

**Addressing Social Inclusion**

**Through Vocational Education and Training**

**Good practices in the integration of marginalized groups in the labour market**

**Francesco Panzica**

**Ylli Cabiri**

***May 2012***



**Acronyms**

ABCCI Albanian British Chamber of Commerce and Industries

ALMP Active Labour Market Programmes

ESF European Social Fund

ETF European Training Foundation

EU European Union

CSEE Central and South Eastern Europe

ILO International Labour Organization

IFAW Independent Forum for the Albanian Woman

IVR Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation

JS Job Seeker

LM Labour Market

MS Member State

MoLSAEO Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

NES National Employment Service

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

PA Personal Assistant

PPP Public Private Partnership

REO Regional Employment Office

SC Steering Committee

SE Social Exclusion

SI Social Inclusion

SIVET Social Inclusion through VET

SP Social Protection

UAW Useful to Albanian Women

VET Vocational Education and Training

VT Vocational Training

VTC Vocational Training Centre

WB Western Balkan

**Table of contents**

[1. Introduction 4](#_Toc324167373)

[2. Social inclusion at EU level 5](#_Toc324167374)

[3. Best practices of social inclusion in some European countries 6](#_Toc324167375)

[3.1 Austria 6](#_Toc324167376)

[A. Credit account for people affected by poverty / persons without cash 6](#_Toc324167377)

[3.2 Czech Republic 7](#_Toc324167378)

[3.3 Italy 8](#_Toc324167379)

[3.4 Poland - PSPRA 10](#_Toc324167380)

[4. The community-based approach in social inclusion 12](#_Toc324167381)

[4.1 Bologna – Flashgiovani 12](#_Toc324167382)

[4.2 Brno – Socio-information Centre 12](#_Toc324167383)

[4.3 Copenhagen – Joint strategy: three separate administrations working together 13](#_Toc324167384)

[4.4 Rotterdam – social greening: job creation and social cohesion through smart investment 13](#_Toc324167385)

[4.5 Sofia - Assistance for Independent Living: an innovative service for people with disabilities 13](#_Toc324167386)

[5. Social inclusion in the Balkans 14](#_Toc324167387)

[5.1 Main findings of related researches 14](#_Toc324167388)

[5.2 Serbia 15](#_Toc324167389)

[5.3 Bosnia & Herzegovina 17](#_Toc324167390)

[5.4 Kosovo 18](#_Toc324167391)

[6 Good practices in Albania 19](#_Toc324167392)

[6.1 Examples of good practices 19](#_Toc324167393)

[6.2 The common characteristics 29](#_Toc324167394)

[7 Conclusions and Open Issues for Debate 32](#_Toc324167395)

[References 34](#_Toc324167396)

# Introduction

Social Exclusion (SE) is frequently associated with poverty: as a matter of fact the three most main barriers to Social Integration (SI) are lack of education, gender bias and inequality and poverty. Whatever barriers to SI are present, it is necessary a synergic effort of the national and local community to address them. For this reason, the SI through Vocational Education and Training (SIVET) project targeting the integration into the labour market of vulnerable groups envisages a multi-layers approach: the policy making at national level and the implementation at grassroots local level, involving all actors and calling for the social responsibility of enterprises.

SE and SI have multiple definitions. They vary significantly depending on the context, and have continually evolved over time. In this research we use the definitions adopted by the European Union (EU) within the Lisbon process:

*SE is a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination*. This distances them from job, income and education and training opportunities, as well as social and community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over the decisions that affect their day to day lives.

*SI is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and SE gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live.* It ensures that they have a greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.

Considering the above definitions, some good practices at EU, Western Balkans and Albanian levels were selected in order to learn from the experience of different projects implemented focused on the integration of marginalized groups in the labour market.

# Social inclusion at EU level

Fighting against poverty and SE is becoming a high priority for the EU as there are more than 80 million people in the EU at risk of poverty – including 20 million children and 8% of the working population. Therefore, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy, an European Platform against poverty and SE has been approved with an ambitious target of reducing poverty and SE by at least 20 million by 2020.

Based upon the principle of subsidiary, the interventions in the field of SI are mainly responsibility of the Member States (MS), the EU plays a role in:

1. Identifying best practices and promoting mutual learning on social innovation that can help in finding smart solutions, especially in terms of more effective and efficient social support;
2. Setting up EU-wide rules;
3. Promoting partnerships between the public and the private sector;
4. Making funding available through European Social Fund (ESF).

Among the key challenges, the EU Platform against poverty and SE identifies the following specific objectives:

1. To promote the **active inclusion** in society and in the Labour Market (LM) of the most vulnerable groups[[1]](#footnote-1);
2. To **overcome discrimination** and increase the integration of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, immigrants and other vulnerable groups;
3. To promote the **integration of Roma.**

In particular, MS have to provide assistance for those who can work to enter or re-enter and stay in employment that best relates to their capacity to work.

The EU Joint Report 2010 on Social Protection (SP) and SI, underlines that having a job remains the best safeguard against poverty and exclusion, since the poverty risk faced by unemployed is five times more than those in work (44% against 8%), and the inactive (not in retirement) face a risk-of-poverty three times higher than the employed (27% against 8%). However, having a job is not per se a guarantee against poverty: in 2008, 8% of the people in employment were living under the poverty threshold. In-work poverty is linked to employment conditions such as low pay, low skills, precarious employment or under-employment.

The last decade has also seen the persistence of groups of people who remain outside or on the margins of the LM, often facing multiple barriers to entry (including low skills, care responsibilities, age, migrant background, disability and other discriminatory factors, etc.).

In order to deal with the worsening of LM conditions due to the global crisis, many MS have strengthened and consolidated the LM measures aiming at preserving employment, supporting activation and promoting re-integration in the LM. But once more, labour market policies alone are not sufficient to support the integration of the most vulnerable in society and into the LM: the personal, family and social hurdles they face need also be addressed: e.g. the lack of enabling services is a real obstacle to participation in the LM for women with care responsibilities.

# Best practices of social inclusion in some European countries

EU countries work together in the field of SI using the open method of coordination. Based on this tool, the MS agree on common objectives and common indicators, against which progresses are measured. The common objectives are included by each country in a National Plan and reports are sent to the EU Commission, which, together with the EU Council, issue Joint Reports. These reports assess what has been achieved in each country and identify good practice and innovative approaches that can be shared among the MS.

In this session, some of the good practices, included in the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010 but also derived by other national sources, are presented as an inspiration for policy makers of other countries, and in particular for Albania.

## Austria

## Credit account for people affected by poverty / persons without cash

In this case, there is no obligation for banks of opening an account with a client lacking of creditworthiness. The lack of a bank account, leads to delays in paying regular expenses (rent, heating, loan installments), threatening the fulfillment of their basic subsistence needs. In addition, an account is often a prerequisite for starting a job and is therefore in many cases indispensable for labour market reintegration.

The situation can change, enabling them to open a temporary credit account. The credit account of “Sparcasse” (savings bank), free of charge, is a useful element of a comprehensive package of support and counseling services, which are provided predominantly by debt counseling agencies and the social counseling centres of Caritas. Social workers support clients in planning their household budgets. Additional services such as a low-cost household insurance to cover household damages are offered.

1. **Komensky Fund: an initiative of the ERSTE Foundation and Caritas Austria**

The objective of the project “Learn for Life“ is to improve the educational opportunities of socially disadvantaged persons and groups in Central and South Eastern Europe (CSEE) with the aid of projects promoting education and individual support in education and training.

