



Making the Labor Market Work for Vulnerable Groups

DEV-AID

Evaluation Report

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BfdW	Brot fur die Welt
CFP	Call for Proposal
GDEVET	General Directorate of Employment and Vocational Education and Training
HEKS	Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz
MoSW&Y	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCCI	National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NES	National Employment Service
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PVTC	Public Vocational Training Center
RDPVT	Regional Directorate of Public Vocational Training
RES	Regional Employment Service
SPN	Social Partners Network
VT	Vocational Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes findings, conclusions, and recommendations relating to the evaluation of the “Making the labor market work for vulnerable groups” project is developed and implemented by DEV-AID in close cooperation with the Public Vocational Training Center (PVTC) No.4 Tirana. The evaluation period includes April 2014-May 2015.

The purpose of this evaluation was to review project’s effectiveness and impact. Evaluation results will be used by DEV-AID and potential donors to decide about funding of this project in the future and the possibility of replicating it in other PVTCs in Albania. The evaluation was conducted by two consultants of the Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Center (ANTTARC).

The project objective is to “make the labor market work for socially excluded groups, through strengthening the synergies between vocational training and labor force requested from the market, involving in the system potential employers and NGOs working with under-developed communities. Four specific objectives have been defined in order to achieve the project objective including: (1) Improved match between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market; (2) Improved access of vulnerable groups to vocational education; (3) Improved employability of vulnerable groups; and (4) Improved integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market.

The main components for the achievements of the project objectives include: Establishing the Social Partners’ Network (SPN) of PVTC Nr.4 Tirana with participation of representatives of other public agencies dealing with vocational training and education and employment, non-governmental organizations focusing on vulnerable groups, and businesses; Information and awareness activities for vulnerable groups focusing social integration; Info-Point that informs trainees from vulnerable groups on PVTC’s services and provides career orientation and labor market information; Social and psychological counselling and legal advice for trainees from the vulnerable groups; Mediation for the professional practice and employment in local businesses of trainees from the vulnerable groups; and Capacity development of the PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana relating to management, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and cross-sector networking and cooperation.

Main findings of the evaluation include:

- The project is in line with priorities of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) and its Action Plan. It contributes to offering quality professional education and training for youth and adults (Strategic Priority B) and encouraging social inclusion and territorial cohesion (Strategic Priority C).
- By focusing on networking between key stakeholders--state agencies, non-profit organizations, and business,—the project has increased the access of vulnerable groups into vocational training and their employment.
- Due to project intervention, the match between key actors of the vocational training and integration into the labor market has improved. The project has initiated and facilitated the establishment of the SPN of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana bringing together state agencies, non-profit organizations, and business representatives. It presents a good model of interaction and networking between state agencies responsible for vocational training and employment and partners from other sectors—business and non-profit.

- The access of vulnerable groups to vocational education has improved as a result of information and awareness activities with vulnerable groups and cooperation with the non-governmental organizations working with vulnerable groups and PVTC Nr.4. During the 2014-2015, the trainees from vulnerable groups were round 67% of the trainees enrolled in PVTC Nr. 4.
- The project has added a new social orientation to the vocational education program consisting of social, psychological, and legal support. The employability of vulnerable groups has improved due to vocational skills and social, psychological, and legal support, and involvement in professional practice. 97% of the graduates have completed the one-month professional practice at local businesses.
- The integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market has improved due to the interaction in the framework of the Social Partners Network and mediation by DEV-AID project. 53% of trainees participating in the professional practice have been employed upon its completion, 42% of them passed the probation period and signed a job contract. Training on labor market, parties' rights and duties, and behavior at work place has helped them keep the job.
- Due to its participation in project implementation and engagement in the Social Partners' Network, PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased its management capacity and external communication. Now, it better reaches out to and works with vulnerable groups. It is better perceived by vulnerable groups, non-governmental organizations, and businesses. PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has become a model center.
- Due to participation in the Social Partners' Network, NPOs have established bridges with PVTC Nr.4 and other state agencies thus increasing the opportunities for their beneficiaries to benefit from the public services. They have also established bridges with business sector thus increasing the employment opportunities for their beneficiaries.
- The gender issue has been central during project planning and implementation. 52% of participants in different activities—trainees, social, psychological, and legal counselling, professional practice, employment, etc.—have been women.
- The project has been efficient due to accurate planning, based on comprehensive environmental analysis, the experience of other projects, and effective management systems, especially relating to monitoring, evaluation, reporting, financial management, and human resource management.
- The Social Partners' Network and its coordination mechanisms are essential for the sustainability of project results. It is an effective structure resulting in win-win situations for all stakeholders by serving vulnerable groups. It is compatible with local perceptions of needs and ways of producing and sharing benefits.

Main recommendations of the evaluation report include:

- The model established by DEV-AID is a best practice of cooperation among key stakeholders and should be further strengthened by PVTC Nr.4. PVTC Nr.4 Tirana should further develop its capacity in order to enhance its key position at the Social Partners' Network. It should develop the capacity and mobilize resources to take over services currently provided by DEV-AID project. It should transfer its knowledge and skills to other PVTCs.
- The model should be replicated in other PVTCs in order to improve interaction and networking with non-governmental and business sectors in their area.

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- More financial and personal resources have to be tapped in order to support further strengthening of SPN and its replication to other PVTCS. Taking into consideration limited resources, in addition to further support for PVTCS Nr. 1 Tirana, PVTCS Nr.1 Tirana and PVTCS Durres that have expressed their interest and willingness to replicate the model might be supported.
 - The social, psychological, and legal support/counselling should be part of any similar future projects working with vulnerable groups. Such support is essential to build the self-esteem and self-confidence and to improve the inclusion in vocational training, employment and, therefore, social life.
 - The professional practice is an important component that should be applied in any similar future project because it helps consolidate the vocational skills gained during the vocational training courses as well as establishes relationships with the businesses that could be potential employers.
 - PVTCS should work to increase the relevance and quality of their vocational training as well as promote these services to the business sector.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. The project, implementing organization(s), and the target groups

Project description

The “Making the labor market work for vulnerable groups” project is developed and implemented by DEV-AID in close cooperation with the Public Vocational Training Center (PVTC) No.4 Tirana and General Directorate of Employment and Vocational Education and Training (GDEVET) at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSW&Y). GDEVET includes the Department of Education, Vocational Formation and Qualifications Policies. The Sector of Vocational Education and Formation within this Department is responsible for the vocational education and training, also including PVTCs. The project aims at addressing integration of vulnerable groups in the labor market through public vocational education and training (VET). Based on the situation analysis conducted by DEV-AID, the causes of the problem include the negative image of Vocational Training (VT) provided by PVTCs in the eyes of business, lack of information and awareness, weak mechanism of social support for the beneficiaries, limited interaction between stakeholders, and poor alignment with labor market needs.

The project aims at improving the quality of public services relating to vocational training in order to make these services useful for the vulnerable groups and decrease their unemployment. It aims at building a model of multifunctional services provided by VT centers. It also aims at increasing the access of vulnerable groups to the VT services and labor market through coordination and cooperation of key stakeholders, awareness raising of stakeholders and vulnerable groups, and vulnerable groups’ counselling and employment mediation. By doing so, the project contributes to the integration/reintegration of vulnerable groups in the labor market and society and, therefore, to the improvement of their life.

The project staff closely collaborates with the PVTC Nr.4 Tirana. In addition to the above-mentioned, the project also focuses on capacity development of the Center. It aims at transferring the knowledge and skill of its staff relating to vulnerable groups, vocational training, multidimensional social support, and cross-sector networking to the staff of the Center. Through the project, DEV-AID transmits the “know how” about improving the quality and reputation of public vocational training services through networking and employment intermediation.

The project established a network of social actors in order to establish and promote interaction and networking between public vocational training centers and social partners such as NPOs, business, employers’ organizations, trade unions, and other state agencies.

The project focuses on employment-oriented VT. It provides, through the “Info Point” placed at the PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana, information and assistance about the services provided by the Center and how to access and benefit from them. It also provides social, psychological, and legal counselling and legal assistance to members of vulnerable groups. It enables the members of vulnerable groups acquire employment-oriented vocational training, gain competencies and entrepreneurial skills. Another key component of the project is job mediation and intermediation between all parties to reintegrate the trainees in the labor market. In this framework, DEV-AID has established strong relationships with potential employers and their associations such as Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The project is based on the concept that the partnership between public agencies providing vocational training services and business regarding workforce training and continuous learning is of mutual benefit. But, they have to work together to define the relationship, determine methods of collaboration, and establish shared goals and specific roles and responsibilities. Also, to ensure that training is relevant to labor market and employment needs, the project conducted a comprehensive survey of the labor market.

Implementing organizations

The project is being implemented by DEV-AID in close cooperation with PVTC No.4 Tirana and General Directorate of VET at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

DEV-AID

DEV-AID is a non-profit organization that is established on October 2013. Its mission is “to support and represent developing communities in human rights issues, gender equality and social progress, aiming to play an important role by providing services to the community through orientation, mediation, information and providing alternatives for improving the socio-economic and political conditions.”

