<sup>22</sup> If the training venture is operated by those firms that are employing graduates after the training period, it is, of course, also possible for the training provider just to „break even“ – or even to run at a slight loss, as long as employing companies see their support of training as an investment into the future skills of their workforce.

<sup>23</sup> The current shortage of skilled labour market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that leads firms to poach trained personnel from rival companies, makes it unlikely that employers invest into skills of *future* employees at a large scale. The

One such activity that aims at improving sector-specific vocational skills is the support to the BIT alliance, which plans to launch an initial training programme for future IT-technicians (BIT camp). The BIT camp is planned to start in autumn 2014 and will enrol approx. 20 young people who will have gone through a very rigorous selection procedure and will certainly find employment in one of the 6 companies that form the BIT alliance. In this example, margins seem to be mainly generated through the involvement of donor agencies: As it now stands, the programme will be entirely funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), with MM/SDC supporting the BIT alliance in terms of business planning and promotion of the BIT camp. However, according to the information provided by the project management, this is expected to change once the pilot phase is over; the financial forecast is that it should be fully commercially sustainable, and even generate quite a large financial surplus. The plan is that this would expand to 200 students per year (2 classes of 100 per year) in Sarajevo and be franchised to similar groups of IT companies in Banja Luka and Mostar after 6-9 months. There is also interest in franchising to Macedonia already. Part of the model is that, in fact, students are expected to pay the full costs in the future. For the success of the BIT camp and similar initiatives, this will be critical.

In the opinion of the reviewers, the attractive labour market of the IT sector in BiH with its comparatively high initial salaries provides ample incentives for young people to invest into their skills, even if they are unemployed.<sup>24</sup> However, ways must be found that respective funds are also made available to young people hailing from less wealthy backgrounds.

### **3.3.3 Impact on target group**

It is far too early to assess the impact on the target group on a substantial basis, too: As project implementation was delayed and as a considerable part of project activities were oriented towards the identification of two additional economic sectors and of respective activities, there was no evidence on economic growth in targeted sectors that could be attributed to the project and that would have provided job opportunities for the target group.

Still, the fieldwork provided some very limited insights into potential contribution to improved access by the target group to the IT sector – which was at the centre of all three meetings related to MM. The most important activities to support this sector have a clear focus on skills development, as studies conducted under the project suggest that skills shortages are a severe barrier for further sectorial growth. Under the pilot phase of the BIT alliance, 20 students are planned to be trained, later on 200 per year. This could be an important contribution to reduce skills shortages in the sector – and to provide young people with access to the labour market.

Given the fact that any investment in a solid IT-skills will pay off for the students, it would certainly be possible to make this programme entirely commercial, with loan schemes allowing access to poorer students.

Other upcoming activities by MM, for instance related to food production/processing (certification) or tourism (product development in strong collaboration with tourist agencies) have a considerable potential for job creation that will have to be realised in the next years of implementation.

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situation in the IT-sector is aggravated by the fact that many skilled IT-technicians are hired by companies in other parts of Europe.

<sup>24</sup> For this reason, it might be useful to analyse in more detail – and from an M4P perspective – the reasons for which a private training market catering to the IT sector has not really evolved without external support.

### 3.3.4 Sustainability

An important aspect of the MM project to sustain economic growth in the sectors it is working on is its collaboration with the RDAs which are thus supposed to improve their role as incubators of growth. For this reason, MM invests considerable resources into training RDA staff, in particular on the M4P approach. To the reviewers, it however remained unclear whether these trainings have a real potential to change the RDA's approach to supporting economic development, mainly for two reasons: firstly, training is provided to RDA staff that are – even physically – part of the project team and thus seem to have limited leverage to promote the new perspective in their mother organisations. The future use of M4P tools (or at least of the approach it suggests) seems all the more unsure as it is not clear to which degree M4P is accepted even among the trained RDA staff.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, RDAs seem, currently, to have limited influence on the approaches that are being chosen to promote economic development. This has very much to do with the role of RDAs to provide their services as project implementers or consultants not mainly to cantonal authorities but rather to bi- and multilateral donor agencies – who bring along a highly diverse set of approaches to economic development. What might be still realistic is that the RDAs will be able to have M4P as one of the instruments in their toolbox and will use it as a future business line whenever possible.

One further important aspect would be that of economic sustainability of supported private sector actors. Given that many of the respective activities were initiated only recently, it is again too early to assess it. What concerns the BIT alliance – the only private sector partner interviewed by the review team – it is not clear to which degree it will provide training services to the portfolio's main target group (i.e. young unemployed) without external support.

### 3.3.5 Efficiency

The reviewers lack sufficient information to make a thorough analysis of how efficient funds have been used in general. Two observations emanating from fieldwork seem important, however:

- *BIT camp*: Support to this initiative (whose main costs are funded by EBRD) are justified only then when there is a clear perspective for making the training centre a commercial venture that caters to a considerable number of individuals from the project's ultimate target group (unemployed youth). Though this perspective was not found at the level of the institution itself, MM's project manager stated that the BIT camp has plans for considerable growth, mainly based on the demand of students who are paying for their training.
- *M4P training for RDAs*: Though the reviewers consider M4P as a useful approach for the analysis of political-economic contexts, they are not sure of its practicality for the *implementation* of MM. The interview with SERDA suggested that the project invested considerable funds into M4P training among RDA staff, which seem not to be in a position to adopt the approach to a substantial degree in practice.

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Interviews at SERDA suggest that there are strong reservations in this regard.

### 3.4 Assessment of the overall portfolio

Based on the insights into the effectiveness of the three projects, the following table provides for an assessment of the entire portfolio in a nutshell:

#### ***Aggregate impact, impact hypothesis and relevance***

SDC is implementing its Youth Employment Portfolio in a highly challenging environment. It is thus not surprising that, though the numbers of beneficiaries reached through the project are satisfactory, they are still low compared to the high total number of unemployed in the country. Rightly so, the portfolio therefore primarily aspires to contribute to systemic changes – and it is in this regard that the project has already made impressive achievements with even more potential. As outlined above, very promising steps forward could be achieved within the PES, whereas it is too early to gauge the potential aggregate impact of the other two interventions. In any event, the overall outline of the portfolio and its project is characterised by relevant activities, with a small number of reservations that can be found in the project-specific sections above.

The portfolio's impact hypothesis is based on the assumption that a successful integration of young unemployed persons is facilitated by a) improved skills of these individuals, b) existing demand in the labour market and c) functioning intermediation processes. While this hypothesis, on paper, is plausible, its translation into practice is difficult in the case of SDC's Youth Employment Portfolio, as there is, firstly, no systematic approach which would ensure that projects are operating in the same geographical areas and, secondly, no general understanding among projects of how their respective project partners should improve their collaboration at the local level.