Another objective is to promote dialogue and knowledge transfer between the organizations participating in project implementation. To this end, partial projects are realized in the following countries: Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Croatia and in Ukraine. Measures improving the situation of the Roma population are in the focus of these projects. The results show very clearly that educational and/or measures supporting education have favorable effects on life situations of the persons concerned.

1. **City of Vienna – Municipal Department**

Three projects address the subject LM integration of migrants and persons entitled to asylum:

1. “Prospects“: vocational and educational counseling for persons entitled to asylum and financial support for further education;
2. “Competence Centre“: counseling regarding the recognition of prior learning and on further education for new migrants;
3. “Basic vocational guidance in the “mother tongue” targeting newcomers

Newcomers to Vienna first undergo a counseling session about their future occupation, if possible in their mother tongue. Comprehensive information are provided on procedures for the recognition of qualification, on how to get further training in Vienna. In order to facilitate labour market integration, assistance is provided for occupational re-orientation.

## Czech Republic

1. **Rehabilitation – Activation – Work**

The project aiming to support the creation of a vocational rehabilitation system and to create structures able to simplify and improve access to the LM for disabled.

The Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation (IVR) has been incorporated in the legislation since 1991,and is officially regulated by the provisions of the Act on Employment, which stipulate that all persons with disabilities shall have the right to vocational rehabilitation. Due to the lack of any methodological support for vocational rehabilitation these provisions have not being fully implemented till 2006. In that year, a project was launched, which brought to the establishment of a methodology for working with persons with disabilities through the creation of an “Advisory Programme for Persons with Disabilities“.

Pilot projects took place in 12 regions and the regional cooperation network was composed of a labour office, training and advisory organization, and a rehabilitation centre. Over 140 persons with disabilities attended the advisory programme. Subsequently, the methodology was completed and amended to take into account experiences obtained during the pilot test.

A new project entitled “Mainstreaming” was launched, involving the preparation of seminars throughout the Czech Republic, aimed at informing labour office staff and social partners about vocational rehabilitation and the possibilities of its use.

1. **Support for inclusion – Career Counseling**

In a society, like the Czech, characterized by a high level of homogeneity, the presence of a large proportion of the Roma population at risk of SE constitutes a relevant problem as the marked difference in the level of education of Roma in socially excluded locations at compared with the majority society represents a significant threat to social cohesion in the long term.

The project aimed at providing people at risk of SE, primarily Roma, with a better chance of success in accessing the legal LM through enhanced career counseling and support in acquiring better qualifications.

Career counselors in certain towns are increasingly frequently encountering a decrease in the number of job opportunities for low-qualified workers. This is a natural result of the ongoing transformation process of the LM.

The project is focused in the following specific objectives:

1. To optimize career counseling tools and to support education as required by the diagnosed predisposition of the client. From 2006 to 2007 a test kit was created, focused on diagnosing the abilities and skills of job applicants. This tool may be applied directly when clients enter the LM, and also be used to diagnose their potential skills and, on the basis of the test results, can be taken into account when deciding on a client’s subsequent education;
2. To improve clients’ qualifications in sectors, with a good perspective, to reflect developments in the LM and to support clients’ job prospects related to the level of their qualifications;
3. To motivate clients to focus on sectors of the LM where outputs from socio-demographic analyses indicate that they are more likely to find employment;
4. To prepare the relevant materials to amend employment legislation to enable people at risk of SE to become more competitive.

## Italy

There are many examples of good practices on SI issues in Italy and the majority of them operate at local level either activating ad-hoc co-ordination initiatives among the actors involved or structuring the interventions through formalized territorial pacts[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. **Valle d’Aosta Region: support for the employment of vulnerable groups**

This is a special programme aims at providing substantial incentives for the enterprises that recruit individuals from vulnerable categories. In particular for persons indicated by social services, it is foreseen the reimbursement of 50% of the salary for two years in case of recruitment with indefinite duration of the contract and 30% of the salary up to 2 years in case of fix duration contract. A similar programme is foreseen for people with a certified disability[[3]](#footnote-3) between 46% and 79 %:

In case of recruitment with indefinite duration of the contract, for each disabled is foreseen a reimbursement of the salary of 40% for the first year, 30% for the second and 20% for the third year. In case of fix duration contract, for each disabled is foreseen a reimbursement of 25% of the salary for up to two years.

1. ***‘Vercellinrete[[4]](#footnote-4)’***

The project was put in place for testing new forms of governance at local level by networking the different actors involved in the inclusion of vulnerable groups. The added value of this networking was the possibility for the individuals to fully explore the existing opportunities avoiding overlapping and duplication, but also the risk of no intervention for lack of appropriate information. The area of intervention was the Province of Vercelli, in the Piedmont Region, which gave the name to the project (Vercelli’s network)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Scope** | **Output** | **Responsible institution** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Screening | Identification of the people to be supported and information sharing among the participants to the network | A file is prepared with personal data of the concerned persons | Social services participant to the network |
| First level diagnosis | Assessment of the working experience of the person and of his/her availability for employment and presence of obstacles. | Personal file is updated with the working experience of the person and of his/her availability for employment and presence of obstacles. | Employment service in collaboration with the  Service, which proposed the case |
| Enhanced diagnosis | An in depth analysis of competences is conducted | Skills and competences are available for further elaboration | Employment service |
| Employment solutions | Identification of the actions to put in place in favour of the targeted person and definition of who is doing what | * Drafting the individual employment plan * Activation of procedures for special funds for disabled (if appropriate) | Employment service in collaboration with the  Service, which proposed the case |
| Employment opportunities | Search for enterprises available for recruitment or apprenticeship for the jobseeker | A file is filled in with the details of the contacts with the enterprises | Employment service |
| Starting work | Planning and support for the beginning of the work in the enterprise | Registration in the individual file of the recruitment data. Preparation of all documents necessary for the employment | Employment service in collaboration with the  Service, which proposed the case |
| Monitoring  of the starting phase | Monitoring  of the starting phase of the new job or apprenticeship | Problems, if any, are recorded in the individual file | Service, which proposed the case |
| Monitoring  of the job relations | Continuing monitoring  of the recruitment or apprenticeship | Problems, if any, are recorded in the individual file | Employment service  or the Service, which proposed the casein presence of problems |

The Steering Committee of the project, composed of representatives of the most relevant institutions involved in SI (social assistance services, employment offices, health services, training institutions, etc.) became the permanent venue for monitoring the implementation and prose new initiatives, as appropriate.

The methodology and the steps followed in dealing with vulnerable individuals are illustrated in the following table:

## Poland - PSPRA

The SI Programme aims at supporting municipalities in the implementation of Strategies for Solving Social Problems. Furthermore, depending on the needs, SI programme is supposed to be used by municipalities for creating strategies or updating the existing document.

The main results of the SI Programme have been:

1. Creation of institutional and social potential in the area of strategic planning and social policy implementation at the local level as well as strengthening regional cooperation;
2. Improved access of inhabitants of municipalities to services, new forms of cooperation and organized activity:

* A wider offer and better standard of services for inhabitants of municipalities;
* Building a network of service providers;
* Greater number of initiatives undertaken by local community;
* Greater participation of inhabitants;
* Increase in the level of knowledge of self-government employees of the proper method of organizing competitions, acquiring by municipalities the skill of managing the processes of subcontracting their own tasks to external bodies;
* Developing social awareness and increasing knowledge of social integration and efficient methods of its development;
* Developing inter-municipality cooperation within the scope of increased SI;
* Ensuring stable and constant participation of social representatives in the planning and implementation of social policy in the territory of municipalities;
* Increased number of services in the field of social assistance offered by municipalities;
* Increased number of service providers;
* Increased funds designated for solving social problems in municipalities;
* Creating a long-term (permanent) mechanism for the evaluation of social policy implementation;
* Increase standards of social services, gaining by local leaders knowledge about organizational and financial possibilities of undertaking local activities,

# The community-based approach in social inclusion

The economic crisis is having an heavy impact also in social composition of the society, by increasing the number of unemployed and those at risk of poverty and emargination. At the same time the crisis is affecting public finances, shrinking the possibility to lower the pressures on the weakest part of the society. Therefore, it is not only vital that the intervention at local level is strengthened and better coordinated with national and regional level and linked with private initiatives, but require the research for innovative approaches, that allow to adapt and develop new ways of implementing active inclusion policies to respond to new social challenges.

