



# ANNUAL BRIEF 2016

## EASTERN EUROPE & SOUTHERN CAUCASUS



**HELVETAS**  
Swiss Intercooperation

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is a politically and denominationally neutral development organisation, which is supported by around 100,000 members and patrons, as well as 12 regional volunteer groups. In the main text in this Annual Brief HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation is abbreviated to HELVETAS.

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Dear partners, colleagues and readers,

2016 has proven once again that the Balkans is a very dynamic region oriented towards EU integration. Nevertheless, the socio-economic and political stability in the region remains fragile. With the many crises it faces, the EU is losing its appeal, while nationalist-populist political voices increasingly dominate the agenda. This has been reinforced by two streams of migration: a) the transit migration of refugees from the Middle East through the Balkans and b) outward migration of people who don't see their future anymore in their home countries. This has had a direct impact on the stability and development of the region, once again making the urgent need for true and inclusive political, economic and social transformation apparent.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation's vision is a just world in which all men and women determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. This vision is the basis for the organisation's mission to help disadvantaged men, women and communities in developing and transition countries. As HELVETAS we believe that sustainable and inclusive development can only be achieved with an approach that builds on local ownership and initiative and focuses on root causes of under-performance and not just symptoms. We are grateful towards our clients, in particular the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and other donors for providing us with the means to realise our goals and for supporting and trusting in our approach and work.

Jens Engeli & Matthias Herr  
Co-Team Leaders of the regional unit Eastern Europe &  
South Caucasus  
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

This brief will provide an insight into our work in 2016, our lessons learned, the challenges and achievements. In doing so, the focus of this year's Annual Brief is on achieving impact through our projects. In Eastern Europe our main interventions focus on local good governance and skills and economic development. Through the various projects, HELVETAS seeks to contribute, directly or indirectly, to changes in people's lives, work and environment. By measuring the outputs and outcomes continually, the organisation is able to steer projects, to report experiences and results to donors, partners and the general public and to learn (together with our stakeholders) from mistakes and achievements. In this Annual Brief different examples are gathered that provide insights as to how HELVETAS approaches, monitors and tries to capture results of the projects. The articles build on our partnerships with various organisations and individuals in each of the countries, to whom we are deeply grateful for their commitment and sharing of knowledge and experience.

Last but not least, we would like to thank our teams in the countries and the Head Office in Switzerland: the quality of our work is the result of many highly motivated and competent staff members who demonstrate leadership and commitment every day. They make the difference and their contributions are key towards our successful and still growing portfolio.



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# OUR PROJECTS IN THE REGION

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## BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

### MARKETMAKERS (MM)

MarketMakers encourages employment opportunities for young women and men (aged 15-29) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Together with the project's co-facilitators (Regional Development Agencies) and its intervention partners from the business sector, the project aims to unlock the unrealised growth potential of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT), business support services, food production and processing, and tourism sectors in the country.

#### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and Kolektiv d.o.o./ Posoa.ba

#### Project value

CHF 4,576,500

#### Duration

June 2013 – June 2017 (phase I)

### Highlights 2016

#### ❖ **Funds allocated to Mostar Airport:**

In the wake of a research and feasibility study into the attraction of low-cost carriers into Mostar Airport and pressure by MarketMakers' partners and the tourism sector in the region, both state and local levels of government responded by provisioning for airport revitalisation and the attraction of new routes. In 2017, the project will monitor whether budgetary allocations translate into expenditures and investments and whether new routes emerge that carry new tourists into Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Tourism intervention, MarketMakers, BiH

#### ❖ **Restart offers services to foreign investors and the diaspora:**

New organisation 'Restart' – branding itself as a 'business embassy for investors' – opened for business with MarketMakers' support. Created to ease the inward investment of the Bosnian diaspora as well as foreign investors in general, Restart provides various consulting, legal, and paperwork services to support the establishment of new ventures. It also serves as a match-making platform for Bosnian initiatives seeking financing and outside investors seeking counterparts.

→ [www.marketmakers.ba](http://www.marketmakers.ba)

❖ **Kanton Sarajevo commits itself to further promoting the IT Sector:** Following a consultancy study designed to investigate how Sarajevo's IT sector could be better supported by more favourable framework conditions for growth, policy recommendations pertaining to a IT technology park and accompanying investments into the canton's formal IT education system were made.



