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## Capitalization of Experiences

# 20 years Swiss VET support to Albania

## Results, traces and footprints – and suggestions for future engagement

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25.8.2014

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## Abbreviations

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AADF	Albanian American Development Foundation
ADA	Austrian Development Agencies
CAPEX	Capitalization Experience
CAS	Swiss Certificate of Advanced Studies
CoOf	Coordination Office
C4E	Coaching for Employment
DAC	Development Co-operation Directorate
DACUM	Develop a Curriculum
DVS	Durres Vocational School
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSTAT	Albanian Institute for Statistics (Instituti Statistikave)
ISDO	Increase Skills Development Opportunities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
IT	Information Technology
LLL	Life long learning
LM	Labour market
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSAEO	Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NES	National Employment Service
PAFL	Partnership for learning
PBL	Project-based learning
PTP	Private Training Providers
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small and medium-sized Enterprises
SVS	Strengthening Vocational School project
TITI	Training Institute for Technical Instruction
TOT	Training of Trainers

T-H	thermo-hydraulic
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VSD	Vocational Skills Development

## Summary

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Swiss Development Cooperation supports VET reform and development in Albania for over 20 years, with considerable financial and conceptual inputs. This long lasting support produced outstanding and important results and is considered as a success story from all actors in the field. After two decades of Swiss support to vocational education and training, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) desires to capitalize on the experiences (CAPEX), in view of outlining the main elements guiding the future of this principal theme for SDCs engagement in Albania.

### **Selected Assets of 20 years of Swiss support to VET in Albania**

Assets of a project are resources, which can be utilised by institutions, partner organisations or other projects for further developing the system, or more directly can produce value for the target groups. This can be products, processes, delivery schemes, organisational structures, etc. Assets in that sense are special ingredients of the Swiss meal offered to the Albanian VET system. The CAPEX identified 24 assets and grouped them in five groups:

- innovative training delivery strategies and coaching
- quality service providers and infrastructure
- cooperation with the private sector
- concepts and resources
- project implementation approaches

Supporting a VET reform is not an option for quick fixes. The long lasting and reliable Swiss engagement in this field, the thematic expertise, the systemic perspective applied,

and the typical Swiss thoroughness of the implementation made up the “*Swiss finish*” delivered in the support to the Albanian VET reform. Given the prospects the EU integration, these assets developed become even more important for shaping a future to the young population of Albania.

### **Possible Entry Points for SDC’s future engagement in VSD in Albania**

Based on the assets described, aligned with the new government strategy on employment and skills 2014-2020 in Albania, and harmonized with what other actors opt for, the CAPEX developed possible *entry points* for a new Swiss intervention in skills development. Entry points are understood as a docking station or an access point for SDC to vocational skills development in Albania. The CAPEX suggests the following entry points:

1. VET Governance and Financing
2. Strengthen private sector participation – support dual VET elements in Albania
3. Institutionalised training for VET managers, VET teachers and vocational practice instructors
4. VSD in rural areas with a focus on diversified training offers for youth and women
5. Non-formal training offers for young adults in cooperation with the private sector
6. Multifunctional training centres network
7. Green jobs / green economy: Centre for renewable energy in public-private partnership
8. Post-secondary (initial) VET
9. Introduction of the new service model of the National Employment Service including the coaching for employment approach C4E

### **Capitalization of Experiences**

*CAPEX is a participatory learning exercise preparing for change. It is future oriented but takes its time to learn from what has been done so far. It produces lessons learnt, identifies good practices and describes assets for future application. CAPEX differs much from usual evaluation exercises, which are guided by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria and have a strong focus on summative aspects and on controlling. Capitalization is, by definition, more open, participative and learning oriented. It puts much less pressure on those capitalized allowing for identifying important lessons learnt and insights, that would most probably not see daylight in any evaluation exercise.*

# 1 Introduction

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After 20 years, Swiss support to the rehabilitation, reform and further development of vocational education and training (VET), AlbVET and its predecessor projects are scheduled to come to an end by mid to end 2014. Starting in 1994, Switzerland was one of the early donors in this domain in Albania. During the two decades, Switzerland implemented three major projects with an overall volume exceeding CHF 20 million. Since 1994, all projects in vocational education and training were implemented by Swisscontact, Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation.

The rationale and focus of Swiss support to transition economies as reflected in legal texts, in messages of the Federal Council to the Parliament, in concept papers and cooperation strategies developed and changed over time. However, vocational skills development, though also under changing overall objectives and purposes, consistently remained an instrument and strong leg in the overall Swiss project portfolio in Albania.

After two decades of Swiss support to vocational education and training, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) desires to capitalize on the experiences, in view of outlining the main elements guiding the future of this principal theme for SDCs engagement in Albania.

## 2 Aim and process

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### 2.1 Understanding

Experience capitalization consists of learning processes for preparing change. It produces lessons learnt, and identifies good practices for future application with the objective to improve implementation by redesigning practice. Accordingly, change is the inherent consequence of the exercise. Experience capitalization is future oriented and aims at change in collective institutional practice. Its focus may be on strategic orientation, basic concepts, or operational activities. Therefore, the focus in experience capitalization is on assets, on their identification and description, on the assessment of their respective value, on their potential for further utilization and exploitation in different contexts, and on labeling the most outstanding and valuable assets, i.e. those with the biggest potential for further exploitation.

**Assets** of a project are resources, which can be utilized by institutions, partner organizations or other projects for further developing the system, or more directly can produce value for the target groups. In the field of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) assets can be *products*, such as training modules, courses and/or programs. These products comprise (the description of) curricula, learning resources, equipment, human resources and management *processes*. They include the respective manuals, instruments and/or human capacities required for implementation. They refer to training delivery *schemes* like apprenticeships, internships, etc. and ultimately can be concepts, policies or strategies, organizational *structures*, or even VET *institutions* as a whole.

The description of an asset is a snapshot as of today, and it is independent from the when and how, and the efforts, justifications and inputs by which it was produced. It is

also independent from the efficiency and effectiveness of the production process. For capitalization it is irrelevant, whether the asset results from the core business of the project, or whether it is a rather accidental by-product. It is the asset itself which matters.

In this regard, capitalization differs much from usual evaluation exercises, which are guided by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria and have a strong focus on summative aspects and on controlling. Capitalization is, by definition, more *open, participative and learning oriented*. It puts much less pressure on those capitalized allowing for identifying important lessons learnt and insights, that would most probably not see daylight in any evaluation exercise.

## 2.2 Aim

Based on the definition provided above, the CAPEX exercise aims for identifying...

- the main assets of the longstanding Swiss support to the Albanian VET sector;
- factors that contribute and factors that hinder the continued utilization and sustainability of these assets;
- lessons learnt from project processes (project design, approaches, delivery mechanisms, organization, interfaces with partner and stakeholders).

In order to contribute to further development of the portfolio in the Economic Development domain, SDC expects to receive:

- Identification of possible *entry points* for a new Swiss intervention in skills development.
- Recommendations for the *skills development dimension* of the three dimensional approach to youth employment.

## 2.3 Process

The process design reflects our understanding of the CAPEX and directly benefits the aim as stated above. Identifying, describing and assessing 20 years of Swiss support to VET in Albania means doing a sensitive selection exercise, putting some key assets in spotlight while not choosing others consciously. In order to have this resulting in an acceptable picture, we needed to choose a participatory approach with several feedback loops included, and with internal and external views well represented. As consignees, we had to assume at least three roles: first, the one of a process moderator, second the one of a historian, and third the one of an expert in the topic. Based on these reflections, the process was designed as follows:

### 1. Initialization phase

During this stage we defined the final process and identified tentative assets to be included the Capitalization of Experiences together with the project team on the spot (AlbVET project), with local and international actors with a long-standing engagement in the sector, and with a virtual Core Learning Group. These assets were discussed in a start-up workshop with key stakeholders of the VET sector in Albania. The result of this stage was that the CAPEX process was well received by all important stakeholders, and a draft list of assets looking back to 20 years of Swiss engagement in VET in Albania.

## 2. Documentation phase

In this stage, we documented the selected assets together with the AlbVET project team and SDC Coordination Office (CoOf) on the spot. It comprised interviews with selected stakeholders and a field visit to important sites which have benefited from Swiss support.

## 3. Analysis phase

During this phase, we rated the assets identified and described in two dimensions: a) completion and sustainability, b) future potential estimation. Based on the asset description and ratings as well as some key interviews regarding future options, we developed possible entry points for SDCs future engagement in VSD in Albania.

## 4. Validation phase

The validation phase consisted in two important elements: first, we interviews key actors and discussed our findings and suggestions with them; second, SDC CoOf Albania organized a validation workshop gathering all key actors in the field of VET in Albania. During this workshop, the assets and entry points were critically discussed and amended.

## 5. Reporting phase

The draft final report received feedback from SDC Albania and Swisscontact, the main implementer during the past 20 years of engagement.

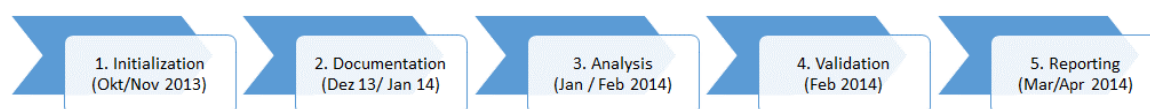


Figure 1: Process of the CAPEX

## 2.4 Instruments

The CAPEX made use of two important instruments: first, it refers to SDC’s systemic VET model, developed by SDC’s employment and income network, and secondly, it developed asset rating tools in order to estimate the “value” of each asset in two dimensions: a) completion and sustainability, b) future potential.

### 2.4.1 SDC’s Systemic VET Model

The following illustration provides an overview of a typical VET system and its interfaces with general education, labour markets and the employment system. It depicts all key elements of a typical VET system, and supports any user in better understanding the interrelations among the elements. However, the complex interdependencies and cause-and-effect relationships between them can never become visible in one graph only. For better understanding and going deeper, SDC provides more information on the systemic VET model.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.sdc-employment-income.ch> → Vocational Skills Development → Main Topics and Resources → VET Systems Development → Understanding and analyzing VET systems



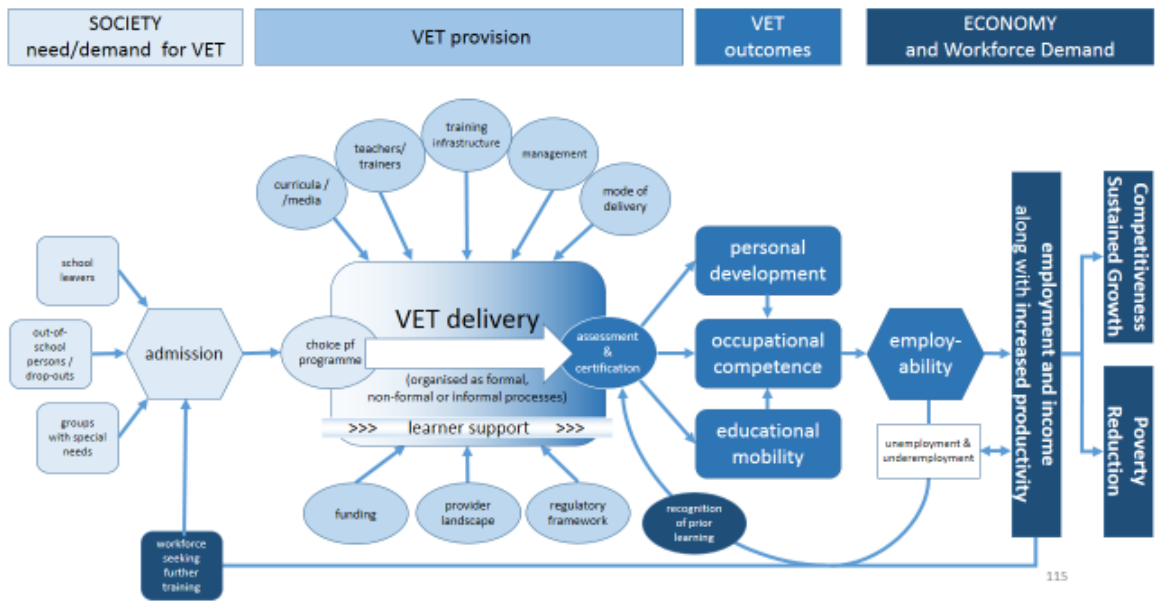


Figure 2: SDC's Systemic VET Model

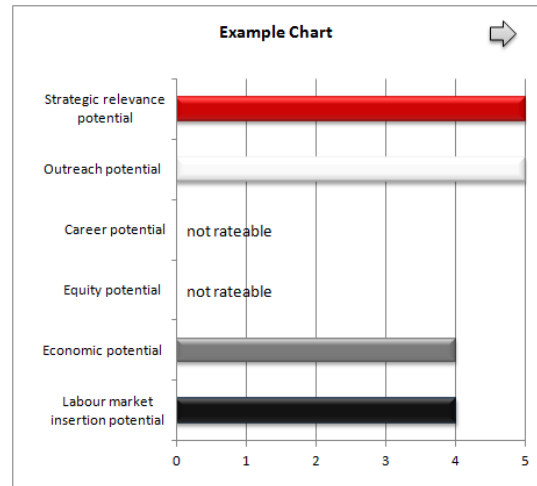
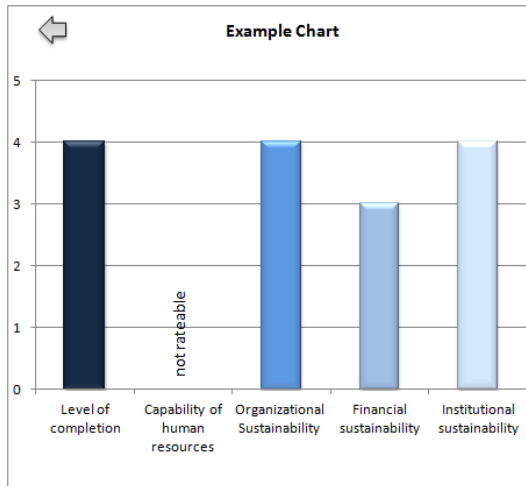
## 2.4.2 Asset description and ratings

The assessment of the assets is based on two instruments:

- The **completion and sustainability assessment** is focusing on achievements in the specific dimensions.
- The **future potential estimation** is based on important outcome level dimensions and other relevant criteria for SDC and the Albanian Government.<sup>2</sup>

By rating each asset with these two instruments, we make sure to follow the logic of the CAPEX, namely to identify assets as resources that could benefit the future engagement of SDC& other donors in the field of VSD regardless of successful implementation. Therefore, the assessment does not judge the achievement of the project under the respective asset, but the *potential* of the asset in this regard. This means that even an asset with low level of completion can have a high potential in terms of employability etc. (See the example charts below). Other assets might be utilized in only one context, whereas they have the potential to be utilized in a different context for different user groups with a higher potential for employability, higher outreach, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Details on the rating method can be found in the annex.



There are **empty bars** in some of the charts of both instruments which either means, there was not enough information available for the assessment of the dimension or there was no relation between the asset and the dimension. (As can be seen for example at the first bar chart at the dimension *Capability of human resources*). The empty bars are marked with “not rateable”.

The respective bar charts are marked with little **arrows** on top, which either point to the left (=past) or to the right (=future).

## 3 Context

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### 3.1 General situation at a glance

Albania, a middle-income country, is making the difficult transition to a more modern open-market economy. Macroeconomic growth averaged around 6% between 2004 and 2008, but declined to about 3% in the period 2009 to 2011, and 0.5% in 2012 while inflation is low and stable.<sup>3</sup>

The new government has taken measures to support the economy in cooperation with other international organizations (IMF, World Bank, EU etc.) and recently is adopting a fiscal reform package aimed at reducing the large gray economy and attracting foreign investment. Remittances, a significant catalyst for economic growth, declined from 12-15% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the 2008 financial crisis to 8% of GDP in 2010, mostly from Albanians residing in Greece and Italy.

FDI is among the lowest in the region, but the government has embarked on an ambitious program to improve the business climate through fiscal and legislative reforms. Also, with help from EU funds, the government is taking steps to improve the economic situation by establishing a long sustained economic growth. The country will continue to face challenges from increasing public debt, having slightly exceeded its former statutory limit of 60% of GDP in 2012.

Albania's labor market has undergone dramatic shifts over the last decade, contributing to productivity growth. Formal non-agricultural employment in the private sector more than doubled between 1999 and 2011, fuelled largely by foreign investment. Emigration and urbanization brought a structural shift away from agriculture and toward industry and service, allowing the economy to begin producing a variety of services, ranging from banking to telecommunications and tourism. Still, the agricultural sector accounts for almost half of employment, but only about one-fifth of GDP, is limited primarily to small family operations and subsistence farming because of lack of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land.

The migration from rural to urban areas together with the industrialization of the country produced structural changes and diversified the demand for skills and competences. The rural areas remain the poorest in the country while the number of unemployed unskilled youth in the cities is increasing.

Persons with disabilities, children and youth at risk, particular groups of women and Roma and Egyptian minorities as more at risk of social exclusion than other population groups. Only 1.3 per cent of Roma and 4.8 per cent of Egyptians between 7 and 20 years old have secondary education, while 0.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent of the same groups attain higher education<sup>4</sup>.

Women education and employment faces many challenges. The number of women graduating from the upper education in the general education is almost the same with male, while in the vocational education stream this number is quite low. The trend is

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<sup>3</sup>This chapter benefits from rich information available under <http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/fields/economy-overview> and <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/albania/overview> [17.3.2014].

<sup>4</sup>UNDP, (2012), Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania,

dramatically decreasing from 2007 onwards<sup>5</sup>. According to data from the Albanian Institute for Statistics (INSTAT) 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2013, the employment rate of over 15 years old is 50.2 % for male and 35.7% for women.

Looking toward the future, Albania focuses on supporting economic recovery and growth, broadening and sustaining the country's social gains. Key challenges for Albania going forward include early resumption of fiscal consolidation and strengthened public expenditure management, regulatory and institutional reform, reduction of infrastructure deficits, and improvement in the effectiveness of social protection systems and key health services.

### 3.2 Education and VET in Albania

VET in Albania finds itself in a difficult situation. Challenges are very significant, also after 20 years of relevant support from bilateral and multilateral partners.

The first challenge is about **the status of VET**: The general education has the largest number of graduates. According to the data offered from the Employment and Skills Strategy (p. 10) in the academic year 2011-2012, there were 40,927 students graduated in upper secondary education, from which just over half, 20,801 were females. Vocational schools graduates are much lower in numbers, graduating 2,844 students, from which 877 were females<sup>6</sup>. This means, that only about 6.5% of the total graduates in secondary education graduated in VET. The trends shows that graduation from general secondary education (Matura) kept increasing almost the double compared with academic years 2007-2008, while vocational education shows a decreasing trend. The number of students enrolling in vocational education declined in the period 2006-2011 by over 38 per cent. One primary reason for this rather dramatic situation of the formal VET system is that VET is only second choice in the Albanian society. This is not only due to low performance of VET system, but also due to the clear preference of university education. In the old system, university education was only for the most privileged ones. Today, things are exactly the other way round, with general education on secondary level and university education for all, with almost no access restrictions in this general education stream. In such a situation and a labour market offering not enough jobs for too many young persons, everybody continues general education and wants to increase their chances. As long as the general education stream continues to be openly accessible, VET will continue to face hard times.

The second challenge is about **financing VET**: Albania still spends less on education as proportion of GDP (3 per cent in 2011), than other countries in the region (4.4 per cent on average) and EU countries (5.4 per cent). Since the costs for students in VET is triple compared to general education, and since VET is 100% publicly financed, pressure on VET is high. Finding a way to finance, steer, and deliver VET in a public-private partnership modus, is therefore key to any future development of VET, irrespective on what level VET is offered.

