



INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

Kosovo* **EU4 Employment and Education**

Action summary

This Action aims to contribute to the increase of employment in Kosovo, particularly of youth and women. A specific component will target youth and women and aim at improved access to active labour market measures and improved quality and effectiveness of public employment services and vocational skills. On Education, the Action aims to increase the quality of higher education with new infrastructure, capacity building of academic staff, and increased access to research grants and enhancement of quality assurance.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	Annual Action Programme for Kosovo for the Year 2020
Action Title	EU4 Education and Employment
Action ID	IPA 2020 / 042 090 / 07 / EU4 Education and Employment
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector	7. Education, employment and social policies
DAC Sector	11110
Budget	
Total cost	EUR 19 080 000.00 (EUR 13 000 000.00 by EU + EUR 5 080 000.00 by University of Pristina (UP) + EUR 1 000 000.00 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST))
EU contribution	EUR 13 000 000.00
Budget line(s)	22 02 01 02
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct and indirect management
<i>Direct management:</i> EU Delegation	European Union Office in Kosovo
<i>Indirect management:</i> Other entrusted entity	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Entity to be selected according to Article 62(1)(c) (i) or (ii) of the Financial Regulation
Implementation responsibilities	European Union Office in Kosovo
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Kosovo
Specific implementation area(s)	Kosovo
Timeline	
Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary	At the latest by 31 December 2020
Final date for concluding contribution/delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114 (2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	6 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

Financing Agreement (date by which this programme should be de-committed and closed)			
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Aid to environment	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. RATIONALE

This Action aims to contribute to the increase of employment in Kosovo, particularly of youth and women. A specific component will target youth and women and aim at improved access to active labour market measures and improved quality and effectiveness of public employment services and vocational skills. On the area of education, the Action aims to increase the quality of higher education with new infrastructure, capacity building of academic staff, and increased access to research grants and enhancement of quality assurance.

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Employment

Despite the economic growth and improved business climate, Kosovo's labour market indicators are among the worst in the region and Europe.

Unemployment is high and labour force participation remains at low levels (Table 1). In 2017, only 42.8% of the working age population was active in the labour market, out of which nearly one third unemployed. The employment rate was as low as 29.8%. The weak labour market indicates that Kosovo's growth model is proving inadequate to mitigate the high rates of inactivity and unemployment and provide jobs for the population.

Unemployment is extremely high especially in women, youth and disadvantaged groups.

Table 1: Key labour market indicators

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Labour force participation rate	36.9	40.5	41.6	37.6	38.7	42.8
Inactivity rate	63.1	59.5	58.4	62.4	61.3	57.2
Employment	25.5	28.4	26.9	25.2	28.0	29.8
Unemployment rate	30.9	30.0	35.3	32.9	27.5	30.5

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Results of the Labour Force Survey 2012-2017

Women's participation in the labour market is marginal (Table 2). With an employment rate of 12.7%, three times lower than their male counterparts (46.6%), women account for only one fifth of the employed persons. There is a pressing need to support women employability programmes.

Table 2: Labour market indicators, by gender

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Labour force participation rate	55.4	17.8	60.2	21.1	61.8	21.4	56.7	18.1	58.3	18.6	65.3	20
Inactivity rate	44.6	82.2	39.8	78.9	38.2	78.6	43.3	81.9	41.7	81.4	34.7	80
Employment rate	39.9	10.7	44	12.9	41.3	12.5	38.7	11.5	43	12.7	46.6	12.7
Unemployment rate	28.1	40	26.9	38.8	33.1	41.6	31.8	36.6	26.2	31.8	28.7	36.6

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Results of the Labour Force Survey 2012-2017

Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, representing a substantial comparative advantage for growth and economic development. However, this asset has remained an untapped potential. In 2017, 52.7% of youth is unemployed (Table 3), nearly twice that of the Kosovo's overall unemployment rate and much higher than that of young people in EU-28 (16.8%), (Eurostat, 2018).¹

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Youth_unemployment

Table 3: Labour market and youth

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years)	55.3	55.9	61.0	57.7	52.4	52.7
Unemployment rate of 25-34 year olds	34.6	33.0	40.0	40.1	34.3	40.5
Not in Education, Employment or Training share of youth population (15-24 years)	35.1	35.3	30.2	31.4	30.1	27.4

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Results of the Labour Force Survey 2012-2017

On the one hand, there is an urgent need to design and implement appropriate labour market programmes that will tackle the general and structural unemployment. On the other hand, Kosovo firms have been raising concerns that skilled labour is scarce and a major factor in limiting their growth opportunities. As the World Bank reports (2017), Kosovo's employment growth is constrained by the inadequate human capital base. An inadequately educated and skilled workforce limits employment growth, especially among large and rapidly growing firms. Inadequate skills constitute a more common barrier to business development in Kosovo than in other beneficiaries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region. This lack of skilled workforce has been also evidenced by recent skills needs assessments by international donors (United Nations Development Program, 2016) and other surveys (Kosovo Education and Employment Network, 2017).

Therefore, the provision of opportunities to the workforce to upgrade their skills in line with the skills demanded by the employers, matching the supply and demand of skilled labour, is crucially important. The new entrants in the labour force and/or those trained in new/upgrading skills need to acquire skills and experiences that will integrate them efficiently in the market. Appropriate training skills upgrading programmes matching the needs of the Kosovo businesses need to be implemented.

Vocational Training Centres' co-operation with businesses remains insufficient. There is a need to enhance training with practical experience based activities; such as training programmes in the enterprises during which trainees are monitored by Vocational Training Centres trainers.

Although Active Labour Market Measures beneficiaries have increased in recent years, the number of unemployed persons benefiting from these remain limited. The budget earmarked for active labour market measures remains insufficient to address the existing needs.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is responsible for drafting employment and vocational training policies; it approves the annual work programme of the Employment Agency; approves the budget proposed by the Employment Agency; and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of employment and vocational training policies. As defined by Law No.04/L-205 on Employment Agency of Kosovo, the Agency is an independent body within the Ministry, which aims to manage the labour market, implement employment and vocational training and Active Labour Market Measures. The organisational structure of the Employment Agency consists of the Central Office of the Agency; 33 Employment offices; 7 Vocational Training Centres providing short-term vocational trainings in 30 occupations; and the General Director. The Agency has been recently set up and inherited the old structure of the regional Employment Offices with relatively aged staff.

