



FINAL EVALUATION

Albania

Thematic window
Youth, Employment and Migration

Programme Title:

Youth Migration: Reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks”

Prologue

This final evaluation report has been coordinated by the MDG Achievement Fund joint programme in an effort to assess results at the completion point of the programme. As stipulated in the monitoring and evaluation strategy of the Fund, all 130 programmes, in 8 thematic windows, are required to commission and finance an independent final evaluation, in addition to the programme's mid-term evaluation.

Each final evaluation has been commissioned by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in the respective programme country. The MDG-F Secretariat has provided guidance and quality assurance to the country team in the evaluation process, including through the review of the TORs and the evaluation reports. All final evaluations are expected to be conducted in line with the OECD Development Assistant Committee (DAC) Evaluation Network "Quality Standards for Development Evaluation", and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System".

Final evaluations are summative in nature and seek to measure to what extent the joint programme has fully implemented its activities, delivered outputs and attained outcomes. They also generate substantive evidence-based knowledge on each of the MDG-F thematic windows by identifying best practices and lessons learned to be carried forward to other development interventions and policy-making at local, national, and global levels.

We thank the UN Resident Coordinator and their respective coordination office, as well as the joint programme team for their efforts in undertaking this final evaluation.

MDG-F Secretariat

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation are those of the evaluator and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Joint Programme or MDG-F Secretariat.

Final Summative Independent Evaluation of the MGDF-S funded Joint Programme on “Youth, employment and Migration” implemented within the framework of One UN in Albania under the title of:

“Youth Migration: Reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks”

In support of the Government of Albania through the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and implemented through the collaboration of the ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Commissioned by: The International Labour Organization (ILO) contracting agency on behalf of the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Albania

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In-country fieldwork from 22nd May until 1st June 2012

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Note: the contents only reflects the authors' views and not necessarily those of the commissioning agency

Acronyms and abbreviations

ALMM	: Active Labour Market Measures
CTA	: Chief Technical Adviser
ESF	: European Social Fund
EU	: European Union
ILO	: International Labour Organization
INSTAT	: National Institute of Statistics
IOM	: International Organization for Migration
IPA	: Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (EU)
JP	: Joint Programme
LFS	: Labour Force Survey
LMI	: Labour Market Information
M&E	: Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG-F	: Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund
MoLSAEO	: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NAP	: National Action Plan
NES	: National Employment Service
NSC	: National Steering Committee
PMC	: Programme Management Committee
PPP	: Public-Private Partnerships
REB	: Regional Employment Board
REO	: Regional Employment Office
SDC	: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TEP	: Territorial Employment Pact
TOR	: Terms of Reference
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	: United Nations Children Fund
UNRC	: United Nations Resident Coordinator
YEM	: Youth Employment and Migration
YES	: Youth Employment Services

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I. ABSTRACT

The Youth, Employment and Migration (YEM) Joint Programme (JP) has been overall largely successful in meeting the expected outcomes. Despite an overly ambitious scope, a short time-frame to implement such a complex programme, and the limited amount of resources available under the programme (US\$ 3.3 million) the JP has achieved significant results in a wide range of areas.

Looking at the initial situation analysis in Albania mentioned in the JP document, progress is outstanding on many fronts. One of the first difficulties was to support the development of proper data and statistics regarding employment. A number of mutually supportive activities were undertaken, such as the creation of an inter-institutional working group of Labour Market Information (LMI) that allowed to develop a consensus and common approach on data collection, definitions and indicators to be used (some 70 indicators have now been identified versus an initial target of 16). Coaching by the CTA on the development of the technical aspects and training sessions supported the capacity development of the government partners, including in the use of software (STATA, SPSS). Further to the training, NES software support still needs to be brought up to speed as it is using MS EXCEL spreadsheets for statistical work – a constraint that should be addressed rapidly so as to render data processing more efficient and manageable across multiple government units. Beyond the technical aspects, stakeholders indicated the importance of the inclusiveness of the process and underlined the fact that it was the first time for them to share information and work together with participants from different government agencies and institutions. The socialisation and better communication across government agencies is therefore a key aspect of building a common ground for working on YEM related issues and on a coherent and consistent approach to LMI.

Further work was done in terms of developing and undertaking the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Attempts to run a LFS were very much scattered prior to the JP, while Albania has now a continuous LFS, which is conducted on a quarterly basis. Negotiations are ongoing between INSTAT and MoLSAEO in order for the latter to be able to access the LFS data, so as to inform policy making of labour market institutions. Other institutions, such as the Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA) are also negotiating similar agreements with INSTAT to have access to labour market and other data.

A national survey was undertaken to address the nexus between informal employment and migration of young people, and a number of studies and surveys were undertaken during the JP implementation, providing further evidence of existing needs, gaps and knowledge that was incorporated into the management of the JP.

The Youth Employment National Action Plan (YE-NAP) is a critical milestone achievement that counted with the active support of the MOLSAEO. Of the total costs of US\$ 17.5 million, some US\$ 10.5 million have been already pledged

and/or made available through measures under implementation by the Government of Albania (and already budgeted), or donor-funded technical cooperation programmes. Further support is given on bilateral basis to projects after the end of the JP but which support the NAP objectives (Austrian funding to UNDP/ILO for Vocational Training and Swiss Development Cooperation funding a continuation of the TEP to UNDP/ILO).

Other positive results include the development of various innovative and creative agreements with national and local level partners from government, private sector, and non-profit organisations. Collectively, these public-private partnerships (PPP) have brought a series of advantages to migrants abroad, young graduates, youth from disadvantaged groups, particularly those who are contributing family workers and engaged in vulnerable employment in agriculture, as well as contributing to improving labour market information by developing a more comprehensive database from both the demand and the supply sides. The inclusion of the private sector, through private sector intermediary organizations, means that a larger number of vacancies and more suitable profiling of the demand side is available to job seekers, while the public side continues to identify the unemployed people available for employment who require to be supported through employment promotion programmes. At the regional level, this has to be seen in conjunction with the useful work undertaken at the Youth Employment Services (YES) centres that are placed under the responsibility of the Regional Employment Offices. Each of the target regions has an operational YES centre, although in Kukes it has just now been transferred to another location. In addition, the use of partners with proven experience in vocational and life skills training, such as Don Bosco, has contributed to providing these skills to 52 youth selected from unemployed, in informal employment and from marginalised groups in Shkodra.

Major achievements have also taken place in the two target regions of Shkodra and Kukes. The establishment of an operational Regional Employment Fund in Shkodra, although late in coming, is a very important and useful achievement of the JP. Considering the fact that the model is based on that of the European Social Fund, providing the Regional Council with the capacity to manage the REF in this JP is critical in building the capacity of the Regional Council to manage ESF interventions at the regional level in the future, and shows good forward planning in terms of the sustainability of the mechanisms that have been created. In the other target region Kukes, the development of a REF was not possible, and the mitigation strategy consisted in developing a Territorial Employment Pact for Youth (Y-TEP). The TEP was seen as added value and it is now being replicated in other regions of the country and further funding has been secured beyond the end of the JP. Again this shows that the instruments and mechanisms developed have a strong potential to play a catalytic role in the social and economic development of the country and the regions.

In the two target regions specific activities and outreach were done on the issue of migration and as regards to visa liberalisation. Target villages in rural areas were selected jointly with the regional authorities. The currently on-going

IOM evaluation of its information campaign has given positive preliminary results in terms of the achieving awareness raising among the youth which should translate in attitudinal change. In addition, at the international level and through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs embassy counsellors were trained and six conferences were organised for the Diaspora in order to explore business and return opportunities in Albania (New York, Rome, London, Brussels, Athens and Milan).

Looking only at the quantitative data regarding the figures available under the JP, the impression is that the JP is costly as regards to the number of direct beneficiaries reached. (e.g. 328 beneficiaries of work training programmes, 322 beneficiaries of the Shkodra Regional Employment and Training Fund, 100 graduates placed in local companies, 942 jobs created/formalised in Kukes, etc.). However, the added value of the JP is not so much in this initial result of the activities, but much more on the actual processes, mechanisms and change dynamics that have been created at the national and local levels. Particularly the collegiality and inclusiveness of the various working groups at the different levels have contributed to a process of ownership and commitment and common understanding that goes beyond the direct beneficiary figures.

The real value of the JP is that it has set the stage for facilitating Albania's pre-accession to the EU by developing strong technical models and mechanisms that can be further utilised beyond the life of the JP. One pitfall in this construction is the lack of proper legislation to allow the MoLSAEO to channel funds to the regions. While a National Employment Fund exists on paper since 1995, it has no resources. Issues surrounding accountability, legislation and procedures are still entangled. It would be extremely useful to the Government if support to legislative changes was provided in order to allow decentralised funding (both from national government as well as from development partners).

The JP management structure was already identified in the JP document. It is important to underline the continuing very strong ownership and commitment from the MoLSAEO since the beginning of the JP, as well as the strong support from the Embassy of Spain and the UN Resident Coordinator. Without these three champions it would not have been possible to achieve these results. Beyond the proven strengths of the technical approach used by the ILO CTA, another issue is to consider whether this sort of programme is better placed under a national coordinator or within the CTA of the lead agency. Because each country operates in a different context, it is important to adjust to the situation and not only see it from a technical perspective. At the end of the day, the technical approach is only one of the elements that contribute to success. Personalities, capacity for networking in an inclusive manner, inter-personal and communication skills are just as important and must be considered when deciding on the JP structure. However, this is not done in practice since the coordinator is recruited after the start of the JP. It would be useful to undertake a pre-recruitment interview with potential candidates at the time of the JP design, in order to be able to appraise the non-technical elements that are required for successful JP management and coordination.

In the case of the present JP, the strong personality of the CTA has been quite useful in maintaining the course of action and approach to the JP implementation. As there are two sides to a coin, this may have led to lower participation of the national counterparts. The departure of the CTA with the end of the JP means that a new dynamic must be created amongst the various actors to ensure that the positive process in which they engaged under the current JP is maintained and a new focal point should be identified to pursue this effort, just as many of the mechanisms and activities will also continue beyond the life of the JP.

Rather than the individual activities that were not realised as planned in the initial JP document, the single biggest weakness of this JP (and also of others previously evaluated) is the lack of lead-time necessary to prepare the ground for implementing these innovative and creative activities. Programmes are never implemented in a linear mode. Changes in the context, in the legislation, in the human resources, the degree of preparation of the different partners, the definition of a partnership strategy, the development of a good communication strategy, all affect implementation. At the design level too much focus is placed on the technical aspects (hardware) and not enough on the socialisation and communication necessary to make people receptive to change (software). A more cautious and realistic time-frame for implementation, recognising the lead-time necessary to prepare the critical mass of actors that will be ready to carry out the process, is needed in future programmes. This is to a large extent the primary reason behind the delays that affected JP implementation, in addition to the elections that were held.

Another lesson is that it may be useful to develop a specific communication strategy for JPs. In the case of Albania given the ONE UN framework, a single communication strategy has been developed, but it does not sufficiently support the communication needs of the JP, particularly at the regional levels. To some extent this was addressed by the IOM in the TV spots and communication materials developed, as well as by the UNICEF, but a specific JP communication strategy would have been useful to transmit to all the stakeholders a clear vision of what the JP was trying to achieve, both nationally and regionally.