The third challenge VET faces is **quality, labour market orientation and private sector involvement**: Currently the VET system in Albania is not orientated towards labour market demand and often delivers poor quality. The system is fully state driven –

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<sup>5</sup>Source: INSTAT; Education Statistics

<sup>6</sup>Source: INSTAT; Education Statistics

and therefore lagging behind labour market realities and labour market needs as a matter of principle. Little systematic labour market analysis is undertaken to assess which are the demanded qualifications and how the courses could be adapted and planned in the future. There is no tracer system for vocational education, which could help to identify the career path of the graduates including both their employment or/and further post-secondary or tertiary studies. Cooperation with the private sector is rare and not systematically developed. Some businesses cooperate with some schools for organizing practical hours of the students. Teacher training and human resources development on school level is very critical. The high average age of technical teachers - most of whom being close to retirement age – is not being addressed. A proper pre-service and in-service training system is almost inexistent. Many teachers at VET schools did never really get in touch with the profession they are educating, and many have an improper educational and no practical background at all. One reason behind this situation is the low reputation of VET in general, the poor training conditions, and the low teachers' salaries. Finally yet importantly, VET offers no VET career. The introduction of post-secondary VET programmes started in 2007 only and has not been well developed so far in terms of outreach and in terms of conceptualization. This means, that for poorly performing VET trainees, VET offers no continues education. The better performing VET trainees continue education at university level and usually opt for study subjects completely detached from what they learned at VET schools.

A fourth challenge VET faces lies in **VET organization and VET governance**: Up to now, VET schools have been part of the ministry of education, while the competent ministry for labour market insertion ran so-called VET Centres, offering short courses to jobless people. This parallel system proved to be very costly and ineffective. The VET Amendment Law 2011 created the legal ground for the establishment of multifunctional VET Centres (MFC), which are expected to become important hubs linking VET clients (youth, students, adults) and potential employers and businesses, through internships and practical work in the premises of such local businesses.

As outlined, there are major challenges in VET in Albania. Therefore, the new Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth launched the Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020, on February 2014. The strategy is based on four pillars which determine the development of VET in the future. Those are:



Figure 3: Four Pillars of the Albanian Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020

According to this Strategy and to the new Government Programme, VET schools are foreseen to shift from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. This transfer is primarily about structures, organization and administration. However, those decisions are crucial for future development, and they prepare the ground for coming years in formal, and partly also in non-formal, VET.

**A. Foster decent job opportunities through effective labour market policies**

This pillar is about (A1) Modernization of the National Employment Service, including headquarters and regional and local offices; (A2). Enhancing compliance with ratified international labour standards; (A3.) Expanding the range and scope of employment services and programmes (active labour market policies). (A4.)Improving the monitoring and evaluation of employment measures.

**B. Offer quality vocational education and training for youth and adults**

Is about (B1.) Optimising the VET providers network and diversifying offers (including competences by sectors); (B2.) Assuring the quality of VET providers and improving the quality of VET inputs (labs and equipment, curricula, teaching materials) and processes (B3.) Raising the image of VET and informing about VET providers, qualifications and training offers; (B4.) Strengthening the linkages between learning and work and facilitating the transition to work; (B5.) Enhancing recruitment and improving competences of VET teachers and teacher trainers (incl. pre service training and continuous professional development), actors in charge of regional management, school or centre directors, inspectors.

**C. Promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion**

Is about (C1.) Extending employment and training services to rural areas; (C2.) Promoting entrepreneurship, social economy and the third sector jobs; (C3.) Introduce an activation strategy to minimize inactivity and welfare traps.

**D. Strengthen the governance of the labour market and qualification systems**

Calls for: (D1.) Reforming the governance of the labour market and VET systems; (D2.) Implementing the Albanian qualifications framework; (D3.) Improving the quality and ensure the use of labour market information for better governance and effective funding; (D4.) Modernising the legislative framework for VET (initial VET and adult training).

**3.3 Project abstract**

The project portfolio since 1994 comprised three major projects as depicted in the below table. The three projects represent at the same time three project generations, which are rather prototypical for the contemporary priorities in international cooperation during the respective periods.

1994-2004	DVS Project Phases 1-3	Rehabilitation of one traditional urban training centre with a strong focus on dual elements like emphasis on practice learning and internships in the private sector.	CHF 6.4 Million
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2001-2006	ISDO Project Phases 1-3	Modular short courses (up to 3 months duration) for unemployed youth and young adults. Cooperation with 25 public and private providers in various cities. Co-financing through a voucher scheme.	CHF Million	6.7
2007-2014	AlbVET Project Phases 1-3	Capacity development and support to overall system reform processes in selected key policy areas. Various components and sub-components under a systemic approach with different levels of intervention.	CHF Million	9.6

The main portfolio was supplemented by two smaller projects, i.e. Strengthening Vocational School project (SVS) – Strengthening Vocational Education through small activities, and rehabilitation of the dormitory in Lushnja Vocational School.

The cooperation strategy with Albania (2014-2017) will continue to promote Economic Development, with a particular focus on the promotion of youth employment. An envisaged new intervention will follow an integrated, three dimensional approach with measures on (a) the skills supply side (employability), (b) the skills demand side (employment creation), and (c) matching skills supply and demand (labour market information and active labor market instruments).

## 4 Looking back: Selected Assets of 20 years Swiss support to VET in Albania

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### 4.1 Asset overview

We identified 24 assets and grouped them in five groups. The first group of assets deals with *innovative training delivery strategies and coaching*. All Swiss interventions in the past 20 years importantly promoted innovative, state-of-the-art and financeable delivery strategies. By doing so, the projects triggered important reformations in the very heart of each VET system. The second group gathers assets regarding *quality service providers and infrastructure*. Relevant VET delivery is not feasible without quality providers, be it private or public ones. The Swiss support of Albania is often identified with “Beqir Cela” school in Durres, the so-called “Swiss school”. This school was and still is an important lighthouse in the Albanian providers’ landscape. However, Swiss support to the rehabilitation of the Albanian VET system did not there, but resulted in other major assets in the field of quality providers. The third group captures assets about the *cooperation with the private sector*. Many actors including the new government of Albania perceive the cooperation with the private sector as the most important challenge for the future, since formal VET offers in Albania are, until today, defined, organised, and paid by the state. Within Swiss projects, approaches and mechanisms for cooperation with the private sector have been defined, tested, and implemented. The fourth group includes several important *concepts and resources* developed under different projects. All of them address relevant elements of the Albanian VET system. The last group of assets addresses a different level compared to the others: project implementation approaches. Under this heading, we tried to group approaches and resources that, in one way or the other, account for a specific Swiss way of implementing projects. The Swiss approach to project implementation has been widely recognised as a quality oriented systemic approach.

In the following chapters, the assets identified within this CAPEX are described.

Headings / Groups	Assets
<b>Innovative Training Delivery Strategies and Coaching</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Minimum 50% practice learning as bottom line for cooperation</li> <li>2. Project-based learning approach with block-teaching</li> <li>3. Modular short courses based on competency-based learning</li> <li>4. Inter-institutional cooperation for post-secondary IT with dual learning venues</li> <li>5. Student rotation system</li> <li>6. Coaching for Employment approach with recognition Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS)</li> </ol>
<b>Quality Service Providers and Infrastructure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. School management tools</li> <li>8. Durres Vocational School “Beqir Cela”</li> <li>9. Private training providers</li> <li>10. Training workshops based on learning islands and projects for thermo-hydraulics and solar heating</li> <li>11. Business-like IT training labs</li> </ol>



Headings / Groups	Assets
<b>Cooperation Mechanisms with the Private Sector</b>	12. Durres Initiative for internships 13. Partnership for learning / apprentice training schemes 14. Inclusion of the world of work in competency-based assessment and certification
<b>Concepts and Resources</b>	15. Thermo-hydraulic occupational area reform 16. Human resources through training of trainers, master trainers, DACUM facilitators, instructors, and coaches 17. Curricula and training materials in diverse occupational profiles 18. Voucher scheme for co-financing short courses 19. Status and part autonomy of public VET providers 20. Small grant scheme for stimulation of quality and innovation in VET delivery
<b>Project Implementation Approaches</b>	21. Systemic approach to VET (“going deep” – “the whole package”) 22. Focus on outcomes at the level of students and participants 23. Working approach and culture 24. DACH+ and Sector Working Group on VET

## 4.2 Asset description and rating

### 4.2.1 Innovative Training Delivery Strategies and Coaching

#### 1. Minimum 50% practice learning as bottom line for cooperation

The fundamental belief in the value of practice learning and dual learning venues irrevocably belongs to Swiss VET stakeholders. Thus, practice learning, be it in training workshops or in business premises, are generic key elements of Swiss VET projects.<sup>7</sup>

In Albania the first Swiss VET project structured the training programs in the Durres Vocational School based on the 50:50 principle: 50% of learning takes place in classrooms, 50% in training workshops or in internship periods. In addition to adequate time allocation for practice learning, this structure also allows for full utilisation of the capacities of the training workshops.

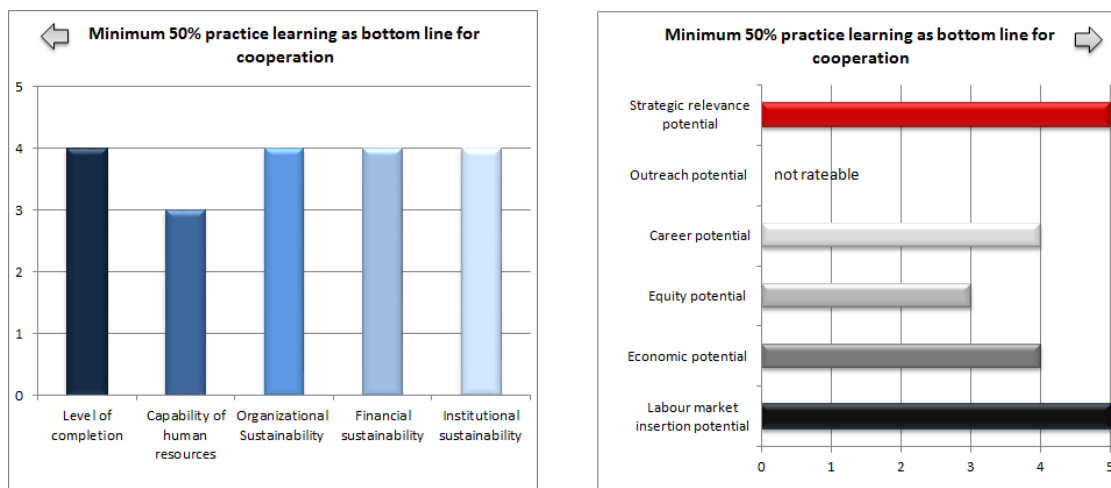
This first intervention developed into an (unwritten) principle for all successor projects and lines of activities. In the present AlbVET project portfolio, it applies to thermo-hydraulics, post-secondary Information Technology (IT) and coaching for employment. Approaches to implementation differ, in that practice learning may be implemented in traditional training workshops, through project-based learning, in internship periods, or through real-life projects. The organisation of practice learning not in lessons, but in blocks of days, weeks or months, is a prerequisite for implementation.

The 50:50 principle has proven to be significantly successful under two points of view: (I) it has significantly increased the employment potential of the trainees by improving not

<sup>7</sup> This is true for all German speaking countries in Europe, as well as to a certain extent for Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium and others.

only their practical skills, but also their social and methodical skills, (II) it has contributed to the acceptance of practice learning as an easy to understand and flexible guideline.

From a systematic perspective, practice learning intervenes at the level of the mode of delivery as well as on all inputs necessary for delivery (incl. teachers/trainers, curricula, infrastructure etc.), training management, VET delivery, but also in the regulatory framework.



The basic idea of having a relevant part of practice learning in each vocational training is fairly well developed and institutionalised. The strategic relevance of this asset is very high for any kind of VSD offer, not only in Albania, since meaningful practice learning improves the labour market insertion potential of the trainees significantly.

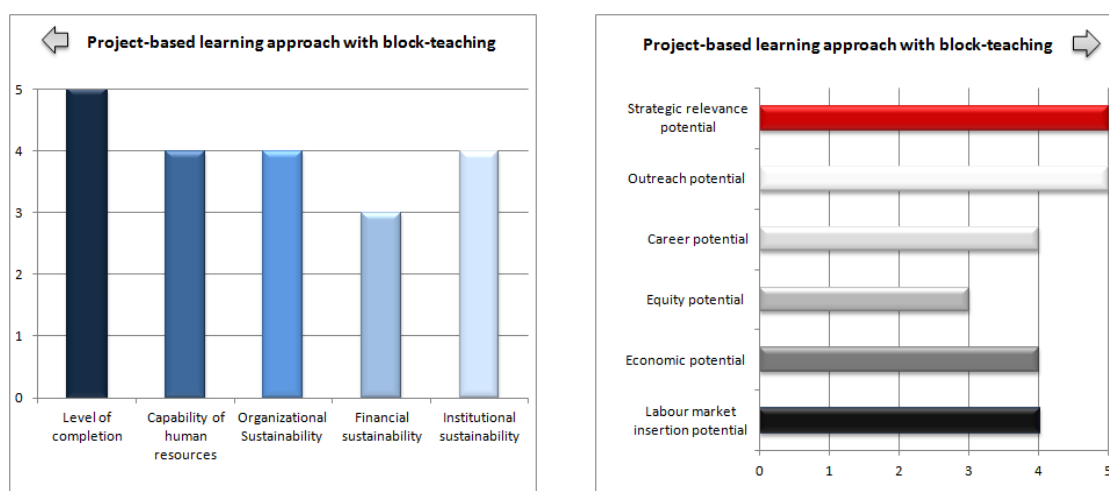
## 2. Project-based learning approach with block-teaching

Traditional teaching in Albania is subject-based, teacher-centred and strictly follows the so-called lesson plan. The schools comply with the old learning culture where the central point is teaching, instead of learning. AlbVET has responded to this ambiguity with the aim to switch the school's focus from teaching to learning, introducing the project-based learning approach (PBL) under phase 2 in 2009.

The PBL approach introduced a new idea of how learning takes place in VET schools: The core idea of project-based learning is to integrate theory and practice. Students receive knowledge and elements of the core curriculum and apply what they have learned to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter. PBL places particular attention on the student, not on the curriculum. The teacher assumes the role of a facilitator, working with students to frame worthwhile questions, structuring meaningful tasks, coaching both knowledge development and social skills and carefully assessing what students have learned during training in order to be able to adapt inputs, tasks or processes immediately and individually. Typical projects simulate a real life situation of the world of work. The introduction of the PBL approach has changed the learning atmosphere, the cooperation both among instructional staff and among students, the students' motivation and the labour market relevance. Project-based learning allows students to go in depth with their learning and they own the whole process, from reading the project design to implementing it accurately.

The approach was first introduced in the complete occupational area of thermo-hydraulics in ten public vocational schools, but is also a core element of other Swiss interventions in VET, e.g. in post-secondary IT. PBL was designed in close cooperation with local teachers and implemented in training blocks with a duration of at least one week up to two months. Project support was holistic in the sense that it included the approach, curriculum development, teachers and instructors training, development of learning resources and equipment. PBL is approved and institutionalised for the thermo-hydraulic qualification. It continues to be consolidated and it is supported by the system. Because of the success of the intervention, numerous schools express their intention to expand the approach to other profiles as well.

From a systematic perspective, PBL intervenes in the core process of teaching and learning, at the level of training management, at the level of managerial and instructing staff, at organisational level of VET providers, at VET outcomes and at policy level.



Today, PBL represents one of the major success stories and a key asset when looking back on 20 years of Swiss support to VET reform in Albania. It strongly contributed to changing the understanding of learning in the Albanian VET system. PBL is perfectly well developed and has good institutional background with fair human resources capacities available, but with some challenges regarding sustainable financing. The importance of PBL is underlined by a very high rating regarding its strategic relevance and its outreach potential.

### 3. Modular short courses with competency-based learning

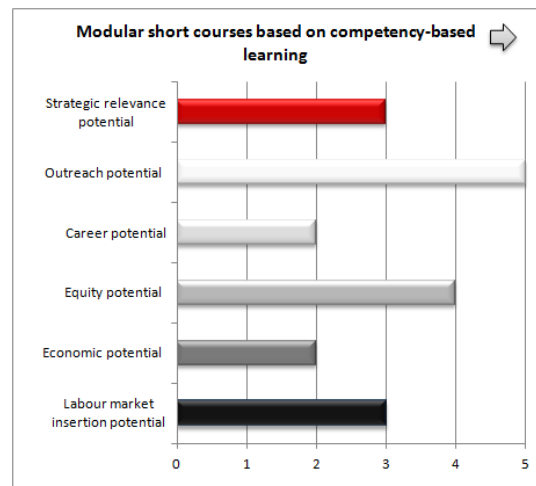
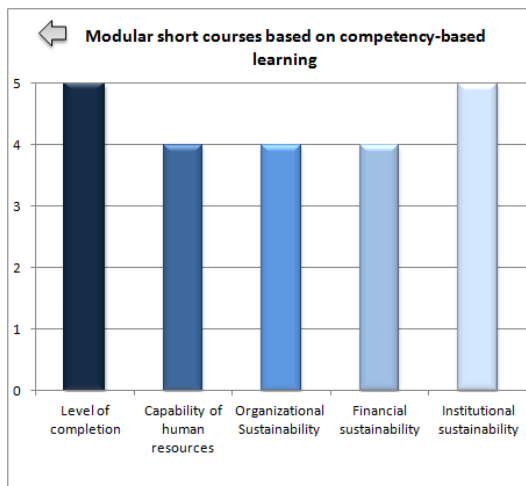
Skills shortage and mismatch are seen as constraints on economic growth in Albania. In the earlier days of transition, a substantial share of youth left the education system after compulsory education or even before in search of employment on the local labour market, or abroad without any adequate preparatory skills development.

Short courses based on competency-based learning were developed under Increase Skills Development Opportunities – ISDO project. ISDO developed a training offer for young adults and school leavers with the ultimate goal to increase their chances for employment or self-employment. The development of an array of modular short courses was the core of this project. By doing so, the ISDO project introduced a modularized, short-course training system for increasing the employment opportunities for school

leavers and young adults in a context where appropriate public training was not yet established and where the labour market was not well structured (e.g. job profiles not defined, informal organization of demand side).

The curricula for these courses were developed based on the DACUM approach. Each short course contained up to three modules, lasting about 100 training hours each. During its lifetime from 2002-2009, the project trained about 30'000 participants. This outnumbered the number of participants trained by the public system under the National Employment Service. Training was implemented by vocational schools in the afternoon, performing as multi-functional training centres, and by private training providers established under the project. Altogether, the project cooperated with 25 training providers. In addition to curriculum development, project support included training of trainers, equipment for training workshops, and co-financing through a voucher scheme. However, from the very beginning, participants had to bear part of the training fee.

From a systemic perspective, modular short courses based on competency-based learning intervene in access to VET provision, in the provider landscape, in the mode of VET delivery, in the training infrastructure, in curriculum development, instructors training, and in enhancing occupational competence and employability of participants.



The asset is very well developed and sustainable to a fairly high degree. Its outreach potential is considerable, also its equity potential, while the asset is not considered to have an average future potential regarding other dimensions. However, if certain target groups like early school leavers, poorly qualified jobless people or special needs groups shall be covered on a large scale, modular short courses with competency-based learning might be considered a model for replication in order to reaching out to masses.

#### 4. Inter-institutional cooperation for post-secondary IT with dual learning venues

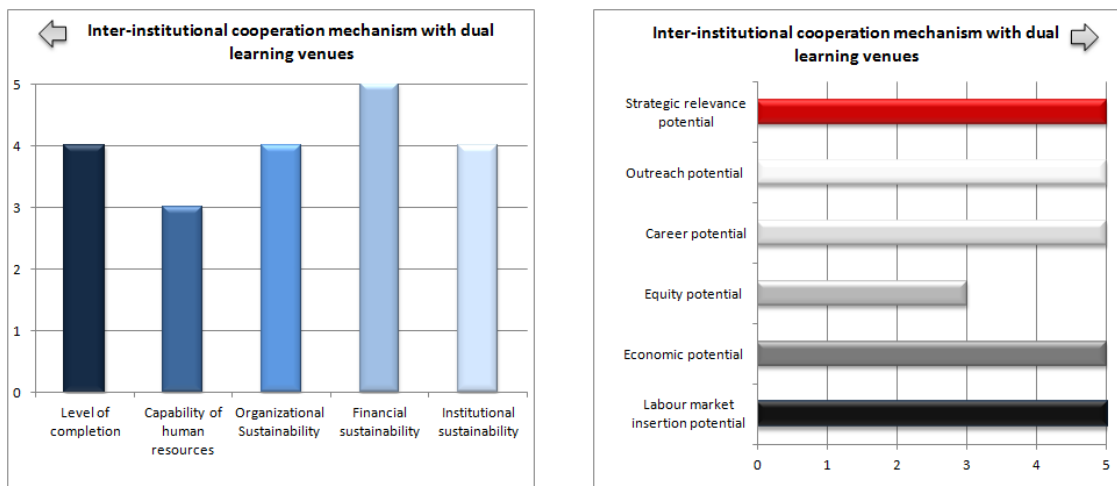
Stakeholder cooperation is a decisive element and success factor in VET. However, legacy of the past impedes Albania to see its benefits. The majority still perceives vocational education and training as a public and unilateral task of a specific Ministry of the central Government, and associate it with the former centrally planned economy and political system. On this background, any stakeholder cooperation innovation must not

limit itself to public-private cooperation, but also focus on inter-institutional cooperation between different public-sector institutions.