The organization has been founded from a group of young professionals, with extensive experience and significant expertise relating to economic development and social integration of vulnerable groups. Empowering the vulnerable groups through vocational education and training and employment mediation is one of DEV-AID strengths. Its members have inherited a good network of actors involved in integration of vulnerable groups in the labor market and social life and VET.

The voluntary campaign named “Give what You Can!” was the first major activity of DEV-AID. It was an appeal to people to provide for the basic needs (clothes and food) of people living on the street, in extreme poverty. Dev-Aid has worked to raise community awareness of voluntarism and philanthropy through awareness campaigns and information sharing.

The DEV-AID permanent staff consists of the Executive Director, Finance Manager, Psychologist, and Social Worker. The project staff includes the Project Director (carried out by the Executive Director), Finance Manager, Psychologist, Social Worker, Information Provider and Career Consultant, and Legal Advisor.

Public Vocational Training Centre No.4 in Tirana

PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana, is a public agency responsible for the vocational training. It is one of nine agencies that are established in Albania. Upon DEV-AID initiative, it partnered with DEV-AID for the implementation of the project. The cooperation is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between MoSW&Y/PVTC No.4 Tirana and DEV-AID. In the MoUs, state institutions agreed to support DEV-AID to implement the project by also covering a part of administration costs (office space and some running costs). The MoU accepts DEV-AID as an added structure of PVTC No.4 in Tirana. By creating a working environment, providing several resources, and partnering with DEV-AID in project development and implementation, PVTC No.4 in Tirana has been essential for the effective and efficient implementation of the project.

Municipality of Tirana

Another Memorandum of Understanding is signed by DEV-AID with the Municipality of Tirana. 9 out of 11 Mini-municipalities of Tirana have participated in project activities. The Municipality of Tirana committed the engagement of Social Offices of Mini-Municipalities in the Social Partners' Network. Mini-municipalities also engaged to support DEV-AID for the conduct of its awareness meetings and campaigns.

Main target groups

Direct beneficiaries

Vulnerable groups including: youth working on the street; people with low level or no education; youth that have dropped out of the schools; poor people; internal migrants; returnees from emigration; violated and abused women; members of Roma community; social and biological orphans; girls and women victims of trafficking; etc. They were referred by the NPOs working with them, mainly NPOs that joined the Social Partners' Network of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana.

NGOs participating in the Social Partners' Network. By participating in the network, NGOs have had the possibility to better serve the vulnerable groups thus creating more opportunities for them to become socially and professionally integrated. Also, being part of the network, NGOs have greater possibilities to build bridges of partnership and collaboration with the state agencies in order to better serve their beneficiaries.

Staff of the Public Vocational Training Center Nr. 4 Tirana. The project has supported PVTC's staff members especially relating to networking with social partners and social orientation of the Center.

Business sector. Local businesses have had access to qualified labor force mediated by the project.

Indirect beneficiaries

- 1500 trainees of the PVTC No.4 Tirana (excluding trainees enrolled by DEV-AID through SPN).
- Round 7500 family members of direct beneficiaries/vulnerable people.
- Communities the vulnerable people come from—round 45,000 inhabitants.
- Other institutions attracted by the success of the project like PVTCs.

1.2. Context analysis

Vocational Training in Albania

Vocational formation in Albania includes vocational education and vocational training. Vocational education and formation is realized through 53 schools including 44 public (also including the branches in the general high schools) and 9 private. Most of the schools offer 2-4 profiles. Only quarter of them offer more than eight vocational choices. The average number of students is 300. Though there are more boys than girls enrolled in these schools, most of the girls that graduate (79%) go to university. Most of the boys enter the labor market.

Vocational training is offered by a network of ten Public Centers of Vocational Training (one of them is a mobile center) which operate in the biggest cities including Tirana (2), Shkodra, Durrësi, Elbasani, Korça, Fier, and Gjirokaster. They are under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. The mobile center covers mainly the Northeastern Albania. These centers offer short-term courses (4-6 weeks) as well as longer courses (up to 7 months). The public VT system provides round 40 training courses. In addition, there are more than 340 licensed private agencies, also including 30 Centers of Vocational Formation that offer certificates recognized by the MoSW&Y. There is no monitoring system in place to evaluate the formation standards and quality of knowledge offered by these entities.

Vocational training mainly targets the unemployed people (registered or not at the National Employment Service-NES). However, they it is open to employed people and students depending on their vocational needs. There is a fee for attending the vocational training courses. Starting from January 2014, the fee is waived for long-term unemployed people and vulnerable groups such as Roma, trafficked women, orphans, returned emigrants, former prisoners, and disabled people. National Employment Service and Regional Employment Services (RES) have assessed the VT needs in the context of regional and national labor market.

According to assessment conducted by different institutions, PVTCs are not effective. Training they offer is weak relating to type and number of courses, programs (that are outdated and in several cases not according to curricula), training materials, funds for the development of new programs, duration of courses (that is short), and quality of instructors. There is no promotion of their services. There is no relationship between PVTCs and businesses. There is no tracking system for integration of trainees into the labor market. There are no relationships between PVTCs and vocational schools.¹

The enrolment of vulnerable groups has been limited and non-systematic. Based on unconfirmed data, in 2014 only round 30 % of trainees enrolled in 9 PVTCs are from vulnerable groups or long-term unemployed people registered at NES.

VET has been a priority area for the international assistance and donors, too. Their support and technical assistance have focused on the VT system reform, development of the VET curricula, training the trainers, training of the staff of PVTCs, social inclusion through vocational education and training, youth employment, etc.

Cross sector cooperation relating to vocational training and employment

¹ Source: National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020

The cooperation and coordination of different stakeholders—PVTCs, NPOs, business sector—has been limited. One of main reasons is the negative image of public vocational training system in the eyes of the business relating to its quality. Actually, being insufficiently geared towards employment, the VT system does not meet labor market requirements. Vocational training hardly feeds the economy with the required skills and competences.

Synergies between VT and labor market

Key stakeholders relating to vocational training and labor market are NES, local Employment Offices, and Chamber of Commerce. NES offers public services through Employment Offices for job-seekers and employers. Services offered to job-seekers include: information and advice; employment guidelines, needs assessment, and career development; training and other interventions into the labor market; mediation services; etc. Services for employers include: Information on labor market; Registration and publication of vacancies; Offering potential candidates for recruitment; Information on labor market programs such as VET, etc. It has also established an on-line system for job-seekers and employers.

The National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) have 654 members. Most of the businesses from Tirana are members of the Chamber. It offers its members different services also including relationships with public institutions. A healthy labor market is one of its priority areas.

Though there is a great need to prepare the labor force for the sectors of economy in which the majority of Albanians earn their living (small-scale trading, agriculture and processing of agriculture products, maintenance and repair, low-tech production, hostelry and tourism), vocational training for these sectors has been limited and ineffective. In 2013, most of trainees attend language and information technology courses. Only 39% of trainees follow courses that help them gain a specific vocational skill.

The vocational training that is provided is poorly aligned with the labor market needs. Moreover, the quality of vocational training graduates has been generally questioned. These factors combined have led to a negative image of the public vocational training in the eyes of business. The main consequences are that VT enrollment rate and follow up employment are low and the labor market does not get the qualified labor it needs.

Situation of vulnerable groups

In Albania, due to overall social and economic situation, the vulnerable groups constitute a significant part of the population. Their social and economic situation is difficult. They are socially excluded and live in poverty. Their limited social role has caused low self-esteem and low self-confidence and various psychological problems. Their access to social resources and systems, also including public vocational training, is limited. According to various studies and policy papers, the most affected groups in Albania are youth at risk, exploited women, unemployed persons, and Roma and Egyptians.

Policy and legal framework relating to VET and social inclusion

The National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) is a major policy document that deals with issues of skills development and employment. The goal of the Strategy is identification and development of proper policies to promote employment and vocational training of the labor force in order to open new quality jobs and long-lasting skills. The Strategy focus on increasing employment opportunities through efficient policies regarding the labor market, vocational education and training for young people and adults, social inclusion and cohesion, and strengthening the labor market and qualification system.

The Strategy considers vocational training and employment as complementary aiming that vocational training and education services are closely connected to employment services. Thus, job-seekers have opportunities to train and use these knowledge and skills to find a job.

The Strategy aims at establishing a unified employment services system based on the principle of public service and sustainable and flexible partnership between actors of the labor market. Vocational schools and vocational training centers are part of a unique system of vocational training and education that will contribute in the development of quality skills focusing on youth, women, and vulnerable groups. The main purpose is to create a labor force that meets the needs of the labor market and is competitive at regional and European market.

Other policy documents relating to vocational education and social inclusion are: “Strategy of Gender Equality 2014-2017”; “National Strategy of Youth 2014 - 2020” (Draft); “Strategy on social inclusion and social protection” 2014-2020 (Draft).