# SERBIA (MAIN OFFICE) AND ALBANIA

## PERFORM

PERFORM (Performing and Responsive Social Sciences) focuses on strengthening the relevance of social sciences for socio-economic and political reform processes. The project contributes to strengthening the social science community and facilitates the development of systems for an enhanced collaboration between social sciences and policymakers, civil society, and other domains of society. Working with government institutions, PERFORM seeks to improve the regulatory framework and enable alternative access to funding for social science and research. Implementation will focus on Albania and Serbia in the first phase and is extended to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia in the second phase.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and University of Fribourg

### Project value

CHF 4,998,310 (phase I)

### Duration

January 2015 – December 2018 (phase I)

## Highlights 2016

### ❖ Evidence Informed Policy-making (EIPM)

is still at an early stage of development in Serbia. Results of social science research, expertise and knowledge of the research community are not sufficiently used in policymaking processes, due to absence of systemic linkages between policy makers and research community. PERFORM in partnership with the Public Policy Secretariat implemented four pilot initiatives to develop structures and mechanisms for collaboration between social science research and policy institutions in creating and feeding evidence into policymaking. Relevant scientific evidence has been generated and delivered to policy makers, and uptake in policy development is taking place.



Changing Serbian-Albanian perceptions, PERFORM, Serbia & Albania

→ [www.perform.network/](http://www.perform.network/)

❖ **Documentary Series “Beyond Enmity: Changing Serbian-Albanian Perceptions”** - Improving Serbian-Albanian relations is considered one of the preconditions for the peace and stability in the Western Balkans. In the light of increasing political cooperation between these two nations (the “Berlin Process”), it is important to debunk some of the prevailing stereotypes. To this end, PERFORM is supporting researchers from Serbia, Kosovo and Albania in producing a documentary series on Serbian-Albanian relations.

❖ **Collaborative Offline & Online Research Platform (COORP)** - PERFORM supported development of an online information-sharing platform that enables social science researchers to join forces and improve their chances in accessing donor funds. COORP aims to increase research funding for participating partners and contribute to making Albanian researchers financially independent. Collaboration of Albanian research groups in European research consortia will enhance the quality of research and put Albania on the map of European research.

# ALBANIA

## The Decentralisation and Local Development Project (dldp )

Dldp seeks to improve quality service delivery to all citizens by strengthening skills of local governments in the north of Albania, anchoring dldp products at national level and contributing to a legal framework that supports the needs and rights of citizens. Working directly with local governments using participatory approaches, dldp aims to put local governance issues on the national agenda and to ensure that national strategies are implemented in close collaboration with local municipalities.

### Project set-up

Project of the SDC/SECO Swiss Cooperation Office  
implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

### Project value

CHF 7,280,000

### Duration

January 2014 – December 2017 (phase III)

## Highlights 2016

### ❖ Adapting technical support to new settings

Following the major territorial and administrative reform in Albania in 2015 dldp revised thematic packages on waste management and strategic and financial planning and disseminated these countrywide. On these topics dldp reviewed the curricula for the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) and facilitated the subsequent trainings together with ASPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Urban Development.

### ❖ Sharing our knowledge on waste management

Regionally as well as internationally there has been a growing interest in dldp's know-how on waste management issues, including regional institutions like NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-east Europe) and several SDC projects (e.g. PSI Kyrgyzstan, GAM Bolivia, DEMOS Kosovo). Knowledge sharing on waste management took place through national and regional exposure visits (Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia) and through centre of competence meetings.

### ❖ Influencing national policy throughout consolidated platforms

Dldp supported the elaboration of the reform package and plans regarding municipal by-laws for 2017-18. Through the centres of competences dldp provided policy recommendations for the new laws on local finances, new function allocation, and development policies on planning for areas with limited development potential. The government's annual report on the decentralisation strategy was complemented with many best practices from LGUs that were supported by dldp.



One-stop-shop in Shkoder, dldp, Albania

→ [www.dldp.al](http://www.dldp.al)

## RisiAlbania (Risi)

RisiAlbania aims to improve access to employment for young Albanian women and men. It does so by stimulating job creation in businesses of three sectors (agro-processing, tourism and ICT), by developing skills demanded by the job market, and by making job intermediation between employers and young job seekers more effective.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and Partners Albania

### Project value

SDC - CHF 4,600,000

### Duration

November 2013 – October 2017 (phase I)

## Highlights 2016

❖ **Creating high-quality jobs in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector:** With a highly educated, multi-lingual young population, Albania has all the ingredients to become a thriving BPO outsourcing destination. The project seeks to achieve precisely that. It supports the Albanian Outsourcing Association (AOA) in accessing foreign markets, attracting new investors as well as improving the image of the sector through co-operation between public and private agencies. The sector has already created 400 high-quality jobs.

❖ **Tourist guides are a country's "ambassadors":** Tourist guides play a key role in a country's tourism industry: they interact closely with visitors and shape tourists' impression of a country. Ensuring that they leave a good impression among tourists is therefore crucial! RisiAlbania assisted the National Association of Tourist Guides of Albania (NATGA) in developing a tourist guide's standard system, so that the quality of tourists can be more effectively governed. So far, more than 150 tourist guides have been certified according to international standards – ensuring that tourists gain a rich and first-rate experience while in Albania.