In a context, where majorities of age cohorts reach the Matura, and either crowd into Universities, or access the labour market without any specific skills, the AlbVET project launched a new type of initial vocational training for IT practitioners with a strong emphasis on practice learning at post-secondary level. For implementation, the project stimulated and facilitated an inter-institutional cooperation between a University and a public vocational school.

The innovative aspect of this asset lies on the cooperation between an academic and a vocational institution in a context where universities generally believe in their superiority over vocational schools. The cooperation is regulated by a memorandum between stakeholders instead of a by-law, which is equally an innovative practice. The rotation between the dual learning venues at the university and the IT labs at the vocational school is realized in weekly blocks. Practice learning in the business-like IT labs is based on real life projects, which simulate the world of work. As a major element of this asset, the university awards ECTS credits for practice learning outside its own premises and outside the direct authority of the university.

From a systemic perspective, the inter-institutional cooperation for post-secondary training intervenes in the providers landscape, at the level of the mode of delivery, at the level of training management, it develops the training infrastructure, qualifies teachers and instructors, at the policy level, and it impacts the VET outcomes and employability of the graduates.



The inter-institutional cooperation for post-secondary VET is fairly well developed and institutionalised under the limited project conditions and in one branch/profession only so far. However, when looking into the future, this asset is seen as one of the top priority fields of interventions for the future by most of the actors interviewed. Post-secondary (initial) VET is considered as one possible cure for formal VET in Albania, offering quality and practice oriented training at the point of the system where most of the youth leaves the education system, i.e. after Matura or a 4-year VET cycle. However, recent studies on post-secondary VET in Albania do not suggest this type of training as an offer for big numbers since it is too expensive and might still be considered as a second choice offer by most of the youths. The equity potential of post-secondary quality VET is rather

limited. In consequence, post-secondary VET has also been reflected in the new draft VET strategy, however with somewhat limited priority.<sup>8</sup>

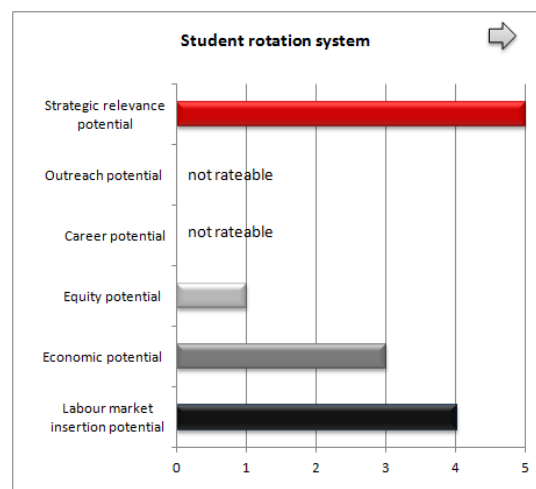
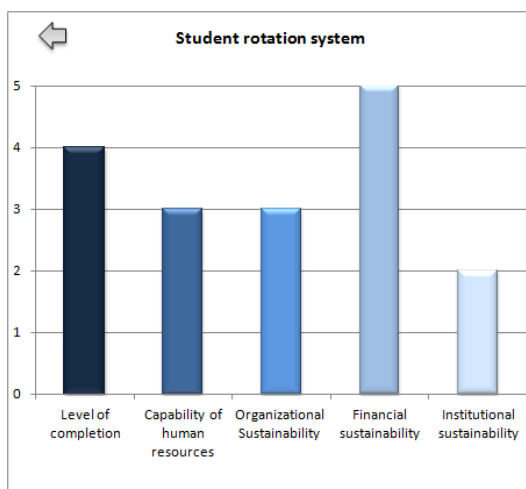
### 5. Student rotation system

Since 2009, AlbVET project supports the implementation of the 2+1+1 system in the complete occupational area of thermo-hydraulics based on learning project approach. The basic training up to level 2 is imparted in all 10 vocational schools of the public system. Advanced specialisations mainly in solar technology at the level +1+1 was concentrated on four selected schools only. Those schools serve as “centres of competence”.

The core idea of the rotation system is that advanced specialisations with sophisticated equipment is only financeable in selected and more developed schools, while still all students should be in a position to benefit from the offer. In order that all students can participate in advanced specialisations, the project stimulated the introduction of a student rotation system: While the students complete the theoretical part of their educational cycle in their own schools, they move to one of the four centres of competence for the implementation of the learning projects. Such advanced learning projects have a duration of 2 months. This approach it is much cheaper and, therefore, sustainable than equipping all VET schools.

The rotation system of students was approved by the Ministry of Education as highly innovative feature, and it was quickly embraced by the VET System. The Council of Ministers approved the necessary stipends and supported the whole plan officially. However, the first cycle of implementation required considerable lobbying, support and pushes from the project.

From a systemic perspective, the rotation system intervenes at the policy level, at the level of the education infrastructure, at admission level (advanced stage), and at VET provision and delivery level. It also supports the educational mobility of the students.



The student rotation system is highly relevant since it offers a financeable system of specialisation in the third and fourth cycle of VET training. For the severely underfinanced VET system of Albania, this might become an important form of VET

<sup>8</sup> Status as of end of February 2014.

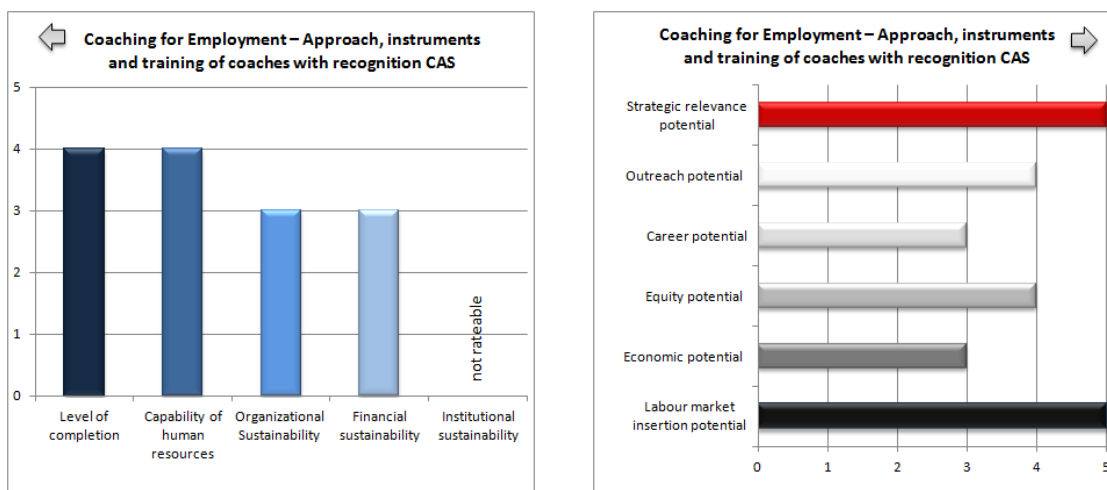
delivery for more specialised trainings with high-cost training infrastructure and more specialised teaching resources.

## **6. Coaching for Employment – Approach, instruments and training of coaches with CAS**

Inclusion of vulnerable groups into the world of work continues to be a challenge in Albania. The traditional approach to tackle the issue is simple and is limited to standardized non-formal short course offers in a few selected occupations with low public social recognition. In order to avoid the trap of these traditional and little promising approaches, AlbVET developed a concept for a more individualized approach, inspired by so-called case management schemes known in Western European countries. Coaching for Employment (C4E) combines the following elements: (a) training of coaches, (b) support to partner organisation for the organisation of the group processes with beneficiaries, and (c) support to the implementation of individual development plans for each beneficiary, and (d) cooperation with the National Employment Service. This makes the approach unique, holistic and systemic. A coaching cycle lasts up to 18 months, and it comprises group processes, exploration of the world of work, short and long internships, vocational courses, business planning in the case of self-employment, and start-up support. An individual development plan is the key instrument to guide the process.

The modular training of coaches is provided by the University of Applied Sciences in Lucerne and comprises about 50 training days. The University has recognised the training with a Swiss Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS). Conceptually, the coaching cycle with the first batch of beneficiaries was implemented in parallel with the modular training of coaches, which made it a dual style project where sharing of experiences and good practices with beneficiaries, and peer exchange among coaches, become an integral element of the training of coaches. Today, under a new service model, the National Employment Service attempts to adapt coaching for employment as approach to work with vulnerable groups.

From the systemic perspective, Coaching for Employment responds to a social demand, it develops new modes of delivery, it improves outcome and employability. However, coaching for employment rather belongs to Active Labour Market Policies than to the VET system from a systemic point of view which has important implications on cooperation, organisation and financing.



C4E is pretty well developed given the fact that it started only in phase 2 of AlbVET and that it is a highly innovative but demanding concept, including also Swiss actors. Its relevance is high, catering for special needs groups of any kind and. With some concept adaptations, it has the potential to become a key instrument of labour market insertion in Albania, redefining the approach to the target groups it addresses. The labour market insertion potential of C4E is extraordinary.

#### 4.2.2 Quality Service Providers and Infrastructure

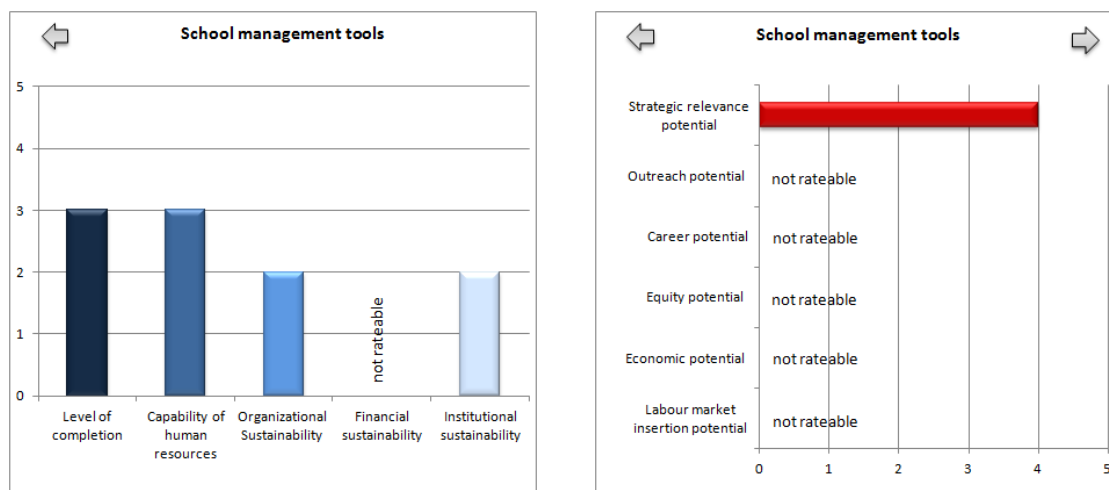
### 7. School management tools

School management is a crucial element for the sustainability of any innovation. Implementation approaches and support with the aim to improve school management changed over time, from delegated quality experts integrated in BeqirCela School in the early days, to SVS-Strengthen Vocational School project and a small grant scheme for quality and innovation projects under AlbVET, phase 1. Typical fields of support covered project management, monitoring issues, financial issues, accounting, participation with the private sector, or quality delivery. Under the small grant scheme of AlbVET, phase 1, quality and innovation should be guided by school development plans, both at public and private providers. The project developed a process and a template for school development plans, and introduced it to selected vocational schools. Conceptually the school development plan was based on an instrument called the “Quality Pentagon”, and approach to describe quality dimensions of VET providers. The “Quality Pentagon” was developed in cooperation with directors of selected vocational schools.

As a result, the asset of school management tools comprises a bunch of instruments like yearly planning, project planning, proposal writing, accounting for services and courses, the “Quality Pentagon”, and a process and templates for school development plans. With all these efforts, school management was considerably improved. New projects and innovations benefit from these efforts.

From a systemic perspective, school management tools are part of the VET delivery and quality management of VET providers.





School management clearly is as a major bottleneck of quality VET development in the formal VET system in Albania. Until today, public VET schools and VET centres do not have a high degree of autonomy. Therefore, they developed modern management approaches and quality processes only to a limited extent. However, school autonomy is high on the agenda in Albania. Once the government opts for such models, school management becomes a key issue for success, and the assets developed can serve as important models to be replicated and used in the whole system.

## 8. Durrës Vocational School “BeqirCela”

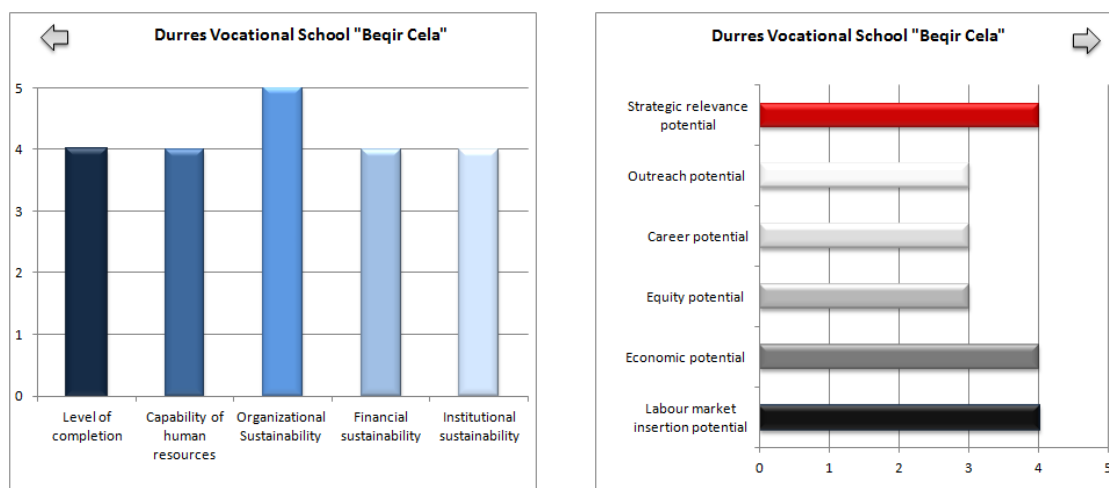
BeqirCela School has been the nucleus of the Swiss support to VET in Albania, and is still one of the most reputed schools in the country, assuming the role of a model school when it comes to school management, quality delivery, preparedness and openness to innovation, cooperation with the private sector and sustainable effects of a long-lasting cooperation.

Despite project support to Durres Vocational School BeqirCela was phased out in 2003, it is indeed still perceived as one of the best performing vocational schools in Albania, and, therefore, it is an asset in itself. From 2004 until today, the school developed cooperations also with other donors, and continued to contribute to the modernisation of the teaching and learning in Albania. Features which make the school outstanding and superior to most competitors are:

- Well-equipped workshops for all profiles offered in the school.
- Continued strong focus on practice learning with 50% of the learning time spent in training workshops or in internships.
- Fully integrated the new approach to teaching, focusing on learning and the trainees, instead of classical style ex-cathedra teaching.
- Stable school management under changing Governments.
- Continued cooperation with the private sector for internships.
- Ability to offer courses and services against payment.
- Private sector involvement in final examinations.
- Countrywide reputation resulting in increasing student applications.
- Ability to develop new programs, to write project proposals, and to enter cooperation with other donors and institutions.

- Partner in the inter-institutional cooperation with the University of Durres for post-secondary training.
- Spearheading the development of the status as “national school”

From a systemic perspective, support to Durres Vocational School(DVS) falls under VET provision, mode of delivery, outcomes and workforce demand, adding value to the competitiveness of the schools in preparing skilled labour force that matches labour market demand.



DVS continues to be a lighthouse among the public VET providers in Albania. Most of the assets identified and described here have been developed together with DVS as one of the actors involved. DVS is a major resource and a reliable partner for future developments and innovations. If public VET providers become more autonomous in future, other schools in Albania can learn from DVS and benefit from all the resources developed under this special regime in Durres.

## 9. Private training providers

Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in Albania offers training at two levels: Public Vocational Schools and public Vocational Training Centres. The prerequisite to enter vocational schools is a successful completion of the nine-year compulsory education. Access to Vocational Training Centres is more liberal, but lack of infrastructure and service provision has made these public centres unreliable for vocational training. Significant percentages of young people enter the labour market directly from the education system. They have almost no possibilities to develop their professional skills and competencies and to certify them, in order to stimulate their labour market mobility and their career, and to secure their access to further education.

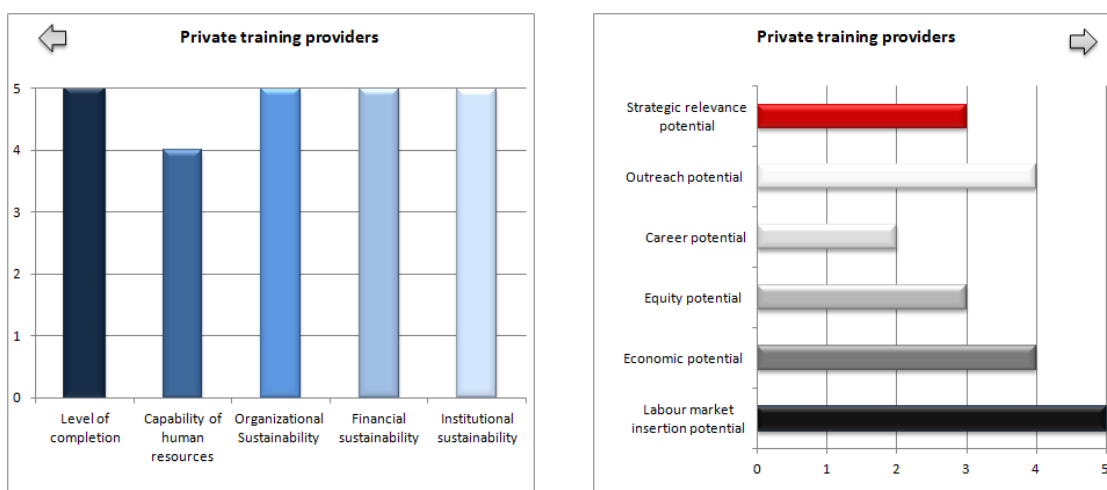
Therefore, the core idea of establishing and upgrading private training providers was to offer short, affordable but high quality and labour market oriented course offers in the non-formal sector to school leaving youth and young adults. In addition to the very limited number of existing public and private training providers, the project identified entrepreneurs with a high reputation and the potential to provide training in addition to their productive core business.

This was the core business of the Increase Skills Development Opportunities (ISDO) Project, 2001 – 2006, which continued as component under the AlbVET project during

phase 1 until 2008. Key inputs for the development of private training providers included training needs assessments, course and curriculum development, instructors training, management support (organisational development, marketing, training organisation, accounting, etc.), equipment support, and co-financing of training delivery through.

Today, a relevant number of private training centres are still active in the market. They continue to offer short and medium-term courses in their regions, and some of them have engaged in partnership for learning. Such sustainable private training providers exist in Saranda, Fier, Berat, Lushnja and Durres and the degree of students being employed or self-employed after finishing these courses is considered quite high. Some of the private centers operate in decentralised areas and until today enjoy high professional reputation among the local communities.