The JP has accomplished much in terms of employment, with limited direct effects on the migration component, which appeared to be the focus according to the JP title¹. The relationship between youth employment and migration remains to be further explored and analysed. It is much too early to consider a direct cause to effect relationship between youth employment and migration at this stage as a result of the JP, since there is no available data to support this claim (lower migration from Kukës or Shkodër or diaspora investments into Albania are yet to be documented). Only over the longer-term can the

¹ The IOM makes the following comment: « The title of the programme did not accurately reflect its content, as both migration and employment were equally covered in the programme document ». Note from the evaluation team: more direct focus on migration was expected in the core activities from the title of the programme.

relationship be established. In general terms, the JP has undertaken the components of the UN agencies and the IOM, but despite some efforts, the implementation modes (pass-through funds and each agency/organisation working according to its procedures) made the project more of a coordinated collection of interventions than an integrated programme. Since JP is an experimental design, it is also important to understand that the time necessary to rollout the concept of the JP and the guidance provided by the MDG-F, while useful, is insufficient to cover all the possible interpretation that arise during JP implementation.

With reference to the evaluation criteria, the JP has been particularly strong and successful as regards to the relevance of its intervention, as well as to the degree of effectiveness and sustainability achieved. The efficiency of the JP could have been much greater with a more realistic implementation time-line and a better financial costing of the various activities allocated in the budget given the broad character of many of these, although at the sub-activity level a much more targeted and precise costing was undertaken.

II. Brief background on the project and its logic

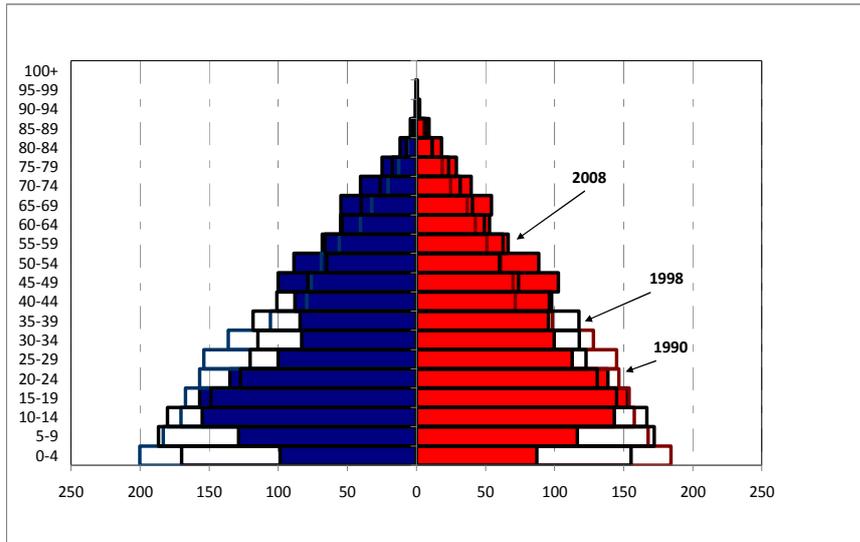
Albania background analysis

Albanians have been involved in an overwhelming process of territorial mobility since the early 1990s, immediately after the collapse of the Communist regime, which for 45 years had prevented both domestic and international mobility. Migration has been the most important livelihood strategy, driven mostly by economic motivation: improving living standards, finding a job, and escaping unsatisfactory working conditions. Today Albania is one of the countries with the highest migratory rate in the world. Indeed, about 25% of the Albanian population is presently living abroad, constituting approximately 35% of the labour force (Iasci 2010). The most important destinations are Greece and Italy, which host together 87% of the total migrants, due to their geographical proximity and cultural similarity (De Zvager et al 2005). These two countries provide also the majority of remittances flows: 60% from Greece and 30% from Italy (Kring 2007).

As a consequence of migration Albania has experienced a huge loss of population and workforce, and a significant evolution of the society as a whole. The loss of young workers, especially men, deprived many households and communities of their human and productive potential.

Looking at the evolution of the population pyramid of Albania in the last 20 years (figure 1), there is a sharp decline of population aged 20-44 for both sexes. That phenomenon is mainly due to migration. Another visible pattern is the smaller base of the pyramid and the top that is getting larger. This is the consequence of both fertility decline under replacement level, that caused a smaller proportion of children between 0 and 14 years, and the rise of life expectancy, that have had as a result an aging population.

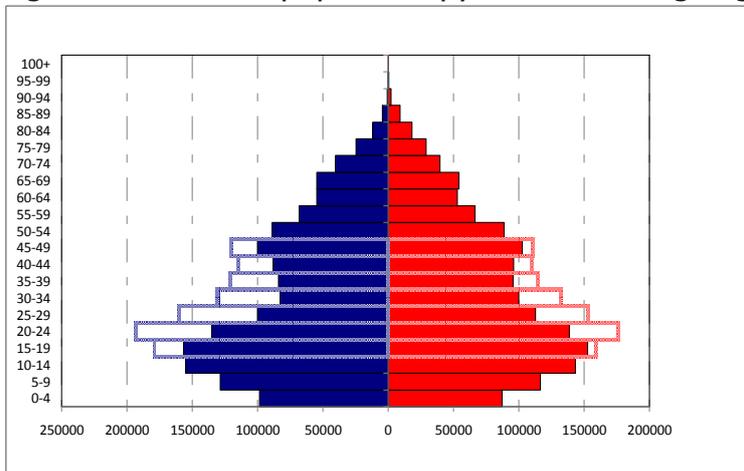
Figure 1.-Albanian Population Pyramids: 1990-1998-2008



Source: Ambrosetti, Cela, Gedeshi 2010, elaboration on Instat, online database: <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

Thanks to the estimation made by the 2008-09 Albania Demographic and Health Survey (ADHS)² of the number of emigrants outside Albania we could add the population abroad to the Albanian residents in 2008. The result is illustrated in figure 2. The inclusion of emigrants to the actual population pyramid of Albania makes the imbalance of sex ratio and the lack of active age population disappear both for men and women.

Figure 2. -Albanian population pyramid including migrants abroad, 2008



Source: Ambrosetti, Cela, Gedeshi 2010, author's estimation from Instat and ADHS

The migration of such a large part of the population has had significant economic and social impacts. The high level of financial remittances is the most tangible impact. At the micro level, remittances have contributed to decrease poverty, especially in rural areas, and to improve the living conditions of

² Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are nationally-representative household surveys

households having one or more migrant workers (de Zwager et al. 2005, Bank of Albania 2008). But remittances, however, have mostly been channelled towards household consumption with little productive investment and job creation, especially in agriculture.

International migration has slowed in the last decade and Albania has started to experience return migration flows (Gedeshi, De Zwager 2012, World Bank 2010)³. Indeed the Ministry of Interior estimates that in 2009 about 47.000 migrants returned to Albania (MoLSAEO 2010) However, this pattern is reversed for the regions of Northern Albania and mountain areas where it has constantly been on the rise over the past years (World Bank 2007). The absence of decent work opportunities associated with bad economic conditions are the main factors, especially for youth, to migrate internally or abroad. Although only 11% of the total population lives in the northern part of the country, data from LSMS indicate that in 2008 the poverty headcount was 26.6% compared to the national headcount of 12.4%, to 10,7% of the central regions and 13% of the coastal ones (INSTAT, UNDP, World Bank 2009)⁴.

According to LFS 2009 youth are twice more likely to be unemployed than adults (INSTAT 2009), but in the rural areas unemployment is a less-affordable option and most young workers have to accept any job, including underemployment and informal employment. Thus labour migration become the survival strategy to overcome poverty, especially for those working with low earnings and poor working conditions in the informal economy, in particular in agriculture.

In October 2007, the government of Albania launched the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), which provides a long-term integrated planning system that sets a number of national goals, related to socio-economic development and to the promotion of Albania's regional and international integration, to be achieved by 2013. The Strategy is the resultant of 38 sectoral and crosscutting strategies that have been developed by several central and local institutions.

With the adoption of the NSDI, the government of Albania has committed itself to achieving a number of policy objectives that contribute to the attainment of the following four main development goals:

1. Achieve rapid, balanced and sustainable economic, social and human development,
2. Develop and consolidate a democratic state,

³ This decline can be attributed, to several factors such as to improvements in the Albanian economy, since for instance, from 2000 to 2008, the real average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate was about 6 percent (World Bank 2010). Another factor is perhaps represented by tighter migration controls, particularly in Greece and Italy. Furthermore low level of return migration might have taken place as a result of the economic crisis (Gedeshi, De Zwager 2012)

⁴ In particular, in 2007, the rate of registered unemployment in the prefectures of Kukës and Shkodra was 30.2% and 22.7%, respectively (ILO, 2008).

3. Establish the rule of law and fight corruption,
4. Integrate Albania in the European Union and NATO.

The NSDI assigns high priority to policies focusing on the role of young people in the economy. This priority is spelt out by the crosscutting strategy on youth development, by the strategy on migration (2004) and by the employment strategy and vocational training 2007-2013.

Since November 2008, within the context of the One UN Programme, the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been providing technical assistance to the Government of Albania through the One UN Joint Programme *Youth Migration: Reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks*. The joint programme (JP), financed by the Government of Spain through the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) with a contribution of US\$3.3 million, aims to support the efforts of the Albanian government (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO), the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports (MTCYS), the Ministry of Science and Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)) to integrate policy priorities on youth employment and migration of the NSDI and the strategies on employment and vocational training, migration and youth development. Some of the key implementing partners include the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the National Employment Service (NES), the regional governments and in particular the regional councils of Shkodra and Kukes, the Albanian Investment Development Agency (AIDA), and the social partners.

The implementing partners have managed the Programme through an international Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) (for the period February 2009-June 2012), together with staff assigned by the four participating international organizations. The YEM programme was designed to offer some responses to the specific employment challenges of Albania, where strong and sustained economic growth (among the highest of all transition economies since the fall of the communist regime in 1990) did not always result in employment creation.

The main thrust of the YEM programme strategy revolved around two major components that combined a) the strengthening of the capacity of institutions (both and national and regional level) to design and implement youth-centred employment policies and programmes, with b) demonstration programmes directed at the creation of more and better jobs for young people and minimization of the risks of migration of disadvantaged youth from rural areas. The institutional development component was geared at increasing the effectiveness of labour market institutions, including the social partners, in addressing the youth employment challenge through better governance of the labour market and improved capacities to design, monitor, and evaluate policies, strategies, and action-oriented programmes on youth employment. The direct support component provided assistance for the development of

targeted employment programmes and information campaigns for disadvantaged youth in rural areas, especially those facing discrimination, informality, risks of irregular migration, and social exclusion in two regions of Albania, Kukes and Shkodra.

Such work also contributed to the achievement of the Outcomes of the One UN Programme (i.e. more transparent and accountable governance, and regional development), and in particular to Result 4.1.4 of the One UN Programme (2007-11), which aimed at expanding local economic development opportunities in target regions.

At the time of formulation, the expected results by the end of the Programme included: 1) improved capacity of the Albanian government to monitor youth labour market indicators; 2) an inter-institutional mechanism able to design, monitor and evaluate youth employment and migration policies; 3) a permanent partnership mechanism between the public and the private sectors; 4) an improved knowledge and understanding of integrated policies and measures to tackle the informal economy and their impact on migration; 5) coordination system for social pacts for youth employment at local levels; and 5) a system for mobilizing resources from Albanian communities abroad.

Joint Programme theory of change

The JP has originally established three outcomes, each supportive of ONE UN outcomes, and composed of different outputs as per the following summary description:

Outcome 1: Youth employment is a priority of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI)

Output 1.1: The capacity of policy makers to address the nexus between information employment and migration of young people enhanced.

