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New services for agribusiness in Kosovo

RECURA Financials is a Kosovo based company which provides strategic business advisory services focusing on the Kosovar, Albanian and Macedonian markets for the last six years. Having served well over 100 clients to date and supporting their business growth and improvement, RECURA is now venturing into specialized sector specific advisory.

From January 2016, RECURA is establishing the RECURA AGRO CENTER - a specialized unit providing technical, business, trade and access to finance services to Agribusinesses in Kosovo and the region. This Center is supported by Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation, and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Prishtina.

The Center is expected to be a strategic partner to agribusinesses through the provision of a multitude of combined services to the market participants. It will focus on pro-

viding a unique package of services supporting commercial level agriculture, including:

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commercial agribusiness management advisory services, technical agronomy advisory, research and data analysis, policy analysis and development, legal support services as well as investment promotion and solicitation services. In addition, trade facilitation and food safety

and quality standardization are intended to support the trade exchange in agricultural primary and processed products. With its core staff as well as a large roster of specialized external experts, Recura Agro Center

will play the role of an aggregator for sector experts, which are combined into teams providing comprehensive advisory services to growing agribusinesses in the region.

The Center will contribute to the creation of a conducive and dynamic agribusiness sector by providing both systemic interventions as well as specific support services to lead agribusinesses, farmers and processors. Main focus is on addressing specific obstacles that hinders their development and providing a transaction based support for investments in the sector. The Center's approach is focused on sustainable private sector led service provision. Such services will go beyond a poverty reduction approach and more towards sector growth and economic development. As a result, agribusinesses grow from small scale subsistence producers to commercial scale businesses that are competitive in the domestic and international markets.

Case Study on Job Matching Service Providers

EYE has recently developed a case study on Job Matching Service Providers (JMSP). This assessment allowed the project to identify key lessons learned, understand the real impact of activities facilitated by the project, as well as understand the key constraints for future engagement.

Job matching remains one of the key elements that ought to be addressed in order to have a better functioning labor market, therefore enabling faster transition of youth in Kosovo from school into labor force.

Meanwhile, the findings from extensive research and analysis focusing on the job matching services show that the original impact logic designed by EYE has been substantially elaborated over the duration of the intervention to align with, and respond to, changes in the market system. Impact exceeds the existing quantitative indicators in the project life cycle which covers period of 2012-2016 including the initial 6 month of inception phase.

It is worth mentioning that private JMSPs, such as KosovaJob and PortalPune, are continuing to expand their services for their clients. These range from recruiting to providing specific tailored made training pursuant in the private sector. JMSPs have matched over 100 internships for unemployed young people in the last two quarters of 2015. The number of visitors facilitated by JMSP's increased exponentially from the time EYE started to support this market. To illustrate the impact, in 2012 there were 490,718 visitors while the projected number of users for 2015 is expected to be around 1.5 Million. The revenue of JMSP's is also reported to have increased three times from 2012 to 2015. This indeed illustrates and supports the increased interest of the young unemployed and private employers to actively use the professional services of JMSPs.

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Several behavioral changes have been noted as a result of EYE interventions in and around the JMS market system. Behavioral changes in relation to JMSPs include a visible shift towards recruitment and other value added Human Resource Development services. Such shift was not evident before as JMSP were mostly focusing in offering simple services such as job posting and advertisement.

Finally, JMSPs are now operating effectively and sustainably throughout Kosovo and in regional and international market, and have adopted "state of the art" technological innovations to support business development and growth.

Organisation of Business lunches

Development of private sector in Kosovo is a joint goal of the CEED Kosovo and EYE, and such goal lead to organizing Business Lunches Events, a follow up of many successful cooperation cases between these two organizations. The primary goal of these business lunches was to encourage development of private sector in Kosovo through building of bridges between businesses and advisory companies that offer business services. The events were held in October and November and were attended by more than 100 participants, businesses and business service providers, as well as associates of the CEED Kosovo and EYE.