Students at the hospitality and tourism academy, Risi, Albania

→ [www.risialbania.al](http://www.risialbania.al)

❖ **Fostering better access to finance in the agricultural sector:** Banks in Albania remain reluctant to disperse loans to the agricultural sector due to limited technical knowledge of the sector. Together with its partners, CBS, RisiAlbania introduced an IT solution: a market intelligence software, AGIS, that provides up-to-date figures and data on the agricultural sector, allowing banks to distribute loans more knowledgeably. Only introduced a year ago, banks have already dispersed more than CHF 1.1m with the information gathered through AGIS.



# KOSOVO

## The Decentralisation and Municipal Support Project (DEMOS)

The overall goal of DEMOS is to support Kosovo in its transition process towards a democratic, decentralised state. It supports municipalities to improve service delivery in waste, public space and mobility, and strengthens downward accountability and financial management processes. DEMOS also aims to contribute to an improved policy framework for local governance.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

### Project value

CHF 10,794,945

### Duration

July 2014 – December 2017 (phase I - succeeds LOGOS)

## Highlights 2016

❖ **Capacity building local government:** The project had a major role in supporting municipalities to address key Auditor General recommendations, such as registration and management of municipal assets. DEMOS facilitated the process of fostering new tools to collect property tax revenue and it played a key role in initiating and supporting the verification process of municipal assets.

❖ **Citizen representation:** It continued to support gender balance representation by supporting women in politics as well as supporting efforts of village councils in Kosovo.



Workshop on women equality at local government, DEMOS, Kosovo

→ [www.helvetas-ks.org/demos](http://www.helvetas-ks.org/demos)

❖ **Performance Based Grants for improved public services:** Over the last years the flagship intervention of DEMOS has been the Performance Based Grants Scheme (PBGs). It aims to incentivise municipalities to improve their efforts in the field of public services, financial responsibility and democracy. The grants scheme ceremony awarded best performing and best improving municipalities.

## Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE )

EYE - Enhancing Youth Employment - is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and MDA-Management Development Associates. It supports employment opportunities of young women and men graduates from schools and universities by developing and matching competencies with market needs. EYE promotes access to skills development services that meet the requirements of the private sector and facilitates job-seekers to gain better access to vacant positions and make informed decisions about their career paths. Focused private sector investments (in particular through an Opportunity Fund providing matching grants) seek to further stimulate job creation and increased employability. During the second phase (2017-2020), the project's interventions will see a stronger emphasis on inclusion of disadvantaged groups such as women and minorities in the labour market.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and MDA (Management Development Associates)

### Project value

CHF 7,157,430

### Duration

January 2013 – December 2016 (Phase I)

## Highlights 2016

### ❖ Job matching service providers:

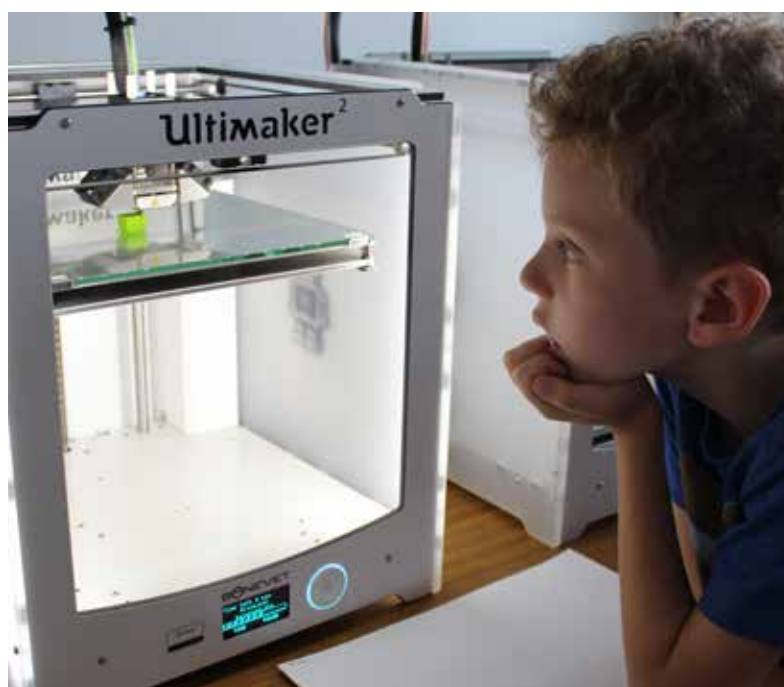
The job matching service market is growing and diversifying and market leaders are emerging. The number of job matching service providers increased from three to nine during the course of the project and two of the three increased their annual combined revenue of approximately € 5,000 to more than € 116,052 annually. These, and many other findings, have been captured in the 2016 JSMP case study of the Springfield Centre, available on EYE's website: <http://www.helvetas-ks.org/eye/portfolio-items/eye-case-study-job-matching-services/>

### ❖ Infotainment for labour markets:

As new players entered the market in 2016, EYE observed marked changes in the media's willingness to discuss labour market issues.