From the systemic perspective, the PTP intervention impacts on in VET provision, the providers landscape, access to (non-formal) VET, outcome and employability.



The private training providers are fully and sustainably developed, and continue to offer their services on the market, mainly focusing on IT and language courses, but also on more hands-on job profiles like hairdressing or tourism jobs. Their strong labour market orientation is obviously a major asset and future potential, as well as their flexibility in reaching out to high numbers. Private training providers might represent an entry point to more private sector engagement in VSD in Albania. They might also serve as service providers for active labour market measures requested by the National Employment Service NES, since they are well positioned in certain economic branches and trades and they might be helpful in developing very flexible courses meeting the needs of special groups.

**10. Training workshops based on learning islands and projects for thermo-hydraulics and solar heating**

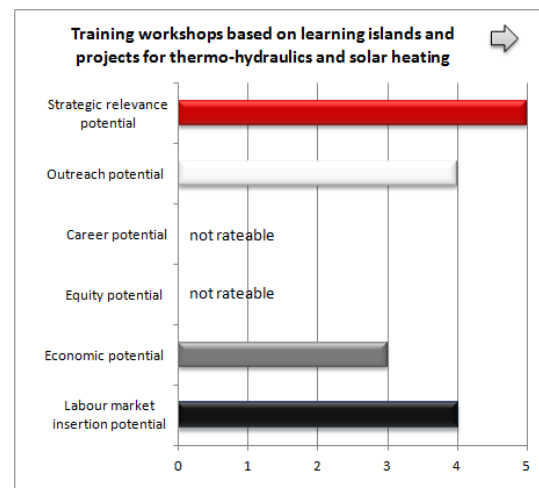
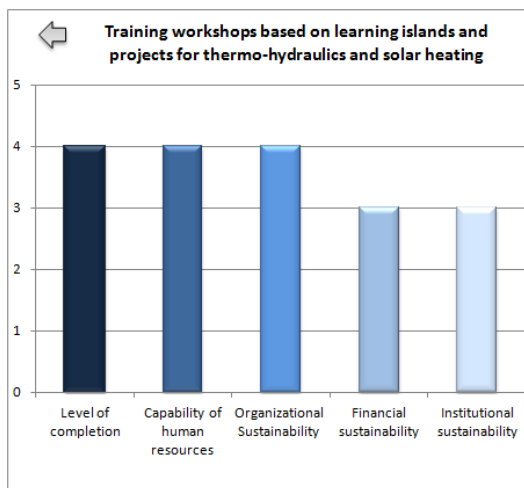
In the framework of the occupational area reform in thermo-hydraulics, the AlbVET project equipped training workshops in ten vocational schools for level 1 and 2 training, and in four selected vocational schools for advanced specialisation, mainly in solar heating and technology. The workshops are equipped with so-called learning islands, well equipped and flexible workspaces for individual and group work very similar to real-

world working places. Trainees use these facilities for their learning projects development under the project, each of them having a duration of 1-2 months. Therefore, in these training workshops, the trainees have the possibility to develop not only their practical competences, but also their social and methodical skills working project-based, in small groups, and under a certain time pressure and self-organised.

Although the learning projects were designed to implement the practice part of secondary vocational education, the value of this asset goes beyond: The training workshops with the learning islands and the learning projects are directly usable for adult learning, active labour market measures, short courses of any type and courses on any level, also in continued training. Furthermore, the training workshops in solar technology have the potential to serve as nucleus for development of centres for renewable energy.

The students attending these courses are now highly required on the labour market and they also start to run their own businesses

From the systemic perspective, the training workshops based on learning islands and the learning projects intervene in training infrastructure, mode of delivery, and curriculum development.



This infrastructural combined with learning approach asset is pretty well developed and has been fully implemented in one cycle. However, certain question marks occur when it comes to financing and institutionalisation of such workshops and related methods. Nevertheless, the strategic relevance of this asset is considered high, including a good outreach potential and good prospects regarding labour market insertion of trainees. As stated above, the workshops, trainers and learning projects are usable for Life Long Learning (LLL) activities, and the package as such could represent a nucleus for some kind of green jobs / green economy engagement.

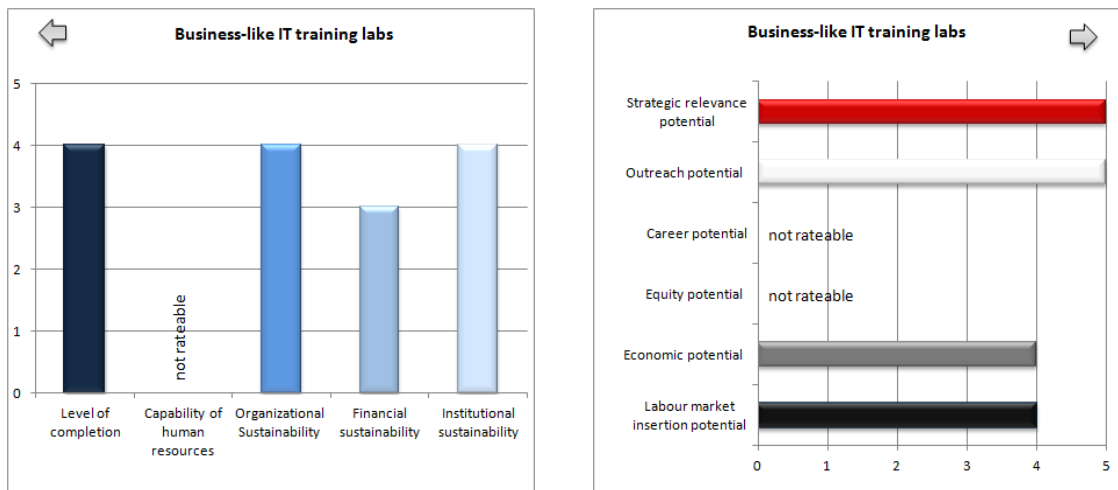
### 11. Business-like IT training labs

Usually, IT labs in Albania have a U shape. The teacher sits in the centre and gives exercises to students. Students usually get all the same assignment at the same time, and they have to do the same exercise. Students work at individual speed and have different results, but in principle, they follow the same programme.

The training labs for post-secondary IT in Durres follow a different rationale and philosophy. The IT lab are furnished and equipped similar to an IT business. The tables are arranged in groups of four, where students do not face the teacher, but each other. The students work in groups on small IT projects and assignments. Within such projects, individual students may perform different tasks contributing to completing the group assignment. At a more advanced stage, the different groups might even be given different assignments contributing to a bigger real life IT project.

The philosophy is to simulate real life workplace reality to the extent possible. Performing different parts of a whole task, and working partly individually and partly in groups, is typical for IT projects, and this is how it also works in business environments. Therefore, this kind of training delivery improves the preparedness of the trainees for the world of work remarkably.

From the systemic perspective, the business-like IT labs intervene in training infrastructure and mode of delivery.



The asset is well developed, considering the short time of implementation, and ready for replication. It's main innovation lies in the approach to learning and teaching, and therefore is considered as highly relevant for any future quality development in VET and in IT especially. The outreach potential is considered high in this regard, and this style of learning improves the labour market insertion potential and the economic potential of participants considerably.

### 4.2.3 Cooperation Mechanisms with the Private Sector

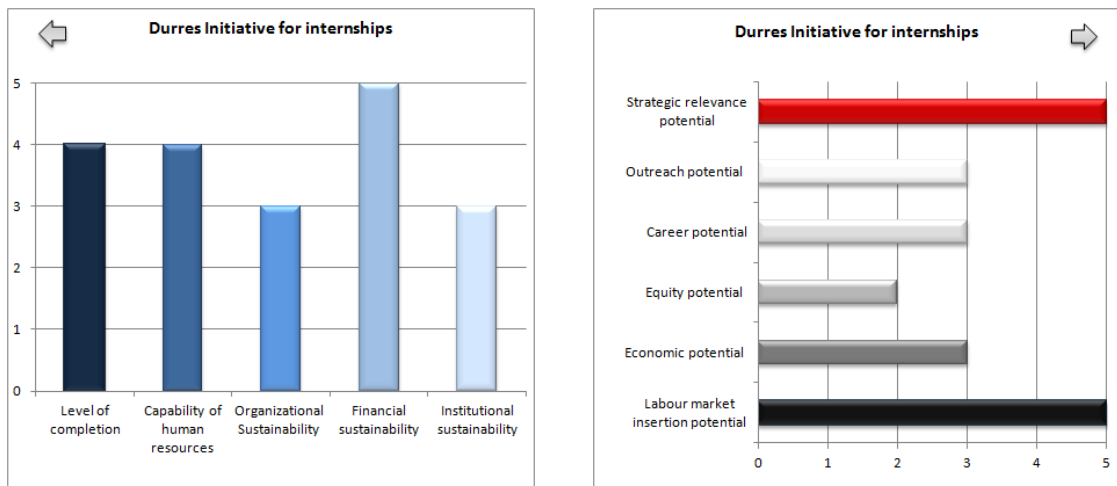
#### 12. Durres initiative for internships

In the framework of the overall support to the rehabilitation of the Durres Vocational School, the DVS also introduced substantial internships periods as early as in the 90ies. A tripartite on-the-job training contract is the core instrument of this asset. The contract between the student, the school, and the business defines the nature and duration of the internship, the status of the student, the insurance, and it regulates the payment of business to the school based on the performance of the student. During the internship the trainee is under the authority of the business, and he has to follow the respective

working hours. The internship supervisor evaluates the performance of the student. This performance evaluation counts as a grade in school. In the Albanian context, this is unique as usually the students remain under the authority of the school during internships, they continue to follow lesson hours instead of business hours, and there is no performance assessment, at least not by the business.

The approach was, in the early days, formalised through a memorandum called “The Durres VET Initiative”, which was publicly signed by the Vocational School, the Chamber of Commerce, the Municipality and the Project. This was a very significant step to institutionalize the partnership between the Vocational School “BeqirÇela” and businesses. A joint working group with representatives of the school, from businesses, and from the Ministry of Education and Science developed all necessary instruments for implementing the approach successfully.

From a systemic perspective, the Durres Initiative for internships impacts VET delivery, mode of delivery, teacher training, the provider landscape, financing, VET outcomes as regards occupational competence, and employability.



The elements developed under the Durres Initiative for internships continue to be used by DVS, and they constitute the main reason why the school has stronger ties with the local business and a higher number of internships compared to other schools. The internship performance evaluation is formalized and has become a part of the school registers. Once the schools have gained more autonomy, this asset is highly relevant to develop models for cooperation with the private sector in training delivery.

### 13. Partnership for learning

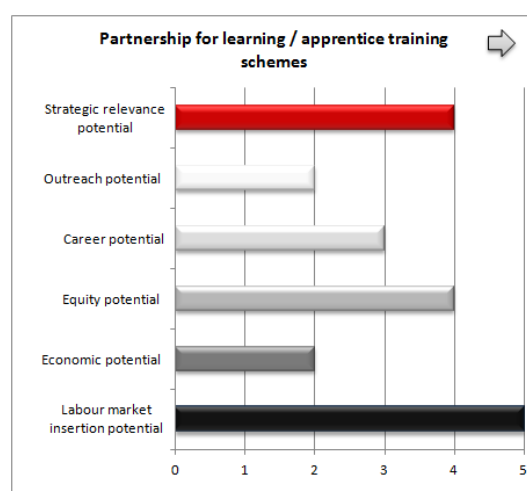
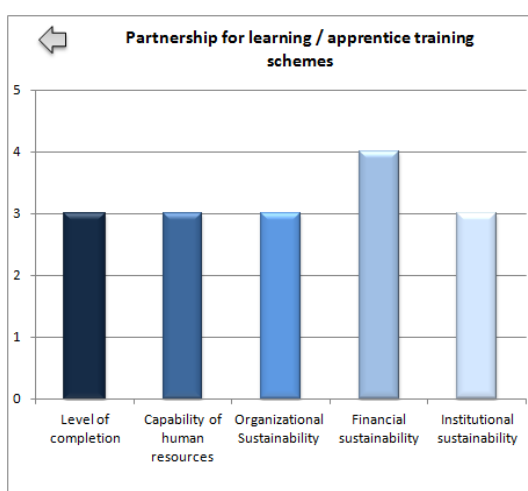
In Albania hairdressing and other beauty services are in high demand. Accordingly, these are also attractive occupations in particular for girls. Under the ISDO project, respective short courses were in high demand. Over time, short courses could not please the increasing quality requirements for the demanded services.

The AlbVET project stimulated the development of an advanced vision of training and of new training models with a focus on work-based learning, based on the idea that only more serious training schemes could deliver the increasing request for quality services in hairdressing.

The core idea of this approach is the cooperation between a (private) training provider and businesses. The modalities of the two pilots run in Fier and Saranda are different, in that in one the training provider plays the leading role and mobilises participating businesses, whereas in the other case businesses created their own association to lead the process and contract the training provider. The parties regulate their relations through a tripartite contract, an instrument that defines the partnership between training centre, the trainee, and the business. This instrument has proven to be efficient to meet the goal of Partnership for Learning (PAFL) in hairdressing.

PAFL is also some sort of an informal apprenticeship scheme. The training model divides the total course into three levels of three months each, where the internships in businesses account for two thirds of the training, and where trainees iterate between the training centre and businesses on a weekly basis. In the third cycle of the training, the internships takes most of the time, as the trainees are better prepared and can contribute to the business. The involvement of the business does not end with training provision. They are also heavily involved in the continuous assessment and the final test/examination, both crucial elements of PAFL and innovations to VET in Albania..

From the systemic perspective, PAFL intervenes at VET delivery, provider landscape, financing, outcomes and employability.



The approach was replicated on their own without project support in Berat and Durres. In a context where stakeholder cooperation and private sector participation is still in an infancy stage, the PAFL is not yet massive, but as an asset it can serve as model for all systems of vocational training, be it formal or non-formal. Its labour market insertion potential is considerable, while its outreach potential is limited by the economic structures, which are predominantly informal and dominated by smallholder and family business.

**14. Inclusion of the world of work in competency-based assessment and certification**

Private sector participation is conditional for labour market orientation of any VET system. At present employers in Albania are at best involved in the development of qualifications and respective curricula. With a few exceptions of functioning internships

and partnerships for learning, they are largely absent in VET delivery, and almost not involved at all in students' evaluation in final examinations.

The involvement of the private sector in the evaluation and final examination of VET students is best practice to orient VET towards the world of work. Though steps were taken in the frame of the VET reform in Albania to improve the evaluation and certification process of students, the schools remain rather free to define independently the "cut off" limit for student evaluation. This unregulated freedom seems to reduce the consistency level of assessment among different providers of the same qualification.

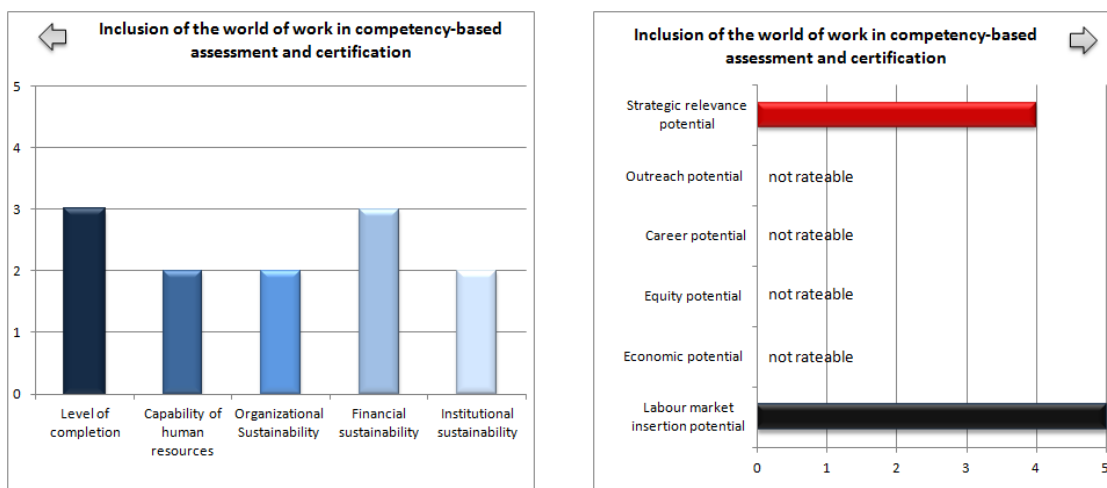
For Swiss projects final examinations with private sector participation was an issue since the very first activities on spot. Back in 1994, the DVS project already started to introduce this new element at the level of an individual school. In the meantime the asset was developed further in a more systematic and institutionalised way, and it is applied both in formal and non-formal settings.

Durres Vocational School continues to use the private sector as assessor of students' performance in internships, and as experts in final examinations. In post-secondary IT the final examinations of the practice part consist of a project work of 1-2 weeks duration, which at the end is presented to a panel comprising instructors of the IT practice, lecturers of the University, and private sector representatives. In the case of success, the students are awarded 40 ECTS credits. In hairdressing, the final examination, consisting of a theory test, a practical test in basic techniques, and the work on a real model, is assessed by a panel comprising experts from a PAFL from different city. In thermo-hydraulics, the final examinations for each level consist of a theory test, an individual assignment and a project assignment in groups. At present private sector participation in the assessment panel is only done in a scattered way, depending on the individual schools. All these evaluation, assessment and certification procedures are exemplary and best practice in Albania as of today, and they point the future direction to be followed.

On top, supported, among others, by the AlbVET project, in 2012 a private company took the initiative to launch skills competition for students of vocational schools in various profiles. The assessment panels are lead by private sector representatives, and comprise experts from VET institutions and projects.

From the systemic perspective, this asset intervenes in VET provision, the regulatory framework, in outcomes, and it influences positively the competitiveness and employability of those tested with this method.





The asset is very relevant on two dimensions: first, it assures acceptance of diplomas by the world of work and therefore improves labour market insertion potential of graduates considerably. Second, inclusion of the world of work in assessment and certification is key to develop a more labour market oriented VET system. The asset provides a basic models how inclusion of the world of work in assessment and certification can be approached, while it is not yet fully developed and not yet close to be sustainable implemented.

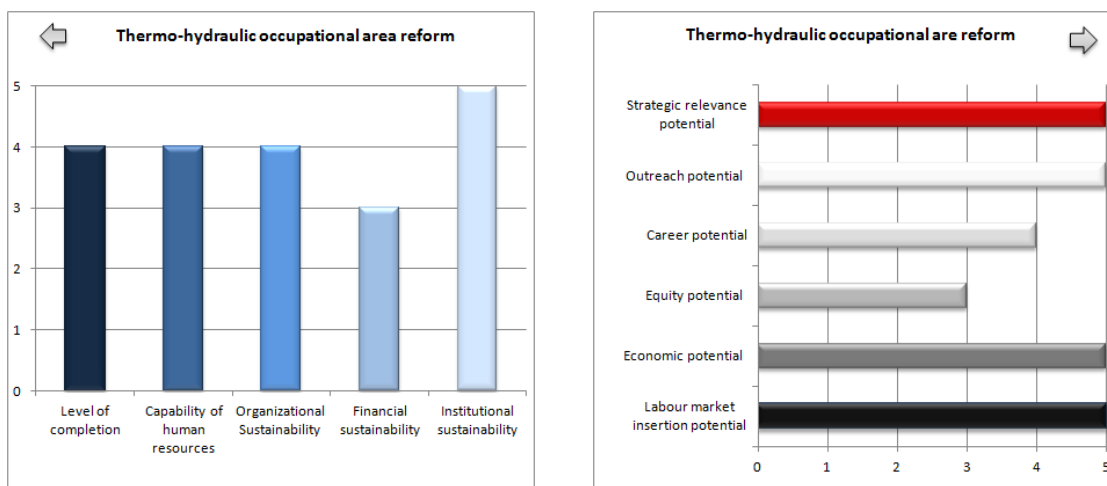
#### 4.2.4 Concepts and Resources

### 15. Thermo-hydraulic occupational area reform

The AlbVET project supported the overall reform of secondary vocational education in Albania in that it facilitated the reform in a complete occupational area, thermo-hydraulics (T-H). T-H comprises plumbing, cooling, heating and ventilation, including solar technology, and it belongs to the portfolio of 10 vocational schools.