1.3. Implementation arrangements between the donors and implementing agency

The project is implemented based on a co-financing grant agreement between BfdW, HEKS and DEV-AID. The total amount of the grant is 105.000 Euro. The project implementation period is April 1st, 2014 – September 30th, 2015.

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The overall purpose of this final evaluation is to review project delivery of the expected results and achievement of outcomes and objectives. It also aims at providing DEV-AID and donor with sufficient information to make judgments about the performance of the project (its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact) and to make decisions about what should be the project focus if it could be prolonged and/or replicated..

The evaluation also provides information about what are the strengths of the project regarding the design and implementation and further build upon these strengths in order to improve the participation of vulnerable groups in public vocational training and labor market and increasing the quality of public vocational training and employment services. Key issues include:

- Quality of the project design and implementation.
- Activities carried out to achieve project objectives.
- Project relevance.
- Effectiveness.
- Efficiency.
- Impact.
- Sustainability of the project.
- Visibility.
- Cross cutting issues.
- Recommendations for the future.

The evaluation assessed the overall project performance as implemented by DEV-AID and project partners. This evaluation had as a reference point the project proposal (Annex A).

The evaluation assessed the project against standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, i.e. relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The particular focus is on results.

Based on the above analysis the evaluation-specific conclusions and recommendations were drawn up for any necessary further action by DEV-AID, government agencies, and/or BfWD² and other implementing agencies focusing on the sector.

2.2 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation is based on existing documentation including, but not limited to, project reports, reviews of various component outputs, meetings with project partners and beneficiaries, and administrative data. Full list of participants is attached. Information gathering also included on-site visits to the project office, PVTC No.4 Tirana, and project beneficiaries including trainees, businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies.

The evaluation methodology was designed to meet the requirements and expectations set out in the Terms of Reference. It included a consultative and transparent approach with internal and external stakeholders by using a variety of tools--review of project document and other

² HEKS phased out of Albania independently of this project

documents (progress and activity reports, mid-term and final reports, etc.), semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, group discussions, and direct observation during field visits.

The scope of this evaluation was analyzed with the DEV-AID staff prior to the start of the evaluation assignment. The report was prepared with technical assistance and valuable commitment from DEV-AID staff, especially Endrita Cici, who provided the required information, arranged field visits, and assisted for the conduct of all meetings with project stakeholders.

Data collection and field visits were conducted during May 2015. The first draft of the evaluation report was submitted on June 12th. The final Evaluation Report was submitted on June 17th 2015.

3. PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

3.1 Project design

The project design is clear and comprehensive. The hierarchy of objectives from the development goal to the project objective and project specific objectives is clear and logical. The development goal of this project is “Make the labor market work for vulnerable groups.” The project objective to: “Make the labor market work for socially excluded groups, through strengthening the synergies between vocational training and the labor force requested from the market, involving in the system potential employers and NGOs working with under-developed communities.” Four specific objectives have been defined in order to achieve the project objective including:

1. Improved match between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market.
2. Improved access of vulnerable groups to vocational education.
3. Improved employability of vulnerable groups.
4. Improved integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market.

The project design also includes the main components for the achievements of the project objectives which are clearly and logically linked. Main components of the project include:

- Establishing the Social Partners’ Network of PVTC Nr.4 Tirana with participation of representatives of other public agencies dealing with vocational training and education and employment, non-governmental organizations focusing on vulnerable groups, and businesses.
- Information and awareness activities for vulnerable groups focusing social integration.
- Establishing the Info-Point that would provide information on services provided by the Center as well as career orientation and information on labor market.
- Social and psychological counselling and legal advice for trainees from the vulnerable groups.
- Mediation for the professional practice and employment of trainees from the vulnerable groups in local businesses.
- Capacity development of the PTVC Nr. 4 Tirana relating to organizational management and vocational training for vulnerable groups.

Activities, expected results and verifiable indicators are identified for each of the objectives.

Project development and implementation is carried out by DEV-AID in close cooperation with PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana. For the implementation of the project, they have also cooperated with other public sector institutions, business sector, and non-governmental organizations.

Summary of observations and assessment

- The project design is characterized by clarity and holistic approach. The linkage between the development goal, project objective, project specific objectives, and main components is clear and logical.
- Activities, expected results and verifiable indicators are identified for each of the objectives.

- DEV-AID has partnered with the PVTC Nr.4 Tirana for the project development and implementation.

3.2. Activity Results

Review of the interim report, activity reports, and other project documents, supplemented by interviews, indicates that project core activities and outputs were produced as planned; some produced results in excess of those planned. The activity reports summarize factual information and are impressive in terms of how many different activities and conditions were discussed, and activities completed.

The project activities were organized in 4 work packages according to project objectives that were designed to lead into achievement of the results:

1. Matching between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market
2. Access of vulnerable groups to vocational education
3. Employability of vulnerable groups
4. Integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market

Main findings relating to each of the work packages are presented below.

3.2.1 Creation of the Social Partners' Network

- Two main activities have been designed and conducted in order to improve the match between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market: (1) Situation analysis and site visits; and (2) Establishing of the Social Partners' Network. Several tasks are carried out in the context of each main activity.
- Activities have been realized on behalf of a better identification of community concerns and needs. The analysis prepared after such activities and the data collected by the tools used by the staff, has made possible a better combination of the needs and demands of all the actors included in this process, aiming to improve in the end, the labor market integration of socially excluded and marginalized groups through better access to Vocational Training.
- During all the round tables organized on behalf of SP's network creation, all the actors involved have received also DEV-AID's recommendation on making the labor market work through an improved coordination mechanism and networking between these three sectors.
- Regarding the business sector, DEV-AID approached the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (with more than 654 members) and signed a MoU for the involvement and cooperation of business enterprises in project activities. Business enterprises that joined the network are considered the most significant actors of center trainees' professional integration.
- During the round tables, all the actors involved have discussed about how to make the labor market work through an improved coordination mechanism and networking between government, non-profit, and business sectors.

The table below presents a summary of achievements relating to this main activity.

Table 1: Summary of activity results for creation of SPN

Activity results	Expected	Achieved	Comments
Situation analysis	1	1	Situation analysis is conducted during first three months of the project life. More than 550 interviews are conducted. Interviews focused on: gender concerns and unemployment; awareness about VT; needed skills from the market; main actors in the target area. Report on situation analysis served for the development of the project's action plan.
Meetings with other NGOs targeting vulnerable groups		23	Serving more than 460 individuals from vulnerable groups.
Business preparatory meetings		52	Meetings with the businesses are held in their offices/work place.
Round tables to create the SP network	2	5	The Round tables aim to establish a network of the most important stakeholders concerning the issue integration of vulnerable youth into labour market. Participants discussed about how to make the labor market work through an improved coordination mechanism and networking between government, non-profit and business sectors.
Round Table 1 With representatives of key stakeholders Held on 18.07.2014		1	Objective: Establishment of the network; Participants: 83 people representing the key stakeholders—public agencies, non-governmental organizations, and business sector—discussed about the coordination mechanism to solve the problem of participation of vulnerable groups in vocational training and labor market. The round table was preceded by three round tables: A round table organized on 28 April 2014 with 17 representatives of public agencies including PVTC's staff, other state agencies such as the National Employment Service, Regional Employment Office, Regional VET Directorate, and Social Offices of 9 Tirana Mini-Municipalities. It aimed at: Ensuring cooperation and coordination among all relevant state actors; Sharing experience and best practices regarding integration of vulnerable groups in the labor market; Better defining the roles played by central/local authorities and communities. A round table organized on 29 May 2014 with 36 representatives of non-governmental organizations working with vulnerable groups. It aimed at: Sharing the needs of the target groups with PVTC; Increasing the knowledge about the services offered by the PVTC; Improving interaction between NGOs and PVTC in order to increase the attendance by vulnerable groups. A round table organized on 16 June 2014 with 38 representatives of the business sector. It aimed at better matching businesses' needs for qualified labor force and the qualification provided from PVTC.

Round Table 2 With representatives of key stakeholders Held on 29.11. 2014		1	72 participants; Objective: Formalizing the network. A Memorandum of cooperation has been signed by the parties.
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3.2.2 Access of vulnerable groups to vocational education

- Awareness raising activities with vulnerable groups have been essential to increase their access to vocational education. They have been organized on continuous basis.
- Daily activities have been organized to raise awareness of vulnerable groups and stakeholders regarding the access of members of vulnerable groups in vocational education.
- Two awareness campaigns are carried out in the informal areas. These campaigns are designed and conducted in close cooperation with the Mini-Municipalities and the communes of Tirana.
- Information regarding the access of vulnerable groups in vocational training and their employment possibilities has been disseminated during different other activities such as job fairs.
- Fliers are used to reach out to potential beneficiaries. They are designed based on the characteristics of vulnerable groups in order to be effective. It provided information about services and how to benefit from them as well as examples of best practices in VT.

The table below presents a summary of results regarding this main activity.