Output 1.2: Migration, employment creation and youth policies of the NSDI aligned with labour market strategies and operationalised through Youth Employment National Action Plan (YE-NAP)

Output 1.3: Public-Private partnerships (PPPs) for youth employment established and contributing to the implementation of the priorities of the NAP

Outcome 2: Risks of migration are reduced through innovative employment programmes targeting disadvantaged youth in two pilot regions.

Output 2.1 : Youth employment coordination mechanism established in the regions of Kukes and Shkodra and responsible for managing the Employment Fund (EF)

Output 2.2 : Labour market programmes targeting youth at risk of migration implemented through the EF in the regions of Kukes and Shkodra

Output 2.3 : Youth awareness raised on employment and safe migration.

Outcome 3: The positive impact of migration is increased through enhanced linkages between Albanian communities abroad and home communities.

Output 3.1: Increased number of Albanian young graduates returning home after studies abroad

Output 3.2: Albanian communities abroad mobilised towards community development in the home county

The theory of change that underlines this JP is that the achievement of the specific outputs contributes to the stated outcomes, which in turn support the large ONE UN outcomes and national priorities. Three UN agencies – ILO, UNDP, UNICEF and the intergovernmental organisation IOM as member of the UN Country Team were actively engaged into the various outputs and outcomes in order to achieve the expected results of the JP.

During the course of the JP implementation some of the assumptions did not materialise and several changes were made to the initial JP design, which are documented in the Programme Management Committee minutes. These affected in particular Outcome 1, Output 1.1 and Outcome 2, Output 2.1. As a result some design changes lead to a revision of what needed to be done under both outputs 1.1. and output 2.1. For output 1.1 the nation-wide survey data results did not allow for an analysis between informal employment and migration. Despite this constraint, an inter-institutional working group on Labour Market Information was created and specific steps were taken to improve statistical data collection, generation, and analysis, specifically by introducing relevant questions on informal employment and migration of young people in the new LFS questionnaire.

For output 2.1, the enabling conditions and local capacities could not be found in one of the two regions, namely in Kukes, for setting up a Regional Employment Fund. As a result the mitigation strategy consisted in developing a Territorial Employment Pact for Youth that came as a different modality to deliver area-based employment promotion programmes. Thus, both tools are similar, the main difference being that the Fund finances employment projects that respond to the broad priority areas set by the REB, while the TEP partners to deliver in certain project areas identified by the REB within the options of the territorial audit.

Given initial delays in the implementation of the various components, the JP obtained an initial two months extension, and subsequently another six months no-cost extension. As a result the end of the JP is set as of 6th July 2012, some 44 months after the official starting date in November 2008.

III. Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This evaluation has been commissioned as an independent summative end of programme evaluation and is undertaken by a team of two external consultants.

The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess and evaluate different dimensions of joint programme (design, process and results). It addresses the performance of the YEM Programme in a comprehensive, systematic and objective manner in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The evaluation assesses the relevance of the programme objectives and approach as well as identifies the extent to which: i) the programme has achieved its planned objectives, ii) its strategy has proved efficient and effective, and iii) an anticipated long-term impact from the programme can be expected.

The evaluation addresses at the programme as a whole, identifies good practices and lessons to be used as a knowledge base for developing future technical assistance packages.

The unit of analysis or object of study for this evaluation is the Joint Programme, understood to be the set of components, outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs that were detailed in the joint programme document and in associated modifications made during implementation.

This final evaluation has the following specific objectives:

1. To appraise to what extent the joint programme has contributed to solving the needs and problems identified in the design phase.
2. To appraise joint programme's degree of implementation, efficiency and quality delivered on outputs and outcomes, against what was originally planned or subsequently officially revised.
3. To appraise to what extent the joint programme has attained development results to the targeted population, beneficiaries, participants whether individuals, communities, institutions, etc.
4. To appraise the joint programme contribution to the objectives set in their respective specific thematic windows as well as the overall MDG fund objectives at local and national level. (MDGs, Paris Declaration and Accra Principles and UN reform).
5. To identify and document substantive lessons and good practices with the aim to support the sustainability of the joint programme or some of its components.

The evaluation criteria are grouped according to the three levels of the programme as defined in the evaluation Terms of Reference as follows:

I: Design level:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the needs and interest of the people, the needs of the country and the Millennium Development Goals.

II: Process level

- **Efficiency:** Extent to which resources/inputs (funds, time, human resources, etc.) have been turned into results

- **Ownership of the process:** Level of effective exercise of leadership by the country's national/local partners in development interventions

III: Results level

- **Effectiveness:** Extent to which the objectives of the development intervention have been achieved.

Sustainability: Probability of the benefits of the intervention continuing in the long term.

Evaluation users

According to the evaluation TOR the final clients of the evaluation report are:

1. Policy makers (particularly the MoLSAEO), managers and practitioners of labour market and other institutions that partnered with the YEM Programme at central and local levels, as well as the social partners, the MDGF Secretariat, and the donor;
2. Project management and the relevant offices of the ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, including the Resident Coordinator Office.

Evaluability analysis

The Results Framework specifies the indicators, baseline, targets and means of verification of the project achievements at the output level and therefore is easily verified. The evaluation of the outcome levels requires a mostly qualitative analysis of the programme achievements. In terms of evaluability, it is important to identify what the programme has been able to accomplish in terms of bringing about positive change to support the national priorities. The evaluation analysis therefore focuses on the core results at the outcome level, particularly with a view to maintaining benefits accrued under the programme and providing linkages to longer-term interventions that will pursue similar objectives beyond the life of the JP. It does not repeat the tables and data contained in the JP reports.

It is important to understand the innovative and experimental nature of some of the programme outputs, which have been designed, implemented and piloted during the life of the JP, as a learning tool that may provide important

learning value for this type of intervention. The specific geopolitical situation of Albania, which is a middle income country in the early phases of pre-accession talks to the EU, is an important element of the analysis as any potential linkages and synergies that may be carried over from the JP into the pre-accession process (for instance through IPA funding) is a positive contribution towards sustainability of the results, some of which will only be obtained beyond the programme life-time (such as being able to prevent further migration through employment generation in targeted regions).

As already mentioned in the mid-term evaluation, the objectives of the JP were quite ambitious as regards to the time frame and resources that have been made available. The evaluation analyses the triggers and change factors that have positively or negatively influenced the JP implementation throughout its lifetime.

IV. Approach and methodology

The evaluation followed a participatory and inclusive approach and the MoLSAEO appointed a person to accompany the evaluation team as observer in line with an evaluation capacity development approach. The evaluation objectives demonstrate the summative nature of the evaluation as results are expected to feed into the learning process for this type of programme and generate knowledge and lessons that could be applied in the future. The evaluation was transparent and inclusive and followed the UNEG evaluation standards.

An initial presentation of the evaluation objectives, scope and approach on the first day of the field work could not be held given the lack of availability from various stakeholders.

On the last day of the evaluation a power point presentation was given with the preliminary findings, conclusions and lessons of the evaluation. This process allowed for validation of the preliminary findings and managing stakeholders expectations.

The evaluation use a mix method approach including quantitative and qualitative data collection, which offers significant benefits through the synergies created by their complementarity. However, the primary method was qualitative data collection technique, based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups as described hereafter. These qualitative approaches allowed interviewees to build their own context and made their views and opinions heard. The manner in which data was collected included:

- Literature and documentary review and analysis of programme documents as per bibliography included as annex;
- In-depth key informant interviews with primary project stakeholders. 38 semi-structured interviews were held with an

average time of 57 minutes per interview and almost 38 hours of interview time in total (see list of interviewees as annex);

- Two focus groups discussions with direct programme beneficiaries in the two target regions covered by the programme, in one case with six women beneficiaries of a Red Cross training on household and industrial sewing in Shkodra; the other with twelve male youth and men in a remote rural village named Grabriçe in Kukes where goat raising and milk sales is one of the projects implemented under the JP. Each FGD took approximately some 50 minutes;
- On-site observation was also a source of data collection

An initial documentary review was undertaken and served as a basis for preparing the inception report. The list of documents reviewed has been the Programme Management Committee (PMC) reports and minutes with their related technical annexes, the JP document, the YE-NAP and the Y-TEP. Not all necessary documents were available for review prior to the field mission, which limited the extent of the documentary review initially undertaken prior to the in-country fieldwork.

Another method was individual in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants in the capital Tirana as well as in the two target regions of Kukes and Shkodra. Focus groups with selected respondents and direct programme beneficiaries were held in the two regions of Kukes and Shkodra.

The evaluation further used observation as a means of collecting information during the fieldwork. To ensure that the findings are credible and substantiated, triangulation was used for each key finding (e.g. confirmation from three different sources).

Evaluation Agenda

The evaluation was undertaken under the following time frame and in line with the TOR:

- Documentary review and analysis by the evaluation team of the documentation received from the evaluation manager, and preparation of data collection instruments (mid-May 2012);
- 22 May to 26 May 2012 : Interviews in Tirana with primary stakeholders, MoLSAEO, NES, UN agencies, implementing partners;
- 26 May 2012 to 28 May 2012 Field work in the two target regions: Travel to Shkodra (26 May) and interview with regional primary stakeholders, travel to Kukes (27 May) and travel to remote rural areas for FGD. Interview with primary stakeholders in Kukes (28 May) and in Shkodra (28 May) and return to Tirana for further interviews;

- Submission of the inception report to the evaluation manager (29th May 2012);
- 29 May to 30 May 2012 : continue interviews with primary stakeholders in Tirana, preparation of the presentation on 30 May 2012;
- 31 May 2012 wrap-up and technical discussion with the JP team
- Next step : full draft evaluation report submitted by 15th June 2012 and final evaluation report by 25th June 2012 based on the consolidated comments made on the draft evaluation report. Given a slight delay in obtaining the consolidated comments the final report was delivered on 2nd July 2012.

Risks and limitations

In terms of documentation available, not all necessary documents were available prior to the fieldwork. In particular there were no reports on the outputs from three of the four international implementing partners involved in the JP. This required an additional effort from the evaluation team as information had to be constantly updated through both interviews and additional documentary collection, which detracted consultants from focusing solely on the actual analysis and interpretation.

Not all international implementing partners seem to be aware of the necessary documentary requirements for evaluations, and it is recommended that they should at least follow the existing guidelines from their own agency in relation to documentary evaluation requirements. All UN agencies have either a regional or central evaluation department that can provide guidance on M&E issues, in addition to the MDGF Secretariat who also has an M&E expert that can also provide advice as needed. It is not up to the evaluators to tell agencies which documents should be supplied to the evaluation team. This is also stipulated in the UNEG norms and standards and UN agencies are invited to apply these recommendations which are common to all evaluations.

The JP has a specific approach and structure, which are detailed in the MDG-F guidelines, and makes the JP structure different from the other regular UN programmes. Joint programmes are a novelty and as such are also experimental in nature. Some aspects and challenges are linked to the nature and design of the JP structure, as mentioned in the mid-term evaluation, and are not specific to Albania. Hence the need to separate clearly the analysis of JP design and management under MDGF guidelines (generic problems common to all JPs) from the specific manner in which in Albania the JP was designed and with regards to its implementation by the three participating UN agencies and the IOM (context specific challenges).

Another factor that was taken into consideration is the general effort that the country has recently been undertaking in a wide range of sectors, and the fact

that Albania is moving gradually closer to EU pre-accession. Nonetheless, as identified by the EU monitoring mission, additional efforts in the area of transparency and accountability are still warranted.