Examples of innovative good practices have been collected by EUROCITIES[[5]](#footnote-5) helping their dissemination and transferability amongst other cities facing with similar problems. The examples[[6]](#footnote-6), show that the innovation was achieved by stimulating innovative partnerships throughout integrated approaches; designing new ways of dealing with group of people with particular difficulties, such as homeless, migrants, street children and people with disabilities; encouraging new ways of doing things or new attitudes by supporting bottom-up approaches for the active inclusion of vulnerable citizens.

## Bologna – Flashgiovani

Flashgiovani.it is an online magazine managed by young people aged 15 to 29 living in the Bologna area. This tool is aimed at easing their transition from education to work preventing the risk of SE. Flashgiovani offers an open online space for young people to provide information and advice on topics such as culture, health and well-being, volunteering and travel, training and job placements.

Flashgiovani.it is based on an innovative philosophy: an on line magazine by the young, for the young. With more than 220 young people involved in the Flashgiovani editorial team since 2000, and with the number of page views per month reaching over 8 million during 2010, it is clear that the Flashgiovani.it project is providing a successful hub for young people.

The Flashgiovani project offers a high degree of transferability and sustainability. For example, the use of creative editorial workshops has been taken up by other European youth projects (e.g. Video makers online – 2004).

## 4.2 Brno – Socio-information Centre

The lack of awareness of the social services available in the city was recognized as contributing to the risk of SE for people most in need of assistance.

Opened in autumn 2009, the Socio-info Centre of Brno offers social services information and advice, both from the staff themselves, and also via telephone links, internet access, and referrals to other relevant organisations. The centre also offers professional help to help people resolve crisis situations.

## 4.3 Copenhagen – Joint strategy: three separate administrations working together

The project aims at offering people with chronic health problems, services they are inmost need of: social services; health and care; and employment and integration through an integrated approach. Since the competences are divided among different institutions, the Joint Strategy allows services on social assistance, health and employment working together in increasing employability and reducing social assistance for this targeted group of vulnerable people.

The idea of a collaborating between the different pieces of the administration and creating a Joint Strategy is a winning model that can be easily disseminated everywhere.

## 4.4 Rotterdam – social greening: job creation and social cohesion through smart investment

This project is an innovative example of social greening: a smart investment can both provide jobs and increase social cohesion.

Like many former industrial cities and ports in Europe, Rotterdam is evolving into a service-based economy. Many people who worked in traditional industries are now long-term unemployed. In addition, they live in deprived areas of the city and experience social isolation. They know relatively few people in the area, and only mix with others of a similar age and background.

With a need to cut unemployment and social isolation in deprived areas, Rotterdam’s Social Affairs and Employment Department decided in 2009 to use active inclusion funding to establish the Community Gardens project. This involves working with the local community to create two green spaces in two of the most deprived neighborhoods in Rotterdam. Rotterdam is continually learning from the experiences of greening projects elsewhere: locally, nationally and internationally. For example, the city has taken into consideration the experiences of projects in Germany (e.g. Gottingen), the UK (e.g. London) and the USA (e.g. Milwaukee, Detroit, New York City).

One of the key requirements of the active inclusion funding is to create jobs. So the project has been designed to provide local unemployed people with paid work and skills training: in gardening, agriculture and maintenance.

## 4.5 Sofia - Assistance for Independent Living: an innovative service for people with disabilities

Many people with disabilities have limited funds: they cannot afford private care and have been at risk of SE. The project offers people with disabilities up to 300 hours’ help a month by up to five Personal Assistants. All the PAs are paid by the municipality. The success of the Assistance for Independent Living service is based on several key innovations: the service is completely free of charge, regardless of a person’s income. PAs can help not only with home care, but with all kinds of other activities: journeys to school and college, excursions to see friends, grocery and other shopping, and visits to the doctor.

In Sofia, Assistance for Independent Living is widely recognized as vital in transforming the lives of service users and their families. Since the service was introduced in 2008, the number of service users has almost tripled. It gives people more chance of being treated equally, as well as the ability to live, learn, work and develop according to their desires and ambitions, and a real opportunity to play their part in society.

# Social inclusion in the Balkans

## 5.1 Main findings of related researches

The analysis of SI has been systemically based on the following main findings of the related researches conducted by international institutions and NGOs:

1. The research conducted by European Commission - Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities presents analyses, conclusions and recommendations in a synthesis report published in 2009[[7]](#footnote-7). The first finding of this document is the scarce reliability of statistics on social inclusion and exclusion in the Western Balkans (WBs) the slow progress in adapting statistical surveys in line with Eurostat standards. WB are improving their statistical systems during their he accession process to EU;
2. The research carried out by SOLIDAR, a European network of 56 NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide, which published in October 2011 a report on Promoting community-based initiatives for social inclusion in the WB[[8]](#footnote-8). Educational deficits and underachievement, as well as skill gaps among vulnerable ethnic groups in the WB region emerge as both a cause and effect of unemployment, low incomes and other multiple deprivations and SE. Education and training present a key challenge to sustainable and effective inclusive policies in the ethnically diverse WB countries and territories. Relevant are also policy advices formulated through a set of recommendations:

* Promote joint and coordinated intervention of all stakeholders and develop cooperation between public, private and NGO sectors.
* Strengthen the capacity of community-based initiatives and organizations in order to better identify and meet needs at grassroots level;
* Develop an institutional and legal framework for social economy organizations;
* Extend the range of available social welfare services and focus on specific barriers to SI, such as unemployment, lack of or limited education and hurdles to participation and access to resources and opportunities.
* Strengthen the capacity of local municipalities to develop a planned approach to meeting needs and ensuring a more appropriate balance between community-based and institutional forms of care.

1. ETF reports have also identified a number of common themes in the whole region, including: the lack of pre-school education; divisive curricula in mainstream education; problems in realizing rights to first language education; distorted curricula; segregated schooling for some groups; cultural stereotypes in vocational training and preparation for work; and lack of minority teachers and mentors. Overall, there is still a lack of a positive and consistent emphasis on inter-cultural education and training. In many ways, deficits in education and in terms of access to the labour market for minority groups are the key to exclusion, and challenging these is a key to promoting social inclusion. In terms of vocational training, many of the general issues identified above are particularly acute for vulnerable ethnic groups[[9]](#footnote-9);
2. A UNDP report on Roma in South East Europe[[10]](#footnote-10) shows clearly the interrelationship between poverty, education, employment, health and education, using sample survey data. It shows, clearly, the additional disadvantages Roma face over other vulnerable groups living nearby. It argues for a concerted effort to break the cycle of dependency, in particular through a long-term investment in education of Roma, desegregation of schooling, additional language support and incentives for families to commit to their children’s schooling.