Taking into consideration the evident weak capacities of the institutional infrastructure it is necessary to upgrade and enhance the capacities of the staff and introduce new methodologies and procedures. In recent years a sizable number of unemployed persons were trained, but in the absence of regular monitoring or tracking mechanisms, it remains unclear if the trainings provided supported employment prospects of the participants. Therefore there is a need to enhance capacities for policy making, service provision and competences for monitoring and evaluations both in the Ministry and the agency.

Higher Education

Higher education is an essential public responsibility holding a special importance for the development of the society. Higher education is one of the essential components of social and political transformations, especially in transition societies, where it can directly improve the sustainability of Kosovo institutions and can create preconditions for economic development. Higher education significantly affects the provision of quality and competitive workers for the labour market. In Kosovo, there is a dire need to improve the quality of higher education at all levels: academic programmes and qualifications, research and infrastructure.

Weak quality standards

Kosovo's higher education system special characteristic is the very high number of higher education institutions per 1 000 inhabitants (overall, in Kosovo there are 30 private and 9 public higher education institutions). It is in fact the highest in the region and significantly higher than the EU average (Kosovo Education and Employment Network, 2017). In the mid-term evaluation report of Kosovo's Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 this is considered to be a consequence of insufficient control and insufficient engagement in quality assurance. The University of Pristina is the biggest higher education institution, representing 39% of the total number of students and 64% of the students in public High Education (Kosovo Education and Employment Network, 2017).

In 2017, the participation rate in higher education of persons aged 18-22 was 84.2%, which puts Kosovo among the highest rate of participation (Kosovo Education and Employment Network, 2017). There are concerns that this high participation rate has contributed to the decline of quality. Moreover, Kosovo scores poorly when it comes to the completion rates in higher education. The on time graduation rate stands at 44% (figure refers to generation enrolled in 2013/14), as compared to 70% in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries and 69% in the EU.

Quality standards in higher education are a key prerequisite for the development of modern higher education institutions. In the Kosovo's Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, non-compliance with the quality standards in higher education institutions is identified as one of the most serious challenges.

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency established by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is an independent authority, in charge of the accreditation of public and private institutions of higher education. It is also responsible for the continuous assurance of quality at accredited institutions and their programmes. There are a few challenges that prevent Kosovo Accreditation Agency from ensuring quality assurance in higher education. The independence of the Agency is of utmost important and the new Law on the Kosovo Accreditation Agency with its new provisions is expected to enforce the independence of the Agency. Currently, the Agency operates with a limited number of staff. In total, there are 6 staff, 3 vacant positions and 3 new positions have already been approved and the recruitment process started in early 2019.

Apart from the understaffing of the Agency, the quantity and quality of its work are also negatively impacted by the large number of higher education institutions and study programmes offered in Kosovo. The new Law on Accreditation Agency (to be implemented, at the latest, by early 2020) requires an increase in the agency's staff (total staff number expected to reach 27). The Agency has recently established the Appeals' Committee after many years, which ensures that Higher Education Institutions can appeal against the decisions of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency in case they disagree with them. This is a step forward concerning transparency and quality.

Another problem affecting the quality of higher education is the poor physical state of the learning environment. There is a lack of safe and healthy facilities, creating a high classroom ratio operating in overcrowded groups. There is a need to increase the number of lecture rooms and group work in faculties lacking necessary premises for the proper implementation of the curricula offered. There is also a problem with limited physical access of students with special needs. Investment in construction in higher education is the first priority in the Social Sector Single Project Pipeline. This includes construction of new faculty buildings, renovations of buildings, construction of dormitory and dining facilities, and of a new institute.

Limited research capacities in the University of Pristina

Kosovo's Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021 identifies a lack of adequate infrastructures as a particular barrier to conducting scientific research. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has identified institutions and faculties, which are operating in particularly poor conditions, which negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning. University of Pristina faces a challenging situation with two faculties: the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (with a total of 2,841 students) and the Faculty of Economics (with a total of 8,095 students). Both operate in premises of other faculties, with limited space and a lack of appropriate infrastructure and of necessary literature to ensure proper implementation of their curricula. The purpose of investing in the infrastructure improvement of the University of Pristina is to advance student performance. Providing spaces for studying and scientific research will contribute to increasing the quality of the offered study programmes.

As reported in the Kosovo's Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021, Kosovo's performance in the area of Research, Development and Innovation is the worst in the region, ranked last by the 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Competitiveness Outlook for South East Europe. Kosovo scores poorly on all five policy dimensions: policy governance; public research system; innovation in firms; human resources for innovation and business-academia cooperation. Further developments in this field is hampered by the limited public spending, the lack of private investment and the limited joint public/private funding initiatives. Whilst mobility of academic staff working in higher education has been intensified, there is a need to foster collaboration in research projects between academics from Kosovo and those from reputable higher education institutions from Member States, in the context of small specific research projects. This would serve as a mechanism to increase skills, expand networks and increase publications in peer reviewed international journals. It would also help create higher absorption rate of funds from Horizon 2020 and other research related funding programmes.

Plagiarism among students and staff is another pressing challenge of higher education in Kosovo. In 2017, the Coalition for Integrity and Transparency at the University presented six reports, revealing evidence for the presence of plagiarism both among students and academic staff. Moreover, according to one study², 80% of academic staff at the University of Pristina with academic titles had 'publications of no value'³. Another recent study⁴ emphasised that even when plagiarism of academic staff is disclosed in the media, plagiarists are not subject to any disciplinary actions. In the context of the EU funded Council of Europe Horizontal Facility and its action on 'Strengthening Integrity and Combatting Corruption in Higher Education' three sets of codes of conduct for managers, academic staff, and students respectively were developed. Their implementation has not yet started at University level. Higher education institutions have to develop and/or amend their regulations, implement regulations, monitor their implementation, and report publicly on that implementation and monitoring as part of their regular reporting cycle.