V. Review of implementation

The JP officially started in November 2008 for an initial period of 36 months. The JP CTA actually started work in mid-January 2009. From the start there was very strong support and ownership from the MoLSAEO, the donor through the Spanish Ambassador, and the UN Resident Coordinator. However, the initial period was also difficult because of the national legislative elections that were taking place in June 2009. Results were contested for several months and very late into 2009 a new Government was appointed. As a consequence, much time was lost because it was not possible to secure the commitment and ownership of some of the primary government counterparts, given the potential changes that could emerge from the elections.

In the light of these difficulties and among the various priorities that were identified in the work plan for the year, the elaboration of the YE-NAP was a major achievement that was only possible through the dedication, commitment and collaboration of the various stakeholders.

During the first year of the JP there was substantial research and analysis undertaken, in order to provide adequate data that could be used by the JP during the course of implementation and as a means to supporting the activities and the stated outcomes.

As indicated in the risks and limitations section, the JP is a new modality for the UN system and therefore requires a longer lead-time than other programme to become fully operational. Based on other MDGF evaluation experience, it is a common feature that JPs take normally up to one year to reach their cruising speed. In this context of Albania, the elections proved to be an additional and important cause of delay.

Nonetheless the first major achievement was the development of the Youth Employment National Action Plan (YE-NAP), which included a costing exercise showing total requirements amounting to US\$17.5 million. Of this amount the MoLSAEO already indicated that some 60% or US\$ 10 million was already secured through reallocation of existing programmes, leaving a funding gap of initially US\$ 7.5 million.

Another important constraint was the lack of credible statistics in Albania regarding employment data. This made the very technical approach used by the JP in the area of employment more difficult as it became evident that further capacity development was necessary within the National Institute of Statistics and within the MoLSAEO and partners in order to be able to provide the necessary employment statistics. After having undertaken an initial survey of

the employment statistics available, the JP rightly created an inter-agency working group on Labour Market Information (LMI), which brought together the various actors in a constructive and inclusive membership to review the LFS questionnaire and identify relevant definitions and indicators with regard to employment and labour market statistics.

An initial nation-wide survey was also undertaken to analyse the nexus between informal employment and migration. The survey can be used for further research. It represents the first attempt in this context for Albania and provides a general overview of the nexus between informal employment and migration in Albania. However there were differences between the IOM and the ILO regarding the methodology used for the survey leading to a less than optimal exploitation of the survey contents.

At the regional level progress was also slow. The initial design of setting up a Regional Employment Fund (REF) met a series of difficulties: at national level, an Employment Fund was foreseen since 1995 but failed to materialise. There is still to date no legislation that allows transfers from the national to the regional levels – again here the issue of accountability is a concern. Therefore the JP had to find a way to develop the REF in the absence of an enabling process at the national level. The REF could be established (even though with some delay) in the Shkodra region, which had a slightly broader and diverse industrial base and a more established local administration. The system used was to make the Regional Council accountable for the funding allocation that was transferred from the ILO directly to the Regional Council. Although an attempt to use the same approach was made in Kukes, it was not possible to establish a REF in Kukes. As a mitigation strategy, a Territorial Employment Pact (TEP) for Youth was established instead, through a collaborative approach. The TEP allowed supporting individual activities at the regional level based on the approval of the proposals from the Regional Council. However, unlike in Shkodra, the funding was directly allocated to the regional implementing partner and the Regional Council did not manage the entirety of the funds, although they were the ones to decide on the approval criteria of the interventions.

In terms of the migration component, several activities were undertaken: a nation-wide survey, an information campaign in schools including those in remote villages, and specific training for counsellors through the partnership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in various consulates and embassies. In addition five international conferences were held in Rome, New York, Brussels, London and in Athens up to the time of the evaluation, with another conference planned in Milan during June 2012. The purpose was to raise awareness of the diaspora and provide linkages both for investments into the country and facilitate potential returns as well as supporting safe migration.

At the national and at the regional level a number of innovative strategies were developed to provide some incentives to potential youth returns and for youth employment. Some of these included a trained and subsidized employment period through a Private-Public Partnership (PPP), in other cases students from

abroad were being matched with potential employers, and a range of opportunities were devised and tried on experimental basis to see which could be most useful in providing employment opportunities for the youth.

In terms of the individual outputs, the JP appears to have delivered most of the expected outputs. More importantly, at the outcome level, the effects of the JP in achieving outcome 1 and outcome 2 have been quite visible. The effects of outcome 3 are not yet felt, as it will require a longer time frame to achieve a measurable impact on migration flows and regional migration trends. The process has been started but cannot be achieved during the lifetime of the JP.

VI. Main findings

As mentioned under point III (purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation), the evaluation presents the findings according to the three levels:

I: Design level:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the needs and interest of the people, the needs of the country and the Millennium Development Goals.

II: Process level

- **Efficiency:** Extent to which resources/inputs (funds, time, human resources, etc.) have been turned into results

- **Ownership of the process:** Level of effective exercise of leadership by the country's national/local partners in development interventions

III: Results level

- **Effectiveness:** Extent to which the objectives of the development intervention have been achieved.

Sustainability: Probability of the benefits of the intervention continuing in the long term.

I. Design level findings

At the **design** level, the Joint Programme was conceived during 2007 and finalized during 2008. The actual title of the Joint Programme "Youth migration: Reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks" actually seemed to indicate a focus of the JP on migration, as shown by having two of the three outcomes dealing with migration aspects.

However the JP design does not address the relationship between youth employment and migration, and the relationships between outcome 1 (Youth employment is a priority of the NSDI) and outcome 2 (risk of migration reduced) or outcome 3 (positive impact of migration is increased). Thus outcomes should be prioritised in the time-line for implementation to reflect

which activities feed into the global JP objectives (for example, the need under outcome 1 to have good statistics to contribute to evidence-based policy making) since some of the activities mentioned under a specific outcome are also pre-conditions for the successful achievement of the other stated outcomes. The links between informal employment and migration are still insufficiently known and remain difficult to ascertain. The logic behind contents the Joint Programme (point 3.3. of the JP document) and the Results Framework (point 4. of the JP document) cover more aspects and dimensions than those that could be addressed throughout the life of the JP. As a result, the design appears to be overly ambitious both given the short-time frame of the JP (originally 3 years) and as regards to the resources available. The JP design gives the same importance to youth employment and migration issues, but does not clearly articulate how the different activities of outcome 1 are also supportive of the other outcomes, and some of the assumptions underlying the JP theory of change have not been tested or revised during implementation. As mentioned in the mid-term evaluation, the actual logic of the chain results process is not clearly spelled out in the project document, leading to a variety of interpretations regarding the expected results. Looking at the balance of the different components, the issue of employment became most obvious and visible whereas migration issues have been relegated to a secondary role. The JP results framework lists the activities and outputs, but does not capture the relationship between the various elements and the essentially quantitative nature of the indicators does not allow inferring the potential synergies from amongst the activities undertaken by the various partners, UN agencies and the IOM.

Be as it may, the title of the JP is actually quite different from the actual results achieved by the JP. In reality, reaping the benefits and mitigating the risks of youth migration is something that cannot possibly be obtained within such a short time frame and with the current level of resources allocated. Pull factors have yet to be established at the national and regional level in order to reap migration benefits, and the issue of remittances has been purposely left out of the JP component. At present there is anecdotal evidence of Diaspora and migrants' interest in investing into Albania through business development, but this is a slow and incipient process that has yet to bring fruits and for which consolidated data is still required.

In terms of the **JP management structures**, the design is made along the guidelines of all the MDG-F financed joint programmes. In Albania there have been four JPs, and the YEM is implemented through the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, with the support of the ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF. The posting of a Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) recruited and deployed by the ILO ensures overall JP management. Given the staffing changes during the period of the JP, there is no longer the institutional memory to explain the rationale behind the designation of a CTA to lead the JP. However one stakeholder indicated that this was due to the limited national capacity on matters of employment. However it should be noted that various options exist for JP management arrangements. In some cases the overall JP

management is ensured directly by the relevant Ministry (for example in the JP for Children, Food Security and Nutrition) with the posting of a national JP coordinator. The reason for posting a CTA to ensure coordination is not known, but with hindsight it appears that the level of technical competency brought about by the ILO CTA certainly contributed significantly to the national capacity development and played a key role in initiating some of the activities. Nonetheless it is useful to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of having an international staff from a UN agency as CTA, versus a national JP coordinator. On the positive side the experience of the CTA provided added value to the MoLSAEO, but it may have led to lower ownership in the JP implementation from the MoLSAEO and may have made inter-agency coordination a bit more difficult. In terms of JP structures, it is necessary to reflect on the primary objectives of the JP to define whether there is more added value in having an international coordinator (providing strong technical support and guidance and ensuring accountability) or in line with the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda opt for a national coordinator that will enhance national capacity and UN inter-agency coordination.

It is also important to consider whether the lead agency for the JP, in this case the ILO, is a resident agency or not. When lead agencies are not resident in the country additional responsibility and pressures are placed on the CTA considering the chain of command structure. While the JPs are under the overall responsibility of the UN RC, the CTA is in practice the JP coordinator, and the absence of in-country support and supervision from the CTA agency is both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand it gives additional room to develop innovative strategies based on the level of technical skills and know-how from the CTA, but on the other hand it means that the CTA has no fallback position within the organisation, and has to leverage support from its regional office. This can be a source of difficulties for JP implementation, particularly in regards to the different mandates of the various agencies. As a tripartite organisation, the ILO has a specific mandate and specific constraints. Conversely the other agencies such as UNDP or UNICEF have different limitations, mandates and operating procedures. The JP had to show some creative arrangements in some cases in order to circumvent the difficulties surrounding mandate limitations and some activities that were undertaken by the ILO or the UNDP were done more in line with mandate limitations than from technical considerations.

The JP was designed at the same time as Albania was one of the eight countries that volunteered as pilots in the UN reform agenda under the Delivering As One (DaO) process. As both the DaO and the JP coincided in time and space, there was no direct effect across the two processes. The JPs naturally flowed into the DaO and the planning framework of the ONE UN was used to integrate the four JPs that came into the portfolio of the UN system at the time.

The JP **results framework** supports directly the various ONE UN outcomes as mentioned in the JP document (result 1.1.4 and 4.1.4). It further also links into

the MDGs through MDG8 as mentioned in the programme document. As such the design supports both the wider planning frameworks of the ONE UN and those of the government through the NSDI and sector specific strategies such as the National Youth Strategy and the Employment Strategy (both 2007-2013).

Relevance

The JP was highly relevant to the needs of the people, to the national priorities, to the ONE UN framework at the time of its design. It remains relevant today, five years after its conception. Available data supports the relevance of the intervention logic as a series of products and processes that were started with the YEM are continuing even beyond the life of the JP. The implementation of the YE-NAP, specific activities such as the two projects that will be funded one by the Austrian (Vocational Training and Employment Activities) and the other by the Swiss Development Cooperation to replicate the TEP under a joint programme UNDP/ILO, are also proof of the continuing relevance of the JP focus on youth employment as a continuous priority for the government and the United Nations System. The two new projects are direct spin-offs from the YEM JP, while the project "IPA National Programme 2010 for Albania/Human Resources Development" also takes on board some of the issues raised by the YEM JP, including the provision of decentralised services at the regional level

In the new NSDI for the period 2013 – 2020, employment now appears as one of the priority areas for the government. This is further supported in the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation 2012 – 2016 under point 4.4.1. (Key state institutions and social partners are capable to develop and implement, in a fair and inclusive manner, employment policies and programmes that meet international standards).