Table 2: Summary of project results for access of vulnerable groups to VT

Activity results	Expected	Achieved	Comments
Flyers	2000	7000	More flyers than initially proposed were produced and disseminated based on the need for information and awareness of vulnerable groups. Distributed during different events and meetings organized in the framework of the project. Content: Facts and figures about VT, its importance and how this service could be reached from the most excluded social groups.
Awareness meetings with target groups of NPOs, network members	-	46	20 participants in each meeting; Awareness meetings are additional activities organized by the project.
Awareness campaigns on VT in the informal areas	-	4	30 participants in each meeting; Awareness campaigns are additional activities organized by the project. They are realized in collaboration with local government.
Street activity—selection of potential beneficiaries	-	1	Daily activity during one month.

3.2.3. Employability of vulnerable groups

- Providing information on services provided by the Center as well as career orientation and information on labor market through the Info Point established by the project.
- The social interventions activity is based on non-formal education approach. It provided information on resources and the environment for discussion of psycho-social issues. It served the socialization between peers, building participants' capacity, raising their self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance. Main topics of discussion include: Personal Hygiene; Motivation; Self-esteem and self-reliance; Importance of Work and Study; Skills for Life; Public Social Service; Peace and Violence; Communication; Gender issues; Human rights; Internet and social media; Health education; Discrimination and Intolerance; HIV- AIDS campaign; Volunteering; etc. Organization of activities was based on specific national and international days and campaigns related to the above-mentioned topics
- The psychological support was based on the evaluation of beneficiaries' psycho-social status conducted through open hearings, daily meetings, and interviews with beneficiaries.
- Legal assistance has aimed at preparing the beneficiaries for the labor market by providing information about important legislation.
- The communication and cooperation with the PVTC No.4. has been continuous. It has aimed at project transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency. It has been essential to define roles and responsibilities of both parties.
- The professional practice has been considered essential for the preparation of the beneficiaries for the labor market as well as cooperation between the sectors about employment of members of target groups.

The table below presents a summary of results regarding this main activity.

Table 3: Activity results for employability of vulnerable groups

Activity results	Expected	Achieved	Comments
Establishing Info Point	1	1	A person is available on permanent basis giving information on Center's services (courses provided, timetables, and beneficiaries' career orientation) and about public and private services and entities.
Establishment of a data base by info point			Unplanned additional activity. When the project implementation started, it was realized that establishment of a data base about services of PVTC Nr.4 Tirana was needed. The existing electronic data base either was not functional or was very outdated and backward.
Social Intervention (information activity)		weekly	90 minute program led by the psychologist and social worker. Designed to provide resources to beneficiaries, included information on resources, and an environment for the discussion of psycho-social issues.
Awareness activity on social topics		monthly	35 participants in each activity

Psychological support	daily	daily	<p>Including: Face to face counselling; Group therapy; Cognitive therapy; Family consulting.</p> <p>Proceeded by evaluation of beneficiaries' psychosocial status through open hearings, daily meetings, and beneficiaries' psychosocial situation questionnaires.</p> <p>More than 50% of the trainees identified with psychological problems (frustration, stress, depression, hyperactivity, and lethargy variable humor, lack of attention, easy mental retardation, violence and antisocial behavior) accepted to be part of counselling process. Beneficiaries also include parents who participated in family consulting (parents of round 20% of trainees).</p> <p>21 people divided in 2 groups (11 and 10 beneficiaries) participated in group therapy. Topics: Unemployment and its effects; Returning from emigration.</p>
Capacity development activity		biweekly	30-35 participants in each activity.
Creativity skills workshops		biweekly	10-15 participants in each activity
Legal assistance	twice/ week	twice/ week	<p>Provided by an experienced legal expert.</p> <p>49 legal counselling sessions (5-7 participants in each).</p> <p>7 cases represented in court linked with violent conflicts and property right.</p>
Information activity on legislation and human rights		monthly	30-35 participants in each activity
Daily cooperation with PVTC	permanent	permanent	<p>Aim: To ensure effectiveness of the project based on the transparency and information sharing and prepare for the know-how transfer to the Center.</p> <p>Focus: The project methodology has been jointly decided thus making the process transparent and facilitating the realization of project activities.</p>
Professional Practice	-	for all graduates	<p>194 formal meetings are realized to enable professional practice for graduated trainees including 164 with business enterprises, 10 with employment offices, and 20 with employment agencies operating in Tirana.</p> <p>All graduated trainees had a month of professional practice at local enterprises, part of the social partners' network.</p> <p>While the professional practice process have been on going, the managers of the businesses have done assessments of trainees 'earned skills and have identified their possible future employees.</p>

3.2.4. Integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market

- Labor market study/survey was based on intensive and continuous interaction with businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in order to better assess the labor markets trends.
- During the career consulting activities, the project provided the necessary information related to their needs and the opportunities that offer the labor market, as well as consulting them how to manage their future career and cope effectively in a competitive labor market.

- The findings of the labor survey were essential for the employment mediation. They provided information about the market demand and the skills base of work seekers trained in the Center.
- Three-party agreements (Employer, Employee, and DEV-AID) provided more security to all parties involved and contributed to promotion of formal labor market.

The table below presents a summary of results regarding this main activity.

Table 4: Activity results for integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market

Activity results	Expected	Achieved	Comments
Labor market study/survey	1	1	Two persons are involved in this activity. It is a on-going activity based on continuous cooperation with Social Partners' Network members.
Career consulting	-	338 sessions	Provided by one expert of the field. Including counselling sessions/interviews and group interviews. Participants: Representing different groups of vulnerable people; Groups were established based on age, gender, work experiences, and the area they were coming from. 242 face to face career consulting have had positive results (the consulted beneficiaries have completed the formation phase in the courses referred by DEV-AID).
Employment mediation; (mediation meetings)		402	Conducted by expert project staff. Involving daily contacts with business sector (307 meetings), especially in the context of beneficiaries' professional practice, Employment Offices (50 meetings), and Employment Agencies (45 meetings).
Agreements between the business enterprises and Center's graduate trainees.			Designed by the legal consultant. Involving numerous meetings with business managers and representatives. Agreements involved three parties: Employer, Employee; and DEV-AID).

3.2.5. Summary of observations and assessment relating to activity results

- Review of the interim report, activity reports, and other project documents, supplemented by interviews, indicates that the project core activities and outputs were produced as planned. Some produced results in excess of those planned. There are additional activities that are impressive.
- New/innovative concepts relating to trust-building, new roles and social consensus-finding need much more preparatory time. Therefore, more resources and time is needed for not yet clearly defined activities.

4. PROJECT RELEVANCE, EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY, IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

4.1. Relevance

The project “Making the labor market work for vulnerable groups” is relevant relating to country’s economic and social development. The project is in line with and contributes to the achievement of the development goal: “Make the labor market work for vulnerable groups.” It contributes to the advancement toward this goal through working to improve: The match between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market; Vulnerable groups’ access to vocational education; Their employability; and Their integration into the labor market.

The project responds to real needs formulated by the beneficiaries. The project beneficiaries have been clearly defined: PVTC’s staff members; Local businesses that host VT trainees; NPOs targeting vulnerable groups; and Vulnerable groups including youth working on the street, citizens with low level or no education, drop outs from schools, the poor, internal migrants, returnees from emigration, violated and abused, Roma community, social and biological orphans, girls victims of human trafficking, etc.. They have been extensively consulted in order to formulate their needs that might be addressed by the project.

The project addresses the needs of vulnerable groups relating to vocational education, employability and integration. It also addresses the needs of the PVTCs regarding networking with social partners—non-profit organizations targeting the marginalized groups and business sector that can employ the VT trainees—and better social orientation and outreach to vulnerable groups in order to find optimal solutions for them and increase their course attendance. It addresses the needs of NPOs which, through participation in the Social Partners’ Network and cooperation with the project, could better serve the vulnerable people that are their target group and establish bridges of partnership and collaboration with the state agencies dealing with vulnerable groups. It addresses the needs of local businesses that can acquire qualified labor force and, therefore, raise the work efficiency.

DEV-AID focuses on the effective provision of VET. Strengthening VET is high on the policy agenda of the Albanian Government in order to improve social inclusion and social cohesion. Effective VET increases the probability of work integration and higher lifetime earnings. Inequalities in access to education, training, and employment typically lead to the social exclusion of vulnerable people.

VET has been a priority area for the international assistance and donors. They have focused on the VT system reform, capacity development of key actors, as well as have supported implementation of different projects such as social inclusion through vocational education and training, youth employment, etc.

The project contributes to the increased access of the vulnerable groups into these centers (specifically into PVTC Nr.4 Tirane). It also contributes to the improved communication and networking of stakeholders—state, NPO, and business sectors. It contributes to the employment of the VT trainees/members of vulnerable groups through mediation with business enterprises for their professional practice and employment.