The reviewers appreciate the strong focus of all three projects on systemic change with the potential for aggregate impact that goes beyond specific supported organisations. This also increases the likeliness of real value-addition and of avoiding a zero-sum game that leads to certain number of direct beneficiaries who enter the labour market at the cost of those who don't have the luck to benefit from supported organisations (e.g. PES offices or TCs).

#### ***Crowding in***

Considerable crowding in of private sector organisations in the fields of intermediation and skills development is not happening currently.<sup>26</sup> Whereas this may be less worrying with regard to intermediation (PES are public institutions), more challenging is to increase the participation by private TCs to cater to young unemployed. This will only be possible if a) public funds (e.g. from PES and municipalities) can be more systematically used for training purposes and/or b) loan or grants schemes are designed that support beneficiaries to invest in those skills that pave the way for higher income.

#### ***Impact on target group***

Since the initiation of the first phase of YEP, more than 3'500 beneficiaries accessed the labour market with the support of portfolio activities. Both genders are roughly achieving similar results. In view of the fact that all projects have a strong focus on facilitating systemic changes and that the total funds spent so far lie considerably below that of other donor programmes with a focus on youth employment (e.g. the closed EU's VET project), this number is clearly satisfactory.

A serious reservation, however, needs to be made in view of the portfolio's emphasis on disadvantaged groups: There is a clear tendency within all projects to focus on those who are more likely to successfully enter the labour market. This is particularly obvious in the case of the BIT camp (supported by MM) but also in the case of the PES whose current approach of screening active candidates tends to discriminate against those who would be motivated to find a job but obviously lack

<sup>26</sup> It is too early to comment on the prospects for MM to contribute to the development of support services that would cater to the selected economic sectors.

specific skills that would help them to be easily mediated to employers.

This takes us to the question whether the three projects actually have the same target groups, even though the focus of the portfolio is on young unemployed as well as on those who are about to graduate from formal education. In fact, two of the projects go beyond this target group: SfJ, in its first phase, focused both on unemployed as well as on employees with work experience. In its second phase, the project will also cater to VET students. MM has an even more extended approach to its target group, as its key objective is growth of selected economic sectors with a potential for job creation. The immediate key target group is, therefore, rather employers than potential employees. For this reason, the project is reluctant to craft activities that might lead to instant access of unemployed people to the labour market.

Though the reviewers are of the opinion that the three projects, working in different domains, do not necessarily need to have the same immediate target groups, it is also clear that this creates some tensions between the projects. MM, for instance, sees itself confronted with the demand that the sectors it supports should create jobs for unemployed, even though the private sector can only grow when it is free to decide whom to employ. In the case of SfJ, the reviewers agree that training for employed personnel might be of strong interest particularly to the employers but that, from a systems perspective, the focus should mainly be on training for VET students and unemployed. Training arrangements should look different for each of these target groups, which does not seem to be the case as yet.

### ***Sustainability***

The changes that are currently being introduced in a number of PES offices, particularly in those parts of the country where they are based on legal changes, have good potential not only to directly benefit job seekers but also to sustain once SDC's funds are being phased out. Still, serious thoughts should be devoted to the question how much the obvious success of the model offices depends on the new infrastructure funded by SDC that will certainly not be provided to those PES offices where the new processes are being implemented in the next phase of the project.<sup>27</sup>

Considerably less clear are the prospects for sustainability among the partners of SfJ, which would actually make it necessary to somewhat delay the start of the second phase of this project in order to clarify the potentials of the current approach for further expansion (in the entire country and to the formal VET system). The experience of MM is clearly too short to make any solid statement in this regard. Still, the reviewers assess somewhat critically the prospects for RDAs to adapt their role in regional economic development through MM.

More critical, however, is the lack of linkages between project partners at the local level, not to speak of the prospects for the sustainability of such linkages. One of the core challenges in this regard is the difficulty to improve linkages between TCs supported by SfJ and the PES offices, the reasons of which are a) the high training costs of training centres (that cannot be afforded by PES) and b) the priority of PES to focus their support on those individuals that are more likely to be integrated into the labour market *without* any further training of vocational skills.

### ***Monitoring***

The quality of monitoring within the specific projects is somewhat heterogeneous, as noted above. As we point out in the section on increased collaboration, a serious issue however is the lack of a comprehensive portfolio monitoring system. Particularly in view of each projects' objective of reaching a specific target number of beneficiaries, this lack can imply a serious barrier to improved

<sup>27</sup> Whereas SDC has stated that support to further infrastructural development of PES offices will be minimal, the project management doubts whether the development of PES can be done without support to infrastructure. In any event, point deserves considerable reflection when defining the foci of the project's next phase.

collaboration.

### **Efficiency**

Overall, efficiency can be rated fair, even though some specific investments would have required some more serious pre-procurement analysis (see notes in the project-specific sections above).

## **4 Potentials of increased collaboration**

### **4.1 A brief analysis of current collaboration**

SDC's portfolio approach to the domain of youth employment in BiH is based on the assumption that the three core aspects of this domain (supply of skilled labour, demand for skilled labour, intermediation of supply and demand) can be addressed through three projects, each of which focuses on one of these aspects. The fact that there are three *separate* projects and not one *single* project or programme that works on all three core aspects at the same time is clearly a result of SDC's institutional learning process over time. This process increasingly showed that integration of individuals into the labour market (YEP) is strongly facilitated by improved vocational skills (SfJ) but also by the enhanced demand in the labour market (MM). As such, each project was designed separately, with outcomes, outputs and activities that, for each project, are related to its designated core aspect of the youth employment domain. The credit documents for the projects, in fact, explicitly make reference to the need of cooperation among them; however, in reality, there are no mechanisms to ensure cooperation.

This type of portfolio approach entails a number of challenges:

- *Dominance of project perspectives:* Once the project document has been approved by SDC, projects are quite autonomous to define how the project objectives are to be achieved. Many important decisions are thus based on a project perspective and not so much on a portfolio perspective. Thus, for instance, the economic sectors to be addressed under MM and SfJ were selected by the projects, and there is no systematic approach to implement project activities in the same cantons or even municipalities.<sup>28</sup>

Still: Given that the issue of youth employment has many different dimensions, it is legitimate for the three interventions to define project-specific priorities and target groups. For MM, for instance, it would not be wise to only focus on activities that provide instant access to the labour market for unemployed, even though this may be in the immediate interest particularly of YEP. The reviewers thus don't suggest that the overall portfolio perspective (which focuses on access of individuals to employment) necessarily needs to be at the forefront of every decision taken at the project level. Rather, it is important for SDC to critically discuss the relation between specific project activities and the overall portfolio perspective on a constant basis.

- *Encroaching of projects into domains designated to other projects:* As project activities cannot be automatically adapted to meet other projects' objectives, all projects have started to design activities in those domains that have not been originally designated to them. Most importantly, both YEP and MM have become active in skills development; furthermore, YEP has also become active in the field of support to self-employment, which could also be seen as a form of support to economic growth. From the

<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that the geographical areas of the three projects are not overlapping: Kanton Sarajevo and the municipalities of Banja Luka and Srbac area are places, where all three projects are active.

perspective of overall impact, this tendency of encroaching would actually be welcome. However, it creates obvious tensions between the management of the three projects, all the more as it has occurred rather by accident than by design.