While under the JP two YES (Youth Employment Service) centres were established in Shkodra and Kukes with the support of the UNICEF, additional YES centres are gradually being established in other regions of the country, outside of the YEM JP.

There is therefore clear evidence to support the on-going relevance of the YEM JP objectives over the short to medium-term.

The two target regions of Kukes and Shkodra have also been selected on a combination of their high level of migration and low formalised employment level, based on initial surveys and studies and in collaboration with the MoLSAEO.

The JP is aligned with the national priorities and the needs of the Albanian citizens. In particular with regard to the intense territorial mobility that over the last 20 years has affected the Albanian population after the collapse of the Communist regime. Poverty and unemployment are the main determinants of this process of territorial mobility, which has produced significant demographic changes in the Albanian population in the recent decades, because of the young

age of those who migrate. Currently the lack of decent employment opportunities, due also to the increase of the informal sector still continue to be the main push factor for the migration of young Albanians, especially for young male with low education, living in the most disadvantaged areas of the country.

In this framework the areas of intervention of the JP (youth, employment and migration) come in direct support to the NSDI and the crosscutting strategy on youth development, the strategy on migration (2004) and the employment strategy and vocational training (2007-2013), as well as the ONE UN framework. With regard to the former the JP's focus on youth employment and migration reflects well the vision of NSDI, that assigns high priority to policies focusing on the role of young people in the economy. Focusing on formal employment the JP highlights the firm commitment of the Government to tackle the informal economy, acknowledging that lack of decent work prospects is the main push factor for Albanians to migrate. Furthermore JP has supported the process of mobilization of high skilled human resources from abroad for their successful return and integration in the Albanian Labour Market (LM) through the internship schemes in line with National Migration Strategy (2004) and the Brain Gain Programme. In addition the JP focus on mitigating the risk of migration support the efforts of the Albanian government, which has placed key importance to the EU integration by defining the priorities in the National Plan for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and in the National Strategy on Development and Integration 2007-2013. EU accession has become extremely important in defining Albania's priorities, particularly as regards to migration and development connections. Emphasis is on promoting regular and safe migration, and fighting illegal migration, as well as promoting circular migration of Albanians and the mobilization of the Albanian Diaspora for the benefit of the Albania development.

At the onset the JP was placed into the ONE UN framework by contributing to the achievement of two of the five outcomes of the One UN Programme (i.e. more transparent and accountable governance, and regional development to reduce disparities) and to promote partnerships for decent and productive work for youth (MDG8) through joint action. In particular the JP contributed to result 1.1.4 on migration management that focuses on minimizing risks of youth migration through better alignment of employment and migration policies; and to result 4.1.4, which aimed to expand economic development to reduce disparities in three pilot underdeveloped regions, Shkodra, Kukes and Lezhe, through the promotion of economic initiatives at local level, focusing on employment, income generation and farmers' productivity.

While conceived in 2008, the areas covered by the JP remain today part of the national priorities. These are included in the new national strategy 2013 – 2020, which is in preparation, and are also in the 2012 – 2016 programme of cooperation between the Government of Albania and the United Nations signed on October 24, 2011.

The JP design is ambitious considering resources and time frame, as reflected in the mid-term evaluation, making it particularly important to manage stakeholders' expectations.

The approach and strategies used by the JP proved to be conducive to obtaining results. However a key factor was the responsiveness to changing situations (e.g. elections) and being able to adjust the approach to the local context through mitigating strategies (e.g. REF in Kukes)

The JP high degree of relevance is felt both at the national and at the regional levels.

Gender aspects in the programme design

Gender equality is a cross cutting issue. Review of the various documents shows that the JP maintained a participatory and gender sensitive approach and gave special emphasis to disadvantaged women especially in rural areas. This is in line with priorities of NSDI to increase female participation in the labour market and at all levels of economic and social life. Anecdotal evidence of gender equality was found with a majority of women (36 versus 28 men) amongst key informants interviewed by the evaluation team.

II. Process level findings

It is very difficult to actually analyse the **efficiency** of the Joint Programme. Given the diversity of outputs and activities, an analysis of expenditures on a basis of cost per capita would not yield very useful information for a variety of reasons: first, given the experimental nature of a high number of activities, many of which were innovative and had not been tried in the past. As a result the start-up costs are always higher for targeted small-scale pilots than for large-scale activities that have developed a critical mass. Secondly, each UN agency has received funding allocation in accordance to the actual planned activities that were to be implemented. However, the rationale for the costing of each agency's activities is not supplied and can be subject to discussion. Most of the activities are budgeted on the basis of estimates of the various activities expected to take place. As each UN agency has its own budget and reporting requirements and guidelines, it is very difficult to obtain an aggregate picture of the costs involved in the JP implementation, over and beyond the JP delivery rate. In the case of JP, the delivery rate is actually calculated on the basis of the commitments made (not actual expenditures) by UN agency and the IOM. There is no possibility to undertake either a global budget analysis for the JP or a cost-benefit analysis under these conditions. In the March 6th 2012 CTA report an indication of the total commitment of the JP of US\$ 2.997.521 is mentioned, which represents 90% of the overall JP budget.

What can be stated is that over the limited number of direct JP beneficiaries, an important dynamic consultative process has been established in key national

priority areas. There has been an important change of mindset both at the national level and at the regional level on youth employment issues (see level III findings hereunder for details). The results and effects of the JP go therefore much beyond the number of direct beneficiaries and should be seen in the light of the longer-term, with pre-accession to the EU as a key driver for the country.

One aspect that needs to be highlighted is the experimental nature of the YEM JP in fostering the collaboration and dialogue among UN Agencies, line Ministries and civil society, through joint planning and implementation (working groups, coaching, training).

The new working methodology established between Ministries represents a trigger for accessing the IPA fund and the European Social Fund over the longer term.

In terms of **timeliness** the JP has been running beyond the initial schedule for two reasons. One, due to an overly optimistic and linear JP planning which did not foresee any constraints or provide any mitigation strategy for existing limitations (such as the elections during the first year of implementation). Two, due to the fact that there is a tendency to minimise the amount of preparatory work in terms of socialisation, communication and partnership building required in JPs. It must be mentioned that no prior experience or knowledge of Joint Programmes existed in Albania, as all four JPs started at the same time and concurrent with the ONE UN process. So even a clear understanding of what a Joint Programme is among the various UN agencies was something that required some lead-time.

As a result the delays that were shown in terms of implementation of the JP are more the consequence of the overly ambitious time frame that was originally envisaged and the underestimation of the amount of preparatory work required to actually develop the JP outputs and implement the various activities.

The JP has a very strong **ownership of the process** from the MoLSAEO. Since the beginning, the deputy minister has been participating in all PMCs and JP related events. The development of the NAP and the reallocation of the majority of the required funding for the NAP by government sources is a promising show of ownership. The evaluation did not receive any evidence from the MoLSAEO about the actual status and availability of the US\$ 10.5 million that the government has committed to the NAP, but requested this financial information from various government sources.

At the regional level, the regional councils are key partners that have been given responsibility for their local development through the use of the REF in Shkodra and the development and implementation of the TEP in Kukes. A network of regional actors that can contribute to the issue of youth employment has been established in both regions, with the Regional Councils playing a key role in each of the regions. Local authorities and in particular regional council

Chairmen have shown strong commitment to the JP as well as expressing their satisfaction with the activities developed in the region. With the May 2011 elections that have taken place in the regions, some changes have occurred and it will be important to maintain the support and commitment from the chairmen and the various regional partners in this last phase of the JP implementation, particularly looking at the issue of sustainability beyond the life of the JP itself.

It is also important to mention that no other regional fund appears to exist in Albania. The lack of proper legislation has repeatedly been mentioned by the MoLSAEO as a constraining factor, something that should be addressed in the next phase of the UN support to the country. Therefore the need to ensure a common understanding by the regional players, through a sound communication and outreach campaign, was a key element to bring regional players around the table and adopt a common position. The experimental nature of the regional mechanisms created by the JP means that strong coordination and communication efforts were warranted to achieve the development of a common view on the JP and how it could positively affect regional development in both Shkodra and Kukes. This means creating synergies not only amongst the regional council members, but also across the line ministries that are key players in regional development such as the Ministry of Agriculture, of Education, in addition to civil society organisations. The lead-time necessary to pass the message and create the mechanisms for the JP implementation was much longer than initially envisaged, in part given the regional elections in 2011. As a result, the individual projects funded under the RETF in Shkodra are still under implementation, while in Kukes activities have come to an end in June 2012.

In terms of donor ownership, the former Spanish Ambassador was always present and actively contributed to the PMC meetings. Spanish support and commitment to this JP was very strong and Spain seemed to have a keen interest in this JP, with actual recommendations and suggestions on improvements made by the Ambassador and captured in the PMC minutes. As the JP comes to an end and a new Ambassador has taken up the post, the ownership has been somewhat lessened since the JP was already nearing completion and given the fact that no further additional funding appears to be forthcoming from Spain.

From the UN Resident Coordinator, there was also a strong commitment to (all four) Joint Programmes. The UN RC always attended the PMC, and a strong ownership was shown and reflected in the PMC minutes. The change of Resident Coordinator did not trigger a lower ownership of the JP. However the fact that the JP was well on its way to completing its implementation made the close supervision and support that was given at the beginning of the JP somewhat less necessary as things unravelled by themselves according to the established work plans.

III. Results level findings

The JP has achieved various results throughout its extended life of 44 months, since its official starting date in November 2008. Given the limited time spent in the field for the evaluation, it was not feasible to verify each and every activity that took place during the JP. As a result the primary unit of analysis was placed on the achievement of the outcomes, both at the national level and at the regional level in both target provinces. The JP monitoring reports provide the details regarding the outputs achieved and the evaluation was able to review some, but not all, of the outputs produced. There is no added value in reproducing the monitoring tables already provided by the JP. In particular, the need for flexibility and responsiveness from the JP to the constraints and limitations faced during implementation means that some of the initial activities or outputs had to be reformulated. But keeping in mind the strong ownership and commitment of the MoLSAEO throughout the life of the JP, the changes were always done in a way to keep steering the JP towards the achievement of the stated outcomes, particularly as regards to the employment component of the JP.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness must be seen at the different levels: i) national, ii) regional, and iii) across the range of UN agencies involved.

i) At the national level the JP achieved the following results:

- Attitudinal change regarding employment and migration as multidimensional issues, which are not specific only to an institution but concern different actors at different levels. The implementation of the programme was determined to a large degree by the participation and cooperation of the different stakeholders. The JP has triggered a collaborative working culture within different institutions for the development of partnership between actors at different levels (government, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, and young people themselves) to elaborate and implement strategies, in order to give young people a concrete chance to find a job and hope for a better future.
- Based on the above, improved collaboration, knowledge sharing and increased dialogue between line ministries that were used to vertical reporting only.
- Capacity development of Labour Market (LM) institutions to integrate and operationalise national policy priorities on youth employment through the development of a NAP, as a result of a joint collaboration from policy makers in different ministries, NES, INSTAT, as well as workers' and employers' organizations.