The project contributes to the improvement of the employment-oriented VT that clearly is a governmental priority. The project is in line with priorities of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) and its Action Plan. More specifically, it contributes to the Strategic Priority B (Offering quality professional education and training for youth and adults), sub-priorities B3 (Improving the image of VET and information regarding VET providers, qualifications, and offers) and B4 (Strengthening links between learning and work and facilitating employment). It also contributes towards the Strategic Priority C (Encouraging social inclusion and territorial cohesion) and more specifically C1.3 (Increasing the VET offer toward rural areas and reaching out to excluded and marginalized people, women, girls, men, and boys) and C1.4 (Training and employment of women and men in need, including Roma and disabled people).

It also contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the National Strategy for Vocational Education Training and Lifelong Learning (2013-2020) and Strategy on social inclusion and social protection (2014-2020).

The project contributes to the achievement of objectives of other national strategies such as the Gender Equality Strategy (2014-2017) and National Strategy of Youth (2014-2020).

Summary of observations and assessment

- The project is in line with and contributes to the achievement of the development goal to make the labor market work for vulnerable groups.
- The project responds to real needs formulated by the beneficiaries which have been clearly defined.
- The project contributes to the improvement of the employment-oriented VT that is a governmental priority. The project is in line with priorities of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) and its Action Plan.

4.2. Effectiveness

Project objectives are achieved. Indicators established in the project proposal are achieved. The table below presents achievement of the project indicators.

Table 5: Achievement of project indicators

Defined Indicators	Present achievement status (extrapolation for 1 ½ years)	Assesment (+exceeded, = reached, - not reached) Comments/Explanations
<i>Objective 1: Improved match between and among the key-actors of vocational education as well as the key actors of integration into the labor market</i>		

Defined Indicators	Present achievement status (extrapolation for 1 ½ years)	Assesment (+exceeded, = reached, - not reached) Comments/Explanations
<i>Indicator 1. A sustainable and official network composed of PVTC No.4 Tirana, 10 – 15 NGO-s, 45 – 50 local private businesses, chamber of commerce and 9 employment offices of the mini municipalities of Tirana is expected to be in place at the end of the first six months of the project.</i>	The established network includes PVTC No.4 Tirana, 23 NGO-s, 38 business enterprises, the Chamber of Commerce, and 9 Tirana Mini-Municipality Employment Offices. The network is established within the first six months of the project (September 2014).	+ At present, the network includes 32 NGOs, 53 businesses, Chambers of Commerce, 2 Employment Office, 9 Social Offices of Mini-municipalities.
<i>Indicator 2. 3 - 6 new professional courses are provided by the PVTC No.4 Tirana proposed by businesses communities and chamber of commerce (1 – 2 new courses each 6 months)</i>	9 new professional courses are provided now by the RDPVT No.4 Tirana.	+ 4-5 new professional courses are opened each six months of the project life (1 year) compared to 1-2 new courses proposed initially.
Objective 2. Improved access of vulnerable groups to vocational education		
<i>Indicator 1. 360 – 540 of trainees that will attend the vocational training are expected to be enrolled from the references of network's new entries.120 – 180 each six months.</i>	338 trainees have attended the vocational training by RDPVT No.4 by the enrollment done from DEV-AID and the NGO-s of the network (04.2014 – 05.2015)	= The indicator is for a year and half. For the period of one year the indicator must be 240-360. Is not less than the indicator.
<i>Indicator 2. 80% – 85% of enrolled trainees are expected to complete the process till graduation, avoiding dropout.</i>	333 trainees who have attended the vocational training by RDPVT No.4 have completed the process till graduation during April 2014 – May 2015.	+ 98 % achievement compared to 85% initially proposed.
Objective 3: Improved employability of vulnerable groups		
<i>Indicator 1. 90% – 95% of enrolled trainees are expected to take the proper information from the “Info Point”, to be psychologically supported and legally assisted regarding the needs.</i>	100% of enrolled trainees have taken the proper information from the “Info Point”, are psychologically supported and legally assisted regarding the needs.	+
<i>Indicator 2. 95% - 100% of psychologically supported beneficiaries are expected to transmit better emotional behavior through face-to-face counseling and group therapy.</i>	95% of psychologically supported beneficiaries have transmitted better emotional behavior through face-to-face counseling, group therapy, cognitive therapy and family consulting.	=

Defined Indicators	Present achievement status (extrapolation for 1 ½ years)	Assesment (+exceeded, = reached, - not reached) Comments/Explanations
<i>Indicator 3. 50% - 55% of legally assisted beneficiaries are expected to have found the proper legal road toward the right solution.</i>	100% of legally assisted beneficiaries have found the proper legal road toward the right solution.	+ Moreover (or 7) 66.6% of the court causes has succeed.
<i>Indicator 4. 90% – 95% of graduated trainees are expected to make one-month professional practice by local businesses. Approximately 108 – 171 each six months.</i>	97% of graduated trainees (or 322 out of 333) have made at least conducted one-month professional practice at local businesses.	+ 52% of them are female.

Defined Indicators	Present achievement status (extrapolation for 1 ½ years)	Assesment (+exceeded, = reached, - not reached) Comments/Explanations
<i>Objective 4: Improved integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market</i>		
<i>Indicator 1 50% – 55% of graduated trainees are expected to be integrated in the labor market through employment mediation, directly after the month of professional practice (54 – 94 beneficiaries every six month).</i>	54% of graduated trainees (or 181 out of 333) are integrated in the labor market through employment mediation.	= Already after 13 months of implementing. + The achievement is expected to exceed after 18 months.
<i>Indicator 2. 25% – 30% of them are expected to have a stable job agreement after 3 months of their employment (there are business that needs more than 3 months of employee assessment to do an official job agreement).</i>	22% of graduated trainees (or 39 out of 181 people) have been integrated in the labor market having a sustainable job agreement after 3 months of their employment.	- 22% relates to the one-year period instead of 1 and half year. Moreover it does not take into account the 3 months period after employment ether. By the end of December 2015 (end of project + 3 months), it is possible that the indicator is reached.

Project activities have been well received and the events organized by the project have been highly evaluated by participants.

The achievement of project objectives has been affected by several external factors such as the negative image of VT, difficult economic situation, and conservative mentality. DEV-AID has managed these factors effectively thus ensuring that project objectives are achieved as proposed, even beyond.

- The negative image of the value of VT in the eyes of business enterprises has been one of main external obstacles. At the beginning of the project, due to such image, the project staff promoting the qualified labor force graduated from the RDPVT No. 4

Tirana to local businesses faced their skepticism. Only few businesses joined the idea of the Social Partners' Network. DEV-AID overcame such a situation through numerous, frequent and continuous meetings with businesses as well involvement of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At present, 53 businesses joined the network and are active actors in the cross-sector cooperation.

- The difficult economic situation of vulnerable groups, especially youth working on the street and Roma, hardens the work of NPOs dealing with them to take them off the streets and enroll in VT and, subsequently, formal employment. Enrolment of this category of people in VT is achieved through intensive awareness work, in close cooperation with NPOs.
- In the case of women, their enrolment in VT and employment are hindered by the conservative mentality. Intensive awareness and counselling work with both beneficiaries and their families is used to ensure their enrolment and employment.

Summary of observations and assessment

- The match between the key actors of vocational education and integration into the labor market has improved due to the Social Partners' Network. In addition to PVTC Nr.4 Tirana and DEV-AID, at present, the network includes 32 NGOs, 53 businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tirana Regional Employment Office and local Employment Office, and 9 Social Offices of Mini-municipalities. DEV-AID has provided a good model of interaction and networking between public vocational training and social partners such as NGOs, businesses, employers' organizations, trade unions, state agencies, etc.
- The access of vulnerable groups to vocational education has improved due to the information and awareness about vocational training realized by DEV-AID for vulnerable groups and the support system that is established to enable vulnerable groups to regularly attend vocational education. 67% of the trainees enrolled in the vocational training courses during 2014-2015 in the PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana are from vulnerable groups. 52% of trainees are female. 99% of the trainees have graduated.
- The employability of vulnerable groups has improved due to the multi-dimensional support provided by the project (socio-psychological counselling, legal advice, mediation for professional practice).
 - 100% of trainees from vulnerable groups have benefited from the Info Point services. 60% of them have been psychologically supported.
 - Based on the data from DEV-AID statistical data base, the socio-psychological situation of trainees from vulnerable groups has improved as shown by the improvement in their social and emotional behavior towards self and others. 95% of psychologically supported beneficiaries have transmitted better emotional behavior as evidenced through face-to-face counselling, group therapy, cognitive therapy, and family consulting. They have improved their peer communication and interaction, recognition, respect, and tolerance towards people coming from other social backgrounds. Trainees' self-esteem and self-confidence has increased. Conflicting situations between trainees from vulnerable groups have decreased.
 - 49 beneficiaries are legally supported by the Legal Adviser. 100% of legally assisted beneficiaries have found the proper legal road toward the right solution (compared to 55% target indicator).
 - Trainees' life skills and social competence have increased due to social and psychological intervention/inclusion of social orientation to the vocational education and training program.
 - Employability of the trainees from vulnerable groups has improved due to their involvement in professional practice. 97% of the trainees that have graduated have completed the one-month professional practice at local businesses (the target indicator was 90-95 %).
- The integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market has improved due to functional Social Partners' Network of RDPVT No.4 Tirana and DEV-AID's mediation for the employment of trainees after their graduation and professional practice.
 - 53% of trainees have been employed upon completion of the one-month professional practice (the target indicator was 50-55%). 52 % of them are women and girls.