Limited transparency and accountability

Monitoring of university programmes post-accreditation remains a pressing challenge. The Kosovo Accreditation Agency has the right and obligation to monitor and control the quality of higher education institutions, with or without prior notice (Article 21 of the Administrative Instruction 15/2018). However, due to the lack of human resources, the Agency has so far failed to perform post-accreditation monitoring of higher education institutions and their accredited study programmes. The only aspect monitored so far has been the verification of academic staff. However, even this verification was only done on paper, with no on-site monitoring. This challenge is particularly serious because such monitoring is very costly. Kosovo Accreditation Agency, due to its limited budget, cannot bear such a cost, which also cannot be covered by the higher education institutions themselves. Currently, the Agency is considering revising this aspect, whereby the post-accreditation monitoring would be performed jointly by both local and international staff of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency. This aspect is planned to be regulated through the new Law on Kosovo Accreditation Agency (currently in development phase).

The expulsion of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency from the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education in February 2018 was a clear manifestation of the existing threats to the independence of the Agency. Ensuring the independence of the Agency and the implementation of best-practice quality assurance mechanisms are key prerequisites for ensuring quality in education.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The priority areas to be addressed by this Action are the access to labour market for youth and women, through the implementation of active labour market measures, vocational skills advancement and provision of high quality higher education. Developing capacities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and

² Transitional Justice, Education and Peacebuilding organisation (Admovere) presented findings from an assessment of a 2014 Steering Committee University Pristina,

³ <https://prishtinainsight.com/ngo-coalition-presents-worrying-research-integrity-university-prishtina/>

⁴ http://admovere.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/admovere_plagjiaturaUP_ENG_web.pdf

Employment Agency for better policy making, service provision and monitoring/evaluations are of central relevance. As a second component, this Action aims at increasing quality standards in education by providing proper facilities to the University of Pristina academic staff and students. It also aims at increasing transparency and quality in the higher education system of Kosovo by strengthening the role and function of Kosovo Accreditation agency and by enhancing the research capacities of academics in Kosovo.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The proposed Action is fully aligned with the **IPA Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020**⁵. Within the employment sub-sector, the ISP puts strong emphasis on the need to raise the employability and social inclusion among particularly vulnerable groups such as long-term unemployed, marginalised communities, youth and women, with a view to promoting active inclusion. It is explicitly highlighted that the EU will support in improving the institutional capacities to design and implement effective employment and social policies. The Strategy foresees support to align education and training programmes with labour market needs; to increase competitiveness of the Kosovo economy as the skills of the labour force are better adapted to the needs; to improve inclusiveness of both the education sector and the labour market encouraging women and men to enter occupations where their sex is under-represented; to update teaching methods and enhancement of staff mobility opportunities; to increase the employment rate among particularly vulnerable groups such as long-term unemployed, marginalised communities, youth and women. The Strategy emphasises that internationalisation of higher education institutions needs to be fostered, with more work needed in building capacities of higher education institutions, among others, through streamlining research as a priority.

The Action is also in line with the Strategy for the Western Balkans ("**A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans**")⁶, launched by the European Commission in 2018 and in particular flagship initiatives 3) socio-economic development and 5) digital agenda. It also reflects many of the recommendations made in the **Kosovo 2018 Report**⁷, which strongly emphasises the poor labour market outcomes for women, entailed to be redressed within this Action. Acknowledging the misalignment between education system outcomes and labour market needs, the report also emphasises the need for more active labour market policies and vocational training programmes better suited for the needs of the labour market (pg. 43).

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the EU foresees reforms and obligations in employment and skills related to: raising the level of general education and vocational education and training, as well as youth policy and youth work in Kosovo as means to promote skills development and employability. The Agreement also points to the need to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, for persons with disabilities and for persons belonging to minorities and other vulnerable groups.

Moreover, **the European Reform Agenda 2016**⁸ calls for improving employment opportunities, primarily for youth and women, through increased support for active labour market measures with tangible results. Measures include implementing active labour market measures for vulnerable groups, development and implementation of the self-employment and entrepreneurship program; and expanding quality services in vocational training. The ERA also calls for an urgent need to improve the quality of higher education by developing mechanisms for quality assurance, ranking, quality-based funding, linking higher education programmes to labour market demands and improving career orientation services.

The Commission assessment of the Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021 highlights inactivity as one of the three key structural challenges faced by the Kosovo economy. It asserts that the very low activity and employment levels and the marginal presence of women in the labour market are the most striking challenges in Kosovo. It also highlights the very high numbers of young people are out of education or

⁵ Dated 04/09/2018: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/timor-leste/50070/indicative-strategy-paper-kosovo-2014-2020_en

⁶ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-561_en.htm

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-kosovo-report.pdf>

⁸ https://www.mei-ks.net/repository/docs/era_final.pdf

employment, which is not conducive to developing the future workforce. It also calls for a more comprehensive approach to job creation. The Action will address several of these concerns.

This Action also contributes to the framework of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which promulgates equal opportunity permitting the full realisation of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity, and implementation of full gender equality through removal of all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment. This Action directly contributes to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 4 of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and Goal 5 of achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls; and Goal 8 of promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The **South East Europe 2020 Strategy – Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective** stresses that unemployment in the South East Europe region remains the highest in Europe and therefore the Inclusive Growth Pillar aims to enhance employment creation and labour market participation by all, including disadvantaged groups.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Education and Employment

Over the past 18 years the education sector has received substantial EU and other donor (bilateral and multilateral) assistance aiming at the development of the education system. Under IPA I and IPA II, the EU Office has invested more than EUR 65 000 000.00 in the field of education. Demonstrating the link between the aid effectiveness and improved sector performance is not always straightforward due to frequent failures of aid recipient to build on donor support and ensure sustainability of the assistance.