- *Lacking coordination of project partners at the local level:* Even though the project intervention areas are partly overlapping and even though there seems to be general consensus between the projects that PES – with its direct access to the target group – would need to play a key role, there is no strategy to ensure that project partners at the local level would interact. The BIT alliance, for instance, did not even consider recruiting potential trainees through PES. The PES in Srbac, to make a further example, sends – with the help of YEP – some of its clientele to a TC that has been built up with the help of SfJ. However, it seems that the management of SfJ is not supposed to be aware of this as the training programme supported by YEP does not follow the Prilika Plus model.
- *Lacking flexibility of project approaches:* The three projects have their specific and partly competing approaches to the domain of youth employment. This is particularly visible in the cases of MM – that designs all its activities on the basis of M4P – and of SfJ with the Prilika Plus model.<sup>29</sup> Both projects have, along the lines of their own approaches, identified specific economic sectors for interventions, not aiming at any kind of collaboration in this regard. One very serious challenge for improving collaboration between the projects in terms of skills development is SfJ's rigid use of the Prilika Plus model. Any kind of cooperation with the project is possible only then when skills development programmes are designed in this very specific manner.
- *Monopolising of stakeholders:* As outlined by one of our interview partners, the three projects have a tendency to monopolise access to their key project partners. Thus, PES is YEP's key stakeholder, whereas RDAs are those of MM and the chambers of commerce those of SfJ. If this statement reflects the reality, it is a clear barrier to improving collaboration but also to enhancing overall impact.
- *Potential tendency to monopolise beneficiaries:* Though the reviewers haven't seen this tendency in practice, the overall design of the portfolio and the three projects have clear incentives to monopolise beneficiaries. This would mean that, according to strict project logic, it doesn't make sense to strongly cooperate with other projects as this could lead to smaller number of beneficiaries with access to jobs. If thus, for instance, PES beneficiaries (who "belong" to YEP) move on to a training centre supported by SfJ: To which project could this impact be attributed to? Of course, this tendency strongly depends on whether or not SDC strictly expects the numbers of beneficiaries defined in the project documents to be reached.
- *Lack of an portfolio monitoring system:* This observation on attribution problems leads us to our final point: If the overall goal of the entire portfolio is to reduce unemployment in BiH and if, even only partly, the impact of the portfolio is measured by the number of beneficiaries that finally find employment, a more overarching monitoring system that covers all three projects would be indispensable. It would, however, be very important for this overall monitoring system to assess the entire breadth of portfolio objectives, particularly also those that aim at systemic changes.

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<sup>29</sup> Interestingly enough, SfJ had, originally, been designed based on the *Participatory Market Chain Approach*, which – even by SDC – was considered to stand in opposition to the M4P approach. It is logical that, with a history of competing ideas at the level of project design, fruitful cooperation is being hindered by ideological differences also in the process of implementation.

## 4.2 Opportunities for stronger connections and joint activities of the projects

### 4.2.1 Policy dialogue

Project staff and project partners need to be sufficiently involved in opportunities for policy dialogues that are of importance to reach the portfolio's overall objectives in youth employment, for instance through the platform of the Youth Employment Forum. This also implies that the three projects ensure that their respective project partners get involved into all discussions of relevance to them.

A key focus needs to be on policy making related to PES, particularly to the issue of using PES funds for training and retraining as well as for internships in private companies. Respective policy changes become possible only then if training centres (through SfJ) and employers (through MM) are motivated to engage in such discussions.

Similarly important is a common engagement to further develop NFAE and to adapt labour market regulations that hinder young people to enter the labour market. In both cases, it should be aimed at increasing the influence of cantonal, entity and national employment institutions on legal changes.

### 4.2.2 Finding solutions for cross-cutting challenges

There are a number of themes that have, either by design or by accident, already become important to all three projects and that would need to be addressed jointly, starting with workshops that are moderated by external resource persons.

- One of these cross-cutting issues is that of *training for unemployed youth*, which is tackled not only by SfJ but also by MM and YEP. In the understanding of the reviewers, this tendency for encroachment has, at least partly, to do with the problem that SfJ is not sufficiently responding to the specific skill needs as perceived by the other two projects (see 4.1). One starting point of such a workshop could be a joint analysis of the different types of skill needs of young unemployed (which are different from the skill needs of VET school students and of those of experienced workers) and of how the activities of SDC's Youth Employment Portfolio currently relate to these needs. Based on such analysis, solutions should be found of how to address these skill needs in a more coordinated, coherent manner across the three interventions.
- The joint conceptual work on training should also focus on *financing of training programmes*. In fact, a part of the portfolio's vision is built on the assumption that PES funds will be systematically used to fully or at least partly fund training for their clientele. However, costs per trainee, at least at the TCs supported by SfJ, are clearly above of what PES offices could contribute per beneficiary, making it necessary a) to look for other sources of funding (e.g. loans or grants with different sources of funding), b) to render training delivery more cost-efficient or c) to provide much more support to public training providers which cannot charge for their services.
- The issue of *self-employment* would also need to be addressed jointly. In fact, both SfJ and YEP have activities in this domain that is strongly linked to the theme of overall economic development but they are, currently, not making use of MMs expertise in private sector development. In fact, MM has already started to work on self-employment in the ICT sector and envisages to address this issue also in other sectors. But it might be worth for MM to even more strongly address the issue of self-employment in future project activities.
- Though *internships* are a very powerful means to facilitate access to the labour market, there are currently no activities in the entire portfolio that systematically address this issue. Activities would be required in terms of policy dialogue, with the ultimate goal that

funds from PES offices cannot only be used for internships in the public but also in the private sector.<sup>30</sup> Even if such policy changes cannot be achieved, it would be important for PES offices – and even schools and universities – to sensitise their clientele for the importance of organising (possibly very low- or not paid) internships on their own.

#### **4.2.3 Cooperation at the local level**

The project staff should contribute to improved cooperation of their respective project partners at the local level. The idea, here, would not be about creating Potemkin villages of collaboration but to experiment with different types of collaboration between the partners of the three projects; such forms of collaboration could then be used as models that might be expanded to other parts of the country. Of particular importance, here, is the *cooperation with supported PES offices*, both with TCs and employers, the contacts to which should be more systematically facilitated by SfJ and MM. Given the general consensus from business that, traditionally, PES offices have not been very effective job market intermediators, YEP, has an important role to play in this regard, too.

Improved cooperation should also include *exemplary workshops* at the local level where staff from all projects as well as those project partners that are active in the geographical area come together and jointly work on solutions how to best create synergies. Such workshops would also need to entail a careful *analysis of current limitations* for improved collaboration at the local level. One of the core issues here would be, again, that of funding of training. Once solutions have been designed at the local level, projects would need to strongly interact in terms of *implementation* and *monitoring*, which will be the basis of using the experience in other parts of BiH.