- 42% of the employed trainees have a job agreement.
- 22% have successfully completed the three-month probation period and have permanent official job agreements.

4.3. Efficiency

The project was implemented efficiently. Efficiency is closely related to the accurate project planning that was based on comprehensive environmental analysis as well as the experience of other projects implemented in the field in terms of budgeting. The proper financial management systems have ensured efficient project management.

The project produced more results—more beneficiaries, more promotional materials, etc.--with the same allocated budget. Any funds excess was efficiently used to finance additional activities. Existence and use of proper financial management system was the key for planning and conduct of efficient activities in an efficient way.

The budget is used as presented in the proposal. The total expenditures are 99% of the budget approved for the period under revision. The funds are used in accordance with the budgeted and approved items and are mostly not overspend or underspend. Slight changes are recorded relating to Employees' Tax and Social Insurance item (Budget Line 2.3). It is linked to the increase by 5% of the income tax starting from 01 January 2015. Changes are made upon approval by the donor.

Human resources are well-managed based on a comprehensive HR Manual. DEV-AID has succeeded to motivate already experienced and capable staff to provide maximum results according to activity timelines. Their performance has been exemplary, especially taking into consideration difficulties relating to the target groups of this project. Duties and responsibilities of each staff member are clearly defined. Staff performance has been evaluated continuously and periodically.

Summary of observations and assessment

- The project was implemented efficiently due to proper management systems, also including financial and human resources management.
- The project has produced more results with the same allocated budget.
- The funds are used in accordance with the budgeted and approved items and are mostly not overspend or underspend.

4.4. Impact

The significant number of activities and beneficiaries enable one to see impact even prior to project completion. However, timing does not yet enable measure the project's impact except for some indicative aspects. Yet there are even other indications for impact which can be observed:

- There is a growing demand to be part of the network by businesses. 46 businesses joined the Social Partners' Network on September 2014. At present their number has increased to 53.

- There is a demand by other PVTCS, Tirana 1 and Durres for example, to be supported with added structure following the model implemented by the project at PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana. The demand to participate in working groups has increased.
- Additional project proposals dealing with these issues have won based on achievements of current project.

A large number of diverse activities were implemented during the project life. Moreover, these activities were complementary to each other. There are many beneficiaries in terms of absolute numbers as well as their typology. A significant part of the larger public was also reached through different awareness activities.

The planned objectives have been achieved. Their achievement has affected the life of beneficiaries.

The Social Partners' Network has affected the behavior of members—state agencies, non-profit organizations, and business enterprises. They have a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities of each other. They find it easier to communicate with each other and cooperate for the integration of vulnerable groups in public vocational training and labor market.

Due to its participation in project implementation and engagement in the Social Partners' Network, PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased its capacity relating to management and external communication. Organization of courses and monitoring of their progress have improved. At present, the Center better reaches out to and works with vulnerable groups. The perception of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirane by vulnerable groups, non-profit organizations working with them, and business has positively changed. The Social Partners' Network has promoted the Center to the business and employers as well as job-seekers. PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has become a model center for other PVTCS. PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana has been rated the first at internal competition between PVTCS conducted at the beginning of the year 2015 by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (yearly assessment 2014). It can transfer the knowledge and skills to other centers.

The presence of DEV-AID in the network has had a positive impact in increasing the cooperation among partners and, therefore, improving the performance of all. (PVTC staff)

State structures have a tendency to stagnation. The project gave us the innovative spirit, pushed us forward. They have affected positively our internal dynamics, our daily communication among ourselves and with the trainees. They have had a positive impact in our management and performance. We are one of most successful centers. We used to think that we do not need much support. Through the interaction with the project, we realized we needed improvement. The project has been a necessary and indispensable addition to the Center. (Instructor at PVTC Nr. 4)

Due to participation in the Social Partners' Network, NGOs that work with vulnerable groups have established bridges of communication with the public vocational centers and other state agencies thus increasing the opportunities for the vulnerable groups to benefit from the public services of vocational training and employment. At PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana, NGOs, members of the Network, have found a partner to address the needs of their beneficiaries. They have established bridges with business sector thus increasing the employment opportunities for their beneficiaries.

Participating in the Network, we became more aware of the services offered by RDPVT No.4. Prior to joining the Social Partners' Network, the major difficulty we faced was to enroll members of our target groups in public vocational centers. Our beneficiaries were put in waiting lists for a long time. People got discouraged. Now, they are a priority. DEV-AID's project intervention not only has prioritized our beneficiaries but also has integrated them in the labor market.
(NPO Representative)

Mediation as a project component has increased employment of people from vulnerable groups. Due to the mediation, for the first time people with disabilities have been employed. Businesses participating in the Social Partners' Network have received qualified workforce thus creating premises for better economic activity.

Success Story

Kledi is from Tirana. He is 19 years old and lives with his mother, his unemployed father, and sick sister. He is a person with disability.

Kledi has completed the vocational training course for carpenter. He was referred to vocational training by the school of people with different abilities "Luigj Gurakuqi" which he has attended, through DEV-AID. He is very happy that could attend the course. He tells that, one month ago, the project staff has mediated his employment at the carpenter shop "Design by Pana."

He starts at 8 and leaves at 17.00 hrs. He tells that he is punctual at work shop, has made new friends there, and people at the work shop love him. He has told his friends at the neighborhood about the course and encouraged them to enroll.

From what you see and listen from him, you understand that his life has totally changed. From a young boy with different abilities, isolated at home, unable to contribute to his family's living, he has become carpenter who works and follows the work place rules, brings money at home, and has a social life.

With its first pay check he is going to by a device to listen to the music.

The project added social orientation to the vocational education program which has enhanced life skills and social competence of vulnerable groups. Many of them have succeeded to have a job thus improving the quality of their life and life of their families.

The increased number of beneficiaries participating in vocational training and the high rate of their graduation and, especially, the high rate of their employment are positive changes from the project.

Trainees from vulnerable groups have achieved positive changes in their social and emotional behavior toward self and others. Many of the trainees have increased their self-esteem and self-confidence. They are better prepared for the labor market and social life.

The project staff has informed us about the opportunities, has helped us register, and has followed our progress. We learned about social integration, domestic violence, and other social issues. They advised us how to dress, behave, establish relationships at work place. They informed us about the labor market, requirements for job-seekers. It was not only a course, but also a life experience. They follow our progress after employment, too, thus making us feel good and motivated to do a good job. DEV-AID has worked hard to build confidence between us and employers. (Beneficiary)

I think that DEV-AID changed my life. I gained a profession, went through situations from which I learned a lot, met many friends, and have a job and a salary to support myself and my family. (Beneficiary)

The Social Partners' Network of the RDPVT No.4 Tirana has positively affected the interaction between potential employers and trainees/job seekers, creating better possibilities for integration/reintegration in the labor market. The key stakeholders are participating actively in addressing issues of vocational training. They are coordinating their efforts for the integration of the target group. The PVTC Nr.4 Tirana Social Partners' Network is considered a reference point relating to vocational education by the key stakeholders. They have been using it for the employment of VT graduates from vulnerable groups.

The gaps in the Public Vocational Education System have decreased. PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased the capacity to address the existing gaps in Public Vocational Education System. Its staff is professionally capable to provide vocational education according to standards.

Summary of observations and assessment

- The Social Partners' Network has affected the behavior of members. They find it easier to communicate with each other and cooperate for the integration of vulnerable groups in public vocational training and labor market.
- There is a growing demand to be part of the Social Partners' Network by businesses.
- PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased its capacity relating to management and external communication and has become a model center for other PVTCs. It has a better outreach to vulnerable groups. The perception of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirane by vulnerable groups, non-profit organizations working with them, and business has positively changed. It can transfer the knowledge and skills to other centers. There is a demand by other PVTCs to be supported to adopt the model implemented by DEV-AID.
- Non-governmental organizations, members of the SP Network, have established bridges of communication with the public vocational centers and other state agencies thus increasing the opportunities for the vulnerable groups to benefit from the public services of vocational training and employment. They have established bridges with business sector thus increasing the employment opportunities for their beneficiaries.
- Mediation as a project component has increased employment of people from vulnerable groups.
- The project has added social orientation to the vocational education program which has enhanced life skills and social competence of vulnerable groups.

4.5 Sustainability

Sustainability has been a major consideration during both planning and implementation phases. The project team has designed activities that would achieve results that can be sustained by stakeholders after the project conclusion. Major factors that contribute to sustainability include:

- *Establishing the structures that are compatible with local perception of needs and ways of producing and sharing benefits.*

The Social Partners' Network and its coordination mechanisms established with DEV-AID's initiative have been essential for the implementation of the project and are essential for the sustainability of its results. Sustainability of project results is closely linked to the value the project has added to PVTC No.4 Tirana.