Apart from the scope and the time horizon of this endeavour, the occupational area reform in T-H is based on some key elements, which make this reform a sample case and an asset in itself. First, the support strategy is holistic and systemic, in that it includes all dimensions which facilitate the learning processes, i.e. the legal and institutional framework, the organizational dimension at the level of VET institutions and providers, the curricula, the qualification of the teaching staff, the learning resources, and the final examinations. Second, conceptually the support used the project-based learning approach incl. learning projects with a duration of one to two months as core structural elements. Third, the concept of four “centres of competence”, where specialisations in solar heating and technology can be learned, has been introduced. This lead to the student rotation system, which has pilot character. Many other innovations and assets described in this report were developed under the T-H occupational area reform.

As this asset was already conceptualised and planned under a systemic approach, it encompasses all main elements of the VET system.



T-H occupational area reform was, for the past years, the nucleus of Swiss support providing the system with many innovations. The reform is sustainably implemented to a good degree, and fully institutionalised, i.e. absorbed by the system. Its relevance and potential are considered very high in different dimensions. It serves as a model case for any future professional reform.

### 16. Human resources through training of trainers, master trainers, DACUM facilitators, instructors, and coaches

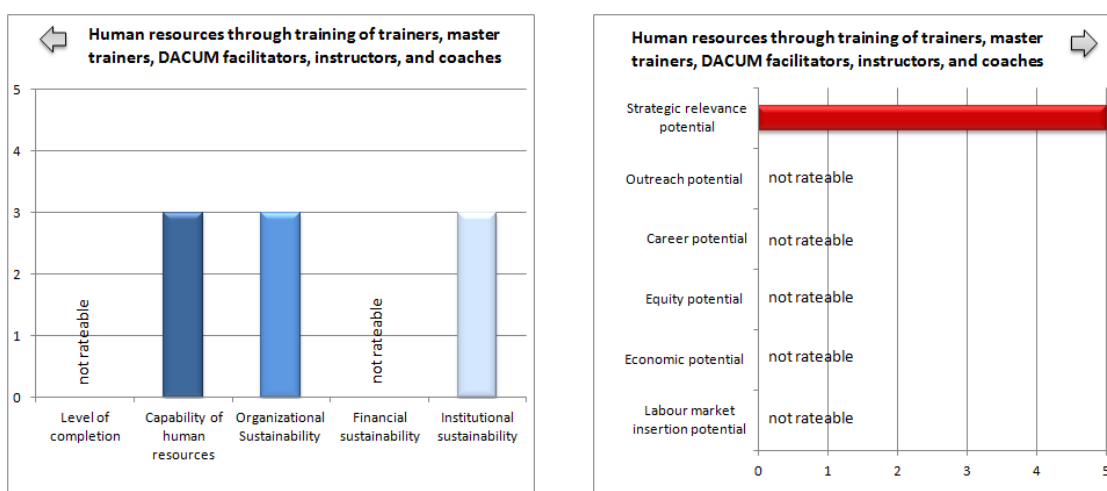
Capacity development has been a core concern of Swiss supported projects in Albania from the very beginning, and it consistently absorbed a substantial share of the projects resources. Under a systemic perspective, capacity development is more than just training people, it is institutional, organisational and human development – and this is exactly what the Swiss support has been doing in the past 20 years.

In the early project for the rehabilitation of Durres Vocational School, capacity development was organisationally fully integrated in the school itself, and encompassed all organisational, managerial, administrative, instructional and occupational capacities necessary to run a quality VET provider. Under the ISDO project, the primary focus on capacity development focused on curriculum development and instructors training. The project introduced the DACUM method incl. facilitator and master trainers, and published the training modules in instructional skills under the National VET Agency. The present practice of the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training for curriculum development based on the DACUM approach, and the curriculum concept with a national frame curriculum and the scope for a school-based curriculum mainly for occupational practice, is based on concepts, inputs and capacity development under Swiss projects. The AlbVET project further diversified capacity development, in that it focuses on quality development and management of VET providers, learning methods and delivery approaches, and on the ability of partners in developing, planning and implementing own school and organisation development projects.

Guiding principles for capacity development throughout the history of the various projects were a substantial volume and duration of training inputs, international benchmarking of the quality through cooperation with international institutions and/or

knowledge bearers, and the systemic integration in other support activities (curriculum development, training infrastructure, learning material, organisational development, regulatory framework). The training of coaches in the Coaching for Employment activity is recognised as CAS-Certificate of Advanced Studies by the University of Applied Sciences of Lucerne, Switzerland. Relevant other international partners, including the TITI-Training Institute for Technical Instruction in Nepal, represent important resources of the Swiss interventions. The AlbVET project was already conceptualised and designed in such a way, that capacity development was its main working principle. Thus, it has supported the capacities of stakeholders at all levels, from training delivery to organisational development processes, and the absorption of innovations in system.

From the systemic perspective, this approach intervenes in VET delivery, training of trainers, support functions in general, and outcomes.



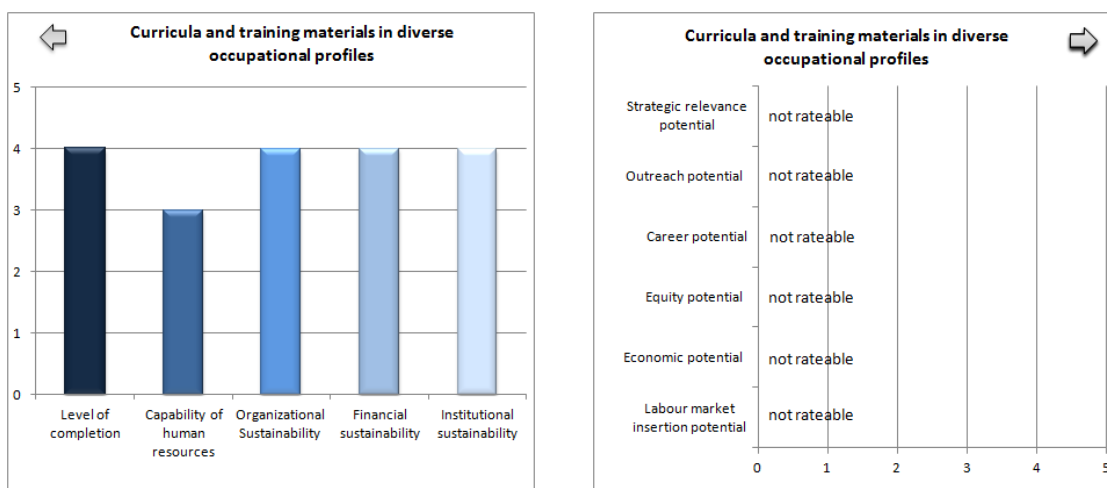
The human resources developed under different Swiss interventions are highly important for the future development of VET in Albania and one of the main footprints left behind. The basic principle of quality and orientation towards European standards is important. To make use of these resources and to continue to focus on Europe as a levelling rule is a decisive success factor for any future intervention in support of the European integration of Albania.

### 17. Curricula and training materials in diverse occupational profiles

Courses, curricula, and learning materials developed under all projects from the rehabilitation of Durres Vocational School, ISDO and the AlbVET project represent a specific asset. They include curricula for about 20 profiles with 1-3 modules of one-month duration each. Until today, those courses represent the backbone of the courses offered in public and private training centres. The implementation of many of those courses was supported through learning material in the form of booklets, published and distributed through a publishing house. Many of those booklets are still in the market and can be found in specialised bookshops. Under the AlbVET project, the development of curricula and learning material continued systematically. The profiles for thermo-hydraulics and IT practitioners are defined in the Europass format, and the respective authorities formally approve the curricula. Learning materials support the implementation

of 12 learning projects, and of the complete cycle of the IT practice. The University of Applied Sciences in Lucerne approves the curriculum for the CAS for coaching, and the manual for coaches is in the process of being finalised. In total, the project has developed, published and distributed a few thousands of pages of courses, curricula and learning material. Many of those materials are in use by partner organisations.

From a systemic perspective, this approach intervenes in the training materials, and indirectly in ToT and VET delivery.



Curricula and training materials developed under the Swiss interventions represent a well-developed quality asset for the Albanian VET system on different levels. Whether this asset is relevant when looking ahead depends heavily on project design, and cannot be estimated here.

### 18. Voucher scheme for co-financing short courses

In order to stimulate the demand for training and encourage people to invest in employable skills development, the voucher program was introduced during ISDO project in 2001 aiming at stimulating young adults' and early school leavers' demand for skills development training. The voucher scheme was introduced in a rather difficult labour market situation and an underdeveloped offer for short training courses.

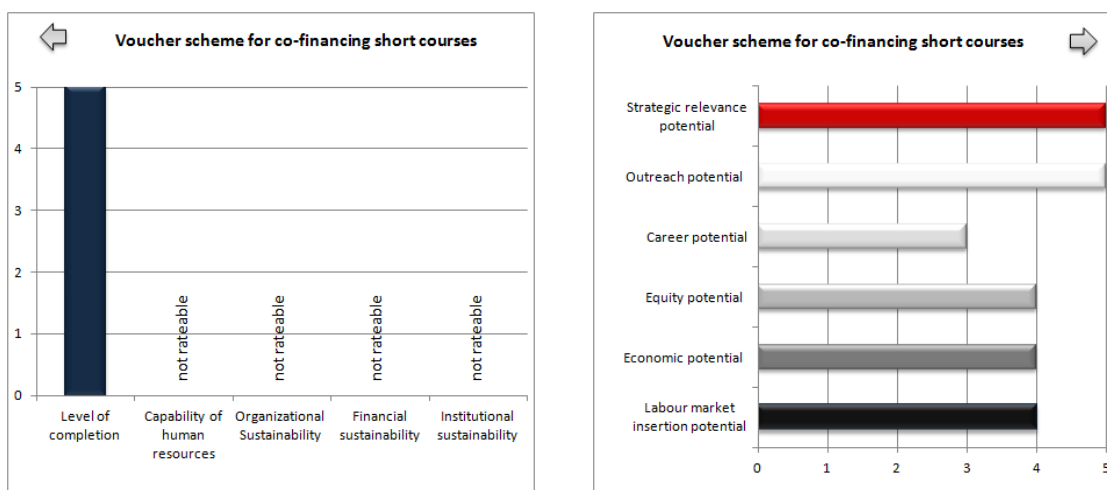
The project administered the voucher scheme. It printed vouchers and distributed them to kiosks and bookshops. There potential participants could buy them for nominal prices. Participants could then pay the training fees partly with a voucher. The difference between the value of the voucher and the real course fee was to paid by the participant out of his own pocket. The project decided on the value of the voucher. The ratio between the subsidy and the self-contribution of the participants was between 25% and 70%, depending on various factors like potential on the labour market, course attractiveness, start-up promotion for new profiles, market saturation, etc.

In general terms, vouchers are an effective instrument to stimulate training demand, and to motivate target groups to participate in skills development who otherwise would not go for it. With changing ratios of subsidies, it is also possible to channel the training demand into more promising and labour market relevant areas. Vouchers are also an instrument to subsidise a diversified and decentralised training offer including private provision. As compared to general education, language classes, ICT (Information and Communication

Technology) courses, etc., occupational skills development is always more expensive, difficult for pure market financing. Thus, vocational training will always require co-financing. Vouchers are an instrument for it.

During the planning of the AlbVET project, the Government was interested to adapt the voucher scheme in their own structures for financing skills training. After this did not materialise, the project-run voucher scheme was phased out under AlbVET, phase 2.

From the systemic perspective, this approach primarily intervenes in VET funding and access.



At present, the asset is not implemented, but the whole system with all procedures is well documented. It has the potential to be recycled as instrument under a training fund. Therefore, it is a highly relevant asset when looking ahead and thinking about financing the system, reaching out to high numbers of students.

## 19. Status and part autonomy of public VET providers

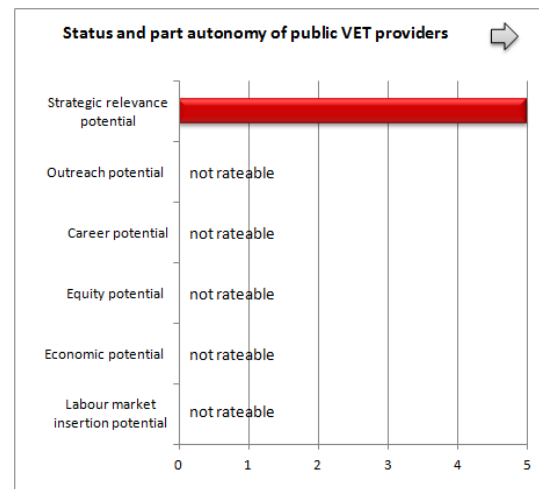
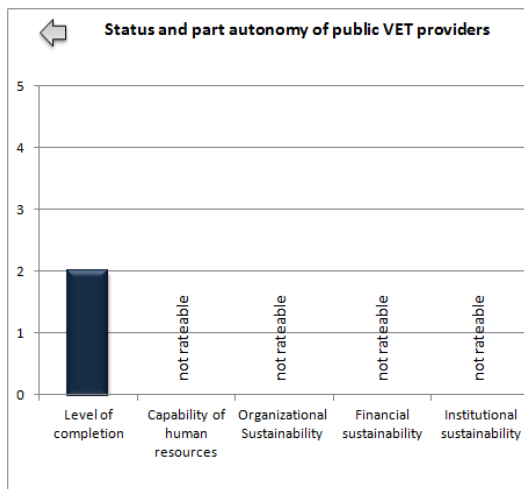
The Swiss projects concern for the status and relative autonomy of schools dates back to the 90s and started with the Durrës Vocational School “Beqir Cela”, where innovations like increased autonomy for curriculum development, cooperation with the private sector, and utilisation of the facilities for courses and services for afternoon and holiday courses were introduced. In cooperation with other projects, in particular GTZ and Kulturkontakt, and in close cooperation with the public authorities, a lot was done on the level of financial management and part-autonomy of VET providers. Under the first National Education Strategy 2004-2015 decentralisation and school autonomy became a strategic objective of the Albanian Government, which received strong support under AlbVET and other actors. A concept for Regional VET Centers was developed under these activity lines. However, this could only be tested in the DVS setting. Key elements for the part autonomy of VET providers include:

- Directorate is approved by the Ministry of Education on the proposal of the school board
- School board with the participation of stakeholders and defined competencies
- Authority and obligation to open and operate a Bank account
- Budget allocated directly to the school

- Authority and obligation to develop an operational manual for administrative and financial processes, including cooperation with the private sector and other stakeholders

However, the status of public vocational schools remained unchanged until today, leaving them inadequately prepared and organised in order to cooperate with the private sector and other regional and local stakeholders to develop a sufficiently diversified, flexible and relevant offer of training programmes.

Under a systemic perspective, the asset primarily intervenes in the provider landscape, in the regulatory framework, with an impact on the portfolio and on outcomes.



This asset is not implemented at present, but it has the potential to be reused under a structural VET reform as outlined by the new Government and the new strategy on youth employment and skills.

## 20. Small grant scheme for stimulation of quality and innovation in VET delivery

Based on the concept, approach and instruments developed for external support to Durres Vocational School during the last phase, the support with small grants was expanded to other vocational schools under a small project called SVS-Strengthen Vocational Schools. The approach was incorporated as component in phase 1 of the AlbVET under the name Quality and Innovation Projects.

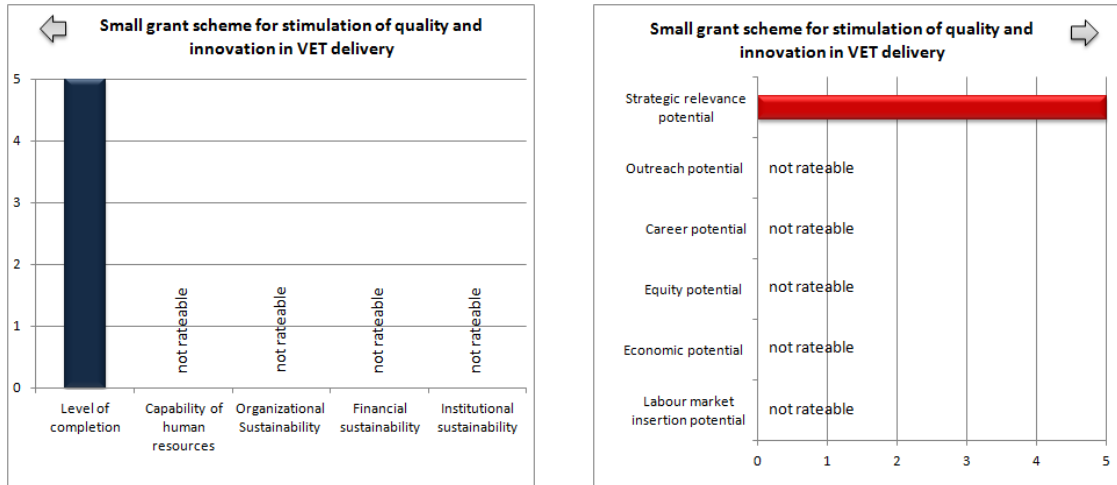
The core idea of the small grant scheme is to strengthen vocational schools as training and labour market oriented institutions through mobilising their own resources. The project supported the development and implementation of small projects improving various aspects of VET providers. Responding to calls for proposals, vocational schools, training providers and other VET institutions submitted project proposals, which in turn were approved by a selection committee. Implementation was closely monitored by the project. At a more advanced stage, proposals were expected to be based on school development plans.

The asset itself features

- Template for project proposals.

- Guidelines and rating tools for the evaluation of project proposals.
- Guidelines and templates for monitoring project proposals.
- Quality pentagon as basis for quality management of VET providers.
- Process and template for school development plans.

From a systemic perspective, this asset primarily intervenes in quality VET delivery and organisational development of VET providers. However, the area of intervention may vary, depending on the character of individual projects.



On budgetary reasons, the component was discarded from AlbVET 2. Thus, the asset is not active, but still ready for use and fully developed. Quality and innovation projects were very much appreciated by vocational schools and VET institutions. Since VET governance and quality delivery are key issues when it comes to develop the VET offer in Albania, this asset is considered as highly relevant.

#### 4.2.5 Project Implementation Approaches

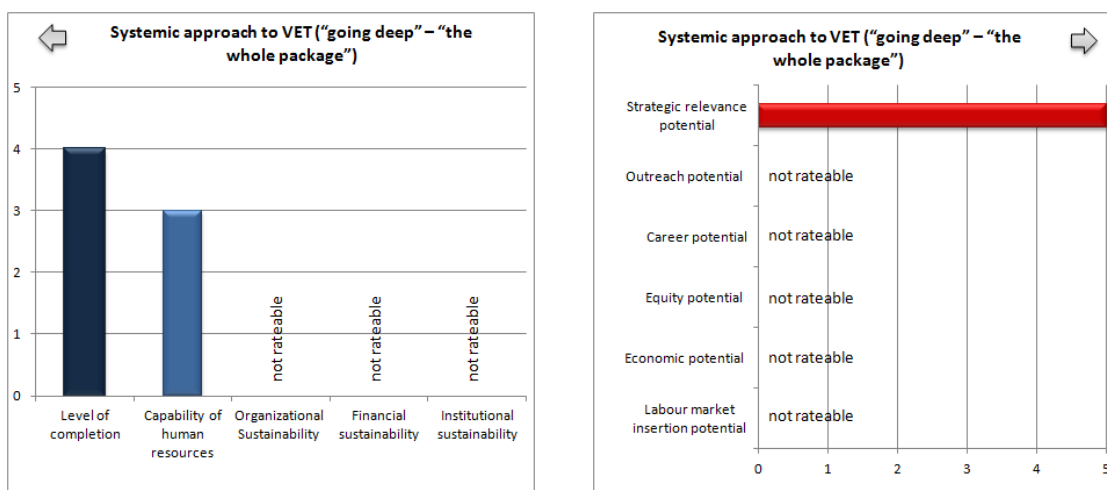
##### 21. Systemic approach to VET (“going deep” – “the whole package”)

In over 20 years Swiss cooperation has supported the Albanian VET system at all VET levels and by applying different delivery approaches reacting to the contextual situation. As a rule, the interventions have been designed in order to cause lasting change. This means that in each intervention, the complex interdependencies and cause-and-effect relationships between the VET system elements and factors have been tackled and followed carefully. In other words, in all interventions, a systemic perspective was applied. The intervention in thermo-hydraulic under AlbVET is the best example to illustrate what is meant here: the Swiss support did not end with nationally redone curricula, but started with an occupational analysis and job description, curricula review and development, teacher training and master teacher training, infrastructural support, financial support and up to the reform of the testing and certification system.