- Strong ownership, capacity development across a range of technical areas (such as LMI, LFS, others), but also in terms of facilitating inter-sectoral coordination on youth employment issues.
- The establishment of the interdisciplinary working group on Labour Market Information was an innovative tool for consultation in the definition of a methodology for the identification of common criteria that allowed collecting reliable data necessary for the policy makers and the labour market actors and necessary to increase the credible evidence that should underpin the country's policy. The joint collaboration has contributed to avoiding data duplication among different institutions and has improved the capacity of the Albanian government to monitor youth labour market indicators and thus to develop better-tailored interventions and programmes. With regards to output 1.1 "The capacity of policy makers to address the nexus between informal employment and migration of young people enhanced" the inter-institutional working group on Labour Market Information Analysis (LMIA), led by MoLSAEO and INSTAT, has introduced in the LFS survey several new questions, as well as a Youth Module in order to capture informal employment, gender equality, and decent work conditions. Furthermore many new indicators on youth labour market have been provided, in order to produce reliable data for policy-making purpose. From 2011 onwards, the regular LFS provides an increasing amount of quality data, which in the future may support evidence-based youth employment policy.
- The NAP is one of the most important and strategic outcomes of the YEM JP. It is the result of the joint work and collaboration of the policy makers at ministries of Education and Science; Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports; Economy, Trade and Energy; Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection; Foreign Affairs; the National Employment Service of Albania, the National Statistical Institute and employers and workers organizations, coordinated by the Employment Policy Department of MoLSAEO. It was the result of year-long capacity building programme that comprised different steps including the review of key labour market indicators, policies and institutions for youth employment; the identification of key problems for policy prioritisation; the development of a framework to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to youth employment policy development; the design of objectives, targets and outcomes as well as the respective responsibilities of lead institutions; and the setting of costs, timeframe, coordination mechanism and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. A very comprehensive approach was taken in the development of the NAP. The development of the NAP identified the policy options at national and local level to address youth employment as well as the means of implementation.
- The development of Y-TEP represents an institutional innovation based on consultation and negotiated planning of over 40 public and private actors at national and local level, that came together on developing employment objectives, with a special emphasis on the transition to formalization of

young workers and enterprises and on job creation for men and women. The Y-TEP has triggered a change process, by requiring the creation of a Regional Employment Board (REB) in the Kukes Region, and by supporting the leading role of regional authorities, which represent an important step forward in the process of administrative decentralization. It contributed to capacity development of local actors in reinforcing their ability to provide services and to express suggestions and concerns about the impact of current policies at local level. At the same time, thanks to the Y-TEP, central institutions have gained a better comprehension of the dynamics and challenges of the local labour markets.

- The TEP objectives revolve around 942 “measurable” jobs to be created/formalized within one year. An important element that allows measuring the quality of the intervention is its ability to trigger institutional changes, given the consultative nature of the social interaction modalities among the community members. Furthermore it has encouraged the establishment of consolidated networks that need to be institutionalised through the Regional Employment Board. The experience of dialogue and consultation feeds also the awareness and confidence on the feasibility of replicating the TEP model. The TEP interventions come in support of policies targeting the development and formalization of the agricultural sector by promoting the formalization of small and micro enterprises, especially in the rural and remote areas. This is also due to a more systematic coordination among national government actors: in particular, it supported the Ministries Labour, Agriculture, and Finance to modify the criteria for accessing resources under the PARD, *Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development*, as PARD beneficiaries were required to submit their social insurance certificate. According to a technical note from the CTA to the MoLSAEO, these legislative changes could lead to the formalisation of the estimated 8,000 jobs in agriculture, reducing by as much as US\$ 1.3 million the actualised social contribution losses to the ISS.

The overall development of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for youth employment created innovative collaboration between public and private sector for the implementation of the work training programmes targeting disadvantaged youth, as well as internship schemes addressed to Young Albanians graduating from foreign universities. An innovative aspect of the PPPs is related to the combination of the various actors involved in provided employment related services. The National Employment Service (NES) and its local branches as front-line service providers, as well as a wide variety of actors like employers’ organizations, chambers of commerce and other private sector intermediary organizations, trade unions, vocational training institutions, and representative of youth organizations and youth networks all partnered at different stages of various PPP schemes. An interesting aspect of the PPPs is the involvement of a private sector intermediary organization, in this case

ABCCI⁵, that represent the private business interests, not only in the identification of existing vacancies, but also in the overall implementation and monitoring of this measure. The introduction of this broker in the relationship between NES and private businesses has allowed the NES role to focus entirely on the provision of employment services and has increased the capacity of the programme to promote employment by matching youths skills with the required standards of private businesses, in addition to adding a check-and-balance system in public-private relations.

- Youth organisations such as the National Youth Council are also active participants in the JP, as they actively engaged with the trade unions and the Ministry of Education in a massive multi-media national campaign on Youths' Rights at Work (YR@W). Based on the Albanian adaptation of the ILO manual for the promotion of the rights of young people in the World of Work, the YR@W, the campaign was officially launched on May 1st 2012 and will unfold until the end of the year (well beyond the end of YEM). The evaluation team was able to attend a television broadcast at NTV where a group of youth discussed youth employment, migration, and other issues of interest to Albanian youth. Noteworthy that the airtime is being provided free of charge given the important social dimension of the TV programme.
- Thanks to the PPPs 328 disadvantaged youth are placed on work-training programmes; a mapping of Albanian students is available on-line through an interactive tool at the website www.punesimirinor.com; a revolving database of existing vacancies in the private sector is available; and 100 young Albanian students/recent graduates from abroad are placed in internship scheme.
- The JP has supported the process of mobilization of high skilled human resources from abroad for their successful return and integration in the Albanian LM through the internship schemes. The scheme of internship is implemented in a context of close partnerships with the private sector and a local association, the Albanian Students Abroad Network (ASAN), who has developed a wide database of Albanian students abroad and has established an extended relation with private sector. In the process of matching of young Albanians studying abroad with private companies seeking young recruits through an internship programme, about 738 students registered into the existing website, of which 230 have applied and 100 have been selected for the internship experience. The attempts to attract young Albanian students and graduates need to be seen in the framework of Brain Gain Programme of UNDP and the Government of Albania that since 2006 has addressed the issue of brain drain that has affected post communist Albania. The intention is to facilitate the employment of Albanian graduates

⁵ Comment made by ILO : It should be mentioned that ABCCI was not pre-selected but there was an open tender where all private sector intermediary organizations with a broad membership of enterprises were invited to participate

from abroad in public administration and academia as well as in the private sector. There are unexploited synergies between Brain Gain and the YEM JP as Brain Gain could easily be expanded (it is currently based on the TOKTEN model that UNDP has been using in numerous countries for the past forty years) to encompass not only highly qualified nationals but also recent graduates and mid-level manager positions. More could be done in the future by expanding the scope of the Brain Gain programme.

- The Active Labour Market Measures, implemented in the context of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), through the combination of on-the-job training with classroom training and wage subsidy are relevant measures, designed to achieve a dual objective: enhance the labour capacities of disadvantaged unemployed youth, making them more attractive to the employers as well as providing incentives to the enterprises to recruit and retain the participants. In the past, these kinds of measures had been adopted separately by NES, but never in combination with each other, and this integrated approach is one of the added values of the JP.

The ALMM: an example of measurable results

333 disadvantaged unemployed jobseekers were selected to participate in work-training program in 37 enterprises during the period of December 1, 2010 – February 1, 2011. 328 entrants started the program. Out of 328 entrants, 64.6 % were female, fulfilling the criteria or having at least 60 percent females as program participants. 313 participants (95%) of 328 entrants completed the three-month training. The number of dropouts that were not replaced by other participants is 4.6%. At the end of the training, 312 (95%) individual beneficiaries signed employment contracts with their employees. Sixty-one enterprises applied to participate in the ALMM program. The kinds of industries that dominated among applicants were manufacturing, construction and food processing. 29 (47.5%) of the applicants were micro enterprises; 21 (34.%) were small enterprises; 7 (11%) were medium size enterprises, and 4 (6.5%) were large enterprises. 50 of the applicant enterprises were eligible to participate in the program. Out of those, 37 (74%) mainly small and medium enterprises were approved for participation in the programme. At the end of five months, 32 enterprises have retained all trainees with legal employment contracts and five enterprises have retained less than 100% of their trainees.

- IOM information campaign on regular migration, risks of smuggling and trafficking in human beings targeted disadvantaged youth in the regions of Shkodra and Kukes, but is also expected to have a wider impact in the country thanks also the TV spot produced in the framework of the project, which was directed to Albanian nationals, in particular youth, to seek information on regular migration in the perspective of visa liberalisation in order to prevent consequences associated with irregular migration, and the risks of human trafficking. The IOM information campaign activities was carried out in synergy with those of UNICEF under the Youth Employment

Service (YES) Centres and the publication materials were distributed to a large number of students in rural and urban schools.

- The JP has started to create the linkages between migration and development through the capacity building of Albanian Diplomatic Missions in the destination countries of Albanians emigrants. IOM adopted an inclusive methodology through an information campaign aimed to create trust on the Albanian institutions, increase communication between authorities and migrants' communities and inform them about concrete investment opportunities in Albania, thanks to the involvement of AIDA. Nevertheless the effects of migration activities abroad aimed to create synergies with Diaspora may only be measured over time. With regard to the outreach activities with the Albanian Diaspora, six workshops have been organized in New York, London, Rome, Brussels, Athens, and Milan; following the New York conference some representatives of SIVA partners, a real estate company, co-owned by a representative of the Albanian Diaspora undertook a visit to Albania and had a series of meetings with the Prime Minister to discuss investment opportunities in the tourism sector. This is a positive result of showing increasing communication between national and local authorities and Diaspora representatives⁶.
- The JP has done the first steps to address the linkages between the informal employment and youth migration, through measures targeting not only urban but especially rural young workers in the informal economy to address the transition from informal to formal economy and the main push factors of migration. Given the size and complexity of the migration problem, significant wider impacts are unlikely to rapidly appear and should be analysed over the longer-term while support to the on-going efforts is maintained over time.
- The establishment of the Youth Employment Services (YES) is a new function of the Regional Employment Services of Shkodra and Kukes towards job seeking youth. YES centres provide not only labour market information, but also individual counselling services on a range of subjects from preparing a CV and entering the labour market to social counselling on a needs-based case. UNICEF has supported the development of national standards on counselling, which are shared and consulted accordingly with MoLSAEO. More than 35 specialists of Employment Offices of Puka, Shkodra and Malesia e Madhe have been trained. The provision of youth focused services at the Regional Employment Office allows state structures to strengthen services to youth with regard to employment and migration.