### **4.3 Opportunities for stronger portfolio management**

Whereas the section above has dealt with specific opportunities for mutual collaboration between the different projects, we will now turn to issues related to portfolio management:

#### **4.3.1 Strengthen portfolio governance**

- *Increase leverage*: SDC must find a way to increase its leverage in portfolio governance in order to ensure better cooperation and to maximise the overall impact. This will also entail the allocation of more temporal resources to the strategic steering of the three projects. It could either be achieved a) by employing an independent consultant on a part-time basis for several years (ideal case), b) by using SDC's own personal resources, or c) by designing a separate component for YEP III, which would then play a leading role within the entire portfolio. The resources should be used, in particular, a) for a more prominent involvement in key decisions of project implementation as well as in the design of future project phases, b) for the thematic preparation of joint meetings and workshops and c) for the maximisation of synergies at the local level.
- *Introduce a portfolio monitoring system*: In order to better understand the overall effectiveness of all activities implemented under the umbrella of the Youth Employment Portfolio, it would be important to install a portfolio monitoring system that is designed and implemented by external resource persons.<sup>31</sup> In case SDC would decide to employ

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<sup>30</sup> One alternative, here, would be to lobby decision makers to cut PES subsidies for internships in public companies for the benefit of increased support to training activities.

<sup>31</sup> The proposed monitoring system should not exclusively gather quantitative information (e.g. on the number of individuals entering the labour market) but also carefully monitor the potentials for the sustainability of supported interventions. The methodology would thus also involve interviews with project partners and key stakeholders on a regular basis.

an external consultant to increase its leverage in portfolio governance, the same consultant could also be entrusted with this task. Based on evidence from portfolio monitoring, more informed decisions can also be taken with regard to key decisions of project implementation and with regard to the design of future project phases. The portfolio monitoring system could thus play a role as a tool of *formative evaluation*.

If needed, monitoring evidence can be condensed in the form of *end-of-phase reviews*. These might be less comprehensive than some of the previous evaluations (e.g. for YEP). In any event, the design of *every* new project phase needs to be based on solid evidence from such monitoring – which, surprisingly, was not the case for the next phase of SfJ.

- *Plan for regular external evaluations of the entire portfolio*: Instead of external evaluations that focus on individual projects, external evaluations would need to encompass the entire portfolio. In order to ensure that this portfolio evaluation is based on comprehensive evidence, the information and data gathered through the portfolio monitoring system would need to be an important starting point for the evaluation.
- *Enable stronger exchange on key issues between managers from all projects*: Most importantly, such exchange – possibly in the form of regular meetings and annual workshops – need to include a) a platform to *discuss upcoming key decisions* with regard to project implementation as well as with regard to the design of future project phases. This will help SDC and the projects to base decisions on more solid information from different perspectives that are relevant for youth employment. This new form of exchange would, however, also be a means to b) maximise cooperation at the local level, wherever it makes sense.

#### **4.3.2 Strengthen the corporate identity of all portfolio activities, clarify roles and improve information sharing**

- *Increase sensitisation in view of overall portfolio objectives*: In view of the current lack of a strong, common corporate identity of the three projects, it would be important to ensure that project staff and their partners primarily understand their mission as to be *focussing on the reduction of youth unemployment*. Self-identifications based on project-specific approaches (such as M4P or the Prilika Plus model) would need to be understood by the projects as means to a common end, means that should be employed with a certain flexibility and openness towards other approaches. Stronger corporate identity could be facilitated by a) common workshops (moderated by external resource persons) as well as by the establishment of the portfolio monitoring system (see 4.3.1) that provides evidence-based feedback on the projects' effectiveness in relation to the overarching portfolio objectives. One further measure should be b) to include, on each project website, information and useful links to the portfolio, to the project's role within the portfolio as well as to the other two projects. In addition, c) projects' progress reports should, in future, reflect the activities planned to strengthen Youth Employment Portfolio implementation, including activities and actions in view of information sharing between the projects and the project partners.
- *Clarify roles*: Increased sensitisation in view of overall portfolio objectives would be a necessary basis for a comprehensive exchange on the roles played by the three projects and their key partners. This exchange would not necessarily need to be aimed at ending any form of encroachment tendencies (see 4.1) but would entail a thorough discussion of why, for instance, YEP and MM are also active in the field of skills development and of whether or not it would be wise to more strongly cooperate with SfJ.

- *Improve information sharing:* Projects should be compelled to more systematically share information on key decisions as well as on the progress of implementation. Information between project managements could be shared on the occasion of the regular meetings. Furthermore, project partners could be informed about the entirety of the portfolio and its activities through a newsletter (“YE Portfolio Info”) and, of course, through the projects’ websites that would now also include information on the entire portfolio and on the other two projects (see above). Sharing of information should also become a regular practice between the project partners at the local level wherever geographical intervention areas are overlapping.

## 5 Conclusions

SDC is implementing its Youth Employment Portfolio in a highly challenging environment: lacking access of young people to the labour market is one of the key problems in BiH, and policy makers as well as many bi- and multilateral donor agencies have started a myriad of programmes which aim to support the country to tackle a complex issue that currently worries societies in many other parts of the world, too. As there are no ready-made fixes to the problem of high youth unemployment, there is a legitimate need for experimenting in order to find means that could improve the current situation.

Through its Youth Employment Portfolio, consisting of three projects with – compared to other projects in BiH – a relatively moderate budget, SDC achieved considerable impact, both with regard to direct beneficiaries and with regard to systemic changes with the potential to affect the lives of many more individuals.

Not very surprisingly, the project that has been there longest – YEP – has contributed the most to these achievements, mainly thanks to the new processes established in the PES model offices and the legal changes related to PES in some parts of the country. For the third phase, it will be important to ensure that what has been so far achieved for two model PES offices can be implemented in other parts of the country, too. Given that this expansion is not supposed to come with comparable infrastructural investment, one core challenge, here, will be to ensure that the processes at the heart of the existing model offices will evolve without shiny new buildings that attract good beneficiaries, potential employers and PES staff alike. A further important element will be to find means how PES personnel can identify (also: to be motivated to identify) skill needs of their clientele, as there is a clear tendency to focus on those who are most likely to be integrated into the labour market without any further skills training. The current approach is clearly inspired by commercial employment services but it discriminates against disadvantaged people – who are supposed to be an important segment of YEP's target group.