The Social Partners' Network is an effective structure that will serve vulnerable groups in the future. Members of the SPN are willing to learn and develop. SPN is a model that has proved effective to deal with vocational education of the vulnerable groups. Further consolidation of the network will certainly bring greater benefits to all stakeholders and, therefore, vulnerable groups. It can be replicated at national and regional level.

- *Policy environment in Albania and interest of donors on vocational training and education and inclusion of vulnerable groups.*

The sustainability of project results is closely linked to the Albanian government policies relating to VET and employment. The government of Albania is focusing on VET and employment through gaining a profession. It is carrying out the reform in the sectors of education, training, and employment. Measures are being taken to modernize the education and training systems aiming to increase the employability of the work force and to reduce the gap between labor market demands and the skills supply. Social integration of vulnerable groups is a priority of Albanian government.

International donors are interested to support vocational training and employment of vulnerable groups. At EU level, VET, Lifelong Learning (LLL) and Employment are defined as key priorities. Social integration of vulnerable groups is one of priorities of EU assistance.

On the short term, funding for VET will originate from the government and/or development partners. On mid-term, taking into consideration the government's emphasis on employment-oriented VET development, the private sector will also contribute to the expansion and improvement of the VET system.

Improving vocational training for vulnerable groups is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. Governmental agencies contribute to social inclusion of vulnerable groups by increasing their employability. Business sector gets skilled labor force.

There is established a good foundation for sustainability. However, more time and an extended involvement are necessary to achieve consolidation of sustainability. In order to achieve sustainability:

- PVTCs should establish information and awareness services, especially targeting vulnerable groups.
- PVTCs should include in their services social, psychological, and legal support for vulnerable groups.
- SPN should be established at other PVTCs.
- SPN should be strengthened by making coordination and cooperation among members a continuous interaction.

Summary of observations and assessment

- Major factors that contribute to sustainability include: Establishing the structures that are compatible with local perception of needs and ways of producing and sharing benefits; and Policy environment in Albania and interest of donors on vocational training and education and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Time and an extended involvement are necessary to achieve consolidation of sustainability. In order to achieve sustainability: PVTCs should establish additional services such as information and awareness, social, psychological, and legal support for vulnerable groups; SPN should be established at other PVTCs and strengthened.

4.6. Beneficiaries' opinion on the project

Opinions of PVTC Nr.4 Tirana staff about the project:

- Regardless some positive steps, cross sector collaboration—government, civil society, and business—is limited. Based on accurate environmental assessment and well-thought intervention, the DEV-AID project has produced important results regarding linkages between different actors as well as between vocational training and employment. The Social Partners' Network of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana is good model for the cross-sector cooperation in the fields of vocational training and employment that can be replicated by other centers. DEV-AID project can be a good model for other non-profit organizations that focus on vulnerable groups and vocational training and employment.
- DEV-AID has been instrumental relating to planning, managing Network activity, and ensuring that best practices and results are promoted to other actors and other places. Organizing the joint activities of Social Partners' Network at PVTCs premises would increase effectiveness of discussions. Partners would have the opportunity to see how centers are run.
- The project has helped increase the number of trainees and psychologically prepare them for learning and working.
- State structures have a tendency to stagnation and projects like this give them the innovative spirit. The DEV-AID project has affected positively internal dynamics and daily communication among staff of PVTC Nr.4 and between the staff and trainees.
- The project has articulated goals and objectives that ask for a mid- and long-term engagement thus emphasizing the need for its continuation and replication to other centers. The need for services provided by the project is still high in Tirana and districts. The experience from this project is a good one to be shared at district level through workshops and informative sessions, etc. PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana can play a central role in the dissemination of this experience to other PVTCs.

Opinions of business representatives about the project:

- Project's mediation has increased employment of people from vulnerable groups. Actors involved in the labor market can better function if an organization like DEV-AID mediates between job-seekers and potential employers.
- It is better when its recruitment comes through mediation. Training on labor market, parties' rights and duties, and behavior at work place make employees take responsibility and respect work place rules.

Opinions of vulnerable groups about the project:

- The project has significantly improved the information sharing. People do not have information that vocational courses for people with disabilities exist.

4.7 Summary of observations and assessment regarding project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability

- The project is in line with and contributes to the achievement of the development goal to make the labor market work for vulnerable groups.
- The match between the key actors of vocational education and integration into the labor market has improved due to the Social Partners' Network.
- The access of vulnerable groups to vocational education has improved due to the information and awareness about vocational training realized by DEV-AID for vulnerable groups and the support system that is established to enable vulnerable groups to regularly attend vocational education.
- The employability of vulnerable groups has improved due to the multi-dimensional support provided by the project (socio-psychological counselling, legal advice, mediation for professional practice).
- The integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market has improved due to functional Social Partners' Network of RDPVT No.4 Tirana and DEV-AID's mediation for the employment of trainees after their graduation and professional practice.
- The project was implemented efficiently due to proper management systems, also including financial and human resources management.
- The Social Partners' Network has affected the behavior of members. They find it easier to communicate with each other and cooperate for the integration of vulnerable groups in public vocational training and labor market.
- PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased its capacity relating to management and external communication and has become a model center for other PVTCs. It can transfer the knowledge and skills to other centers.
- There is a demand by other PVTCs to be supported to adopt the model implemented by DEV-AID.
- The project has added social orientation to the vocational education program which has enhanced life skills and social competence of vulnerable groups.
- Major factors that contribute to project sustainability include: Establishing the structures that are compatible with local perception of needs and ways of producing and sharing benefits; and Policy environment in Albania and interest of donors on vocational training and education and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- In order to achieve greater sustainability, PVTCs should establish additional services such as information and awareness, social, psychological, and legal support for vulnerable groups.

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

5.1. Management, reporting, monitoring

Project management provided a structured and organized way to achieve expected results. It was facilitated by reporting and monitoring. The formats for reporting and monitoring were mostly developed for the project purposes.

Project reports and other documentation gave the project team a better understanding of the project needs and helped them establish an effective environment to achieve expected results. They also gave the project team a guide to monitor progress by using rather simple tools and techniques. The project's tools for project monitoring and evaluation are as follows:

- Weekly project team meeting.
- Monthly reports to the Project Manager and Director of PVTC No. 4.
- Monthly staff meetings.
- Six-month reports (narrative and financial) to donors and General Directorate of VET.
- Final reports (narrative and financial) to donors and General Directorate of VET.

According to project staff, the weekly project team meetings were very informative and useful. These working meetings provided an opportunity for updating information on project implementation, upcoming events, existent or expected problems. These tested tools, as was reported during the review meeting, are to be used in all upcoming projects.

Monthly reports contain a short description of activities conducted in the previous month; they are rather factual in content with the small exception of presenting a critical review of the project implementation in terms of difficulties related to the technical, organizational or financial implementation of the project; solutions for these difficulties are suggested.

The six-month reports provided substantial insight regarding results achieved. Based on these reports, it was recognized that all expected results were generally achieved as planned.

In addition to these documents the project team set up a regularly updated data base consisting of all beneficiaries who participated in variety of project activities.

Monthly meetings have been helpful to deal with problems faced during the project implementation.

DEV-AID has complied with the rules for accounting and record keeping included in the Contract Agreement. DEV-AID's accounting system and records fulfil the requirements described in the agreement.

5.2 Project visibility

Different promotional methods have been used to promote the PVTC Nr.4 Tirana, donor, project, and participation of vulnerable groups in the VT. The combination of promotional activities and extended communication with all the project partners was an important part of promotional activities. Promotional materials are of high quality and have been produced locally. Main promotional materials/activities include:

- Project promotional materials (logo, letterhead, poster, banner, photo) used during training provided by PVTC.

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- Thematic promotional materials (leaflet)
 - Web page www.devaid.al
 - Social Partners' Network meetings and other activities.

DEV-AID has been effective at conveying its messages on project implementation to the public. Meetings that are organized with partners, state agencies, NGOs, business enterprises, etc. for the discussion of different issues are also used to promote issues of vocational training and employment for vulnerable groups and the DEV-AID project.

The plan of promotional activities was designed in such a way as to allow possibilities for giving efficient information about project objectives and progress to target groups and key stakeholders.

Inclusion of the beneficiaries in awareness activities and campaigns such as “16 days against violence against women,” “International Voluntarism Day Campaign,” “Clean Albania in one day Campaign,” etc. has effectively served visibility purposes.

5.3 Cross cutting issues

Gender issue has been a key issue during project planning and implementation. DEV-AID paid attention to participation and representation of women in project activities. 52% of participants in different activities—trainees, social, psychological, and legal counselling, professional practice, employment, etc.—were women.