Finally yet importantly, all interventions had been supported by all relevant institutions at local and central level, i.e. everything has been implemented in a participatory working form. This means that all interventions have always focused on systems functionality in

the whole VET delivery chain, and therefore strongly promoted sustainability by facilitating change.

That way, the Swiss support produced long lasting results and supported the entire VET system in the country and not only the areas and/ or sectors which have been directly benefitting, like professions under the thermo-hydraulic occupational area reform. Due to the systemic approach followed and the participatory working style, the innovations have been absorbed to a great extent.



Applying such a systemic approach requests considerable human resources at target group and cooperation partner level. Its sustainability might be somewhat questionable, since it depends on the presence of international expertise. However, the strategic relevance of approaching things this way is very high and an undisputed and much appreciated asset.

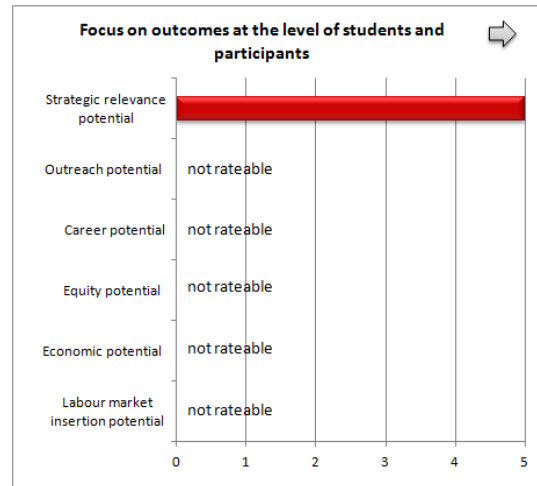
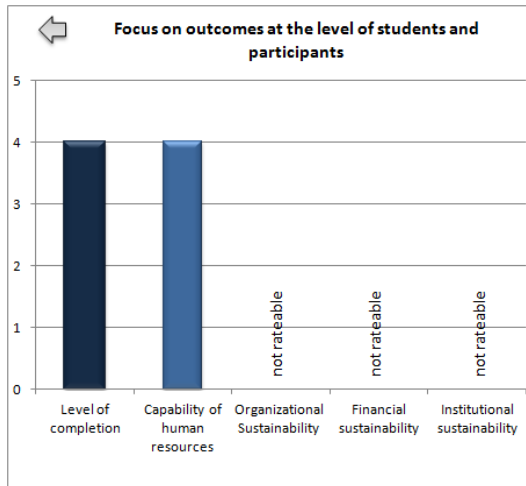
**22. Focus on outcomes at the level of students and participants**

While many programmes supporting VET system running in the country focus their activity at the level of training of trainers/ coaches/ instructors/ teachers, Swiss support over the years has placed particular attention and has measured its success with the dimensions of personal development, occupational competence, and educational mobility of the students attending the courses and schools, i.e. employability.<sup>9</sup> The strong focus on learning methods placing the trainee and its individual learning process in the centre of any course, was one of the most important and profound innovations in the Albanian VET system.

The courses and skills proposed at different schools and VET centers has offered good inclusion into the world of work. The rising demand from youth to register to this courses and schools is prove of the level of appreciation of the skill offered.

<sup>9</sup>Tracer data have not been available to the CAPEX team since the first batch of T-H trainees was about to graduate only this year.



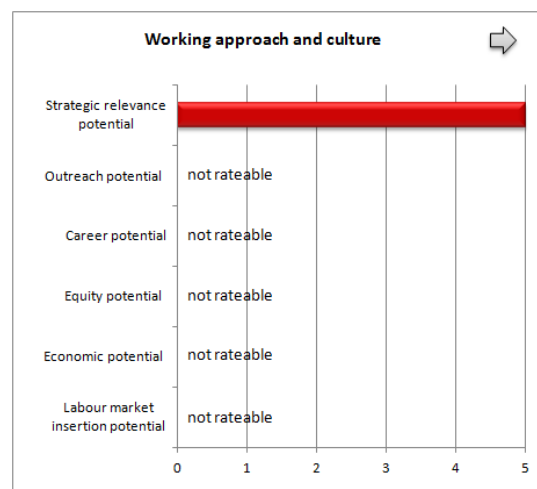
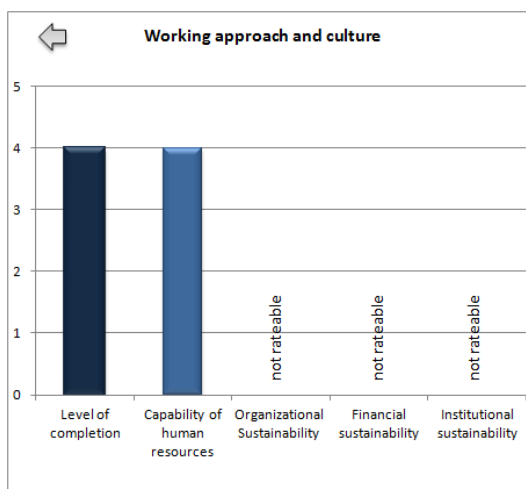


The strategic relevance of this asset is very high: putting the trainee and his learning outcomes in the centre of any VET reform is one of the main messages from the Swiss support to VET in Albania. This asset is fairly well developed in terms of human capacities and level of completion.

### 23. Working approach and culture

Otherwise known as ‘the Swiss culture’ among local people – this asset refers to a set of values and approaches developed such as the team work, cooperation, respect, care, commitment to results, ownership. The selling slogan of this asset might be “take ownership in what you do and do it properly”.

The Swiss approach has introduced a dynamic working culture in Albania, where employees and staff take an active role within the organization. People had learned to work together in a spirit of partnership and enjoy an open and cooperative working atmosphere, including a new communication culture of knowledge sharing instead of privatising knowledge. Differing views, experiences, social backgrounds and personalities became accepted under the idea of cultural diversity. Only that way, certain innovations like coaching for employment or the new approach to student centred teaching became feasible.



This way of working together and sharing its expertise and knowledge is considered as key to development in a complex world. The long-lasting support of Swiss interventions in the VET sector has developed very good models of professional relations and enabled skills of staff and beneficiaries at all levels.

#### **24. DACH+ and Sector Working Group on VET**

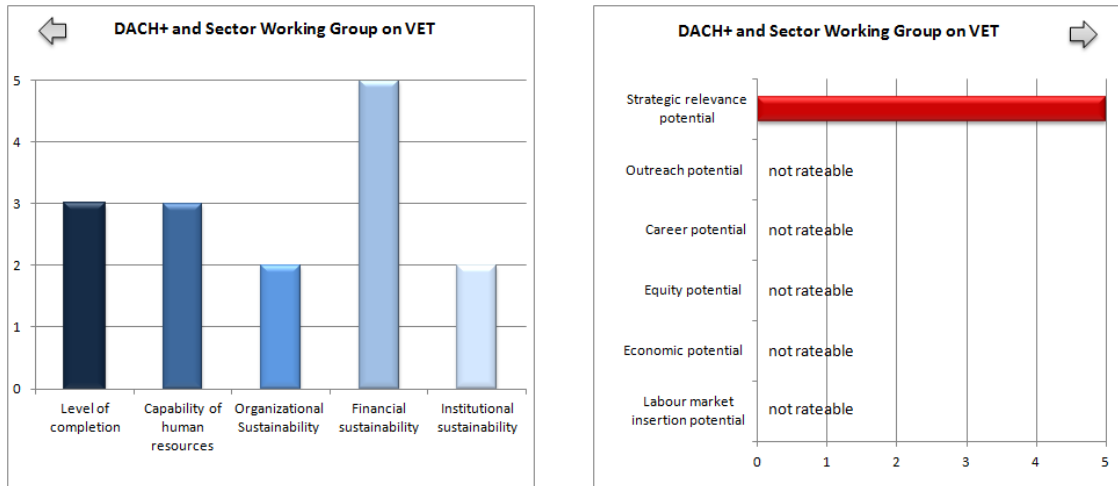
In the Albanian context, the international donors and implementing agencies have played an important role in reforming the VET system. Two bodies are important for donor coordination:

- Sector Working Group on VET
- DACH+

The VET Sector Working Group is the official donor coordination body gathering all donors in the field. Because of the long history and the important support from Swiss government in the VET sector in Albania, SDC-A assumes the role of the leading donor and focal point . The sector working group can be considered as an important asset since it is a well-functioning donor coordination body, encompassing all important activities and actors. It has strongly contributed to VET policy development, coordination of activities, avoiding of over lapping etc.

DACH + Group is an informal technical coordination body of bilateral and multilateral donors and implementing agencies and projects working on VET in Albania. Formerly, DACH+ was composed of DACH region – Germany, Austria, Switzerland, notably German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), Swiss Development Cooperation, Austrian Development Agency, Swisscontact, Kulturkontakt Austria. The + stands for all other donors/projects such as European Union (EU), United Nations Development Programm (UNDP), International Labour Organisation(ILO), Albanian American Development Foundation (AADF), British Council etc., depending on the project scope and implementation periods over years. DACH+ has no standing organization and no charter or whatsoever, there is no formal membership and the participation in it is voluntary. Meetings take place irregularly and only on the initiative of its members. DACH+ takes no binding decisions for anyone, but is an important space for informal exchange among, for information sharing and discussion. Since 2007, some efforts have been taken to feed in common statements into policy dialogue and joint activities have been organized.

The Sector Working Group on VET and the DACH+ group can be considered as an asset for coordinating donor activities in Albania and for policy dialogue. They support the cooperation among international actors.



The strategic relevance of well functioning donor coordination mechanisms is undisputed and will remain very important due to the continued engagement of donors in Albania. They represent an asset for developing new aid modalities for Albania.

### 4.3 Lessons Learnt and Conclusions

Swiss support to VET in Albania is considered as a success story from local people, schools, institutions in charge, and other donors that supported the sector over the years. Going through the various interventions, methodologies, and circumstances that affected the implementation of the projects, there are different factors that contributed to success:

- the Systemic approach and the “full package” implementation of the initiative which covered all aspects of the intervention ensuring the sustainability;
- the constant, long-lasting and therefore trusted support among all actors involved;
- the identification/ promotion of occupational areas required from the market (T-H, solar heating, IT, etc.);
- the integration of theory with practice /dual elements for the first time in Albania.
- a constantly innovating project crew and motivated local staff
- the promotion of cultural diversity along the implementation of the projects
- the understanding of peoples individuality as a strength and make use of it;
- the strong networks between stakeholders;
- the inclusion of a participatory approach (PAFL, C4E)

However, other factors hindered success to certain degree, namely:

- Politicised system: constantly changing personnel on key positions due to political positions
- Serious underfunding and low-priority of VET from the institutions in charge.

- Very poor conditions of VET providers, incl. management, infrastructure, etc. and rigid rules and regulations (legislation);
- Lack of autonomy of public VET providers;
- No VET teacher training at all;
- VET under the Ministry of Education and lack of cooperation between former MoE (Ministry of Education) and MoLSAEO;
- Lack of participation from the private sector;
- VET as a second pathway to Universities instead of catering for the Labour market (LM).

Considering these hindering and supporting factors to success and all the assets we described above, some **important lessons learnt** can be drawn for future interventions:

- Only thanks to the support of various donors, assuming public roles and responsibilities, which in turn hindered sustainability to a certain degree, the Albanian VET system did not fully collapse;
- Realising major reforms in a public education system takes time; it is not an option for short-term support. Constant long-term engagement fosters trust and sets the ground for successfully integrated innovations;
- Building up strong institutional and organisational cooperation mechanisms is important. In a small country like Albania, it is also important to develop strong personal relations based on trust;
- Delivering a full-package support considering and addressing all levels and dimensions of VET delivery is key in any future intervention.
- High quality VET is requested by students and by the labour market, also on the backdrop of the future European integration of Albania. By increasing the quality VET offer in accordance with the current VET reform, there is a chance that VET can become more attractive for youth;
- For young people in Albania education has to open up pathways to LLL and smooth labour market insertion. Only offers providing options in that sense will have a chance on the market;
- Cooperation between like-minded donors and the Government is important in order to bring VET back on track.

## 5 Looking forward: Possible Entry Points for SDC’s future engagement in VSD in Albania

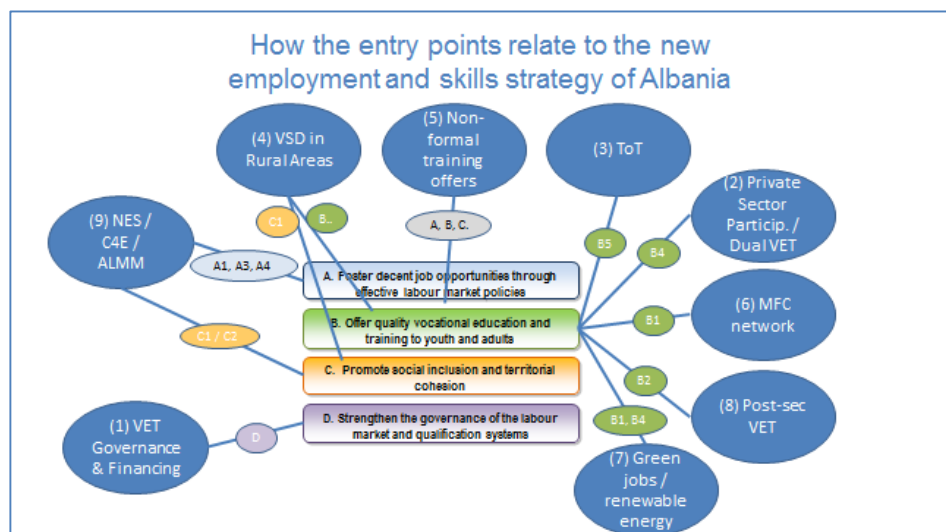
In order to contribute to further development of the portfolio in the economic development domain, SDC expects to receive a number of possible *entry points* for a new Swiss intervention in skills development from this exercise, in order to somehow structure the field and reduce the many options based on the many needs obviously around. This chapter deals with these entry points. Here, we identify and describe them. We use a grid structure for describing them and try to make best use of the assets developed in the past 20 years of engagement in Albania, align with the new Government strategy, and harmonized with what other bilateral and multilateral donors opt for.

The entry points chosen and described below are well aligned with the new government strategy on youth employment and skills in Albania. The following graph indicates how the entry points relate to the strategy. The numbers given indicate the priority fields defined in the strategy. Yet, all these entry points are multi-dimensional and address, once designed and implemented, several elements of the strategy.<sup>10</sup>

### What are *entry points*?

Entry points can be understood as a docking station or an access point for SDC to vocational skills development in Albania. There is, obviously, a huge demand and many options around. Therefore, entry points provide a prioritized selection based on the past experiences, namely the identified assets, and the future development known today. They consider different intervention levels, topics, target groups, geographic areas, etc.

Entry points do not provide for an elaborated intervention design. They simply identify possible fields of interventions that would need further elaboration. Entry points are no elaborated intervention designs. Some of them might be combined into one intervention; some could form a proper project without any adding. This openness is important, since it provides all actors concerned with the scope of action necessary in the fast moving environment that Albania finds itself as of today.



<sup>10</sup> Please note: The order in which the entry points are presented should not be construed as indicating the importance of these entry points.

## 5.1 VET Governance and Financing

This entry point covers VET governance on the central state and legislative level as well as on provider and regional level. It covers also VET financing, since these two elements are closely interlinked. The most important aspects among many to be properly addressed here are part-autonomy of VET providers and involvement of the private sector in governing and financing the system, be it formal or non-formal.

Description	The legislative framework of the Albanian VET sector is not conducive and does not allow for the development of a modern VET system, oriented towards the labour market needs and the students needs (LLL). The governance mechanisms and processes at central and at regional and provider level are not appropriate, and adequate skills needs analysis is not available and not processed. The VET system is also seriously underfunded. The new Government of Albania has reached out to all actors who assume an important role in VET definition, steering, financing and delivery to play an active role in the future VET system.
What assets could be referred to?	Under SDC's projects, a whole bunch of concepts have been develop that served as model cases and continue to do so. To name just a few: part-autonomy of VET providers, regional VET centres concept, regulations for the rotation system, regulations for the cooperation with the private sector, school management tools, voucher scheme, elements of PAFL, etc.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<p>SDC could provide important system development expertise and counseling, which would be a legitimate offer given the role of a bilateral lead donor SDC assumes. The most important question to be answered under this entry point is how systems development support could be most effectively provided, aligned and harmonized. We name some options here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further develop donor coordination organization allowing for new aid modalities (e.g. basket funding, joint project planning, others).</li> <li>- Expertise / technical support to legislation / review</li> <li>- Technical support for installing a legislative framework that is supportive for engaging the private sector in VET (expertise / information, steering, financing, delivery, accreditation and certification)</li> <li>- Set-up a small grant scheme for school innovation and management projects</li> <li>- Support the management and network of future multifunctional VET centres (see separate entry point)</li> <li>- Technical support for setting up a sustainably financed VET system</li> <li>- Organisational and technical support to develop a VET fund</li> <li>- Technical support in developing an up-to-date labour market information and skills needs forecasting system including</li> </ul>

	<p>proper planning of the VET offers: Steering the skills development system needs proper information about the current state of affairs and about the future developments on the labour market, in order to answer two key questions: a) do we develop the appropriate skills (list of professions offered on different levels); b) do we develop them properly? There are two major challenges in here: a) access to the real the knowledge bearers, b) making use of the information developed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the setting up of a proper quality assurance and accreditation system, e.g. by introducing a quality label for VET providers (formal and non-formal, on different levels). This quality label could be a PPP-initiative.</li> </ul>
What would be the implementation approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical expertise, which should be closely coordinated with other actors active in this field</li> </ul>
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assuming the role as a lead donor also in this very important pillar D of the new strategy</li> <li>- Changes in the rules and regulations of the system are very important in order to allow for a modern and future oriented VET system</li> </ul>
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crowded by other multilateral and bilateral donors: many of the concrete actions might be covered by multilateral organizations (eg. ETF, ILO, EU, others).</li> <li>- Heavy dependence on the government /actors involved for reaching the goals, politicized level, with limited leverage of SDC alone</li> <li>- No decision making by the donors / clear role understanding and good facilitation is necessary here</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High, pillar D of the new strategy</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Strengthen private sector participation – support dual VET elements in Albania

Private sector participation is key to any VET system. Not state is able to offer quality VET out of its own pocket. However, addressing the private sector has not really materialized so far in Albania due to several reasons. The main question to be answered is “how” this could be done successfully. Most importantly, this needs an education system understanding the labour market and the private sector, and talking its language.