Under IPA II, The EU has supported the employment sector with interventions in access of EUR 8 500 000.00. The projects supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare including the Labour Inspectorate and Employment Agency to, inter alia, draft labour law including legislation governing health and safety at work compliant with the *acquis* and to ensure its effective enforcement. The EU has also supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups through support to the administration and the executive bodies of the Ministry and with direct financial assistance to social entrepreneurship related initiatives such as social incubators and social enterprises. Together with United Nations Development Programme, the European Union has financed several active labour market measures: training and re-training, on-the-job training, self-employment and entrepreneurship, employment subsidies and public works. As allocations from the Kosovo budget are insufficient to cover the majority of the needs in the employment sector, the support from donors, especially from the EU has so far been an important source of financing.

Additional lessons learned for future financial assistance are:

Any reform at a sectoral level represents a major challenge in the international aid context. This requires strong and effective leadership of the relevant sector ministries and commitment to the process at the centre of the Kosovo institutions and at senior political level.

Support to designing or reviewing new policies needs to be followed by at least initial support for their implementation. For any sector reform to embed, the duration of assistance should be longer than three years. Lack of follow-up may result in lost momentum and thus a lack of political support.

While there has been significant amounts of funding available for project and programme implementation, their effectiveness were often questionable. The reasons for greater success of some programmes rather than others are in most cases project-specific and environment-specific.

The local non-governmental sector has developed capacities, although limited, for education consultancy and community mobilisation, and is well-positioned to draw on regional expertise for specific knowledge and skills deficient locally. This lowers the implementation costs significantly, hence contributing to greater aid efficiency. Another important dimension to be considered is the capacities of Kosovo institutions to absorb the technical assistance and support on the one hand, while taking leadership and ownership of processes on the other. These two aspects combined account for a crucial determinant of success of projects. While

challenges to implementation have been overcome in most institutions through build-up of experience in cooperating with donor-funded projects, challenges to long term strategic and policy planning remain for most public institutions.

The projects supporting an increase of employment and employability were in the past implemented by non-governmental organisations. These types of projects were intended to be pilot projects in order to test specific Active Labour Market Measures. The projects identified good practices with sustainable results, however, these have shown that non-governmental organisations cannot implement such projects due to the problems ensuring sustainability of the implementation of the programmes in the long-term. The implementation of the programmes should be taken over by the Employment Agency. For the success of the Active Labour Market Measures, it is of key importance to best match skills and interests of the unemployed during placements in such schemes. Finally, in order to gain the best value for money, systematic and comprehensive evaluations on the impact and effectiveness of Active Labour Market Measures are of central relevance.

2. Intervention logic - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE(S) / (IMPACT(S))	INDICATOR's NAME	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS ⁹ OO1. Progress made towards meeting Copenhagen criteria (EC) OO2: Employment rate 15-39 total % disaggregated by gender			SOURCES & MEANS OF VERIFICATION	
		BASELINES (2017)	MILESTONES (2020)	TARGETS (2022)		
To contribute to a more inclusive labour market, through provision of active labour market measures, skills development and increased quality of higher education	Progress made towards meeting Copenhagen criteria Employment rate 15-39 total % disaggregated by gender	29.8 M: 46.6, F: 12.7	32.0 M: 48, F: 15.0	35% M: 49, F: 18.0	European Commission Kosovo Report Eurostat data Employment Agency Annual Report; Employment Management Information System	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE(S) / OUTCOME(S)	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)				SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Specific objective 1 To increase employment and develop skills of youth and women	Employment rate of those aged 15-24, total % by gender	11.2 M: 16.7, F: 5.2	15 M: 20, F: 10	11.2 M: 22, F: 13	Kosovo Agency of Statistics Labour Force Survey; Household Survey, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Annual Performance report of Labour and Employment Employment Agency Annual Report;	Employers have interest and capacity to accept unemployed persons for participating in Active Labour Market Measures Job Creation remains same or increase Level of financing Active Labour Market Measures remains the same or increase
	Employment rate of women 15-65	12.7 27.4 M: 23.8, F: 31.4	15.0 25 M: 22, F: 27	18.0 20 M: 18, F: 20		
Specific objective 2 To increase the quality of higher education	Not in Education, Employment or Training, total % by gender	344	300	250		
	Number of accredited study programmes by Kosovo Accreditation Agency					

					Employment Management Information System	There is sound evidence on labour market demand Agency for Accreditation is fully independent
OUTPUTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)				SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Employment Output 1 (influencing Specific Objective 1) Technical capacities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Employment Agency and other institutions strengthened, to effectively design policies, improve quality of services, and their implementation and evaluate Active Labour Market Measures.	Number of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency staff effectively trained in line with the job descriptions and identified training needs	0	30	120	Kosovo Agency of Statistics Labour Force Survey; Household Survey, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Annual Performance report of Labour and Employment Employment Agency Annual Report; Employment Management Information System University of Pristina Annual Reports	Output.1.1 There is commitment from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency to establish effective Human Resource Development and training systems and practices Output.1.2. unemployed and employers have interest to participate in Active Labour Market Measures
Output 2 (influencing Specific Objective 1) Active Labour Market Measures developed and implemented, with a specific focus on youth and women	Number of unemployed aged between 18-39 benefiting from active labour market measures (total, youth and % by gender) Number of new employments created by implementation of Active Labour Market Measures (total, youth 18-39 and % by gender)	8,806 Youth 7,322 M: 5,784 F: 3,022	9,158 Youth 7,615 M: 6,015 F: 3,143	9,891 Youth 7,919 M: 6,256 F: 3,269		Output2.1.1 and Output 2.1.2 All necessary documentation and licences for construction purposes secured Output 2.1.3 Law on Kosovo Agency of
Higher Education Output 1 (influencing Specific Objective 2)	Number of students, studying in newly	0	0	20,000		

Improved quality standards in higher education	constructed buildings	1:67	1:60	1:50		Accreditation and the Guideline on post-accreditation monitoring approved
	Academic Lecturer/ student Ratio ¹⁰					
	Number of by Kosovo Accreditation Agency staff trained for post-accreditation monitoring	0	3	15		
		0	20	90		Output 2.2.1 International higher education institutions interested to collaborate with academic staff from Kosovo
Output 2 (influencing Specific Objective 2) Improved research capacities in Universities	Number of research articles implemented in collaboration with reputable international higher education institutions submitted for publication in reputable peer reviewed international journals	0				Output 2.3.1 Universities committed to prevent and combat plagiarism by implementing codes of conduct
Output 3 (influencing Specific Objective 2) Increased transparency and accountability in Higher Education Institutions	Legal framework against plagiarism is in place and software being utilised		Legal framework completed	Software detecting plagiarism used		

¹⁰ <https://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2017/02/20161006-action-plan.pdf>

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

This action consists of three different project components.