## 5.2 Serbia

**Social Innovation Fund (SIF)**

To support the first wave of social welfare reforms introduced in 2001 and 2002, a Social Innovation Fund (SIF) was established, becoming operational in 2003. SIF was envisaged as a transitory mechanism providing competitive funding and management support to reform-oriented social services projects at the local level. In particular it was designed to promote the development of a coherent and sustainable range of community-based, alternative, social services implemented through partnerships between pluralities of service providers, in order to ensure that local level innovations inform central levelreforms, and provides opportunities for knowledge transfer.

Instead of duplicating existing systems of social protection, the SIF aimed to increase their outreach while also identifying, testing and replicating new innovative ideas. SIF has been funded from combined state and donor funds, including the Norwegian Government, the European Commission and UNDP. SIF's annual budget was between €1.3m and €1.7m, with the average size of funding for each project increasing overtime.

SIF promotes also the partnerships between state providers and NGOs enhancing the role of Civil Society Organizations as service providers, creating an emerging market for their services, and has helped to break down resistance to non-state providers from within state services. SIF has helped in modeling work on standards and on costing of a basket of services. There are now plans for re-conceptualizing SIF in the light of evidence that patterns of funding tended to be regionally unequal, with less developed areas receiving fewer and smaller size grants on average, and with little coverage in rural areas.

**Eco– Social Enterprise**

The project aimed at supporting the creation of a social enterprise (cooperative) producing innovative products with an emphasis on environmental preservation, recycling and reuse.

The targets are long-term unemployed women over 45 years of age. The cooperative was established in April 2010 by9 women. After 18 months, other 5women were hired in this self-sustaining enterprise.

The sustainability of the enterprise is guaranteed by the achieved complete knowledge of textile manufacturing process; the specific knowledge in innovative techniques of disposal material management(mostly from printed PVC canvas and various advertising materials) for manufacturing goods of high ecological value and the additional knowledge about entrepreneurial skills and selling.

**Network of Social Entrepreneurs (SENS)**

Group 484[[11]](#footnote-11) is dedicated to developing and promoting social entrepreneurship in Serbia. Through the Social Enterprise Forum project, Group 484 has initiated a network of enterprises. This project, supported by the UniCredit foundation and with participation of UniCredit Bank Serbia, provides financial support for social enterprises in the form of mixed grants and credit earmarked funds.

The mission of the network is to support an inclusive, creative community where the social economy, economic empowerment and social inclusion is encouraged and promoted, thus contributing to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in society and the sustainable economic development of Serbia. Through networking and supporting social enterprises in Serbia, the network is actively working to promote social enterprise as an innovative undertaking in the field of social economy. More specifically, the network:

* Provides sustainable ways to promote and improve local communities;
* Develops skills and knowledge of local communities;
* Helps excluded groups to integrate back into society and the labour market;
* Promotes and supports active citizenship;
* Provides alternative business models.

**Support to Rural Development Programming**

The objective of the project is to increase opportunities for rural communities and inhabitants, small households, handicrafts and agricultural producers to receive accurate information about support for local development initiatives, through**:**

1. Support the creation of regional networking as a tool for the creation of a national rural development network;
2. Creation of a basis for further development of local action groups using the rural development fund

The expected results are:

* Strengthened existing, and supported new, potentials for rural development;
* Organized efficient and updated collection of information of key relevance for programming and evaluation of rural development measures;
* Enhanced horizontal and vertical flow of information;
* Identified local actors and supported regional/local initiatives for rural development;
* Improved conditions for development, living conditions of rural areas in Serbia and environment.

## 5.3 Bosnia & Herzegovina

**Rural Tourism as a tool for economic and social revitalization**

The overall objective of the project is to promote economic and social development in the wider Knin area and to foster greater cross-border cooperation with regions in BiH, as well as to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders to manage region development in cooperation with partners across the border.

The specific objectives of the project are:

(i) Develop rural tourism as a tool for economic and social revitalisation of rural areas of the Knin and Bosansko Grahovo municipalities

(ii) Improve the quality of life in rural areas of the Knin and Bosansko Grahovo municipalities

1. To decrease the demographic downfall of rural areas within the Knin and BosanskoGrahovo municipalities.

The project planned to achieve the following main indicators:

* 50 rural households from Knin and Bosansko Grahovo areas profiled and assessed for the purpose of rural tourism development
* 20 rural households from Knin and Bosansko Grahovo areas received education, training, and technical assistance for adapting their available resources for the purpose of rural tourism development
* 10 unemployed young individuals (men and women equally) received education, training, and technical assistance in starting their own businesses related to traditional handicrafts
* 5 individuals from local associations and institutions and 5 employees from local authorities in Bosansko Grahovo received training and technical assistance
* Associations and institutions from the Knin area transferred their knowledge, lessons learned, and experience to relevant associations and institutions from Bosansko Grahovo
* Concept notes for 2 cross-border projects developed and prepared for future calls for proposals bilingual tourism catalogues and tourist maps prepared and distributed

## 5.4 Kosovo

**Access to employment in rural areas for young people**

The overall objective of the project is targeting poverty reduction through the enhancement of young people’s access to employment in rural areas, with a special focus on women.

The specific objective of the project is the implementation of vocational trainings on demanded professions in the country, and the preparation of young unemployed people from the rural areas to be trained and prepared to negotiate a working position on the labour market. The project planned to achieve the following main indicators:

* Provided 120 vulnerable unemployed persons in Kosovo with vocational trainings in a demanded field and with specific skills to research and apply for a job.
* Provided women and youth from the rural areas with working competences sanctioned
* by a nationally recognized certificate
* Additional training on labour skills and basic labour rights allowing people to be
* competitive on the labour market and to be aware about their rights
* Mediation between potential employers and participants
* Improving the access to training and to employment for vulnerable group will have an impact on the social and economical situation of the rural area.

# Good practices in Albania

## Examples of good practices

1. **Public programs**

With regards to the social inclusion, social protection measures (social aide and payment for disability) and labour market programs (employment promotion, vocational training, unemployment payment and mediation and counseling assistance) has been adopted by the Albanian Government including specific related financing in the annual state budget. The major part of this budget was addressed to the social protection measures (see Table 1) that represented in 2011 about 37% of the total budget of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO).

**Social protection measures**

A small part of the MoLSAEO budget was addressed to the labour market programs out of which about 60% covered the unemployment payment, about 8% financed the employment promotion measures and about 12% financed the vocational training (see Table 1).

**Table 1: MoLSAEO Factual Budget by Programs**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PROGRAMS/Products** | **2008** | | **2009** | | **2010** | | **2011** | |
| *mil. Lek* | *%* | *mil. Lek* | *%* | *mil. Lek* | *%* | *mil. Lek* | *%* |
| **1** | **Social Protection** | **17,194** | **44.4** | **18,663** | **39.5** | **18,837** | **37.2** | **19,161** | **37** |
| 1.1 | *Social Aide* | *6.203* | *36* | *4.503* | *24* | *4.214* | *22* | *4.421* | *23* |
| 1.2 | *Disable people* | *9.19* | *53* | *10.273* | *55* | *12.268* | *65* | *12.326* | *64* |
| **2** | **Labour Market** | **1,588** | **4.1** | **1,542** | **3.26** | **1,615** | **3.22** | **1,472** | **3** |
| 2.1 | *Employment Promotion* | *202* | *13* | *182* | *12* | *133* | *8* | *108* | *8* |
| 2.2 | *Vocational Training* | *351* | *22* | *188* | *12* | *170* | *11* | *170* | *12* |
| 2.3 | *Unemployment payment* | *824* | *52* | *868* | *56* | *982* | *61* | *886* | *60* |
| 2.4 | *Mediation and counseling* | *210* | *13* | *304* | *20* | *330* | *20* | *307* | *20* |
| **3** | **Total MoLSAEO** | **38,689** | **100** | **47,243** | **100** | **51,195** | **100** | **52,190** | **100** |

**Employment promotion**

The public employment promotion programmes in Albania include the following main components:

(i) Support to the *unemployed job seekers in difficulty[[12]](#footnote-12)*. Under this programme, employers providing employment to job seekers for at least one year receive up to 100% of the minimum wage for 4 months, and are reimbursed for 100% of their part of social insurance contributions. Eligible beneficiaries are long term unemployed persons, people receiving social assistance, people receiving unemployment benefits, first entrants in the labor market aged 18-25 years, people over 45 years age who do not have any education higher than the secondary education or its equivalent, people with disabilities, Roma people, and returned emigrants.