Given their shorter history, the other two projects have achieved a comparatively smaller impact, particularly in view of systemic changes. There is, however, considerable potential for satisfactory aggregate, systemic impact for both projects. For SfJ, now entering its second phase, it will be important to critically analyse how the project can take the model developed in the first phase to many other parts of the country and how the model can be used for public VET schools.<sup>32</sup>

An obvious challenge of the portfolio is the *lack of systematic cooperation* between the three projects which all run as separate endeavours, basically oriented towards the same overall objective but with different foci and approaches. The lacking cooperation between the projects at the management level is also being reflected by a lack of interaction between project partners at the local level, wherever interventions areas are in fact overlapping. In the view of the reviewers, cooperation increases only if *portfolio governance* is being strengthened with additional, external or internal (SDC) resources. The resources should be used, in particular, a) for a more prominent involvement in key decisions of project implementation as well as in the design of future project phases, b) for the thematic preparation of joint meetings and workshops and c) for the maximisation of synergies at the local level. Stronger portfolio governance would also be in need of a monitoring system for the entire portfolio, as the current project-specific monitoring processes include disincentives for cooperation.

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<sup>32</sup> Though the review team agrees with the project that capacity building and well-drafted training standards and curricula are important pre-conditions for good training, it is important to emphasise that control mechanisms that monitor actual training quality are important, too.



## 6 Recommendations

### 6.1 Improving collaboration in view of the entire portfolio

- SDC has to find a way to increase its leverage in portfolio governance in order to maximise overall impact. This will also involve the allocation of more temporal resources to the strategic steering of the three projects. The resources should be used, in particular, a) for that SDC can play a stronger role when key decisions of project implementation are taken, b) for the thematic preparation of joint meetings and workshops and c) for the maximisation of synergies at the local level.
- In order to better understand the overall effectiveness of all activities implemented under the umbrella of the Youth Employment Portfolio, a portfolio monitoring system should be introduced that is designed and implemented by external resource persons. Based on evidence from portfolio monitoring, more informed decisions can then be taken with regard to key decisions of project implementation and with regard to the design of future project phases. The portfolio monitoring system could thus play a role as a tool of formative evaluation.
- Instead of external evaluations that focus on individual projects, external evaluations would need to encompass the entire portfolio.
- In view of the current absence of a strong, common corporate identity of the three projects, it would be important to ensure that project staff and their partners primarily understand their mission as focussing on the reduction of youth unemployment. Self-identifications based on project-specific approaches (such as M4P or the Prilika Plus model) would need to be understood by the projects as means to a common end, means that should be employed with a certain flexibility and openness towards other approaches.
- A stronger corporate identity of the projects as being part of one portfolio with one core objective (reduction of youth unemployment) needs to evolve. It could be facilitated by common workshops (moderated by external resource persons), a portfolio monitoring system and references to the entire portfolio on each project website.

### 6.2 Youth Employment Project

The reviewers are of the strong view that the project should be continued with a third phase.

#### 6.2.1 *The core objective of the third phase*

- The core of this next phase should focus on the *country-wide implementation* of the processes established at the two model PES offices in the second phase. Thereby, ways need to be found that the reform process can evolve also without considerable infrastructural development.
- Though the support to NGO initiatives have resulted in a number of relevant activities, such a component should not play a major role in the third phase. Rather, it would be important to work with the other projects from the portfolio in order to improve access of unemployed to effective skills training and to (self-)employment.
- If YEP should enter a new field then we suggest to reconsider to work with schools and universities in order to contribute to the prevention of unemployment. Campaigns on the benefits of internships that would be implemented in cooperation with employers could be one potential activity.

### **6.2.2 New elements in the PES model**

Though the processes at the two model offices feature significant innovations, a number of further elements could be added to the new PES model:

- Counselling on potential skill needs of the unemployed should be made more systematic. This would imply a more systematic use of the data on the labour market situation and of up-to-date expertise on available training opportunities and funding mechanisms that support training. All potential synergies with SfJ should be used. Electronic forms of counselling should be introduced wherever possible.
- PES offices should inform the unemployed more systematically about the clear benefits of internships.
- YEP should help public PES in BiH to find ways to broaden the set of labour market measures even in smaller cantons. One option here would be to convince cantons to pay measures implemented in other cantons (both by public and private providers).

### **6.2.3 Capacity building**

- Capacity building of PES staff will continue to be very important. In order to train the staff of PES offices that are newly introduced to the system, staff from the existing two model offices should be involved as trainers.
- Given that counselling on skills training opportunities would be an important additional element in the PES model, capacity building should also include this dimension by improving the staff's capacity to analyse training needs of unemployed people and to find appropriate training opportunities.
- Capacity building should also continue to involve the higher hierarchical levels of PES (state/entity/cantonal), as many important policy changes can only be achieved if high-level administrators are aware of the need for change.
- An option to consider would be to develop a national competence centre for youth employment that provides training to PES staff from all over BiH or even to professionals from neighbouring countries.

### **6.2.4 Policy dialogue**

- Policy dialogue through the Youth Employment Forum needs to be continued. However, it will be important to strengthen ownership by stakeholders from BiH, in particular from the higher levels of the public authorities (state/entity/cantonal). The latter can be facilitated through continued capacity development at all levels.
- YEP's contribution to policy dialogue should continue to underline the need that PES funds can be used for training activities.

## **6.3 Skills for Jobs**

The reviewers propose to carefully analyse the achievements of the first phase, before activities are expanded under phase 2. The following questions would need particular attention:

- Which will be the best way to ensure that training programmes are designed according to the needs of the three target groups in the focus of SfJ (i.e. VET students, unemployed, experienced workers)? The design of the programmes for these specific groups may strongly differ in terms of curricula and certification, funding mechanisms, key partners and mechanisms for labour market integration.
- Which organisations are the most realistic to become responsible for certification?

- How can monitoring be improved? On the one hand, it would be important to gather more systematic information on the trainees (including employment status prior to training and wages after training). On the other hand, it will be important to improve monitoring of training provision by project partners. Currently, there is a strong focus on inputs (i.e. curricula, capacity development, and infrastructure) but a lack of information on training quality. Information flowing out from external assessment of the graduates has not been available so far – and might not be sufficient.

#### **6.4 Market Makers**

It is a key element of MM to identify further interventions on a regular basis and the reviewers therefore refrain from making specific suggestions in this regard.

It seems, however, important for the project to ponder on its activities in the field of skills development, particularly with regard to the IT sector. There are good reasons to argue that skills shortages seriously hinder the further growth of this sector. However, an initiative that supports a total number of 6 companies to develop the skills of already highly educated individuals will not help to resolve skills shortages. What would be needed, here, is a serious discussion about how skills for this sector could be developed on a much larger scale. This would also involve contributing to more and better programmes offered by public education and training providers but also to develop more convincing forms of financing access to private training providers. Given that salaries in the IT sector are comparatively high, it would, for instance, be possible to design sustainable loan schemes.