5.4 Summary of observation and assessment

- Project management was facilitated by reporting and monitoring. The project's tools for project monitoring and evaluation include weekly and monthly project team meetings and monthly, six-monthly, final reports. A data base consisting of all beneficiaries who participated in variety of project activities was established and updated continuously.
- DEV-AID has been effective at conveying its messages on project implementation to the public. Different promotional methods have been used to promote the PVTC Nr.4 Tirana, donor, project, and participation of vulnerable groups in the VT.
- Gender issue has been a key issue during project planning and implementation. 52% of participants in different activities—trainees, social, psychological, and legal counselling, professional practice, employment, etc.—were women.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The project focuses on effective provision of vocational training for vulnerable groups and their employment. Both vocational training and employment are priorities of the Government's policy toward social inclusion and cohesion. The project has worked to increase the access of vulnerable groups into public vocational training and their subsequent employment. By focusing on networking between key stakeholders--state agencies, non-profit organizations, and business,—it has increased the access of vulnerable groups into vocational training and their employment. It is in line with priorities of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020) and its Action Plan. It contributes to the Strategic Priority B and C (Offering quality professional education and training for youth and adults; Encouraging social inclusion and territorial cohesion).
- The project aims at making the labor market work for vulnerable groups. It responds to real needs that are formulated in consultation with the beneficiaries. The project addresses the needs of vulnerable groups for vocational education, employability and social integration. It also addresses the need of non-profit organizations to better serve vulnerable groups. It addresses the needs of PVTCs for better social orientation, outreach to vulnerable groups, and networking with other sectors. The project addresses the need of local businesses for qualified labor force.
- A large number of diverse activities, complementary to each other, are implemented during the project life. Project activities are implemented according to the Action Plan. Some activities have produced results in excess of those planned. In general, indicators established for each objective are achieved. Project activities have been well received and the events organized by the project have been highly evaluated by participants.
- The match between key actors of the vocational training and integration into the labor market has improved. The project has initiated and facilitated the establishment of the Social Partners' Network of PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana bringing together state agencies, non-profit organizations, and business representatives. It presents a good model of interaction and networking between state agencies responsible for vocational training and employment and the partners from other sectors—business and non-profit.
 - o The model established by DEV-AID is a best practice of cooperation among key stakeholders and should be further strengthened by PVTC Nr.4. Based on the assessment of the PVTC Nr.4 capacity, further support is needed by the project for the capacity development of the Center and strengthening of the Social Partners' Network.
 - o The model should be replicated in other PVTCs in order to improve interaction and networking with non-governmental and business sectors in their area.
 - o More financial and personal resources have to be tapped in order to support further strengthening of SPN and its replication to other PVTCs. Taking into consideration limited resources, in addition to further support for PVTC Nr. 1 Tirana, PVTC Nr.1 Tirana and PVTC Durrës that have expressed their interest and willingness to replicate the model might be supported.

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- The negative image of the value of VT in the eyes of business enterprises has been one of main external obstacles for the integration of vulnerable groups in the labor market. The access of vulnerable groups to vocational education has improved as a result of information and awareness activities with vulnerable groups and cooperation with the non-profit organizations working vulnerable groups and PVTC. During the 2014-2015, the trainees from vulnerable groups were round 67% of the trainees enrolled in PVTC Nr. 4 (compared to round 20% during 2013-2014).
 - The employability of vulnerable groups has improved. In addition to vocational skills, trainees from vulnerable groups have received additional social, psychological, and legal support from the project in order to improve their social inclusion and employability. As a result, their social and emotional behavior towards self and others has improved: 95% of beneficiaries who received psychological support have demonstrated better emotional behavior. Conflicting situations between trainees from vulnerable groups have decreased. Trainees' self-esteem and self-confidence has increased. Their employability has improved due to their involvement in professional practice: 97% of the graduates have completed the one-month professional practice at local businesses.
 - o In any similar future project, the social, psychological, and legal support/counselling should be part of it when working with vulnerable groups. Such support is essential to build the self-esteem and self-confidence and to improve the inclusion in vocational training, employment and, therefore, social life. This component should be designed carefully in order to provide expected results.
 - o In any similar future project, the professional practice is an important component that should be applied. The professional practice helps consolidate the vocational skills gained during the vocational training courses as well as establishes relationships with the businesses that could be potential employers. Mediation by a third party is necessary to match trainees and businesses and to monitor the professional practice.
 - The survey of labor market has been essential to narrow the gap between the needs of business for qualified labor and the skills presented by graduates of vocational training. Based on findings of the labor market survey, the project has cooperated with PVTC No. 4 to introduce 9 new vocational courses for the vulnerable groups.
 - The integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market has improved. Interaction in the framework of the Social Partners Network has been essential for the integration. Due to mediation of the project, 53% of trainees participating in the professional practice have been employed upon its completion. Round 42% of the employed trainees passed the probation period and signed a job contract. The newly added social orientation to the vocational education program has enhanced life skills and social competence of vulnerable groups, and therefore, their employability. Training on labor market, parties' rights and duties, and behavior at work place has helped them keep the job. The quality of life of vulnerable groups and life of their families has improved.
 - o The Social Partners' Network should continue focusing on the integration of vulnerable groups into the labor market. Under current conditions, mediation between trainees and businesses can be effectively conducted by projects like DEV-AID project.
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- o PVTCS should develop their capacity relating to communication, mediation, and coordination with the businesses to support integration of their trainees in the labor market.
 - Due to its participation in project implementation and engagement in the Social Partners' Network, PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has increased its management capacity and external communication. It better reaches out to and works with vulnerable groups. It is better perceived by vulnerable groups, non-profit organizations working with them, and business. The Social Partners' Network has promoted the Center to the business and employees as well as job-seekers. PVTC Nr.4 Tirana has become a model center for other PVTCS. Through the work done from DEV-AID staff, an improved model is in place and values are added to Regional Directorate of Public Vocational Training No. 4 in Tirana.
 - o PVTCS's management should work to increase the relevance and quality of vocational training as well as promote these services to the business sector.
 - o PVTC Nr.4 Tirana should further develop its capacity in order to enhance its key position at the Social Partners' Network.
 - o It should develop the capacity and mobilize resources to take over services currently provided by DEV-AID project.
 - o It should transfer its knowledge and skills to other PVTCS.
 - At PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana, NGOs have found a partner to address the needs of their beneficiaries. Due to participation in the Social Partners' Network, NGOs have established bridges with PVTC Nr.4 and other state agencies thus increasing the opportunities for their beneficiaries to benefit from the public services. They have also established bridges with business sector thus increasing the employment opportunities for their beneficiaries.
 - o NGOs should improve their cooperation with state agencies aiming at providing better services to their beneficiaries. They should establish and maintain communication and share information with state agencies, refer their beneficiaries to them to receive services, and follow up their progress.
 - o NGOs should improve their cooperation with business sector in order to increase employment of vulnerable groups. They should mediate with the businesses for the employment of their beneficiaries and follow up their performance.
 - The Social Partners' Network and its coordination mechanisms have been essential for the implementation of the project and are essential for the sustainability of its results. The Network can be sustainable because it is an effective structure for a win-win situation of all involved stakeholders by serving vulnerable groups. It is compatible with local perceptions of needs and ways of producing and sharing benefits. It can be replicated at national and regional level.
 - o The Network should be further consolidated. The project and PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana should develop specific action plans for the Network and work for the participation of all stakeholders in its activities. The model should be replicated by other PVTCS.
 - DEV-AID has conducted planning and management of Network activity. It has also promoted results and best practices to PVTCS and other actors that have stake in vocational

training and employment of vulnerable groups. The project has articulated goals and objectives that ask for a mid- and long-term engagement thus emphasizing the need for its continuation and/or replication to other centers.

- o The experience from this project should be shared with other PVTCs. DEV-AID and PVTC Nr. 4 Tirana can play a central role in the dissemination of this experience to other PVTCs. The project should be replicated at other PVTCs.
 - o DEV-AID project can be a good model for other non-profit organizations that focus on vulnerable groups and vocational training and employment.
- The gender issue has been central during project planning and implementation. DEV-AID has paid attention to participation and representation of women in project activities. More than 52% of participants in different activities—trainees, social, psychological, and legal counselling, professional practice, employment, etc.—have been women.
 - o Gender issues should be at the focus of the project in the future, too. Indicators and all project activities should take into consideration the gender perspective.
- Different promotional methods have been used to promote the project, vocational training for vulnerable groups, and the donor. DEV-AID has been effective at conveying its messages on project implementation to stakeholders and the public. Inclusion of the beneficiaries in awareness activities and campaigns has effectively served visibility purposes.
 - o Special attention should be paid to visibility issues in the future project, too. The project visibility is important not only to promote the project objectives and activities but also to promote the important issues the project has embraced.
- The project efficiency is based on accurate project planning, based on comprehensive environmental analysis, the experience of other projects, and effective management systems, especially monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, financial management, and human resource management. DEV-AID has succeeded to motivate already experienced and capable staff to provide maximum results according to activity timelines.
 - o Establishing internal operating systems based on comprehensive, customized, internal rules and regulations are the key for efficient project management. These systems should be revised based on the lessons learned from past project management experience.