Component 1: Employment

Output 1: Technical capacities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Employment Agency, and other institutions strengthened to effectively design policies, improve the quality of their services, and implementation/evaluation of Active Labour Market Measures.

Activity 1: Preparation of Human Resource Development Plan 2020-2022 for Employment Agency

Under this activity support in form of on the job training will be provided to the Employment Agency to develop their internal systems for Human Resource Development and to develop a new Human Resource Development Plan for 2020-2022

The Employment Agency of Kosovo, was legally established in 2015, but was not fully operational until the third quarter of 2017. Employment Agency is now an independent body, under Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare who has taken over operational tasks related to the employment policy.

Currently the Employment Agency has significant capacity constraints in terms of the provision of employment services, especially effective and efficient Active Labour Market Measures. They also face a number of challenges, not least of which is limited staffing and central budget allocations. A critical issue is that within the next 3-4 years 60-70% of all employment advisers will be due to retire, this presents something of a staffing crisis for Employment Agency that needs to be effectively and structurally addressed.

Technical assistance support will be provided to further develop the Employment Agency in house capacity and systems for management and implementation of Human Resource Development process. Central to these systems are effective process of: review of the Employment Agency organigram, job descriptions; establishing individual goals and target; performance appraisal systems; an individual professional development approach; succession planning, which is linked to an Internal Training System and the development of a Human Resource Development Plan.

Activity 2: Development of the internal training system and a capacity-building plan for the Employment Agency and the staff of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

The aim of this activity is to further develop the Employment Agency's Internal Training System and quality and experience of Employment Agency's own internal trainers, through provision of an advanced training of trainers approach. Through the provision of technical assistance the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency will develop their own internal capacity to:

- Undertake Training Needs Assessment, linked to the Human Resource Development system (job description and performance reviews);
- Based on the needs assessment to design their own on-line classroom based capacity building training programmes, or effectively identify external training programmes where the training needs cannot be addressed in house;
- Effective and efficient implementation of the capacity building programmes; and
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the training delivery
- Identify, develop and implement Active Labour Market Measures

Output 2: Active Labour Market Measures developed and implemented, with specific focus on youth and women

Review of currently implemented Active Labour Market Measures (i.e. internship programme, self-employment programme, vocational training programme), based on evaluation done by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in 2019, design/redefinition of Active Labour Market Measures, support to Employment Agency with their implementation, promotion of Active Labour Market Measures, and monitoring and evaluation of the implemented Active Labour Market Measures.

Support will be provided to Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency to design the guidelines for implementation of Active Labour Market Measures, support potential beneficiaries in the application process, support the businesses participating in implementation of Active Labour Market Measures (i.e. internship, on-the-job training) and deliver advisory services, monitoring and coaching of unemployed on their access to labour market

Component 2: Higher Education

Output 1: Improved quality of standards in higher education

Activity 1: Construction of new premises for the faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Economics of the University of Pristina

This investment will create safe and healthy facilities pursuant to norms and standards, reduction of classroom ratio operating currently in overcrowded groups. It will also increase the number of lecture rooms and group work in faculties lacking necessary premises, and it will create premises/laboratories and workshops for the proper implementation of the curricula offered in the targeted faculties. At the same time, new infrastructure will take into account the need to ensure increased physical access of students with special needs to the new premises of the relevant faculties and thus, it will contribute to the increased access to the University overall for this particular group of students.

Activity 2: Technical Assistance to Kosovo Accreditation Agency

This activity will assist the Kosovo Accreditation Agency to properly monitor the post-accredited study programmes in all Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo. It will include: a) On site visits from Monitoring Teams consisted of international experts, coordinated by Kosova Accreditation Agency staff; b) Study of relevant University documents and exchange of information with Higher Education institutions; and c) Conduct surveys with students and academic staff about quality assurance provided at program and institutional level.

The monitoring of higher education study programmes, via complementing the regular accreditation procedures, gives the possibility to examine selected quality standards in more detail. It also contributes to checking that the institution provides true facts in their publications and self-evaluation reports. In that sense, monitoring contributes to the making processes within Kosovo higher education institutions more transparent, and therefore protects outside stakeholders, most importantly prospective students. Monitoring should also be a guiding / supporting process to respective higher education institutions to reflect on the implementation of programs and their institutional development.

Output 2: Improved research capacities in Universities

The main activity contributing to output 2 is the development and launching of a research grant scheme to support research and innovation in collaboration with international higher education institutions.

This activity envisages providing research grants for research activities undertaken jointly between academic staff/ researchers from Kosovo and reputable European higher education institutions.

This activity will allow the grantees to conduct meaningful research activities in areas that are considered to be priority for Kosovo;

This activity will increase research skills, research quality and foster internationalisation of research work conducted by Kosovo's academia;

In addition this activity will facilitate the development of partnerships and collaborative research between public universities and public research institutes in Kosovo with public universities and public research institutes in the EU and western Balkan (WB) region within priority research fields for Kosovo.

The activities under output 2 aim at building research capacity in Kosovo by providing motivation and funding opportunities to researchers in Kosovo to cooperate with institutions and individual researchers in Europe and abroad. The final target of this activity would be to a) achieve a higher degree of internationalisation of research: support the development of institutional strategies and necessary capacities

for strategic international collaboration and: b) support the development of research-based learning and teaching, including transversal and entrepreneurship training at all levels;

Output 3: Increased transparency and accountability in Higher Education Institutions

The main activity contributing to output 3 is the purchase and delivery of Plagiarism Detection software for University of Pristina.