#### **6.5 Improving the network with Switzerland in VET and youth employment**

It is not possible to directly transfer elements of the Swiss VET and youth employment system to BiH. The reasons for comparatively low (youth) unemployment in the Swiss labour market are complex, ranging from a relatively liberal employment regime, to the high importance of VET and to constant economic growth (which, again, has many different reasons). Nevertheless, there are some fields related to youth employment and VET where an analysis of Swiss practices might add value to SDC's youth portfolio in BiH:

##### **6.5.1 Broadening the offer of active labour market measures**

Most Swiss cantons offer a broad set of active labour market measures. Two aspects are particularly important:

- *Orientation towards specific target groups:* As the specific needs of unemployed people are heterogeneous, the unemployed have access to a diverse set of active labour market measures, ranging from counselling to provision of access to internships and regular VET programmes.
- *Inter-cantonal market for active labour market services:* Given the small size of many cantons and the need to offer a broad set of labour market measures, the cantons are financing access to programmes that are offered in other cantons, by both private and public providers. Given the highly-decentralised administrative structure of BiH, the Swiss approach to governing and financing active labour market measure might be worth analysing.

For both aspects, it could be useful to contact the following organisations:

- Office for Economy and Labour of the Canton of Zurich<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.awa.zh.ch/internet/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/awa/de/arbeitsmarkt/qus.html> [25.11.2014]

- Office for professional orientation and training of the Canton of Geneva (*Office pour l'orientation, la formation professionnelle et continue*)<sup>34</sup>
- Association of the Swiss Labour and Employment Authorities (*Verband Schweizerischer Arbeitsmarktbehörden*)<sup>35</sup>
- Impulsis: a Zurich-based provider of active labour market measures for young unemployed<sup>36</sup>

### 6.5.2 Improving capacity building in the field of youth employment

Though the cantons have considerable autonomy to design and fund active labour measures, the authorities collaborate across cantons when it comes to capacity building for their own staff. As mentioned above, this could be important for the BiH context, too. In Switzerland, the Association of the Swiss Labour and Employment Authorities (*Verband Schweizerischer Arbeitsmarktbehörden*) is in charge of this type of capacity building.<sup>37</sup>

### 6.5.3 Increasing access of adults to formal VET

Given the shortage of skilled labour in many sectors of the Swiss economy, there are a lot of attempts to improve access of adults to VET, both formal and non-formal. The following initiatives are of particular relevance to the BiH context:

- Initiative of the Swiss Association of Gastronomy (Gastrosuisse) for the catering sector<sup>38</sup>
- Initiative of the Swiss Construction Entrepreneurs' Association for masons<sup>39</sup>
- Initiative in the Canton of Solothurn for production technicians<sup>40</sup>

Considerable information on VET for adults in Switzerland can also be found on the websites of the following organisations:

- Zurich University of Teacher Education: website of a series of presentations and workshops on VET for adults in Switzerland<sup>41</sup>
- Emil Wettstein / Berufsbildungsprojekte: website with very rich information on VET for adults in the whole of Switzerland<sup>42</sup>

### 6.5.4 Increasing access of adults to non-formal VET

Non-formal VET programmes for adults are mainly provided by private sector organisations in economic sectors with a lot of comparatively low-qualified employment. Particularly important are programmes in the construction and in the social care sector.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.ge.ch/ofpc/> [25.11.2014]; the Canton of Geneva is generally considered to be one of the most innovative in Switzerland when it comes to the design of training programmes for unemployed.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.vsaa.ch> [25.11.2014]

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.impulsis.ch/> [25.11.2014]

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.vsaa.ch/fachstelle-bildung/avig-vollzug> [25.11.2014]

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.hotelgastro.ch/standard.cfm?ID=607&language=1>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.baumeister.ch/berufsbildung/grundbildung/projekt-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.so.ch/departemente/bildung-und-kultur/berufsbildung-mittel-und-hochschulen/berufs-studien-und-laufbahnberatung/biz/nhb-produktionsmechanikerin-efz.html>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.phzh.ch/Berufliche-Nachqualifizierung> [25.11.2014]

<sup>42</sup> <http://bbprojekte.ch/zc-programme/> [25.11.2014]

<sup>43</sup> For social care see e.g. the courses by the cantonal sections of the Swiss Red Cross (e.g. <https://www.srk-zuerich.ch/srk/lch-will-lernen/> [25.11.2014]) ; for the training in the construction sector see the special training programmes offered by the Swiss Construction Entrepreneurs' Association, e.g. for construction machine drivers (<http://www.baumeister.ch/berufsbildung/berufe-bauhauptgewerbe/> [25.11.2014])

## 7 Annexes

### Annex 1: Terms of references: Youth Employment Portfolio Assessment (team leader)

Duration: 12 to 19 September 2014

#### 1. Background

##### 1.1 Introduction

High unemployment is one of the biggest socioeconomic problems faced by Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The estimated unemployment rate in accordance with ILO methodology (based on annual representative surveys) constituted 28%, while at the same time registered/official unemployment amounted to 44%. Youth (59%), and particularly young women (64%), are most hardly hit by unemployment.<sup>44</sup>

The roots of BiH's unemployment situation lie in the country's transition from a socialist to a market economy. Transition entails the implementation of far-reaching reforms in different areas relevant for the functioning of the economy, which are progressing at different speeds. Delays in reforming the vocational education and training (VET) system and in creating a more enabling business environment have resulted in a considerable mismatch between the skills available in today's workforce and those sought after by employers. Despite the high unemployment rate in the country, there are at the same time numerous vacancies which cannot be filled, because of a lack of applicants possessing the required skills.

To address the lag effects of the transition to a market economy and close the existing skills gap, a substantial number of employees need to be re-skilled, or their skills need to be significantly upgraded, in line with the needs of the market. A more integrated approach to employment, encompassing all relevant sectorial policies would be needed to address the country's considerable labour market challenges. Entity governments still lack the capacity to implement appropriate active labour market measures. The large number of labour and employment institutions at State, Entity and Canton levels and the lack of coordination between them remain a cause for concern. Considerable efforts remain to be made to develop reliable labour market data, a prerequisite for developing labour market policy, counselling and employment mediation. A major stumbling block for the implementation of these reforms has been the poor performance of the Public Employment Services (PES) in both entities. Due to their limited capacities and an overburdening with so-called passive labour market measures (social security administration for the unemployed), the PES so far have been devoting only little time and efforts to their core task – to help the unemployed find work. However, their strong involvement in the SDC projects has proven that the PES are open to change and ready to improve their services for unemployed people

In 2012, only around 5% of the BiH population was involved in any kind of continuous education. Among young people aged 15-25 just 3.3% of those not enrolled in the formal school system were included in some sort of education or training program. The willingness of the labour force to pay out of the pocket for their training is low. The private market for the provision of continuous education and training to adults is very underdeveloped, and the number of professional training providers limited. A serious problem consists in the fact that

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<sup>44</sup> The official unemployment rate reflects the number of people officially registered as unemployed. As the social security system entitles unemployed persons to health insurance, it creates incentives for those working in the informal economy to register as unemployed to enjoy the healthcare benefits. The ILO unemployment rate thus provides a clearer picture of real unemployment.