⁶ IOM reported another positive result at the Conference that took place in Italy (Milan) on 9 June 2012. The Conference was organized with the great support of the Association of the Albanian Entrepreneurs in Italy (established in March 2012). Following the Conference, AssoAlbania organized a visit of a group of politicians and businessmen from the region of Tuscany in Italy to Albania (in Tirana, Shkodra and Lezha) to promote economic cooperation between Albania and Italy.

ii) More specifically at the regional level in Kukes and Shkodra the JP obtained the following results:

- Strengthening the capacity of regional actors to mitigate difficulties and cooperate together on issues like youth employment and migration, which represent the priorities of the two pilot regions of the JP.
- The JP presented innovative and experimental approaches consistent with the needs of the people, and that of the regions, given the high migratory and unemployment rate that affect both Shkodra and Kukes regions.
- At the regional level the various training, internships, work programmes and counselling and coaching activities show a good potential for significantly improving the pro-active tackling of youth unemployment based on further NAP and/or TEP implementation.
- The JP has changed attitude as regards to the relationship between employment, youth and migration, just as it has at the national level. A new approach to more collective and inclusive collaboration for regional development through youth and employment is being consolidated through the JP. Context specific models (REF in Shkodra and TEP in Kukes) for each region based on local constraints and strengths have been developed.
- In Kukes the specific conditions did not allow the implementation of a Regional Employment board and a TEP was developed as a mitigation strategy. This is an example of good responsiveness from the JP management, turning an initial failure into a success story. Noteworthy that the TEP are now being extended to other regions of the country beyond the JP and that Tirana is showing an interest in a municipal TEP.
- The JP has strengthened the capacity of Shkodra regional board to manage funds through the establishment of Regional Employment Board also in view of the decentralization process. The Shkodra RETF was designed along the model of the European structural funds, such as the European Social Fund (ESF).
- Visible results of dissemination and outreach activities through YES centers with anecdotal evidence of a few cases of youth who were informed through the IOM awareness raising campaign and came to register at the YES centers.
- Interesting innovative partnerships with new linkages were developed to provide employment (various forms of training and employability schemes tested through different actors). Training for youth can trigger a mechanism of incentive to acquire skills, especially when coupled with the possibility of employment and in particular for those coming from disadvantaged social background and low educational achievement.

A concrete example of innovative partnership was seen with Bella Complex in Shkodra, a women and men underwear factory initially set up by youth owners, now employing 2.070 persons with a workforce of an average age of 24⁷. The company initially signed up to PPP for 30 workers to be trained on industrial machinery, but after completing the training and work programme, only seven workers remain. The high turnover is in part due to the effects of migration. However the company is interested in pursuing collaboration with this system but given the low retention rate a higher number of people should be trained versus those that would remain in their job, a good ratio being 2 to 1 (2 trainees for every job opening). It was further indicated that the project would yield better results if the agreement subscribed by the company would take into consideration the seasonality of the production lines and offer a large number of job seekers at the peak periods. The added value for the company was in part to obtain a relatively large number of employable youth that could be hired at the same time.

- The demonstrated relevance and usefulness of the YES centres has led to the development of three additional centres outside of the JP that were developed with the support of the UNICEF along the model used for Shkodra and Kukes.
- In Shkodra the Regional Council approved 7 projects as a result of their first call for proposals. The beneficiaries' number in total 305: 110 for Malesia e Madhe (63 of which are female); 40 reside in Puke (25 of which are female); 155 in Shkodra (84 of which are female). 214 beneficiaries are between 15-29 years old. 175 are employed and 130 are formalised employment cases. 77% of the beneficiaries are from rural areas. In Kukes, under the TEP 12 interventions, over 942 people benefited from the 6 service lines and all activities finished on 5th June 2012.

iii) At the level of the three UN agencies and the IOM, the JP has tried to develop connections among the four international implementing partners with varying degrees of success.

The ILO and the UNDP were able to develop a partnership by both having JP focal points in UNDP work directly with the ILO CTA, and through a division of labour that took into consideration resources, comparative advantages and primarily mandate constraints when developing PPPs or other projects implemented in partnership.

The IOM and UNICEF also had good collaboration with the JP management, but their activities were less dependent on collaboration with the other agencies. As a result, the support of UNICEF to YES was essentially done through partners such as Centre for Research and Development that worked at field level in the establishment of the YES and with the relevant government ministries.

⁷ data supplied by the company owner during the interview

Therefore while some anecdotal evidence points to the fact that some youth that were targeted by the IOM campaign actually came to the YES centre for support, UN agencies and the IOM have mostly worked on their own activities and according to their own procedures. There is a clear difference between a Joint Programme in which the activities are undertaken separately even if under an overall coordination of the CTA (but who has no authority to change any of the UN agencies' work plans) and an integrated programme where each activity creates a multiplier effect to the output level and the collective outputs support the various outcome statements. The YEM is a Joint Programme and has a certain level of information sharing and coordination, but it is not an integrated programme. An integrated programme would also require a single budget and a single implementation procedure. Nonetheless with very few exceptions the work undertaken by each of the UN agencies and the IOM has contributed to the relevant outputs and has been addressing identified needs in a responsive manner.

Sustainability

Amongst the strongest points of the JP is the high value of developing national and regional capacity on interventions similar to those funded by the EU. In context of shrinking bilateral funding, IPA is a reference and national capacity to implement similar interventions is a very strong point for sustainability of the benefits. Similarly at the regional level, the model used as basis for the REF is the European Social Fund, which means that the Shkodra Regional Council will have the know-how required to implement this kind of project.

A number of activities and spin-off projects and replication are taking place, both through bilateral funds (Austria and Switzerland) and also government commitments both at national and regional levels (LFS, statistical collection to inform policy making, expansion of TEP to other regions, NES continuing support to YES after UNICEF funding has ended, etc.).

The NAP offers some feasible interventions that contribute to the sustainability of YEM interventions, identifies specific lessons learned and replicable models, and builds on some of the YEM achievements to launch that to a larger scale. It is also reported to re-allocate US\$ 10.5 million from on-going government and donor commitments to implementation, with a funding-gap of some US\$ 7 million. However the two above-mentioned projects funded by the Austrian Development Agency and the Swiss Development Cooperation will also lead to narrowing the funding gap as both projects come under the NAP framework (one on vocational training, the other one a joint project UNDP/ILO on replication and expansion of the TEP model).

The existing website regarding the matching of recent graduates abroad seeking employment opportunities in Albania will be turned over to NES, in order to allow continuity of the services through the commitment of a public institution in providing matching between student abroad and potential

employment opportunities in the country. There could be added value in integrating this into the on-going Brain Gain programme given the existing synergies between the two.

YES will be included within the REO and there is an on-going ownership of the NES through integration of the YES activities as part of their regular work even beyond the end of the personnel funded by UNICEF. The new location of the YES in Shkodra, in the building of the Regional Employment Service, also provides a continuation of the services through the staff of the REOs.

Another positive indicator of sustainability is that additional funding beyond the JP is already being channelled through the Regional Employment Board in Shkodra, as the representative of Emilio-Romagna region of Italy indicated that 20 grants would be given for youth employment to 20 enterprises, as indicated in the REB meeting minutes of 15th June 2012 that were forwarded to the evaluation team, together with the consolidated comments on the draft evaluation report.

In regards to the IOM component, two aspects as concerns sustainability of programme results also must be underlined:

1. The programme paid special attention to capacity strengthening and promotion of Sportele Migracioni' role in all regional and local employment offices, as the public entity where information on safe migration, return and reintegration in the country, can be obtained by youth (and population in general) on a long-term basis. Sportele Migracioni are public structures and as such they will continue to perform their functions in the future too.
2. The recommendations formulated during the programme outreach activities with the Albanian Diaspora, will be reflected in the new country Strategy on Migration 2013-2018 as discussed in the Inter Institutional Working Group meeting held in February 2012, responsible for the formulation of the new strategy. Once these recommendations are reflected they will be translated into actions and progress will be monitored within the overall monitoring of the new Action Plan on Migration.

As a result the evaluation considers that there are many elements that point out to a strong likelihood of maintaining a positive dynamic in the key areas of the JP, provided ownership and commitment from the different parts is maintained over the longer-term.

Impact of the JP

The JP has contributed to trigger an on-going change process across a range of national and regional actors, enhancing understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of youth employment, formalization, inclusiveness and technical capacity to address youth employment challenges. This is a key, albeit non-technical, result. All government staff interviewed both at the national level and in the regions pointed this out as one of the main JP achievements.

Overall the JP has obtained some very good results, particularly for the first two outcomes. On the other hand, there may be unexploited synergies with the third outcome (positive impact of migration is increased through enhanced linkages between home communities and Albanian communities abroad), that can be developed further in due time as the process of formalising employment, youth and migration is gradually given more importance within government priorities for the next planning period 2013 – 2020 and results from this JP are pursued by the NAP and other planning instruments. Many aspects have the potential to be more closely linked in future interventions (e.g. Outreach and dissemination activities visible in YES registrations) and also in terms of linking activities among UN agencies and the IOM (not always the case). Certainly the JP has had a catalytic role in terms of changing and expanding stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of youth, employment and migration issues and addresses an existing gap.

Looking at the individual components, the first outcome to make youth employment a priority of the National Strategy for Development Integration (NSDI) has largely been successful. This is shown both by the adoption of the Youth Employment National Action Plan that was foreseen in the JP document, but also in the fact that the new NSDI will focus on employment as one of the priority areas of government. The NAP is currently being implemented, but there is still a need for government to supply the data about the level of resources it has allocated to the NAP since no data has been supplied to the evaluation team. A specific component of this outcome was the creation of new alliances through the concept of public-private partnerships geared towards youth employment, which included a wide range of experimental and innovative designs, some of which have the potential for future replication.

Scant statistics on employment were available at the start of the JP. Through the creation of the inter-institutional working group on Labour Market Information (LMI), a new process was triggered by which the different actors (INSTAT, MoLSAEO, NES) could actually come together to share concepts and definitions on the different labour market indicators, and this was the first time that such a horizontal connection was made from amongst the government players, that were used to vertical reporting with little horizontal linkages. This is important in order to adopt a common approach and understanding across government departments, sectors and ministries.

Another important achievement was the development of the Labour Force Survey with improved questions, particularly on informal employment, something that was not done before in Albania. In 2011, a nation-wide census was carried out, and the MoLSAEO should be able to obtain the relevant information from the LFS and the census in order to feed into evidence-based policy making. A Memorandum of Understanding has been prepared and needs to be signed by the MoLSAEO and the INSTAT regarding the provision of statistical information, so that the MoLSAEO will receive updated information and statistics in an anonymous format that can be used to further inform policy

making. Other institutions are now pursuing similar agreements (based on this sample MoU) with INSTAT to expand the access to labour market data and other information.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The JP has largely been successful in contributing to the anticipated results. Overall achievements are positive, despite constraints and an overly optimistic time frame that did not consider the lead-time for implementation.

A number of initial difficulties (scant informal employment knowledge, access and reliability of statistical information, lack of possibility of developing REF in Kukes, missing national level legislation) were addressed in innovative and constructive modes and most are in the process of being solved. Concrete results have been achieved including in terms of employment creation as per the data from the JP results framework, although the success of the JP goes beyond the quantitative data of employment figures and direct beneficiaries of the various JP interventions.

The successful implementation of the program is determined to a large degree by the participation and cooperation of different stakeholders about key issues, such as youth employment and migration, which are not specific only to an institution but concern different actors. The JP has triggered a cooperation working culture within various institutions for development of partnership between actors at different levels (government employers, worker representatives, civil society and young people themselves) to develop and implement strategies that give to young people a concrete chance to find a job and hope for a better future, which is consistent with NSDI priorities on employment, migration and youth development.

VIII. Recommendations

The evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR) do not explicitly solicit recommendations from the evaluation team, given that such implementation modality of Joint Programme through the MDG-F is unlikely to repeat itself. Nonetheless the evaluation team does have a few targeted recommendations that are made with the objective of improving further and maintaining the positive changes that have taken place during the JP. Some may apply beyond the immediate future of Albania and can be analysed in a broader perspective.

For the Government of Albania and MoLSAEO

An important recommendation is to **provide data and documented evidence of NAP implementation**. It is understood that some actions are being implemented, but **documented evidence has not been supplied to**

the evaluation team⁸, particularly in relation to the use of the reportedly already secured US\$ 10.5 million for the implementation of the NAP.