In addition, the activity will also provide technical assistance to strengthen the regulations for addressing plagiarism in higher education.

Through this activity the University of Pristina will be capacitated to implement the codes of conducts that were developed in the past by the support of the EU. The University will be able to review and adapt its quality assurance standards. Therefore, the activity will not only support the increase of the quality in the existing study programmes and the functioning of the University as a whole but it will also mark a substantial change towards more transparency at all levels in the academic life of the University of Pristina and potentially in all Universities of Kosovo in the future.

RISKS

1. Insufficient number and/or low quality of applications for Active Labour Market Measures

Mitigation measures: Timely provision of information on Active Labour Market Measures in place at the Employment Agency to potential beneficiaries.

2. Low interest of businesses for participating in Active Labour Market Measures

Mitigation measures: Employers will be informed of possibilities and benefits to participate in Active Labour Market Measures. Engagement of employers in the selection process and close cooperation with employers will be crucial to increase incentives of employers for participating in Active Labour Market Measures.

3. Lack of readiness of the social partners to participate in the implementation of project activities

Mitigation measures: Involve and take into account concerns and suggestions of target groups' representatives (women non-governmental organisations, local Youth Councils) within the design of interventions. Engagement in the information dissemination and monitoring would also add value to the process.

4. Lack of training providers

Mitigation measures: During selection of the occupations for training purposes, availability and quality of available training providers will be taken into account.

Component 2: Higher education

1. Securing appropriate land allocation for construction of buildings

Mitigating measures: All necessary documents will be secured, prior to starting any infrastructure intervention.

2. Law on Kosovo Accreditation not approved

Mitigating measures: Close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Parliament will be maintained.

3. Academic staff not interested/committed to enhance their teaching and research skills

Mitigating measures: Effective and hands-on training programmes will be developed, which will enhance teaching and research skills. Academic staff will be informed in detail about the content and training approach.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Specific conditions for activities related to the increase of employment;

- The full functioning of the Employment Agency, i.e. optimal number of staff employed through a transparent, fair and merit-based recruitment process.
- Employment Agency secures co-finance of the implementation of Active Labour Market Measures in the amount of EUR 1 000 000.00 annually.

Specific conditions for activities related to the investment in higher education:

A complete set of the following documents will be necessary, in original where possible:

- The government will make available appropriate land in the vicinity of Pristina University with all necessary ownership documents, land certificate/copy of the plan;
- Situation layout with all cadastral parcels and their respective numbers;
- Municipal decision on land property;
- Building permits issued by the relevant authorities;
- Consent for access to infrastructure, electrical, water and wastewater, etc.;
- Specific Programme for each municipality based on their real needs.

Specific conditions for activities related to the support to Kosovo Agency of Accreditation:

- Approval of the Law on the Kosovo Agency for Accreditation;
- Smooth functioning of the Agency, including sufficient number of employees;
- Progress in the area of adopting and implementing the legislation relevant to the higher education of Kosovo is a precondition to support the proper implementation of the University Codes of Conduct.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Component 1: Employment

Output 1: Strengthening of the technical capacities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Employment Agency and other institutions to effectively design policies, improve the quality of their services, and Output 2: Active Labour Market Measures developed and implemented, with a specific focus on youth and women

The main beneficiaries are the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Employment Agency of Kosovo. Through a project steering committee, the ministry will advise the project strategically and be involved in monitoring the progress and accepting the results of the project.

Final beneficiaries are: private companies, formal and non-formal education and training providers, local labour market stakeholders, development agencies, regional and local authorities and other. The above entities will apply for and implement the grant actions in support of youth and women.

Component 2: Higher Education

Output 1: Improved quality of standards in higher education

The main partner for implementation of this action is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, which is the highest Kosovo institutional body responsible for the Education Sector in Kosovo. Universities and the Kosovo Agency of Accreditation, which will be supported, are the main beneficiaries. The Ministry and the University of Pristina already possess the investment plans for priority interventions. Municipalities are responsible for issuing construction permits.

Output 2: Improved research capacities in Universities and output 3 increased transparency and accountability in Higher Education Institutions coordination will be ensured through the respective Project Steering Committee that will consist of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology – Chair, EU Office co-chair, Office of the Prime Minister, municipality, benefiting University/s and other relevant stakeholders. This Steering Committee will meet regularly to discuss the progress of the project, verify the achievement of the outputs and results and discuss actions to be undertaken in the following working period. Coordinating body for the IPA II is the Office of the Prime Minister.

METHOD(S) OF IMPLEMENTATION AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING (SEE ANNEX IMPLEMENTATION – BUDGET)

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Project monitoring should be set up in each grant, service and supply contract and call for proposals, through the following actions:

- a) Contractor will ensure that monitoring requirements are promoted in the information to potential beneficiaries;
- b) During calls for proposals/tenders, the Contractor and the Contracting Authority will ensure that monitoring requirements are explained to potential beneficiaries in the guidelines for applicants, and that the requirements for financial, outputs and results information in the application form is compatible with the strategic documents (financial table and measure-level monitoring indicators) and the operating structure's monitoring needs;
- c) The request for payment from contractors, including the financial, outputs and results data, will be checked by the Contracting Authority and verified by the Beneficiary, as part of the financial management and control system, before being forwarded for payment, to ensure they are compatible with the contractual obligations;
- d) The verification of operations by the Contracting Authority / Beneficiary through sample on-the-spot visits to projects will include checks as to whether the expenditure claimed has actually been incurred and the outputs achieved;
- e) The Project Steering Committee will hold the main responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the projects. The Project Steering Committee will also be responsible for establishing the methodology and instruments for monitoring the implementation of the project.

Overall coordination of monitoring the financial and technical progress of the Action will be obtained by the EU Office in Kosovo as the Contracting Authority.