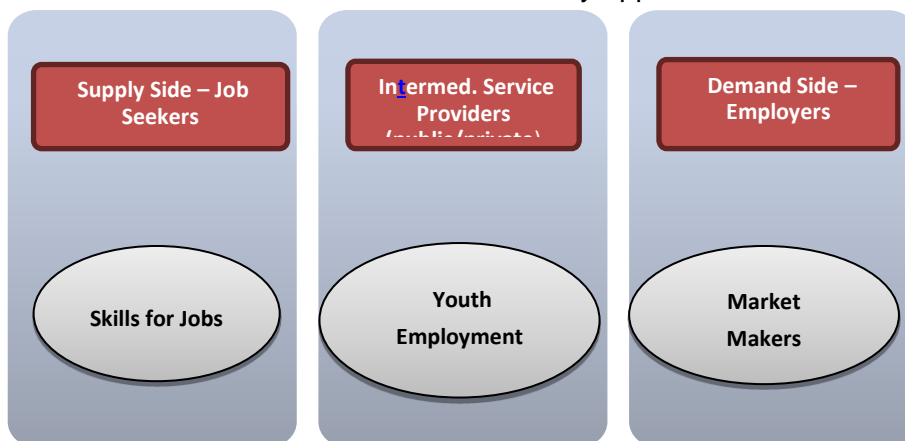
the available offer of NFAET (Non-Formal Adult Education and Training) services is out of touch with the skills requirements on the labour market, due to the fact that there is no systematic involvement of employers in the training and continuous education “system”. Existing training programs are therefore largely supply-driven, with virtually no inputs provided by employers. At the same time, a number of larger companies conduct in-house adult training on their own initiative. In this way companies are supplementing inadequate education and training conducted by educational institutions. Most companies, however, are not satisfied with this solution, as organizing trainings themselves implies significant investments in terms of time, personnel, and financial resources.

## 1.2 SDC’s Youth Employment Portfolio

Given the above described situation in the country, and in line with the SDC Western Balkan concept, which **aims to improve youth’s employment prospects through better cooperation of vocational education/training systems and private sector employers**, youth employment has been defined as one of the priorities of Swiss development cooperation in BiH in its Cooperation Strategy (CS) for the years 2013-2016. It is constituted in the domain Economy & Employment.

Experiences gained in the past have underlined the need for a more systematic approach in the promotion of YE. A comprehensive strategy in dealing with youth unemployment as a multidimensional problem is thus being pursued under the new CS, addressing the demand- and the supply-side of the labour market, the matching process between the two, as well as relevant framework conditions.

Currently, SDC’s YE portfolio counts three projects: the Youth Employment Project (YEP), Skills for Jobs/Prilika Plus (SfJ/PP) and MarketMakers. The first two interventions focus on the supply and matching side of the labour market, enabling a better functioning of job intermediation services and supporting an increased employability of young job-seekers. While the projects are showing significant results, their impact is limited by the fact that the overall amount of open job positions in BiH is very low. Effective measures at the demand side of the labour market, i.e. the creation of new jobs and upgrading of existing ones, should therefore be stimulated within the newly approved MarketMakers program.



## 2. Rationale and Objectives of the Review

### 2.1 Rationale of the review

The review shall cover the three ongoing swiss-funded pillar projects within the Youth Employment (YE) domain (Skills for jobs, Youth employment project, MarketMakers). The Youth Employment portfolio has been gradually developed, therefore the three pillar projects, which have been built around the major bottle-necks on the labor market, are at

different implementation/development stages. Collaboration and use of synergies among them is not on a significant level, but from SDC's perspective would have potential to boost the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. Besides this, the Youth employment project (YEP) is entering soon the preparation process for a possible consecutive project phase, hence the timing of the review is right to verify and recommend on the future strategic orientation.

**The purpose of the review is:**

- A. Assess overall effectiveness of YE-Portfolio
- B. Assess the potentials of increased collaboration among the pillar projects in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Given the potentials exist: suggest ways and measures to increase impact of the programme by better collaboration and use of synergies among the projects.
- C. Provide recommendations on the strategic orientation of the third phase of the youth employment project (YEP)

Consequently, the review serves mainly for learning and steering purposes.

## **2.2 Objectives of the review**

### **A. Assessment of the overall effectiveness of the YE Portfolio**

#### **Specific issues to be addressed**

- A.1 What has been or is the likely impact of the interventions on the BiH employment market? E.g. Does the impact hypothesis and its assumptions hold? Are crowding in, empowerment of the private sector etc. likely to happen?
- A.2 What has been or is the likely impact of the interventions on the target group young people, especially young women?
- A.3 How sustainable are the created institutions and procedures? How could it be improved?
- A.4 How effectively and efficiently were the interventions planned, implemented and monitored? E.g. Could potentially even more relevant interventions be identified? Does the current project neglect any promising and worthwhile interventions or player on the market?

### **B. Assess the potentials of increased collaboration among the pillar projects in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Given the potentials exist: suggest ways and measures to increase impact of the programme by better collaboration and use of synergies among the projects<sup>45</sup>**

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<sup>45</sup> In order to achieve an optimal interplay of different interventions within the Youth Employment portfolio, the consultants are expected to systematically analyze and critically assess existing interactions between the three projects and provide recommendations for needed changes that would allow stronger links and joint actions, including the scaling- up of successful practices.

### **Specific issues to be addressed**

- B.2 What are the expectations towards the further Swiss support (by the projects themselves and by the project partners)?
  - B.3 Where are the most promising opportunities for stronger connections and joint activities of the different projects within the portfolio?
  - B.4 Recommend the actions and mechanisms to improve mutual understanding and relation at all levels.
  - B.5 Ideas on how to improve the network with Swiss, and other competence centers for youth employment: What concrete contributions can Switzerland make to reduce youth unemployment in BiH as a result of its “comparative advantages”/ specific strengths (e.g. dual system; public-private partnership)?
- C. Provide recommendations on the strategic orientation of the third phase of the youth employment project (YEP)<sup>46</sup>**

### **Specific issues to be addressed**

- C.1 Which project activities and outputs are the most relevant having in mind the current situation on the labor market and the composition of the YE portfolio? Which ones should be scaled-up and rolled-out? What could be done to make the project’s interventions more effective?
- C.2 Does the current project neglect any promising and worthwhile interventions?
- C.3 To what extent do the YEP interventions contribute to capacity development and the strengthening of the targeted institutions and organizations in BiH?
- C.4 To what extent does the project establish processes, mechanisms and instruments that are likely to become sustainable after the phasing-out of the project?
- C.5 What are recommendations on the core activities for the third phase? What are suggestions on how to better integrate and synergize YEP activities with other interventions in SDC’s Youth Employability domain, namely “Skills for Jobs” and MarketMakers projects.

## **3. Methodology and Expected Outputs of the Review**

### **3.1 Methodology**

The review process shall be carried out as follows:

- Desk study/document review:
- Review of project documents: semi-annual operational and financial reports, monthly progress reports;
- Review of the relevant national policy and strategy documents;

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<sup>46</sup> Reality check and verification of the current YEP strategic orientation, as a basis for the final decision-making on the continuation of the project.