Description	Dual VET and private sector participation go hand in hand, since “real” dual VET requests for dual delivery, so-called work place learning. Aiming at introducing a fully-fledged dual VET system
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	<p>might not be a good option for Albania, but working on some key elements and develop its own system of dual VET provision is, even the more that no country around the world can afford high-quality VET without having the private sector on board. This entry point therefore aims at introducing selected key elements of dual VET provisioning together with the private sector.</p>
<p>What assets could be referred to?</p>	<p>Diverse inputs under AlbVET, Durres Initiative, PAFL, 50% practice learning as a bottom-line for cooperation, internship programmes, etc.</p> <p>Additionally, Switzerland, together with Germany and Austria, is the host of the dual VET system.</p>
<p>What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the Government in developing a conducive environment for private sector participation at all levels (governance/steering, planning and development, delivery and skills testing, financing, others)</li> <li>- Developing models for all functions the private sector might assume: information/expertise provision, co-financing, co-delivery, co-steering/governance)</li> <li>- Promote and spread these models</li> <li>- Develop a label/brand for dual delivery at provider level (marketing and quality assurance measure)</li> <li>- Capacity development for “private sector moderators” within the VET system</li> </ul>
<p>What would be the implementation approach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical Assistance on macro, meso and micro level</li> <li>- Close cooperation, even common planning or co-financing with GIZ and ADA</li> </ul>
<p>Potential / opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong support from the new Government of Albania in this regard</li> </ul>
<p>Challenges / risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private sector participation has been strongly promoted but never really materialized so far; however, the new Gvt. seems to be dedicated to make it happen.</li> <li>- Very poorly organized private sector and mostly informal.</li> <li>- 98% of the firms are very small, many of them rather serve as a survival strategy than as a real business</li> <li>- No culture of private sector engagement in education at all; education is perceived as a public liability.</li> <li>- Public authorities are not used to and experienced in cooperation with the private sector</li> </ul>
<p>Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government</p>	<p>Highly important for quality VET provisioning</p> <p>Strategy reference: Part B, Part D</p>



### 5.3 Institutionalised training for VET managers, VET teachers and vocational practice instructors

Good vocational skills development needs good teachers, as any educational offer does. Initial and further teacher training is not sufficient to run a quality VET system, but is a key input factor and a main bottleneck if not in place. The same goes for VET managers: competent school management and development is not enough, but without this input factor, quality training can never be organized and delivered sustainably.

Description	<p>VET teacher training has been identified as a main bottleneck for quality VET development in Albania by many authors and organisations. All ToT activities introduced by international projects have remained project based until today. Institutionalisation did not take place and sustainability of these efforts is to be considered very limited. The recent ILO IPA Feasibility Study on the Expansion of the Post-Secondary VET in Albania (Heitmann, Shingjergji, 2013) identified Vocational Practice Instructor as one top-priority programme to be offered in future. The new Employment and Skills Strategy put VET teacher training on the agenda and identified it as one key element in the action plan.</p> <p>As of today, the VET teachers receive only academic training. There is almost no vocational pedagogy and no professional practice requested, not even for VET practice instructors. The pre-service VET teacher training is liberalised, with only one offer known to us at the University of Korca (Professional Master Degree for Vocational School Teachers, about 26 students). In-service training is almost inexistent, quality assurance and central steering is missing, and the system is severely under-funded.</p>
What assets could be referred to?	<p>The Swiss projects invested heavily into the introduction and development of new learning methods, the introduction of at least 50% of practice learning in VET offers, the shift from teaching to learning, project-based learning approach, etc. All in all, they introduced a whole bunch of pedagogical concepts and trained a relevant number of teachers, instructors, and even master trainers as well as other specialists (e.g. DACUM) and school management.</p>
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feasibility study</li> <li>- Policy consulting</li> <li>- Technical support in governing and financing the Teacher Training System</li> <li>- Provision of organizational development support</li> <li>- Cooperation with Swiss Institutions for VET Teacher training (e.g. University of Teacher Education Zug, University of Teacher Education Zurich (Centre for International Projects)).</li> </ul>
What would be the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation with other donors and organisations might be</li> </ul>

<p>implementation approach?</p>	<p>necessary due to the scope of the topic: ADA, GIZ, ETF are possible partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only technical assistance (rules and regulations, financing the system, organizational consulting, quality assurance, technical consulting and exchange regarding TOT and vocational pedagogy with specialized institutions in Switzerland) in building-up the system, not assuming the role of the system.</li> <li>- Existing infrastructure must be used (e.g. in well equipped VET schools, future multifunctional centres)</li> <li>- Inter-institutional cooperation modalities between VET providers and Universities (e.g. multifunctional Centre in Kamza and University of Kamza)</li> <li>- Cross-border / regional cooperation mechanisms might be an important option to be considered since the Albanian VET system is too small to run a fully-fledged system on its own.</li> </ul>
<p>potential / opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High demand due to an important lack of qualified VET teachers and</li> <li>- Meets new governments priorities</li> <li>- Switzerland has relevant experience in supporting VET teacher training around the world, in the region (Serbia, Romania) and in Albania</li> <li>- Regional outreach might be considered (e.g. cooperation with Kosovo)</li> </ul>
<p>challenges / risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- needs at least a 7 year time horizon</li> <li>- no fast results available</li> <li>- small numbers (but high indirect outreach to beneficiaries)</li> <li>- efforts in reforming VET teacher training failed in many cases in the whole region, and the Governments never really engaged into this so far</li> <li>- poor salaries might not motivate the well-qualified youngsters to opt for a VET teacher career</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highly relevant and key to any sustainable development of the Albanian VET system in the future (Strategy, B5)</li> <li>- Given the fact that so many VET teachers will soon retire, efforts in this regard are urgent</li> </ul>

## 5.4 VSD for rural areas with a focus on diversified training offers for youth and women

Albania is a fertile country, gifted by nature, and has always been a country and culture strongly defined by agriculture. However, the potential of agriculture is not being exploited, while it still offers a living to many people, yet on a very low basis. Internal migration to Tirana and other cities is one of the effects resulting. Therefore, poverty and lack of skills development for youths and women in rural areas is a major issue to be tackled, but mostly untouched as of today.

Description	<p>Extension qualitative training and skills to Bio Agriculture / Agro-Processing / Agricultural Value Chain Support Programmes in rural areas is expected to have a big impact on reducing social exclusion among youth, vulnerable groups of the population (low-skilled individuals, long-term unemployed, women working as contributing family members and youth living in rural areas).</p> <p>Targeted education and training actions could be deployed to develop skills, improve the economic situation of population groups at risk of marginalization, and shift beneficiaries from social assistance to work.</p>
What assets could be referred to?	<p>SDC has long-standing experience in agricultural training around the world. SDC Albania along 'Promotion of Agriculture in the District of Puka' project has already supported successfully with training in production, processing and marketing and new technologies farmers in the rural areas.</p> <p>In terms of VET delivery, elements of ISDO could be replicated, such as the approach to cooperate with local organisations/ structures that have access to the regions and target groups; the experience in occupational area reform is available (T-H reform) and could be replicated for other occupational fields which are attractive to skills development in rural areas.</p>
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<p>Support to develop all levels of vocational training especially for youth and women in Agriculture, Agro-Production, Agro-Processing, Agro Food Processing, and related job profiles in the agricultural value chain, while focusing on the under privileged and women in the regions of intervention.</p> <p>This kind of education needs to be tailor made, responsive to concrete potentials, strongly practice oriented and most probably non-formal with adapted delivery modalities (duration, time of training, locations), content, and, last but not least, well-chosen implementation partners with access to the rural areas. Here, Switzerland has lots of expertise to offer.</p>
What would be the implementation approach?	<p>Cooperate with local and regional extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture, private training providers, possibly also a Multifunctional Vocational Centre in the region and with other agencies and programmes such as GIZ, Danida, EU IPA</p>

	programmes ( such as IPARD).
potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Switzerland is engaged in territorial reform and local governance and decentralization in rural regions of Albania which might ease access and implementation</li> <li>- Fertile soil, enough water, tradition of Agriculture</li> <li>- EU is investing into Agriculture and will even strengthen this in future (IPARD funds)</li> <li>- Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy.</li> </ul>
challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generally, education is expected to offer other perspectives than becoming a farmer;</li> <li>- Access to target groups, businesses: systems of trust might be a challenge</li> <li>- Enormously high level of informality (50-300 farms out of about 300'000 farms are formalized), small-holder farming, subsistence-farming is predominant;</li> <li>- Property title issues not solved;</li> <li>- Labour migration from rural areas to cities;</li> <li>- Bad road infrastructure and difficult access to certain rural areas which represent opportunities for development;</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong focus of the Government Programme on rural areas and Agriculture as promising sector to be developed</li> <li>- Employment and Skills Strategy focuses on rural areas, underprivileged persons, rural poverty and women as well, under C1 (C1.1., C1.3), B2</li> </ul>

## 5.5 Non-formal training offers for young adults in cooperation with the private sector

Formal training offers do not reach important target groups of SDC, namely early school leavers, jobless people, working poor who do not have skills needed to improve their situation, and minority groups with low school enrolment and attendance. Tailor-made non-formal training offered in close cooperation with the private sector can reach out to these important strata of society.

This entry point complements the one labeled “VET for rural areas” and the last one touching the NES services, and also the MFC entry point. All of them run non-formal training offers.

Description	Non-formal training is being offered on the Albanian market, by VET centres and by private training providers. However, their offers are not strongly labour market oriented and focus on IT application, foreign language courses and some other important basic skills. At the same time, there is a huge request for relevant skill enhancement sought after by private and public companies, but no offers around.
What assets could	Mainly ISDO, private training providers, but also the concepts of

be referred to?	part-autonomy of training providers and regional VET centres. School management is an important asset too. Another important group of assets is private sector participation.  SDC is running a project in non-formal education in BiH, which could serve as a role model.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify branches and conduct a skills needs analysis</li> <li>- Identify cooperation partners among the private businesses and the training providers (private or public)</li> <li>- Identify chambers as cooperation partners</li> <li>- Run a training fund / innovation fund that fosters private initiatives in this field</li> </ul>
What would be the implementation approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capacity building and technical expertise</li> </ul>
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reach out to a relevant number of key beneficiaries of SDC</li> <li>- Multifunctional training centres with part-autonomy as well as private training centres established and strengthened under ISDO are ideal cooperation partners</li> <li>- NES is strongly supporting cooperation in this direction, which allows for targeting jobless people.</li> </ul>
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public authorities are not used to and experienced in cooperation with the private sector</li> <li>- Chambers are very poorly organized and play a weak role</li> <li>- Mostly informal businesses difficult to approach</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	High, regarding pillar A and C of the strategy, and partly also B (multifunctional centres)

## 5.6 Multifunctional training centres network

The projected multifunctional training centres are a major and future oriented step in providing quality vocational skills development on all levels, in formal and non-formal education, to an affordable price. The MFCs also offer the unique chance to establish close cooperation with the private sector gradually, since they become attractive cooperation partner for the private businesses.

Description	The new government is currently undergoing a process of reorganizing the structure of the public training offer. The new Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is responsible for public VET schools <i>and</i> Vocational Training Centres, which allows for making use of new synergies. It is therefore foreseen to run multifunctional training centres operating on a regional level and covering a diversified offer of labour market oriented courses, non-formal and formal, on different levels of the training system (from short courses up to post-secondary offers). The new MFC
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	should be at least partly autonomous regarding steering, financing and operations / offer.
What assets could be referred to?	Switzerland set-up a model school in Durres “BeqirCela” which operates as a Multifunctional Centre already in many dimensions. It seems most important to benefit from this expertise. Other assets come into play here too, like the concept of regional VET centres, part-autonomy of VET schools, and school management elements.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<p>Instead of taking care of one school, SDC could provide support in setting-up a provider network, facilitating knowledge exchange among these new providers, and supporting them in influencing important policy decisions regarding their operations and framework conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizational and management consulting for all MFCs</li> <li>- Setting-up a network of MFCs and make sure that certain elements (like management training and coaching) are implemented for all of them.</li> <li>- Spill-over of BeqirCela experiences to all MFCs</li> </ul>
What would be the implementation approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical assistance</li> <li>- Very close cooperation among donors involved (GIZ, ADA, SDC, others) in the sense of a concerted action</li> </ul>
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MFCs are most promising and future oriented structures, allowing for a diversified and cost-effective VET offer</li> <li>- MFCs might allow for building up cooperation modalities with the private sector, in non-formal as well as in formal VET</li> <li>- The limited number of MFCs and the smallness of Albania makes such a network approach feasible</li> </ul>
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Replication is tricky, and needs a lot of adoption, and openness from all sides</li> <li>- Knowledge exchange / exchange of good practice is not common in Albania. The more MFCs will offer market-driven courses also in competition with other MFCs, the less they might be willing to exchange about their practice.</li> <li>- MFCs are not yet introduced models. The final regulation of MFCs might not offer them what is promised know, limiting their autonomy and freedom of action considerably.</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	High in the sense of developing quality providers working efficiently and in close cooperation with the private sector (steering, programming, financing, delivery, assessment and certification)

## 5.7 Green jobs / green economy: Centre for renewable energy in public-private partnership

Today, Albania is still heating many houses with electricity based heating systems, while solar power would allow for heating easily all year long. Albania has everything that is needed to develop a green economy from financial to natural and human resources. While a market does not exist as of today, this market could develop in future making use of the assets developed under AlbVET thermo-hydraulic occupational area reform.

Description	“Green jobs are central to sustainable development and respond to the global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion.” <sup>11</sup> Albania finds itself in a perfect starting position to develop a green economy: there is enough income and access to financing, enough natural resources around, there is a market close by (Europe. Turkey) and a high potential of developing a future Albanian market namely in solar heating and solar electricity, and enough water.
What assets could be referred to?	The occupational area reform in Thermo-Hydraulic in 10 VET schools and the specialization in solar heating at four VET schools is a major asset in this regard. These centres of excellence could serve as a cluster or centre for renewable energy.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support developing one of the future MFCs into a centre for renewable energy and green qualifications</li> <li>- Combine the programme with a market development strategy, like develop a scheme for promoting green economy together with the Albanian government (like compensation for electricity fed into the grid, subsidies for installation, etc.)</li> <li>- Foster private sector involvement and provide start-up / promotion / entrepreneurship schemes</li> </ul>
What would be the implementation approach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical and financial assistance</li> <li>- PPP</li> </ul>
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Natural, financial, educational and human resources available or rather easy to access/ develop</li> <li>- A future oriented sector that would most probably receive support from other initiatives around in this field</li> </ul>
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No well-developed market around yet</li> <li>- The Government of Albania faces severe budget cuts and restrictions for the next years to come. It is unlikely that there will be funds available for boosting this economic sector.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup>ILO Green jobs initiative, [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	- Not known, but very much future oriented.
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## 5.8 Post-secondary (initial) VET

Offering initial VET training at post secondary level faces the realities, namely the fact that more than 80% of each age cohort follow the general education stream at secondary level, while the country is in dire need of qualified professionals in many professions.

Description	Post-secondary VET is usually conceptualized as a form of continuous higher training in the VET system, in order to train highly qualified specialists in rather small numbers. However, in a system where more than 80% of each age cohort follow, for certain reasons, the general education stream on secondary education level, it is an option to offer post-secondary <i>initial</i> VET training. This kind of training would address graduates of gymnasias and adults and jobless seeking for further training / requalification. It would provide them with a practice-oriented training that offers a valuable ticket for entering the job-market.
What assets could be referred to?	Switzerland runs a post-secondary VET training system, which is the backbone of its highly competitive and innovative industry and service sectors.  In Albania: Post-secondary initial VET training in IT with Beqir Cela School and the University of Durrës (inter-institutional cooperation). This project has been recognised as a model case.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue and further develop the IT offer (e.g. outreach to other areas of Albania)</li> <li>- Transfer the approach to a different profession, like Agri-Food Processing / Agri-Technology and Production, VET Teacher Training, Renewable Energy / Energy Consumption and Savings, or any other sector which might result from further studies.</li> </ul>
What would be the implementation approach?	- Technical expertise and possibly project-based implementation.
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requested from the Albanian Government</li> <li>- Albania lacks (a rather small number) of highly qualified professionals in certain fields; these are important for innovation and economic development</li> <li>- A focus on renewable energy / energy consumption and savings could be seen as a direct continuation and development of what has been introduced under the occupational area reform in T-H (solar heating). The option of</li> </ul>



	developing a centre/cluster on renewable energy might be considered (see separate entry point).
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not address the key target group of SDC</li> <li>- Clear preference for university degrees among students and employers so far. It is not very likely that this preference will change fast. The most important mitigation strategy to this risk is offering post-secondary VET in the form of an inter-institutional cooperation including a University.</li> <li>- Offering (initial) VET training after Matura to a large number of graduates is a very expensive VET system that excludes important strata of society. It would also support the development of secondary-level VET becoming obsolete.</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	Post-secondary VET offers have been mentioned as a priority by the Government when presenting the new Strategy on employment and skills in Albania (B.2.3)

## 5.9 Introduction of the new service model of the National Employment Service including the coaching for employment approach C4E

For reaching out to certain important target groups like early school leavers, jobless youth and young adults without meaningful training, and special needs groups, the national employment service represents the most important systemic entry point. Its recent and still ongoing reorganisation represents a chance for positive change.

Description	The NES has introduced a new three-level service model (1 <sup>st</sup> level self-service for people simply needing access to up-to date information, 2 <sup>nd</sup> level: consulting for normal clients, 3 <sup>rd</sup> level: coaching offers for special needs groups with a longer duration). The Coaching for Employment Approach C4E is a model case that shall be used (probably slightly adapted) by all NES offices for level 2 and 3 services.
What assets could be referred to?	Coaching for Employment C4E Switzerland runs a very well developed system of active labour market measures, including a sophisticated M&E system that is also adapted and introduced in BiH by SECO Switzerland.
What would be the concrete input of an SDC support?	<i>Focus:</i> Streamlining (and most probably adapting) C4E for NES services and therefore supporting them in modernizing their offer.  <i>Option 1:</i> support NES in developing their result oriented monitoring with SECO support, similarly to the project running in BiH  <i>Option 2:</i> support NES in imparting their employment measures on a larger scale, building on following ideas/options:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ideas formulated in the youth employment feasibility study 2011: restoration programmes, clean up the country</li> <li>○ public tendering in construction: include the obligation to impart on-the-job training to a number of people</li> </ul> <p><i>Option 3:</i> support social entrepreneurship models, supported employment, subsidized jobs/second labour market models)</p> <p><i>Option 4:</i> cooperating with private employment services in accessing important target groups and providing better services to them.</p>
What would be the implementation approach?	- Technical support to NES
Potential / opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reaching out to a high number of people</li> <li>- Delivering fast</li> </ul>
Challenges / risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainability of employment measures is sometimes challenged. However, this is always an issue, all over the world, while it may still make sense to do it, and is a public assignment.</li> <li>- Access to target group(s): many underprivileged are not registered in NES data bases.</li> <li>- Working with public institutions limits the influence and leverage considerably, an adapted role needs to be accepted.</li> <li>- Financial limitations of NES might restrict options considerably</li> </ul>
Strategic Relevance for the Albanian Government	- Employment and Skills Strategy: effective labour market policies, pillar A.

## 6 Concluding observations

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### About formal VET in Albania

VET sector in Albania has gone through many changes as all of Albania in the past 20 years. After the fall of the old system, general education opened its gates, with no limitations regarding access to general education stream at secondary level and almost no access barriers to university level education. This has influenced dramatically the VET sector at the point that it is the less attractive choice for students, only attended by the least performing students. The challenge of the new government and the donor community engaged in this field will be to revitalise the sector and to increase its attractiveness. Quality VET provision is the only panacea in this situation, but no fast solution. However, the open access to the general education stream at secondary education level (Matura) is a major hindering factor for secondary level VET to regain terrain, and this fact represents a major bottleneck for any respective action in the field of formal VET at the usual level of initial training. Yet, for SDC as the bilateral lead-donor in VET, it might not be an option to discontinue in formal VET. For the new Government of Albania it is neither, since today's system produces enormous skills mismatches and is very expensive, if one considers all negative effects of this so far rather unguided education system. By reorganising the VET provider landscape (multifunctional VET centres) and pushing hard for entering into social dialogue with all relevant partners, many positive evidence is around for change. For SDC, adding non-formal components and/or formal offers on the post-secondary level to an engagement in basic formal VET might be the silver bullet. Finally yet importantly, quality VET in formal education is requested if Albania is to access to the European Union one day as a competitive and strong member.

### About a future programme design

Entry points are no programme design. Yet, they shall pave the way for programme design. Once SDC enters the programme design process, some thematic guidelines seem important:

- We suggest that any future intervention shall comprise elements at the macro, meso and micro level. It is SDCs particular strength to work on the basis, in the classrooms and workshops, with teachers and students, with special needs groups and private providers, as well as with public offices and policy actors at the same time. We therefore strongly recommend continuing this systemic and extensive approach to VSD.
- VSD is no end in itself. SDC follows a three dimensional approach to youth employment, with interventions on the supply side (VSD), on the mediation/matching system, and on the demand side (private sector development). It might be an option to select the same sectors for the future VSD intervention as targeted in SDCs employment promotion projects, namely Risi Albania.
- Given these two points of consideration, a future intervention could combine several entry points. One example might be an intervention that focuses on non-formal VET for young adults, implemented by the new multifunctional VET centres in close-cooperation with private businesses that are also targeted by other interventions of

SDC, and NES. A component of such a project could improve governance and financing mechanisms, and improve the framework conditions for working together with the private sector. In a future step of development, cooperation with the private sector could spill over to formal VET offers.