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final and/or an ex-post evaluation for this Action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set out in the Financing Agreement.

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

Kosovo institutions have a sector approach to both employment and education. The first pillar of the **Kosovo National Development Strategy 2016-2021** is dedicated to the development of Human Capital and includes overarching objectives related to both sectors.

In the employment sector, there are two sector-wide strategies. In February 2018, Kosovo approved the **Sectoral Strategy 2018-2022 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare**. Increasing employment and developing skills for the unemployed in line with labour market needs, represent one of the key strategic objectives. The document, specifically addresses the need to support labour market performance of vulnerable groups, including women, youth, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Increasing the coverage of unemployed with Active Labour Market Measures and equipping unemployed with skills demanded by the labour market, are key measures to tackling unemployment in Kosovo.

In January 2018, the government also approved the **Action Plan to Increasing Youth Employment 2018-2020**. The aim of the Plan is to increase employment and improve employability for young people through a) increasing the access of young people in the labour market through the provision of quality employment services and active employment measures; b) increasing employment through entrepreneurship development; c) harmonisation of vocational education and training with labour market requirements and provision of career guidance and counselling services; and d) increasing the quality of practical learning at school and professional practice outside the school.

In addition, the Kosovo Gender Equality Agency is in the final stage of preparing the **Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2018-2022**. This programme includes activities related to active labour market policies and enterprise development through start-up programmes for women.

In the education sector, there are also two sector-wide strategies. **The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021** (KESP) is the basic document for the development of the education sector in Kosovo. The document was developed in the period June 2015-July 2016 through a highly participatory process led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and based on the assessment¹¹ of the previous strategic plan – Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016. The planning process was organised around seven thematic areas that cover all relevant segments of education in Kosovo: 1) Participation and Inclusion, 2) Management of the education system, 3) Quality Assurance, 4) Teacher development, 5) Teaching and Learning, 6) Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, and 7) Higher Education. Kosovo Education Strategic Plan has seven strategic objectives, one for each thematic area. In general terms, the development of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan took place in the context of an awareness of the four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020, detailed in Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)¹².

In April 2017, Kosovo approved the **Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities in the Kosovo Society 2017-2021** which, based on the EU Framework on **National Strategies for Integration of Roma until 2020**¹³, addresses four priority fields: education, employment and social welfare, health, and housing.

The government's Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021¹⁴ also takes a sector approach to its analysis of challenges posed to Kosovo's competitiveness and its reform measures. It includes actions foreseen in the Sectoral Strategy 2018-2022 and Action Plan to Increasing Youth Employment 2018-2020, aiming to increase the access of young people and women to the labour market through the provision of quality employment services, active employment measures and entrepreneurship (reform measure 19). Main activities included are identification of sectors (local level) with potential for youth employment; implementing Active Labour Market Measures for vulnerable groups; and development and implementation of the self-employment and entrepreneurship programme. In the education sector, the Economic reform programme focuses more on pre-university education, including Vocational Education and Training.

A challenge posed to the sector approach in general, which also affects the employment and education sectors, is the weak donor coordination. Within the Kosovo institutions, the **Office of the Prime Minister** is

¹¹ Evaluation Report for KESP 2011-2016, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2015.

¹² Strategic framework – Education & Training 2020 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm).

¹³ EU Framework on National Strategies for Integration of Roma until 2020, Brussels, 05.04.2011, COM (2011) 173. http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

¹⁴ <http://kryeministri-ks.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ERP2019.pdf>

responsible for coordinating donor assistance. The Aid Management Platform, established with EU support, is used as a main tool for monitoring of donor activities. Sector working groups, established with the aim to coordinate donor activities, are not yet fully functional and lack substantial involvement from donors and line institutions.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

A recent study by the World Bank, Democracy 4 Development, and Reinvest (2018) indicate that women's participation in the labour market is constrained by several factors, key ones being family responsibilities in combination with limited access to quality and affordable child and elderly care; conservative social norms and discrimination; lower levels of education and work experience among women; barriers in the labour law (e.g. high cost of maternity leave for employers); and women's limited access to assets and productive inputs. Despite this, women continue to be underrepresented among the beneficiaries of the Employment Agency's employment support programmes. In 2017, women constituted 45% of registered unemployed, but they represented only 40% of employment intermediations, 34% of trainees and 35% of other Active Labour Market Measures beneficiaries. By type of Active Labour Market Measures, in 2017, women's representation is very low in the self-employment/entrepreneurship programme (only 2 out of 35 beneficiaries), whilst they compose 38% of wage subsidy beneficiaries, 50% of on-the-job training and 60% of internship scheme beneficiaries.

Table 5. Employment services and Active Labour Market Measures beneficiaries, by gender

	2015		2016		2017	
	Total	% women	Total	% women	Total	% women
Registered unemployed	112,179	44%	101,773	44%	93,866	45%
Intermediations for employment	3,574	34%	4,022	39%	3,215	40%
Trainees in VTCs	4,055	44%	6,736	27%	5,979	34%
Active Labour Market Measures beneficiaries	3,125	25%	2,732	35%	2,827	35%

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Employment and Labour, Annual reports 2015- 2017.

Within this Action, it is envisaged that gender disparities are addressed through increased information outreach and development of gender sensitive labour market measures. To this end, the Action entails a) implementing a gender sensitive entrepreneurship program, and b) within other measures, applying affirmative actions for women and other vulnerable groups.

In higher education, the gender parity index is 0.96, which is higher than the demographic parity index of 0.92. This implies that participation of women in higher education is not a concern, although female enrolment differs significantly depending on the study programme. However, access of ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities is limited (Kosovo Education Strategic PlanKESP 2017-2021). All planned interventions of the action should take into account the specific impact on women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities as part of the overall gender mainstreaming agenda adopted in Kosovo. Sex-disaggregated data will be collected to follow the progress on regular basis, not only at recruitment phase, but also during the course of implementation, to ensure consequent results and impact.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The promotion of inclusive support, equity, equality of opportunity, is the basis and fundamental objective of the action. Minority inclusion and inclusion of disadvantaged groups is their primary focus. The action's design and implementation will ensure gender equality and the full participation of minority communities, long term unemployed persons in particular girls/ women and persons with disabilities.