(ii) *On the job training for unemployed job seekers[[13]](#footnote-13)*. Under this programme, employers who provide on the job training for unemployed job seekers are offered financial support in the form of training cost (up to 70% of the cost). In addition, job seekers participating in the trainings benefit 50% of the minimum wage for all training duration;

(iii) *Training of youngsters finalizing university education[[14]](#footnote-14)*. In this case both employees and job seekers benefit an amount equal to 100% of the unemployment payment for six-month duration;

1. *Unemployed women[[15]](#footnote-15)*. Under this programme, employers providing employment to job seekers marginalized women[[16]](#footnote-16) for at least one year receive 100% of the minimum wage for 4 months and 70% of their part of social insurance contributions. In case of two years contracts, employers received the minimum wage for 6 months and 85% of their part of social insurance contributions. Similarly, in case of three years contracts, employers received the minimum wage for 4 months and 100% of their part of social insurance contributions. The financing of this programme by the state budget ended in 2010.

About 7,200 people from the above target groups benefited from these programs during the last four years (see Table 2). Their number decreased significantly by years due to the related financing shortcomings as presented in Table 1.

**Table 2: Number of participants/beneficiaries**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Products** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** |
|
| 1 | Employment Promotion | 2188 | 2020 | 1757 | 1170 |
| 2 | Vocational Training | 7965 | 7751 | 10470 | 10475 |
| 3 | Unemployment payment | 9866 | 10244 | 10055 | 9397 |
| 4 | Mediation and counseling | 11.150 | 11.344 | 11.913 | 11.555 |

**Vocational Training**

According to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Law[[17]](#footnote-17), public institutions provide Vocational Training (VT) though 10 Vocational Training Centres (VTC) established in 9 Albanian Regions out of 12 Regions in total[[18]](#footnote-18). Despite the decrease of the state budget financing for VT (see Table 1), the total number of beneficiaries from VT in VTCs was increased by about 35% during the last two years (see Table 2 and Chart 1) reaching about 10,500 trainees in 2011. While in the Elbasani VTC were trained some 4,000 peoples during the last 4 years and in Fieri about 2,050 people, no VT were provided in the Lezha Region because there is not a VTC in place in this region.

**Chart 1: Total trained in VTC by years**

The number of profiles offered by VTCs was increased too during the last 4 years: in total 55 profiles in 2011 as compare to 34 profiles in 2008 (see Chart 2).The VTC 4 in Tirana and VTCs in Shkodra and Fieri offered the major number of profiles: 19, 17 and 15 profiles respectively. Tailoring, plumbing, computer operator and English language were the most offered profiles in all VTCs during the last 4 years.

**Chart 2: Number of profiles in VTC by years**

In Elbasan VTC, every year about 50% of trainees followed training courses in basic computer (15 – 20 short term courses per year) and English language (20 – 25 short term courses per year). In Fieri VTC, about 50% of trainees followed training courses in computer and plumbing profiles.

Unemployed people were part of the total number of trainees that followed training courses in VTCs. During the last 4 years, they represented about 39% of the total number of people trained in VTCs (see Chart 3). Specifically in Elbasan and Fier VTCs, they represented less than about 43% of the total number of trainees.

**Chart 3: Unemployed peoples trained in VTCs during 2008-2011**

However, not all the unemployed people trained in VTCs were job seekers (JS) registered in the Regional Employment Offices (REO). The JS represent only about 54% of the unemployed trainees (see Chart 4). This is partly related to the low interests of unemployed peoples to be registered as JS in the REOs.

**Chart 4: JS trained in VTCs during 2008-2011**

The formal statistics of the National Employment Service (NES) consider women, Roma and disable people as three main disadvantaged categories participating in VT. During the last 4 years, about 1/3 of the total number of JS trained in VTCs were women (see Chart 5). Roma and disable people represented about 5% and 1% respectively due to the very limited number of people part of these target groups registered as JS in the REOs[[19]](#footnote-19).

**Chart 5: JS from disadvantaged groups in VTCs**

**B. International donors programs**

**Strengthen the employment and training system of NES[[20]](#footnote-20)**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) implemented in Albania during the period 2009 – 2011 a project regarding Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP) in four Albanian Regions[[21]](#footnote-21) targeting disadvantageous unemployed people and focused on three main programs:

1. Work Training Program, which consists in financing 34,800 Lek to the enterprises per each unemployed job seeker as training allowance with the condition that the training is delivered for a minimum period of 3 months. An additional amount of 10,000 Lek /month per person was payed to the participants during the three months of compulsory training. The enterprise is obliged to employ the trained people for at least double the duration of the training period;
2. Employment Subsidy Program, which consists in 100% subsidy of the obligatory insurance from the employer up to 12 months, and 6 minimum wages for the employee provided that they are hired for a period which is at least double the duration of the subsidy period,
3. Self Employment Program devoted to women, which consists in business skills training and pre and post business start up advice, 1000 USD benefit per each participant in the form of grant (half of the amount to be granted after the completion of training and after the prepared business plan be approved and the second half to be released upon delivering the business registration certificate in the NES office). In case the business plan is elaborated by 3 and more women together, the grant would be doubled (2000 USD per participant);
4. Employment Promotion for Disable Persons Program, consisting in 19,000 lek paid as the salary for a period up to 6 months, 100% coverage of obligatory insurance from the part of employer for 6 months’ period and coverage of the training cost for 3 months at an amount of 11,600 lek/month.

There were 17 companies and 148 jobseekers in total involved in the Project implementation in the 4 pilot locations. The highest number of beneficiaries (about 57% of the total) was supported by the employment subsidy program, while the lowest number of participants (about 12%) participated in the work training program. The women represented about 46% of the total number of beneficiaries.

In Lezha Region*,* REO implemented 3 Programs with the participation of 41 job seekers in total: work training for 7 jobseekers, employment subsidy employing 20 job seekers, and self-employment involving 14 women. In Shkodra Region*,* REO implemented 3 Programs with the participation of 54 job seekers in total: work training for 11 jobseekers, employment subsidy employing 22 job seekers, and self-employment involving 21 women. In Kukesi Region*,* REO implemented 2 Programs with the participation of 36 job seekers in total out of which 25 job seekers in employment subsidy and 11 women in self-employment programs. In Gjirokastra Region*,* REO implemented only the employment subsidy program with the participation of 17 job seekers.

While the Disable Program was considered as relevant, no progress has been made by REOs because of the lack of appropriate business infrastructure conditions of companies[[22]](#footnote-22) and the low interests of disable people to be register as JS and consequently to be part of the programme.