It is important to address **legislative framework** to channel funds from national to regional level also in view of the decentralization process. It is also important to develop a clear definition of the informal economy since there is a need by the national institutions dealing with statistical data, to work on a clear and national definition of informal employment.

Longer term monitoring is required to appraise effects of migration flows as well as of remittances and migrants' investments in Albania. It would be useful that with the IOM some longer-term monitoring system be developed that would built on the JP achievements which are only a first step. On-going work within the GoA migration strategy should be able to address this need for better linkages on the monitoring of the migration cycle, including Albanians abroad and internal migration in Albania⁹.

Statistical information supply is necessary for evidence-based policy making in MOLSAEO. Follow-up on the MoU between MoLSAEO and INSTAT is necessary to ensure smooth information flow is taking place.

⁸ The ILO makes the following comment: "Both TEP and SH-RETF are part of the NAP (Output 1.1.5). So is the national campaign on Youths Rights @Work that is implemented the Albanian Youth Council. So are some of the interventions currently implemented through the IPA 2010 project. Of that there is documentary evidence." The following comment was also received from the Deputy Minister :

"As a matter of fact, the Government of Albania and its partners, with the leadership of MoLSAEO, have already started the implementation of the NAP in 2011. I could give you several examples, Output by Output throughout the NAP. I will make reference for instance to NAP Outcome 1, where resources are being associated with ongoing implementation: The total cost of this Outcome is US\$1,200,000. Part of these costs (US\$ 600,000) were covered through technical cooperation programmes led by MoLSAEO, with the technical assistance of the ILO, such as for instance the MDG-F joint programme Youth migration: Reaping the benefits, mitigating the risks (capacity building at local level to prioritize youth employment interventions; piloting of social pacts in regions with a high incidence of youth at risk of labour market exclusion), and the IPA National Programme 2010 for Albania/Human Resources Development (capacities of the EPD, and management of the monitoring and evaluation cycles of the active policy on employment). Over US\$ 600,000 were committed by the Swiss Development Agency for the replication of local social pacts in the regions of Kukes, Shkodra and Lezha in 2012/13. This is part of an overall commitment of US\$ 2 million to support youth employment. With regard to Outputs under Outcomes 3 and 4 for instance, the Government of Albania is already implementing other NAP recommendations/policy options. For instance, in 2012, the Employment Policy Department of MoLSAEO formulated two additional employment promotion programmes, one for women from vulnerable groups and the other for unemployed job seekers looking for a first-employment contract. These are but few examples. There is a full report under preparation."

Note from the evaluators : We received anecdotal evidence of NAP implementation, but no documented evidence or data from the Government was supplied to the evaluation team to this effect, despite requesting such information both from MoLSAEO and at the DSDC meeting. However it may be contained in the full report that is under preparation as announced by the Deputy Minister in his comment above.

⁹ IOM indicates that such a system exists since 2009. Recommendations of the outreach activities with the Albanian diaspora groups will be reflected in the new country Strategy on Migration and its corresponding Action Plan for the period 2013-2018 with the support of IOM. The progress of the Action Plan implementation will be frequently monitored by the Albanian Government as per existing coordination and monitoring mechanisms.

Update the NES Excel database to SPSS or STATA. Given the limitations of the MS Excel format and the fact that both MOLSAEO and INSTAT use a different programme, it is important to ensure compatibility and common tools to all the primary users. Adequate staff training in NES on the new software is warranted.

Future replications of PPPs could **facilitate a system which links skills needs identification with local labour market.** The innovative cooperation between the private sector, focused on identifying market labour skills needs, and NES's and its Employment Offices will strengthen the public capacities to build a vocational training program that properly addresses actual labour market requirements. It is important to place emphasis on the parallel integration of on-the-job training with classroom training, as well as on raising awareness among disadvantaged youth about the importance of vocational training and encourage them to register with REOs/EOs and apply for training programmes.

Support value chain projects in particular for remote rural and mountain area development: Interventions in mountainous areas, such as for example the case of goat breeding in Action 4 of the TEP "Formalization of employment through upgrading of rural enterprises" should embrace the complete value chain (inputs, farming, processing, transport and marketing) rather than parts of the chain. The processing level should have a special focus, which is in line with broader GoA policy to encourage the shift from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture and the development of agro-industry, since it creates the added value through commodity processing and transformation. This is a way of involving also disadvantaged youth in these areas through specific training on food processing, triggering a mechanism of youth employment as well as entrepreneurial area development.

Promote Training centres for women with tailor-made training and other skills enhancing programmes as well as micro-credit for female households as a way for them to build a sustainable life.

At the regional level

Clear criteria for selection of beneficiaries at regional level should ensure transparency, accountability and built cohesion. While the Regional Council has been in charge of approving the various interventions in Shkodra region, it is very important to respect allocation criteria. In the case of the Red Cross sewing courses to disadvantage women, half of the six women interviewed did not meet the age criterion to be considered as "youth", being over 29 years of age. It is important that the Regional Councils be specifically made aware that the criteria have to be consistent with those stated in the programme, since donors can decide to stop funding if criteria are not being respected¹⁰. If the

¹⁰ Comment from the ILO: "We do not think this is a good example, as this project falls squarely within the priorities of the SH-RETF. It was not the Regional Council. The Regional Employment Board (see minutes) decided that youth as beneficiaries would be given priority (i.e. more points in the scoring

numbers of the specific target group is too small to fill the activities undertaken, a written note should be made by the Regional Council to explain why and how many of other beneficiary categories have been accepted into the activities, explaining what secondary criteria were used for selection. This is important both for the credibility of the overall programme objectives and of the impartiality of the beneficiary selection process.

A Pact (such as TEP) should envisage modalities to attract the commitment of financial institutions, to invest in decent work objectives and in the transition from informal to formal economy of small and medium enterprises especially in the agricultural sector. For this reason banks should be among the important stakeholders of the pact providing financial resources and credit facilities such as micro credit. Another key actor to involve in the pact could be the research sector, in order to create synergies between socio economic and technological research and the development of small and medium enterprises.

Pacts are replicable instruments to be structured through local consultative processes and adherence to the specific challenges and needs of the territory.

Extend the consultation and cooperation mechanisms of the TEP from the regional to the district and communes level, in order to enhance the participation of Communes in the consultation phase, especially when supporting the transition of activities that belong to the informal economy toward market-oriented micro and small enterprises. This would ensure bottom-up participation from the lower levels of the administration that are the ones closer to the beneficiary population, particularly in the rural and mountainous areas.

IX. Lessons identified

Identified good practices:

- The inclusive process to develop the NAP and the TEP have allowed the Albanian institutions at national and local level to adopt active labour market measures for youth employment and to tackle migration more effectively;

during the evaluation of the project proposals), but women from rural areas (particularly contributing family workers) are also a top priority group, regardless of age (see Annex to Grant Document signed with the ILO), to engenderise the intervention (see comments made in the minutes of the Evaluation Committee). So, a different example needs to be chosen to argue about the selection criteria.” Note from the evaluators: past experience has shown that donors have suspended funding for not following the original age target criteria under which the programme was designed (cf. ILO, IPEC, child soldiers programme evaluation, 2006). The thematic window Youth, Employment and Migration has a clear target, particularly in view of the fact that under the MDG Fund another window of funding is available under the theme Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. While there is a clear need to apply gender sensitive programming, it is the view of the evaluation that funding instruments should respect the original target groups in order to avoid potential duplication with other MDGF JPs and also avoid potential duplication amongst donors funding mechanisms. Thus it is important to stick to consistent selection criteria for beneficiaries.

- Shkodra REF is a good example of empowering the different stakeholders in view of the decentralization process. It is critical in building the regional capacity to attract and manage EU funding for the implementation of actions that address youth employment and migration issues in the future since the REF is based on the ESF structure;
- The same can be said also for the TEP: as a consequence of the capacity building interventions related to the Pact implementation, the local communities and regions are developing the capacities to mobilize resources and may in the future be able to access national and IPA fund for infrastructure and development, as well as future structural funds from the EU;
- Manifested interest of other regions in replicating TEP (Lezhë) and YES centres (three additional in Centres have been inaugurated at the request of the MOLSAEO in Fier, Durres and Elbasan) shows the successful achievements of the JP and their replication and extension to other regions of Albania;
- Strong ownership of actors at national and regional levels;
- High value of the approach used as a model for potential replication not only in Albania but also to other countries;
- Strong technical competencies on employment, youth and migration provided through the participating UN agencies and the IOM. A particular mention on the technical capacity of the CTA in providing utilisation-focussed technical support to MOLSAEO on a number of subjects that contributed to follow-up action in capacity development and policy formulation;
- Strong initial baseline information and situation analysis of the situation in Albania supported by surveys and technical and socio-economic data.

Lessons identified:

- The Joint Programme has consistently responded and provided support in a complex operational environment. The JP as a multi-level actors effort has been flexible to address changing needs and creating foundation for long-term development.
- Strong commitment of key stakeholders – MOLSAEO, Spanish Embassy, UN RC, is a key condition for the success of JP implementation.
- Reliable data and background analysis concerning the underlying relation between youth migration and unemployment is necessary in order to

provide policy-makers with recommendations in order to properly address the challenge of contributing to improve employment opportunities of the young people and preventing irregular migration.

- Do not underestimate the lead-time for programme implementation and ensure that a clear communication strategy for the JP exists and is adequately disseminated.

Some reflections regarding migration

Enhancing the dialogue with Albanian Diaspora abroad represents a good baseline and starting point for encouraging their involvement in the socio economic development process of Albania. Migration generates a number of "capitals" such as social (networks, ties), human (skills and knowledge), and cultural (norms, behaviours, ideas that migrants acquire throughout their migratory experience), which can be mobilized for development and can generate migration-driven forms of change.

An important tool in achieving migrants' participation to the development of their country of origin is the support of their integration process in the destination countries. The stabilization of the Albanian migrant community in the countries of destination does not necessarily mean real economic integration, because often there is a significant mismatch between the skills migrants possess and the jobs they end up doing; studies show that Albanian migrants, both men and women, are employed mainly in low-status jobs such as, agricultural, construction, manufacturing or elderly care regardless of their qualification. These types of employment probably do not represent the integration or the emancipation of migrants, but rather their flexibility and ability to adapt and survive in a very fragmented labour market. (Bonifazi, Sabatino, 2003, De Zvager et al. 2005, ETF 2007, Cela 2008) A possible first step forward could be avoiding the process of brain waist through the recognition of the Albanian qualifications abroad.

Initiatives that offer migrants the opportunity to invest in the country of origin are very important but not all migrants do necessarily have the intention to invest (Cela 2008). And since it is difficult to convert successful migrants with no prior business experience into dynamic entrepreneurs, it could be useful "to introduce financial intermediaries that capture migrant remittances/savings as deposits and channel them to existing small and micro-businesses, rather than transforming migrants directly into entrepreneurs" (Puri and Ritzema, 1999). In other words, besides focusing on "migrant-specific" investment programmes, policymakers may also induce finance institutions to capture remittances and savings and transfer them to small entrepreneurs in the more disadvantaged areas of the country.

Strengthening the role of migrant associations as development agents and involving them as partners in cooperation projects could generate collective initiatives and mobilize collective remittances that may have a stronger impact on local development compared to individual remittances, especially in the remote and rural areas.

Fostering the linkages between YES centres and youth organizations in Albania and youth Albanian associations abroad could create a transnational cross border network of youths and generate both ideas and experiences sharing.

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