- It is imperative, that any future intervention makes use of resources available in Albania, like existing VET providers, and not develop new parallel structures.
- In order to reach out to important SDC beneficiaries, close cooperation with organisations like NES and grass-root organisations of special needs groups is very important in any future programme design, since many who slipped through the public social nets are not easily approachable.
- European Integration is a fact in Albania and will most probably materialise one day with full membership. For accession to be successful and for Albania to be able to withstand market realities within the family of European countries, quality development oriented towards European standards is the only way to follow.

### **About the CAPEX**

The CAPEX exercise was applied for the first time in the VET sector in Albania. It was considered interesting and useful from all stakeholders who participated, including SDC and the AlbVET project staff. Both, SDC and AlbVET / Swisscontact, engaged themselves remarkably and in a distinguished way in this CAPEX. The authors of this report want to express their gratitude for being entrusted with this report and for the excellent cooperation with all involved actors.

## Interview partners

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## Field visit report

- Date: 09 – 10 January 2014
- Report compiled by Delina Nano

### 1. Program of the visit:

Day	Time	Institution	Name &Function
	8.00	Depart from Tirana	
Thursday 09.01.2014	9.30 - 11.00	VET public school in Lushnje	Vladimir Gjermeni, School Director Abaz Hajdari, Deputy Director Niko Nikolla, Instructor Vali Çuko, responsible for the workshops
	11.15 – 13.00	Training center Blerimi, Lushnje (private centre),	Tatiana Pirro , Training Center Director
	13.00- 13.30	<i>Lunch break</i>	
	14.00- 15.00	Training Center Agroni, Fier (private centre),	Agron Dule, Training Center Director
	16.00- 17.00	Rom association in Kucove (not for profit org) which implemented C4E.	Klodjan Laze, Coacher/ Coordinator
Friday 10.01.2014	09.00 – 13.00	BeqirCela School Vocational Public School	Bashkim Shkëmbi, School Director Spartak Rigo, Instructor Vjollca Gruda, responsible for the workshops

*The selection of the sites visited was done in cooperation with AlbVET team. The sites were selected carefully and each is representative of specific interventions and assets of Swiss support to VET.*



### 3. Purpose and Objectives of the field visits

The purpose of the field visit was to:

- Document (through interviews, visits on spot, learning materials, photos, etc.) some of the sites considered as best example of different Swiss Programs and interventions.
- Get to know the capacity and competence of actors in the VET context in Albania, including their potential for future plans.
- Gather information, understand and start with a preliminary rating of the assets already identified from the previous phase of the Capitalization of Experiences process.

During the interviews we discussed about ideas for the Swiss intervention in the skills development dimension in future.

*Objectives:*

- Receive feedback from local actors who contributed to the achievements (assets, innovations, traces, footprints, perceptions) of the Swiss support and get an impression of support and achievements on spot.
- Meet and discuss with teachers and instructors who contribute to the continued utilization and sustainability of these achievements.
- Identify supporting and hindering factors for the sustainability of innovations.
- Discuss over the lessons learnt from project processes (project design, approaches, delivery mechanisms, organization, interfaces with partner and stakeholders).

### 4. Methodology and Approach

The visits consisted of:

- Meetings with school/ training center directors,
- Meetings with teachers and instructors,
- Visits to workshops and labs in the school/ center ,
- Taking pictures.

The interviews/ meetings were shaped in the form of round tables where participants could share their experience, raise questions and exchange opinions on different elements and resources.

During the interviews, the following questions have been raised:

- What has been realized exactly?
- What was the intention and what were the condition to promote such an action? When was it realized? How long was the duration of the implementation and if it is still active?
- How sustainable can the intervention be considered once the project was over and there is/ was no support?

- What made the action successful? What elements should be taken into consideration for future interventions?
- What is the potential for utilization in the future?

## 5. Feedbacks from the interviews

### a. VET school in Lushnje

VET school in Lushnje is a Local Public VET school. The difference between local and public school stands in the status and autonomy they have. What makes the difference is the financial autonomy; the national public school have their own bank account being able to manage their own financial resources. While Local Public School as the one in Lushnja lacks this financial autonomy.

During the interviews as well as by different people the problem was related to competences and status of Local public schools, considering that as a handicap (in the system). Local public school finds it difficult to establish their own financial sustainability for the workshops and the needed training materials, after the donor support is over.

New curricula and training materials were developed under Swiss program in different occupational areas; learning resources and equipment for workshops and labs were provided; teachers were trained etc. The most successful intervention is the support offered in one of the profiles - the plumber. The School of Lushnje is one of the four centres of rotation at national level in thermo hydraulics and IT.

This school has well developed internal human resource/ teachers which are able to deliver highest standards of teaching and training. The new curricula in plumbing is considered a success, as the employability of the graduated students is quite high. Still, there is no tracing system in place to monitor the students after they graduate. Normally it is the staff of the school, teachers who use personal channels and keep good contacts/ relations trying to gather information on the employability of the graduates afterwards.

The interviewed people referred that after finishing the school most of the students were directly employed from the small local companies where they made the apprenticeships during the studies. Some other students are self-employed in their own service businesses. The new curricula in thermo-hydraulic and solar hitting have increased youth employability as they gained skills required from the labour market.

The weak point is that the local schools can hardly support the cost of the training materials for the workshops without a donor support. The cooperation with the private sector is weak and does foresee an improvement for the future.

### b. *Training center Blerimi, Lushnje*

Training centre Blerimi, Lushnje, is a private training operator. New curricula were developed under Swiss support (example: cooking and pastry courses), financial support was offered through voucher schemes, learning resources, equipment for workshops and labs were improved, human resources developments and management processes enhanced. The centre was established during ISDO project.

Actually the centre does not receive any financial support from Swiss programs, yet it is considered a successful training centre for the vocational skills it is specialized in. 80 students attend the training courses each year. Most of them are employed just after finishing the term. The centre is attended from youth from Lushnja and also from students coming from other cities and staying on rent in Lushnja to follow the training courses.

The courses combines 3 months of classroom training and 3 months of practice. The students are able to successfully work in any restaurant in the country after finishing the course.

What made the intervention successful was a synergy of dedicated human resources managing the centre, the financial and technical support offered from the project and the relevant skills identified from the labour market.

The centre is planning to enlarge their premises and increase the offer for short training courses and post secondary in the tourism sector.

#### c. *Training Center Agroni, Fier*

Training Centre Agroni, Fier is a private training provider. New curricula and, training materials in diverse occupational areas (example: hairdresser aesthetics, plumbing) are developed, financial support through voucher schemes offered, learning resources, equipment for workshops and labs, human resources and management processes were improved with the Swiss support.

The courses combined well theoretical classes with practice in some local private enterprises. The director of the centre is confident for further cooperation as he has established good relations with the local private companies. He also appreciates this cooperation for the students' benefits going through this learning experience.

The centre is very much oriented towards the local skill needs. It is actually working to establish some short courses for welding, as the market labour demand in the area for this profession is raising bearing in mind that TAP -Trans Adriatic Pipeline, project will be passing through Fier region.

The support offered from Swiss interventions is considered sustainable, due to the flexibility in operation and management that a private centre can have. Still there is no tracing system in place to measure the outcomes of trainings in terms of employment.

#### d. *Roma association in Kucove.*

Roma Association in Kucove (branch of Amarodrom NGO), is the partner organization engaged in the implementation of C4E project for vulnerable groups. The coaching cycle for employment was build on the cooperation with local NGOs and is implemented under a two-layer approach, i.e. (a) training of coaches, and (b) implementation of the coaching cycle with participants. During the project, occupational skill of Rom and Egyptian community members in carpentry, hair dressing and other profiles were developed. This was well combined with cases when Roma people did not have the possibility to develop individual business plans. The selected beneficiaries were trained to develop mini business plans and were offered small grants for the implementing individual development plans.

During the visit in Kucova, two beneficiaries of the program were present at the meeting. One of them has established a football team and was aiming for the national football championship. The second was a carpenter which started its own service small business. Thanks to this support he has employed other family members and the business is expanding.

Training courses were delivered only in those cases where people did not have the possibility to develop individual business plans. These trainings were offered from local training providers, which in most of the cases have a major focus on practical skills for employment.

Most of the interventions were considered successful because of the (i) relevant identification of good business ideas tailored for each specific case; (ii) qualitative training offered to develop the business plans; (iii) continual coaching and assistance in developing their business plans.

e. *VET School 'Beqir Cela', Durrës*

Beqir Cela School is a National Public VET School. This is the nucleus of the Swiss support and a centre of excellence. The support offered to this school has been extensive (developing curricula, offer training, DACUM approach, frame curricula concept, training materials etc.)

The School has 'a history' of support from different Swiss programs (DVS, ISDO, AlbVET). Nowadays this School is considered the best example of the systemic approach of Swiss support by constructing the basement for a sustainable development over the coming years.

The School was supported since 1994 with trainings of the teachers to prepare teaching plans according to the labour market demand, by establishing workshops in different occupational areas, by improving the internal organizational structure, by introducing efficient and flexible management tools, the teaching process, methods and instruments had been updated and modernized, etc. The School soon after the support started to be distinguished from other VET schools in the country. Actually, due to the good quality in delivery it is still considered a good example of VET school in the country. Yet greater efforts and at different levels of the VET system are needed to consider it a 'Model of VET School' for the entire country.

Beqir Cela School was the first VET public school to introduce the practice learning schemes and establish a cooperation with the private sector. This model was adopted afterwards from other public school in the country and today is totally integrated in the system.

In plumbing profile (thermo hydraulic), the school is a rotation centre. The different workshops of mechanic, electricity, hydraulic, solar hitting, etc., are very well maintained and functional. The school itself has established good cooperation with the private sector in relation with the time that students have to dedicate to practical training. Still, this cooperation it is not institutionalized and the private sector does not take over an active role as a partner in the process. In most of the cases the private sector is playing a passive role in the cooperation with the VET schools.

The School offers high standards of sustainability and management compared with other public VET schools. The demand for increasing the offer in other occupational fields, such as tourism, but not only, can be considered as an option for future interventions. The school

offers vast teaching and practice premises which are not fully functioning but can be utilized in the future for expanding the offer and for developing new labs. The existing workshops present the need for improvement according to latest demand and developing techniques.

The schools has the potential to attract students from all over the country, if among other facts that dormitories are fully functional and do offer good living conditions. The demand for attending this school is quite high, but the capacity of the school to offer qualitative training to a high number of students is low.

The School faces different issues related with contextual problems within the system. VET schools are considered last option from youth, as the first option for all is the university, public or private ones. The preparation level of students entering VET school is very low. The classes are overcrowded. From a max of 26students foreseen per class, the enrolment reaches at about 30 students. The role of the government is considered rather weak and quite inexistent in supporting the necessary VET infrastructure.

Mr. Bashkim considered relevant to increase efforts from donors, to establish a Model of VET School for the country. Other need is to increase the cooperation with business and to update the technical workshops with latest technologies. Other forms of cooperation mechanism with private sector could be identified and promoted for the business to play and active role and support the VET schools.

## **6. Comments on the Outcomes from the interviews organized according to the fields of Assets previously identified.**

### ***Innovative Training Delivery Strategies***

Innovative Training Delivery Strategies such as: dual learning, practical learning, short courses based on competencies training, rotation system etc., were very much appreciated from all interviewed people. All these assets were organically integrated in the structure of the each school/ training centre. The capability of teachers/ instructors to develop the training and curricula is excellent. Lushnja School (thermo hydraulic teams) has won two national competitions organized from MEGATEK - a company with 100% Albanian investment focused in operating at the wholesale and retail market. The teachers are committed to their work and they are very much careful in the utilizing the support/ training materials provided from AlbVET.

The curricula and training materials itself developed from Swiss experts are considered excellent from local teachers in terms of quality and knowledge they offer in a simple/ uncomplicated structure ready to be absorbed from students.

The institutional sustainability is also considered excellent as the integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework is considered outstanding.

The innovative training approaches, especially in thermo-hydraulic has largely facilitated the transition from school-to-work and labour market insertion for school leavers. Most of the students find it easily to get a job or become self employed after finishing the schools. Still, there is no tracing system on the number of students employed after the training/ school, but the interviewed people consider it rather high.

### **Quality service provided and Infrastructure**

The schools and training centres offer quite good training modules and teaching premises, compared to Albanian standards. The workshops and training materials offered from Swiss support are considered of high standards, especially for the workshop of thermo hydraulic, solar heating and IT. The concern is that the technologies change quickly and the schools/ training centres are not always capable to afford the costs required to equip the workshops, while the support from private sector on this regard is totally missing.

On regard to the organizational sustainability, the rate is different between a local and a national school. Local schools are depending from outside financial sources (public or donors) and can hardly develop other services to overcome this handicap.

Another difference is noticed among public versus private structures. Private structures are more flexible on the internal management and in allocating the financial and human resources. Private training centres can quickly adopt the courses (short courses) they offer to the changing needs of the labour market.

Still, in terms of quality provided in the classroom both public and private centres supported from the Swiss programme are able to offer high quality of training.

### **Cooperation mechanism with private sector**

The Swiss support introduced for the first time in the public schools the cooperation with the private sector. The cooperation with the private sector is accomplished at different levels of the teaching process and for different reason with a common aim to support students to receive practical skills related with the different professions as well as to facilitate their integration into the labour market.

Today the cooperation between the schools/ training centres and the private sector is considered easier due to the good performance of the students during the apprenticeships. More often, there are private companies contacting the schools looking for cooperation. This offers high potential for labour market access of the students after graduating in those schools. However the business culture of the private sector in Albania is considered primitive and business owners and their teams, mostly family members, are not always able to provide students with the required skills. It is widely shared that the private sector is considered relatively new in Albania and for that reason the business owners/ managers do not have the necessary competences to train the students.

The involvement of the private sector in the evaluation process of the students is considered an innovative approach and is highly appreciated at all levels.

### **Concepts and Resources**

All concept and resources (identified from us as Assets) developed from Swiss support received the highest score from all interviewed people.

The curricula and training materials are very well developed and the teachers are very happy to work with them as they consider them very well developed and structures allowing a quick engagement from students.

The training of trainers/teachers and DACUM are considered excellent opportunities for the teachers to raise their capacities and professionalism in teaching. Frame curriculum is already absorbed by the schools and being implemented successfully.

With regard to the Status of the autonomy and part autonomy of the VET providers, as mentioned above, there are still problems in the system and the way how public school are managed at local and central level which needs to be improved in the future. More specific, a systemic approach could be considered in order to simplify and facilitate the financial management/ liquidity for the necessary operational expenses of the workshop in the public school, especially for the local VET schools.

In terms of financial sustainability for the future: National public school have a personal bank account, but the teachers/ instructors are not allowed by law to receive more than two salaries and thus to benefit from the services they may offer in order to increase the 'portfolio' of the school.

This gap is not to be considered by the Swiss support, but as a general concern for the VET system in Albania. Swiss programmes over the years have already contributed to bring many positive changes in the system, such as the 2+1+1 system, on the job training, improvements of the VET law which has facilitated the function of the public school and has highly improved their performance.

AlbVET program has contributed significantly to the overall reform of the formal system at secondary and post-secondary level in two selected occupational areas (thermo-hydraulics and IT).

The programme supported the complete occupational area reform of thermo-hydraulics in all 10 vocational schools based on the learning project approach, and with a comprehensive support which includes curriculum development, teachers and instructors training, development of learning resources and equipment. More specifically, during phase 3 AlbVET project is supporting the implementation of the +1 level of the 2+1+1 system in 10 schools (year 3) including internship periods in the private sector. The internships last 16 weeks (almost 4 months).

### **Stands Alone Assets**

C4E was implemented in cooperation with Rom Association. The beneficiaries/Roma and Egyptian community people has benefited in terms of enhanced and improved knowledge to develop their business plans and access small grant to carry on with their mini business plans afterwards. From the financial support offered from the project, new very small enterprises had been established. The small initiatives grew further as business was expanding and business owners have employed other family members.

Beqir Cela School in Durres, is the excellent case of Swiss support to VET sectors in Albania. The performance of the teachers after they were trained, the curricula introduced and the workshops are considered of high standard and the intervention offers a good degree of sustainability. The School employs dedicated management staff that is working every day to maintain and improve the teaching standards and infrastructures. The workshops equipped by Swiss support are operative, as there is care and commitment from local teachers to manage and maintain them correctly and well functioning.

The labour market accessibility of graduated students is considered high. For that reason there is high demand from youth all over the country to study to Beqir Cela school.

Post secondary in IT, is an innovative curricula. The labs are very well equipped and well maintained. At the moment there are 60 students attending the post-secondary IT course while there is a growing demand. The courses offer very good career potential for the students.

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## Asset Rating Instruments

The rating of the **completion and sustainability assessment** consists of five dimensions, which are to be understood as follows.

1. Level of completion: This dimension addresses the extent to which the asset has been developed into a self-sustained product, process or organization.
  - 1= Asset won't be completed at the end of the project.
  - 2= The majority of the asset components will be unfinished at the end
  - 3= Some asset components will be finished at the end
  - 4= All asset components will be finished at the end of the projects
  - 5= It is already a fully self-sustaining product, process or organization.
2. Capability of human resources: This dimension asks the question to which extent the concerned staff (instructors, teachers, managers, public administration) are in a position to implement the asset with the desired quality.
  - 1= Poor capability of human resources
  - 2= Fair capability of human resources
  - 3=Average capability of human resources
  - 4= Good capability of human resources
  - 5= Excellent capability of human resources
3. Organizational Sustainability: It addresses the question to which extent the asset is still being used by the partners on their own without the project being in the driver seat. A low value on this dimension means that implementation of the asset depends on project conditions.
  - 1=Use of the asset is still completely project dependent and project driven
  - 2= Use of the asset is still very much project dependent and project driven
  - 3=Use of the asset takes place, but still unusual.
  - 4=The asset is recognized and used regularly.
  - 5=The asset is being used in everyday business by the partner on their own.
4. Financial sustainability: It addresses the availability of finances for the continued implementation of the asset, and the willingness and authority to access and spend the available financial resources adequately.
  - 1= The asset fully depends on financial support of the donor
  - 2= Only a few components of the asset are independent from financial support of the donor, the asset still has a project status and is not yet part of the core services.
  - 3= Some components are independent from financial support of the donor, the asset still has a project status and is not yet part of the core services.
  - 4= The asset is almost independent from financial support of the donor
  - 5= The asset is fully independent of financial support of the donor and is financially self-sustaining, it is part of the core services.

5. Institutional sustainability: This dimension addresses the level of integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, i.e. the availability of the respective legal and institutional foundation to implement the respective asset.

1= Poor integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, implementation is not possible

2= Fair integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, implementation is at risk

3= Average integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, implementation is difficult but possible

4= Good integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, implementation is possible

5= Excellent integration of the asset into the regulatory and institutional framework, implementation is outstanding

The Rating of the **Future Potential Estimation** was guided by the question, why the specific asset is a resource for further utilization and what its potential is in this regard. It consists of the following six dimensions:

1. Labour market insertion potential: in the sense of successful school-to-work transition and labour market insertion for school leavers
2. Economic potential: in the sense of increased quality, productivity, innovative capacity and competitiveness of receiving employers
3. Equity potential: in the sense of labour market insertion of specific needs groups and equal access of different user groups into vocational education and training programs
4. Career potential: in the sense of higher income, job advancement, labour market mobility, and access to further education
5. Outreach potential: in the sense of reaching big numbers of beneficiaries, related to the size of the system, including potential for expansion and scaling-up
6. Strategic relevance potential: in the sense that this asset responds to strategic priorities of the Government for the Albanian VET system

All the dimensions have been rated on a scale from one to five.

1= Poor potential

2= Fair potential

3= Average potential

4= Good potential

5= Excellent potential