**Work Training/ Wage Subsidy Scheme for Vulnerable Youth**

An active labour market measure that combines work-training and wage subsidies has been designed by four Agencies of United Nations[[23]](#footnote-23) to support disadvantaged youth with the aim of enhancing their employability. The project involves the NES and its local offices as front-line service providers. Considering a Public Private Partnership (PPP) approach, an innovative aspect of the project is the involvement of the private sector (represented by the Albanian British Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ABCCI) not only in the identification of existing vacancies, but also in the overall implementation and monitoring of the measure.

The aim of the project is to support unemployed youngsters of working age with work training followed by subsidized employment in order to reintegrate them into the active labour force, establish/restore work capacity and motivation, and lead to sustainable employment in private enterprises. Beneficiaries are young people (aged 16-29), who have low educational attainment, with no (or limited) working experience and are registered as unemployed job seekers for a period of 6 months or longer. While the selection criteria aim to stimulate the involvement of women, the measure seeks to give equal employment opportunities to both young men and women. Further preference was given to those unemployed belonging to households receiving social assistance.

The project includes the following two main components:

1. *Work training* for a 3-months period. This includes provision of on the job training as per individual training plan by the enterprise. In addition, the enterprises shall avail the trainees to attend general employability training for up to 20% of the working time. This training is arranged by NES either directly through VTCs or through sub-contracting training to other service providers. A lump sum amount is allocated to the enterprises to support the work placement for the three-month training period and cover on-the-job training related costs (tools, raw materials, etc.)and provision of formal training arranged by NES. To increase motivation, an additional monthly allowance is transferred directly to the enterprises, during the 3-month training period, upon provision of evidence that the allowances have been paid to the trainees;
2. *Wage subsidy* for a 2-months period. Enterprises hire the trainees with regular employment contracts and are subsidies with the minimum wage. In that case, wage is paid directly to the employer. Limiting the wage subsidies to two months minimizes the possibility of market distortion, while still serving the purpose of providing the employers with an added incentive to retain the workers. During this period, employers are required to pay the social insurance obligations for each worker, and retain the worker for a period that is at least equal to the number of months for which they received training and a wage subsidy and with the same salary, terms and conditions (i.e. if they receive training support of three months and wage subsidies for two months, the individual will be employed for at least 5 additional months).

Eligible companies benefited from the project comply with the following terms: (i) Registration period of min. 6 months prior to commencement of the project; (ii) No history of worker dismissal in the last 6 months; (iii) Regular payment of tax and social security liabilities and possession of a bank account in an authorized banking institution; and (iv) Priority was given to enterprises with 3-20 employees and enterprises located in the Regions of Kukes and Shkodra.

To date, on-the-job training was provided to 328 disadvantaged youth in 37 private enterprises in six regions in Albania. Over 90% of those trained are employed with regular employment contracts.

**C. NGOs Programs**

**Murialdo social center**

The Murialdo social center was established in Fieri in 1994 aiming at social development and vocational training for youngsters. VT courses started in 1997 initially for 3 profiles and later on this number increased to 8 profiles. In terms of duration, the center provides 1-year and 2-years VT courses. Woodworker, mechanics, office assistant, welder, electrics, and plumber are some of the courses offered by the center.

The main target groups involved in training are: women from poor urban families, Roma youngsters from rural areas, ex-trafficked women, prisoners and disabled (deaf). Individuals apply for enrolment in VTC and some of them are accepted to participate in VT courses after selection procedures including interviews.

The VT courses of the period 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 were followed by 269 trainees in total and the demand for enrolment has been increased year after year. According to the Murialdo data base, about 96% of the trainees of this center are employed by local businesses.

The EU is the main source of financing for the Murialdo social center. During the period 1997 – 2010 the center benefitted EU financing for 9projects.

In 2006 the activities of Murialdo center were extended in Spitalla that is one of the poorest suburban areas of the City of Durres.

**Professional Alternative Center of Tirana**

Useful to Albanian Women (UAW) is one of the Albanian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) that contributes to the improvement of the social and economic conditions of street children and teenagers in difficulties. the first “Professional Alternative” Center was established in 1997 in Tirana District, and later on similar centers were established in Durres and Lezha Districts too. The activity of the social center was focusing on the following services:

1. Provide professional training in Hairdressing, Esthetics, Tailoring, Fashion design, Cooking, Secretary, Plumbing, Solar Panel, and Auto Mechanic profiles. Additional knowledge on English language according to profiles and computer user skills are offered to the students as well;
2. The employment mediation through UAW own employment agency, its Alumni organization, the social cooperative[[24]](#footnote-24) (The idea of the social cooperative consists in the fact that beneficiaries and ex-beneficiaries are joining to create their own enterprise, in order to empower themselves in the market, facilitate the process of investment, and reduce the expenditures of enterprises);
3. Provide credit: at the end of VT courses, the young graduates are equipped with a set of tools respective to their profession as a loan[[25]](#footnote-25) that will help lift them off the ground. They are obliged to return only 40% of their costs.
4. Improving and facilitating the social integration of beneficiaries in the Albanian society: the social and psychosocial intervention is one of the most important parts of the integration process since target groups in need come from zones and communities with very difficult social and economic conditions, which are reflected and manifested in their psychological situation;
5. The center offered also periodical medical examinations, further medical treatment according to cases, and free medicines.

Since 1997, about 1800 beneficiaries attended the VT courses in the center, out of which about 870 (48%) were females. The street children and youth in need of age 15 – 20 years old (about 375 beneficiaries), youth in need of age 21 – 25 years old (about 75 beneficiaries), and youngsters member of Alumni organization (about 700 beneficiaries), were the main target groups benefited by the services of the center. The average age of beneficiaries was 17 years old.

According to the UAW data, the employment rate of the trainees is about 66%, and self-employment rate is about 6%.

**Professional Alternative Center of Elbasan**

The social and professional integration center “One dream more” was established in Elbasani in June 2000 by UAW. Children and teenagers aged 16-22 years old, including youngsters from families in socio-economic difficulties, youngsters from Roma and Egyptian families, youngsters with divorced parents, and orphans are the main target groups that benefited from the activities of this center.

This is related to the main goal of the center namely improvement of the economic situation of the street children and teenagers in need through social and professional integration, enabling them to become full right citizens and to participate actively in the development of our country.

The activity of the social center was focus on the following services:

1. Integration through VT courses in several profiles such as cooking, tailoring, hairdressing, auto mechanics and plumber;
2. The employment mediation through its employment agency that ensure coordination between the center, the REO and businesses;
3. Psychological and medical care support;
4. Social cultural integration activities.

During the period 2000 – 2011, about 1,200 beneficiaries attended the VT courses in the center, out of which about 600 (50%) were females and about 380 (32%) were from rural areas. Participants were provided with Certificate recognized and approved by the NES.

According to the UAW data, the employment rate of the trainees is about 52%, and self-employment rate is about 5%.

**Social enterprises Penelope**

The Independent Forum for the Albanian Women (IFAW) started in 1991 the implementation of a large program supporting women in need in 15 districts of Albania, namely: Tirana, Durres, Lac, Shkodra, Burrel, Bulqize, Peshkopia, Kukes, Lushnje, Fier, Vlora, Saranda, Kruja, Elbasan, Pogradec.

The aim of the program was to expand the professional training courses for socially excluded women and to promote female social entrepreneurship as a primary way to empower women. In addition, the program aim to provide women with all the necessary information, regarding legislation and laws, and advise them on important gender issues, combining VT with counseling, information, and awareness on gender concepts. The women that participate in the training courses come from a variety of different social situations, but most of them have been socially excluded for different reasons. About 200 women have been trained in these centers during 1991 – 2000.