The topics discussed over these business lunches were: "Utilisation of business services for Company's growth;" "Attraction of investments through professional services;" and "Market digital services and business growth."

Utilisation of professional services offered by reliable Kosovo market consultants enables establishment of a well-structured and easily manageable business, which affects the growth of company, sustainable development and efficient fulfilment of tasks. This was a general message conveyed through these events to businesses aspiring to attract foreign investments or to increase their current capital. Various success stories were presented to the participants through panel members, who shared their personal experiences, how they transformed their



One of the recent CEED business lunches

family companies into modern business corporations, and the methods of operation through the use of professional services. Representatives of Ujë Rugove, KIVO L.L.C, Baruti GmbH, IQ Link companies and service providers RECURA Financials, Baker Tilly, Goodwerp were part of the panels. Leonora Kusari, the Director of the EBRD TAM/BAS Programme, was part of the third panel. She stated that "We offer quality services, we have most advanced marketing, ICT, and strategic planning consultants in the Balkans.". Therefore, we have to find ways how to utilise these resources adequately as they are an advantage for development of the private sector, whose development would help economic development of the country.

Other companies that attended these events includes Scampa, Grand Décor, ELEN, City Bakery, Rolleo as well as representatives of, Arizona Partners, RTC Consulting, Portal Pune etc, which are consulting companies providing business services. All of them were enthusiastic about changing the management methods in their businesses and to orient their businesses towards a long-term development, with clear visions and strategic plans drafted with the help of consultants.

CEED Kosovo will continue to organize such events with the support of EYE, which produce positive effects for development of private sector and increase the interest of participants, who find new ways for cooperation in such events.

Supporting with skills the re-emerging textile industry in Gjakova

In the 70's and 80's, the city of Gjakova used to have one of the biggest textile industrial zones in ex-Yugoslavia.

During political turbulences in the 90', the industry itself was hit heavily while thousands of workers were laid off and factories were amortized.

Meanwhile, sewing was one of the traditional skills inherited through generations within Gjakovar families, skills that support heavily the textile industry in producing clothes. The same traditional skills risked fading because the textile factories where shut down.

After the war in 1999, few factories were becoming active by local investors. Major market development occurred just after last year, when a foreign investor came in and revitalized one of the factories to produce accessories for Swedish car producer Volvo, as well as military clothing for US market. This opportunity increased

significantly the demand for skilled seamstress and therefore offered more job opportunities in Gjakova, with specific focus on female workers.

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One of those who benefited from this re-emerging market is Leonora Brovina, who finished the basic sewing training offered by Arva Textile training center, this center that was supported by EYE Project. Arva is active in textile industry and recently has expanded their business by offering certified sewing training.

Leonora originally graduated as medical lab technician and was unemployed for many years. After completing a 3 months course within Arva Training Center, she immediately got employed by Intertex, the



Leonora Brovina, training at Arva Textile

factory that is now already exporting 100% of its products outside of Kosovo. She said that "it was almost unbelievable for her to think that just after finishing the course she will get a job". The same story line goes also for as many as 63 women that got training from Arva and are now full time employees within the textile industry in Gjakova.

130 trainees are expected to complete the one year course by March 2016. These newly trained sewing experts will match the increasing market demand for certified sewing skills and help enhance employment prospects in Gjakova and the surrounding municipalities.

Traditional sweet producers - a growing subsector

If you have craved for a home-made baklava, now they are available in every supermarket. Designated stands for traditional recipes such as Kadaif, Tatlia, and Baklava are now available at hands reach.

In June 2015, EYE conducted a study to understand the size of the traditional sweet producer market and the characteristics of the labour involved in this subsector. The study revealed that there are a total of 31 producers in Kosovo that are meeting the demand of the customers for traditional sweets. The self-declared turnover by the producers, places this subsector at the annual turnover of 5.5 million EUR. This market is competing with the Kosovar cheese producers whose turnover is 6 million EUR per year competing the money value of these markets.