- Analysis of the previous evaluation reports, as well as information from the project's monitoring system.
- Semi-Structured interviews with representatives of key actors who have been (are being) involved in the project, a list of relevant contacts will be established by SCO (Annex 1)
- Verification of key findings and preliminary assessments, as well as presentation of conclusions and elements for decision making on future support actions in the Youth employment field.

### **3.2 Deliverables of the Review**

The review team will deliver the following:

- A draft review report within 3 weeks after completion of field work
- A final review report
- The report should be written in English and not exceed 30 pages (excluding annexes). All findings in support of the main report shall be part of the report's annexes.
- The structure of the external review report shall include the following sections:
  - Table of Content
  - Acronyms and abbreviations
  - Acknowledgements
  - Executive summary
    1. Introduction
    2. Description of the intervention
    3. Findings
    4. Conclusions
    5. Recommendations & Lessons learnt
  - Annexes

## **4. Tasks and Responsibilities of the Consultant**

The mandate will be carried out by a team of two consultants, one international and one local. The international consultant performs the role of the team leader and is responsible for submitting all deliverables in sufficient quality and due time to SDC.

The team of consultants shall perform the following tasks:

- Thorough document review
- Methodological preparation
- Briefing and debriefing with the SCO
- Field visits and interviews with the project partners and stakeholders in the field (see Annex 1 list of interviewees and field visits foreseen for the mandate)
- Submission of the draft and final version of the external review report to SDC within the given deadlines

The team of consultants will be joined by Mr. Reto Nigg, regional advisor for business administration of the Swiss embassy in Sarajevo. He is enrolled in the NADEL-CAS and his participation in the review is part of a personal training measure. His role within the review will be discussed between the international consultant and Mr. Nigg himself.

## 5. Work Plan and Timetable

A draft External Review Report shall be submitted to Swiss Embassy three weeks after the completion of the mission. Following the comments by the Embassy, a final External Review Report shall be submitted one week after the receipt of the comments.

The review is ending with a management response provided by the Swiss Embassy. It shall contain a general assessment of the conducted review and its process as well as a statement of the Embassy position regarding the conclusions and recommendations given in the final review report.

Activity	Workdays		
	International Consultant	Local Consultant	Total
<b>Preparation</b>			
Desk review	3	3	6
Methodological preparation (guiding questions for interviews)	½	½	1
<b>Review / Field work</b>			
Interviews with project stakeholders (YEP team, project partners, beneficiaries) and other relevant actors in the youth employability field	6	5	11
<b>Reporting</b>			
Writing of a draft report	4	3	7
Finalisation of the report	2	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15 ½</b>	<b>12 ½</b>	<b>28</b>

Several consultants have been invited to express their interest in this mandate prior to the establishment of the specific ToR. The selected consultants have been chosen based on their professional experience.

## 6. Contract and Logistics

The Embassy of Switzerland in BiH offers an international contract to the consultant. The consultant's engagement covers the period from 08.09.2014 to 15.10.2014, with 15 ½ working days in total.

Transport and accommodation will be organized by the consultants themselves. The consultants are responsible for the division of the workload among themselves.

## Annex 2: Programme of the mission

<p><b>Monday, 15.09.</b></p> <p>8.30</p> <p>10.00</p> <p>12.00</p> <p>13.00</p> <p>14.00</p>	<p>Briefing at the Embassy 033/ 275 865</p> <p><b><u>Market Makers</u></b> Zmaja od Bosne 74/2, 033/942 294, 942 293</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p><b>SERDA (Regional Development Agency for Sarajevo Region)</b> Hamdije Cemerlica 2/11 (zgrada Energoinvesta), 033/652 935</p> <p><b>BIT Alliance</b> Zmaja od Bosne bb, TC Robot, entrance JI/5, 71000 Sarajevo</p> <p><i>Wrap up of the day?</i></p>	<p>David Kramer, Deputy Director of Cooperation Mersiha Alijagic, National Program Officer</p> <p>Andrew Wilson, Project Manager, Vildana Mandalovic, Deputy Project Manager ( upon request also other team members)</p> <p>Mr Sevkija Okeric, Director Aida Džamalića Duran, Senior Manager Slavisa Ceranic, Senior Manager</p> <p>Damir Ibrisimovic, 061139754 Zana Karkin, 061227192</p> <p>Reto, Mr Maurer and Mrs Andric</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 16.09.</b></p> <p>8.30</p> <p>10.30</p> <p>12.00</p> <p>13.00</p>	<p><b><u>Youth Employment Project (YEP)</u></b> Ljubljanska 34, 033/222 703</p> <p><b>Youth Information Agency (OIA)</b> Ferhadija 28, 033/653 217</p> <p>Lunch</p> <p><b>Employment Office (Model Office Novo Sarajevo),</b> Lozionicka, 033/653 217</p> <p><i>Sarajavo - Banja Luka Hotel Bosna</i></p>	<p>Ranko Markus, Team Leader (upon request the rest of the team will join) Jan Zlatan Kulenovic, Executive Director / Reto</p> <p>Amela Mulac, Director, Fikret Hadzic, Cantonal Employment Service Counsellors and representatives of the Job Club Sarajevo (Adisa Saric, Tamara Jakupovic), Reto</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, 17.09.</b></p> <p>8.30</p>	<p><b><u>Skills for Jobs</u></b> Save Mrkalja 16/4, 066/ 714 312</p>	<p>Nikola Dragovic, Project Manager</p>

10.30	<b><u>Training Centre / Agricultural School</u></b> Knjaza Milosa 9, 065/927 931	Edi Hanes, Director
<b>13.30</b>	<i>Banja Luka – Srbac</i>	
	<b>Job Club Srbac + NVO Milenium</b> Mome Vidovica 15, 051/490 695	Dragan Mačinković, Milan Berić Representative of Srbac Municipality
15.00	<b>WMTA, training center (cooperating with Skills for Jobs and YEP)</b> Ul. Danka Mitrova bb	Zoran Vukovic, 066/ 820 751
	<i>Srbac - Sarajevo</i>	
<b>Thursday, 18.09.</b>		
9.00	<b>NGO KULT</b> Ul. 4 viteske brigade 34-36, Ilidza	Jasmin Bešić i Amila Dedić, Reto
11.00	<b>Employment Service Canton Sarajevo</b> <b>Djoke Mazalica 3, 033/251 260</b>	Igor Kamocaji, Director, Reto
12.30	Lunch	
14.00	<b><u>Skills for Jobs Sarajevo</u></b> Alije Isakovića 1 066/ 004 655	Emir Dervisevic, Halko Basaric Eldin Sarajlic
16.00	<b>Training Centre JUB</b> Vlakovo 1J, Blazuj	Elvir Cimpo (061 225 194), Reto
<b>Friday, 19.09.</b>		
	Open for additional meetings upon request	Reto
12.30	Debriefing in the Embassy	David, Mersiha, Reto