Thereafter, IFAW established three social enterprises of women, named Penelope, initially in Vlora and Tirana cities, and then in the city of Durres. Even in these times of economic crisis, social enterprises are able to resist adversities, due to a collaborative spirit and the high quality of production.

Social enterprises have trained and giving jobs to vulnerable women, women from Roma community, single women and women who are victims of human trafficking, as well as women who wish to start their own business and to enter in the market economy, with adequate qualifications in order to be on equal footing with men. In the three Penelope enterprises there are working 215 women and there were trained about1500 women in the sector of clothing, design, cultural and family tourism, manager/responsible of production departments, etc.

In addition, during the period 2002 – 2005 IFAW established two Green-Houses – run by groups of women as social enterprises, in the rural zones of Lushnja and Tirana. The projects were supported by the Italian Ministry of Social Affairs and the EU CARDS Program. There were 20 women that run the green houses and other 150 women trained on the biological agricultural productions.

IFAW established also two info–points for the development of the cultural and family tourism in Berati and Shkodra cities runed by women, where people may find information on the touristic characteristics of the cities.

Currently, IFAW aims to enlarge the idea of professional courses and to put the experience of Penelope into a bigger dimension: to promote female social entrepreneurship as an extremely important way to empower women.

According to the statistics, more than half of women trained by IFAW’s projects – about 1000 women - have found jobs in the other private enterprises or have opened their own business in the villages or small towns where they live.

More than 100 women trained in the info – point of Berat run their houses as bed and breakfast, or have been grouped to organize agricultural small activities.

**VT and Employment Center of *Tjeter Vizion***

In 2007, the Albanian NGO *Tjeter Vizion[[26]](#footnote-26)* established in Elbasan a VT and Employment Center aiming the integration in the labour market of women and youngsters part of the vulnerable groups with a special focus on victims of human traffics and of domestic violence. The project includes the following two main components:

1. *Vocational training*: during the period 2007 – 2011, VT courses were organized in 8 main profiles such as auto-mechanic, welder, tailor, cook, foreign languages, computer and hairdressing, with 3 – 6 month duration. In total, 875 persons benefited from the VT out of which 805 were women. About 115 trainees were employed after finalizing training courses corresponding to an employment rate of 14% in average;
2. *Small grants*: at the end of VT courses, the trainees are supported with small grants to start their own business or they are equipped with a set of tools respective to their profession that will help lift them off the ground. To date, 118 small grants were provided out of which 24 were equipment support.

In addition, *Tjeter Vision* developed income generation projects considering the social enterprises model such as Internet Café, restaurant, and car washing/tire service. All these activities have been established based on business plans carried out by the organization and registered as autonomous business activities employed by peoples coming from the same above target groups. According to a recent *Tjeter Vizion* evaluation, Internet Café resulted to be an example of a business which has not well-functioned. It has been resulted non-rentable, therefore it was closed.

Considering this experience with regards to the social enterprises, *Tjeter Vizion* collaborated with MoF and MoLSAEO in preparing the draft Law on Social Enterprises that includes some fiscal facilities for the social enterprises such as the reduction of VAT and their exclusion by some of the local taxes.

## The common characteristics

Considering the above examples of good practices on SI through VET in Albania, the following main conclusions can be drawn:

**A Impact in the larger society**

All identified initiatives ensured that people remain at the centre of the action and provided direct help to those in need according to the target groups selected by each of the projects. As results, several impacts of the above initiatives could be underlines:

* *Impact on employment*: All interventions positively impacted the employment level of the target groups and project managers reported from moderate to high level of employment rate of trainees. However, this indicator need to be better considered as an important target for verifying the efficiency of the related financing. This is especially related to the public programs, considering both social protection measures and active LM promotion programmes;
* *Impact on human resources development and productivity*: Human resource development is considered as one of the main driving force for the economic growth of Albania. In this context, specific actions related to social enterprises that provide products for the market and helps businesses to be further developed have positive impact in productivity. This is especially important in that period of global economic crisis with serious implication on the new business development and new job creation capacity of the Albanian economy;
* *Impact on SI of a range of people in society*: All identified actions directly influenced the SI of women from poor families, ex-trafficked women, unemployed youngsters, Roma people, persons with disability, and other marginalized groups and well coincide with the SI policies adopted by the Albanian Government. However, relevant statistical data that would demonstrate the size of the actions’ impact as compare to the needs of the target groups do not exist. It is the same for specific statistical data to measure the implementation progress of the Government policies on SI;
* *Impact in increasing interests on VET*: It is already recognized the significant contribution of VET to jobs creation, economic growth and social development, as well as to personal development and social inclusion. It constitutes an important part of lifelong learning. VET plays a vital role in enabling young people involved in VET to acquire skills and competences relevant for labour market requirements and in promotion of labour force’s skills, competence and mobility by improving training opportunities and better recognition of prior learning gained through training and work experience. Despite several policy measures and actions undertake by the government institutions to fight the decrease of interests for the vocational programmes, the enrolment in such programmes is lower than expected. In this respect, all above projects have important awareness impact in increasing interests on VET;
* *Impact in presenting successful models:* The good practices benefit the larger society as well as the direct recipients. In addition they represent models to be further developed and extend to the overall country.

**B Community based approach**

The selected best practices are community-based. All of them involve target groups from local communities who, for a variety of reasons are socially excluded. This predominance of grassroots community work is more evident in the projects implemented by NGOs and international donors rather than in the public programmes.

While the successful actions are implemented at grassroots level in close collaboration with local government institutions, there is a very limited role of the local government attributed by law that cries out for government policies that promote decentralization of responsibilities with regard to the SI.

**C Participants and beneficiaries**

In the selected good practices, the beneficiaries are actively involved in the programme as participants not just as recipients. The lesson learned is that people in need may seek help, but most are willing and eager to participate in the process and welcome an opportunity to improve their circumstances. Recipients and providers both understand that a simple handout is a one-time “Band-Aid”, which is only of temporary help. What is needed is help and support that enables recipients to progress by themselves.

In many of the selected cases, the project contributes also through information and knowledge transmitting and sharing, through introduction of contemporaneous mentality, and through finding of employment opportunities in their own communities.

In addition, regular employment of beneficiaries after finalization of VT could be a fundamental precondition for businesses to participate in the project. Promoting self-employment is also a very good approach for projects in the SI areas.

**D Sustainability**

Most of the selected actions resulted to be generally sustainable. However, a more detailed analyzes of their sustainability presents several difficulties that need to be considered.

At project level, the financial sustainability seems to be the more sensitive issue with regards to the donors and NGOs projects. Most of their activities are closed after the termination of the project and, in the case of NGOs, efforts were made to fulfill the gap through applications to the international donors companies for further financing. It is not the same for the government programmes that have guaranteed annual financing by the state budget despite the decrease of the related budget due to budgetary shortcomings. In the specific cases of social enterprises, financial sustainability was helped also by revenue-generating activities that were addressed to the project’s benefits.

At the beneficiary level, the financial sustainability is related to the continuation of the employment contract after finalization of the project. This is generally respected by employers despite the consequences of the economic crises that is a prove of the appropriate skills developed under the project’s activities.

In terms of the institutional sustainability, the selected projects are fully sustainable and the commitment of the Albanian related institutions was evident in each of the cases supporting implementation agencies, NGOs and/or projects’ staffs. This is related to NES and REOs, as well as to the local government institutions.

**E Reproducibility**

The selected good practices are reproducible. Some of them are already extended in other regions or communities. This is related to the fact that their concept and its implementation are simple and easy to replicate and their benefits a natural result.