Characteristic of this subsector is that women labour makes up for 70% of the total of 250 employees. In addition, 40% of the companies are owned and managed by women, a percentage not evident in other sectors. EYE study also revealed that the demand for these products is growing not only locally but also abroad. The in-depth interviews conducted with 17 producers indicate that this sector has the potential to double the number of employed labour within one year, which would bring the total number of employees to 500.

On October 30th, 2015 EYE invited traditional sweets producers, retailers, input suppliers, food safety specialist, and investment consultants to discuss the findings of the sub-sector study. This event brought all

the actors of this value chain in one place for the first time, where they addressed pressing issues affecting their daily operations. Issues such as merchandising, product differentiation, bargaining with retailers for product shelving, sharing distribution as well as food safety were topics jointly discussed. Moreover, the producers are interested for self-regulation and coordination, and expressed the need for a sub-sector association to be established.

One of the producers is Rolleo, a company established in Ferizaj on 2008. Rolleo is one of the biggest producers in the sector, producing traditional desserts, sweets, biscuits and other confectionary products. Rolleo, currently with 15 regular and 20 seasonal employees is a growing company. Having received support in improving food quality, Rolleo is now shifting focus in obtaining advisory services on financial management, sales and further improve

its business processes. Such strategic intervention for business development is what could further grow this sector and introduce new practices among the companies.

In order to avoid market distortion, EYE invited companies that are interested in improving their internal production and sales processes to engage in co-investment agreements with the project. A total of 6 propos-

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Vast number of traditional Sweets present in one of the retail stores in Kosovo

als were received where the main intervention will be improving food safety production standards (i.e. HACCP) as well as consultancy on Financial Management, Marketing and Sales.

In 2016, EYE will continue engaging with the actors of the traditional sweets value chain in order to ensure that they reach their optimum in their growth plans, as well as to ensure that more jobs are created in this sub-sector.

BONEVET Makerspace

BONEVET is a non-profit community center where people gather to share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network, and build various prototypes. It is an informal combination of a lab, shop and a conference room which encourages "hands-on" exploration by providing resources that are usually unavailable to individuals working alone. This centre which is based in Gjakova, aims to become vibrant community of ideas and a resource sharing among youth in Kosovo. Moreover, BONEVET will foster character building, creativity, open-mindedness, social responsibility and most importantly team work of young adolescents and young women and men. To develop such an innovative working environment, EYE has supported BONEVET to buy 3D printers and automatized machine tool, the so called CNC. Since its establishment, 300 young women and men have used the services of BONEVET. Below are some testimonials from BONEVET members:



Enisa Muhaxhiri, 17 years

“ As an artist i am always looking for new ways to be creative. 3D printing at Bonevet was a great way to express my creativity. It taught me that there is more to just drawing lines in canvas and filling in those lines. It taught me that there is another world that leads to combining 2 of my favorite things: technology and painting/drawing ”



Flatra Thaqi, 17 years

“ 3D Print basically for me is where every fantasy becomes reality with a little imagination, a lot of work and willingness to invent new prototypes in Tech industry using less physical input ”



Rrezarta Hana, 19 years

“ During 8 weeks learning in Grade 3D Printing at BONEVET i learned the creation of various forms of modeling, 2D and 3D. Design and printing of images, using the SolidWorks, Blender, Inventor,ing 3D was the final part of the work that we have designed during this time. An unforgettable experience ”



Lum Zhubi 13 years

“ Anything we see in the real life is three dimensional and now is our chance to create everything through 3D printing ”



Ela Krelani, 17 years

“ 3D modeling & 3D Printing printer inspires you to new ideas, It gives you creativity and teaches you how to form simple shapes and objects , practical for all ”



Jon Zuka, 20 years

“ BONEVET is a paradise for 3D practitioners. I could only be dreaming for such wonderful equipment. I am having a wonderful time experimenting with 3Dsoftware, thanks to the powerful GPU rendering

We were until now driven by the idea that what happens in the computer stays in the computer, one might say. But now, virtual models become real when you use 3Dprinting and cutting machines. This is a great opportunity to make fantastic prototypes ”

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