Kosovo is fully committed to a policy of equal opportunity. Kosovo has put the necessary legal framework in place such as the Law No. 05/L-021 on the Protection from Discrimination, the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and their Members in Kosovo and its amendment 04/L-020 etc.

The present action will support through the activities described the necessary implementation of the relevant framework by ensuring the equal participation of youth women, men, and people from disadvantaged groups.

Based on the fundamental principles of promoting equality and combating discrimination, participation in the action will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Equal access to all benefits of the Action will be promoted. Based on the fundamental principles of promoting equality and combating discrimination, participation in the action will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. More specifically; training and other capacity building activities in this action will be fully adjusted to the needs of women with children, training and meeting premises will be fully adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, equal opportunities principles and concrete measures will be embedded in all documents that will be produced under this Action. During definition of the training the needs of women and interest of women will be considered. Moreover, efforts will be taken to incentivise and orient women towards trainings considered ‘male professions’, contributing to redressing the existing gender occupational segregation. Finally, research ideas should be gender sensitive.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Vulnerable and social disadvantaged/excluded groups represent the main focus of the project. Therefore, all the activities will try to maximize the benefits for women and men, youth amongst the most vulnerable groups including: ethnic minorities (notably those in poverty and social exclusion), women in rural areas, people with disabilities and their families, and victims of domestic violence.

More specifically, the education related actions will take into account the needs of students belonging to disadvantaged groups (minority groups, disabled etc.). For example, the action targeting at improving the infrastructure in the two selected faculties (Faculty of Law and Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences) of the University of Pristina will take into account the need to increase the physical access of disabled students to the newly constructed premises. The action relevant to research grants will also, via the award criteria, pay particular attention to allocating grants to researchers coming from marginalised/ disadvantaged groups (female researchers, Roma etc).

It is of outmost important to actively involve representatives of vulnerable groups, in the design phase, to ensure that their needs and interests are fully taken into account. These groups will be aware of the purpose and the benefits the measures offer as well as of the fact that they are tailored taking their needs into consideration. In this way, the risk of a lack of commitment and involvement of the target groups themselves in the measures and unwillingness to actively participate in their implementation will be tackled. This will then lead to their efficient and successful implementation and long-term impact.

Findings from the ongoing external evaluations of the Active Labour Market Measures and Vocational Training Centres, will shed lights on effectiveness and relevance of implemented measures. These findings will also provide useful insights on weaknesses and challenges that need to be addressed, in order to best fit needs of different target groups, particularly of persons with disabilities.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

Employer membership organizations are an important stakeholder in the processes for implementation of the proposed interventions. The Sectoral Strategy 2018-2020 and Action Plan for Increasing Employment of Youth 2018-2020, have been prepared by engaging the civil society in the drafting process of the two documents, expressing their needs, concerns and proposals to tackling barriers for all, but specifically for women and youth. Given that the Action aims to support women, cooperation needs to be fostered with Agency for Gender Equality. They have been an inclusive part in all relevant policy framework planning processes in the past and will continue to be such in the future as well, especially since adoption of the Kosovo Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2013-2017. Local Youth Councils, youth organizations, women organizations, will be involved in the Action when deemed appropriate.

A partnership and consultative approach will be implemented across the Action activities; Civil Society Organisations will participate in the design of employment policies, provide feedback on labour market needs

from the first hand, act as a local partner in creation of partnership structures and actively develop and deliver innovative local employment development actions.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Environment consideration is relevant, particularly for the entrepreneurship programme, within the training program, business idea development phase and selection of grant beneficiaries. Energy efficiency and promotion of renewable sources of energy will be at the core of government attempts to minimize the carbon footprint and adverse effects on the environment.

Environment and climate change should be one of the focus areas to be supported through research grants.

The Action will contribute to building the awareness of young generations on their role in protecting and fostering the environment. The topic on environment protection will be embedded into training programs and propounded into the entrepreneurship trainings. Moreover, potential entrepreneurs will be motivated to orient their ideas in green business and environmental friendly sectors.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

Without a conducive environment for introducing new policies, regulations and practices in the system, any impact on enhancing the quality of education will be negligible. Therefore, in this Action, sustainability will be ensured through developing capacity and sense of ownership among key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The present Action will build capacity of about 120 Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency personnel, which will improve the quality of policy making, increase effectiveness of public services and Active Labour Market Measures. Capacity building for monitoring and evaluation will ensure that Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency make best use of resources. Proper planning/design, implementation and monitoring of Active Labour Market Measures foreseen within this Action will contribute to achieving sustainable employment outcomes. Results from monitoring and evaluation of Active Labour Market Measures within this Action, will also provide valuable information on potential revisions and steps that Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Employment Agency should take into account.

A selected number of higher education universities/faculties, will receive support to improve the physical infrastructure, to enhance teaching and research skills of academic staff, to increase access to recent literature, increase cooperation in research projects with reputable international institutions and will also be supported to increase quality of administrative services for students. These all will improve the quality of higher education, which in turn will be translated into better employment prospects of graduates. It is important to emphasise, that the support provided to one university (for example to University of Pristina), will provide positive externalities to other universities, hence multiplying the direct impact of this Action alone.

8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all the phases of the programme cycle.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the European perspective. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Visibility and communication actions shall be complementary to other activities implemented by DG NEAR and the EU Office in the field. The European Commission and the EU Office should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

A consolidated communication and visibility plan for the Action will be developed, based on an agreed communication narrative and master messages, customised for the different target audiences (stakeholders, business community, civil society, general public etc.). The plan should clearly set out how EU visibility will be ensured in all the activities.

Effectiveness of communication activities will be measured inter alia through public surveys in the IPA II beneficiaries. The surveys will cover awareness about the action and its objectives as well as the fact that it is funded by the EU. As a minimum one survey should be carried out before the start of the implementation of the communication and visibility plan and one after its completion.