However, the question of reproducibility is more related to the possibility to standardize actions and to a proactive role of government institutions vis-à-vis the dissemination of good practices and their adoption at countrywide level.

# Conclusions and Open Issues for Debate

Presenting good practices is considered the best way to solve similar problems learning from the experience of other people or organizations. But it is also clear that importing experiences from abroad, but even extending the local ones to other areas of the same country, might be challenging. Different economic, social and legal conditions can make the task problematic.

Anyhow, some indications can be derived that can be envisaged without the demagogy of proposing impossible achievements.

One important aspect is to have a possibility to monitor constantly the situation by establishing clear indicators and measuring periodically the progresses. In this direction is going the ILO-UNDP project, financed by ADA, testing a methodology for collecting and analyzing administrative data at regional level. Here the limit is the mass of existing data, while in the future, data collected by administrative bodies could be refined and better serve the scope.

A more global analysis could be obtained in the near future once the MoLSAEO has completed the ongoing measurement of the Laeken indicators**[[27]](#footnote-27)** on social inclusion for Albania,

Social exclusion is a multi-faceted problem, which requires multiple solutions. The first important factor is poverty. Albania has made a big improvement in reducing the poverty rate in the country from 25,4% in 2002 to 12,4% in 2008, picturing both the economic progress but also the possible impact of internal mobility from rural to urban areas and external migration. The latter has also contributing through remittances that have improved the level of consumption for many families. In any case, there are still deep regional income inequality as poverty in Lezha, Kukes and Diber is far above the national average. This indicator needs to be handled with care, since being a bit over the poverty line, does not guarantee for having a decent life. Therefore, the analysis of poverty in the country should more focus on the minimum level of resources for meeting the basic needs of an individual.

Fighting against poverty is not an easy task and calls for a strong effective cooperation not only of the components of public administrations at all level (governmental, regional, local), but also of the different actors of the civil society (employers, workers organizations, NGOs, even individual citizens).

The logical framework of this social pact should be the preparation of an Action Plan as an “umbrella” strategic document that could be more effective than the actual approach based on specific target groups such women, Roma people, youngsters, etc. and could be the solid reference for international donors’ initiatives.

In order to avoid to have another useless paperwork, the Action Plan has to contain precise indications on the role and responsibility of each partners, the indicators of achievement for an effective monitoring of the actions, means to be activated for achieving the results. As the resources are limited, the traditional approach top down in which the state budget has to cover all expenditures should be reversed activating mechanisms of local development and opening the floor for a competitive participation to the available funds both national and donors’ ones.

Improved capacity of local actors is a field of attention for many projects implemented by international community (eg. EU funded IPA projects), but it will be necessary to introduce mechanisms of liability in the implementation of the activities avoiding wasting the scarce resources. Improved capacity can pave the road for successful proposals once the Component 4 of IPA will be available.

One of the main actors in the fight against SE at regional level are the regional NES offices, which have a statutory duty of improving the employability of jobseekers through matching services but also through vocational training. Big efforts have been done in this area, but a lot should still to be addressed: their empowerment through an effective functional decentralization; capacity to bid for the limited state resources by producing sound proposals and improving them efficiently; contribute to the local employment and economic development initiatives; establish a virtuous circle between the training provided to jobseekers and effective employability.

The latter implies that there is an effective evaluation of the training offered by the public VT centres, which actually seem more offering LLL courses than a real vocational training linked to the LM demand. The mechanisms for promoting employment through work training should be seen as a possible alternative to traditional more theory-based training courses.

One important aspect that emerges from the good practices presented in this study, is the involvement of target groups by sharing information, promote new initiatives, identify needs and solutions and at the end increasing transparency in the way these initiatives are carried out. In this respect, the experience of Bologna Flashgiovani gives food for thoughts on how similar activities could be stimulated in Albania.

# References

* Social integration in action stories from the grassroots. 2009. NGO Committee for Social Development

<http://www.ifa-fiv.org/attachments/059_January%2010%20Report%20of%20NGO%20Committee%20on%20Social%20Integration.pdf>

* Draft EU Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, 2010 - <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=750>
* Social Exclusion and the EU’s Social Inclusion Agenda- Paper Prepared for the EU8 Social Inclusion Study

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECONEVAL/Resources/SocialExclusionReviewDraft.pdf>

* Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2010, European Commission

Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

* National report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion 2008–2010 - Ljubljana, September 2008

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=757&langId=en>

* National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010 – Italy

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=757&langId=en>

* Austrian report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion

2008-2010 - [www.bmsk.gv.at](http://www.bmsk.gv.at)

* Ireland - Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=757&langId=en>

* Promoting community-based initiatives for social inclusion in the Western Balkans

<http://cms.horus.be/files/99931/MediaArchive/41_socialinclusion_WBalkans.pdf>

* CESS, Needs assessment study on Roma and Egyptians communities in Albania, Tirana, February 29, 2012.
* Preston J., Green A., The role of vocational education and training in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion, CEDEFOP publication, 2008.
* Petricusic A., Access to education, training and employment of ethnic minorities in the Western Balkans, EURAC, 2010.
* Meeting of the South Eastern Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net), Sarajevo, December 2009.
* ETF, VET for social inclusion in the Western Balkans and Turkey, Regional Workshop, Torino, December 12, 2011.
* MSIO, Developing best practice in social inclusion policy: a Merseyside perspective, Policy Report, December 2005.
* NGLS, Social integration in action: Stories from grassroots, 2009

1. See Commission Recommendation 2008/867/EC on active inclusion [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A Territorial Pact is an agreement signed by the local governments and the representatives of the civil society (mainly, entrepreneurs and trade unions) of a number of neighboring municipalities, which is subsequently endorsed by the Central Government. The agreement consists of a fully-fledged development plan, which includes a number of private and public investments for which public funding is provided [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There is a legal obligation for enterprises with more than 15 staff, to hire a certain quantity of staff from PWD with a reduced working capacity of 46% (law n. 68/1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.slosrl.it/documenti/pr107-%20024_Layout%201.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.eurocities.eu/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Collection of innovative city practices: <http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/149_Eurocities-CFAI-brochure-web.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Social protection and social inclusion in the Western Balkans. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://cms.horus.be/files/99931/MediaArchive/41_socialinclusion_WBalkans.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ETF, 2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. UNDP, 2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [**www.sens.rs**](http://www.sens.rs/) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Government Decree No. 48, date 16.01.2008 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Government Decree No. 47, date 16.01.2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Government Decree No. 873, date 27.12.2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Government Decree No. 632, date 18.09.2003 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Roma women, previously trafficked women, and old and disabled women. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Law no. 8872, date 29.03.2002 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. One of them is a mobile VTC. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ILO/HDPC, Addressing social inclusion through VET –Updated Information, Tirana, January 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ILO/HDPC, Assistance to strengthen the employment and training system of NES in Albania – Monitoring Report, September 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Lezha, Shkodra, Kukesi and Gjirokastra [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Cabiry, Y., Assistance to strengthen the employment and training system of the NES in Albania, Final monitoring Report, September 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. It is a Joint Programme of ILO, UNDP, IOM and UNICEF financed by Spanish Government and leaded by ILO. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The idea of the social cooperative consists in the fact that beneficiaries and ex-beneficiaries are joined to create their common enterprises, in order to empower themselves in the market, to facilitate the process of investment, and to reduce the startup expenditures of enterprises. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. They receive equipment only. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Another Vision [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The Laeken European Council in December 2001 endorsed a first set of 18 common statistical indicators for social inclusion which will allow monitoring in a comparable way of Member States’ progress towards the agreed EU objectives [↑](#footnote-ref-27)