EYE - along with a large number of private advertisers that were drawn by the shows' popularity - supported the second seasons of two pilot media shows: "PunPun" and "Here and Now". And also the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) provided financial support for one of the TV shows. A survey on the viewership of TV shows supported by EYE, showed that almost 30 percent of youth in Kosovo were aware of the PunPun TV Show, making it the most popular 'infotainment' program in the country.

❖ **Gender and Social Inclusion:** EYE partnered with the World Bank's "Women Online Work" project, supporting the "Female in Business" training. The purpose of this activity was to train and guide women who were trained in IT to expand their scope of work, providing training on issues such as business development, online work and full-time employment. In 2016, as a result of the assessment of traditional sweet production (a sector that employs mostly women (70%) and where companies are frequently owned by women (40%), EYE supported three sweets production companies on certification and marketing.



3D printing training, EYE, Kosovo

→ [www.eye-kosovo.org](http://www.eye-kosovo.org)

## Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE)

The goal of S4RE is to contribute to income and employment generation in rural areas, focusing on five remote municipalities in the Sharr Mountains and the Southeast of Kosovo. The project addresses both the supply and demand sides of the labour market - stimulating local economic development (demand) and improving skills of S4RE's main target group: young women and men and ethnic minority groups.

### Project set-up

Project of Medicor and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation implemented by HELVETAS

### Project value

CHF 1.4 million

### Duration

January 2016 – December 2018 (phase 2)

## Highlights 2016

❖ **Developing local institutional capacities:** S4RE is collaborating with the strategic partner Central Youth Action Council to empower Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs) in five target municipalities. In 2016 the LYACs were involved in mobilising youth and creating 28 opportunity groups to address skills gap and unemployment.

❖ **Sustainable market linkages and access to income for farmers:** S4RE successfully facilitated the technical expertise and communication between Local Action Groups (LAG) and the Rural Development Network. S4RE's efforts focused on stimulating LAGs to take over the business models developed by the Project during phase 1 and strengthening the LAGs capacities in local economy and skills development. The business models implemented by LAGs ensured that small farmers were integrated in value chains for non-timber forest products, dairy, fruits & honey, leading to higher income and better employment conditions for rural farmers.

❖ **On-the-job training based on training needs assessment:** S4RE conducted assessments of training needs for businesses in five municipalities and organised the necessary skills trainings accordingly. S4RE is facilitating the identification and establishment of business member organizations that serve as one-stop-shops to address the needs of local companies and the business community as a whole.



Hairstyling training for young women, S4RE, Kosovo

→ [www.helvetas-ks.org/s4re](http://www.helvetas-ks.org/s4re)

# MACEDONIA

## The Nature Conservation Programme (NCP)

The programme aims to improve the conservation of natural values in the eastern Bregalnica region of Macedonia, based on the principle of sustainable resource management while fostering socio-economic development. In order to achieve this goal, the framework conditions for natural conservation are improved through national and regional strategies and plans. Capacity of local authorities is build up and local projects implemented to support sustainable management of natural resources and the introduction of energy-saving technologies.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by Farmahem with secondment of International Team-lead from HELVETAS

### Project value

CHF 3,632,671

### Duration

November 2012 – December 2016 (phase I)  
January 2017 – December 2020 (phase 2): Farmahem will lead implementation and HELVETAS provides backstopping support.

## Highlights 2016

❖ **Launching of a policy dialogue on regional forest management plans:** A regional forest management plan that sets out the future direction for managing forests sustainably, merging the interests of different stakeholders at national and local level. The NCP launched a policy dialogue with representatives from the forestry sector as well as from tourism, agriculture and nature conservation.

❖ **Macedonian authorities visit regional nature parks in Switzerland:** In November, Mayors and representatives from different Ministries and the Centre for Development of the

Eastern Planning Region visited Switzerland's Biosphere Reserve and the Jura Park Aargau. The main conclusion of this exchange was that the first "seed" to build a park or reserve is a common vision for the entire landscape bringing communities together to work towards common objectives. Such a vision needs to take into account the interests of multiple stakeholders. Switzerland also showed that a few innovative entrepreneurs could be a strong driving force for the success of regional parks. Such entrepreneurs can positively impact the socioeconomic development of the entire region and inspire other individuals to collaborate.

❖ **Interdisciplinary Summer School with Macedonian Students:** during a two week's summer school, organised by ETH, 20 Macedonian students from different disciplines developed measures to counteract negative developments in the rural community of the project areas. Solutions were presented to the local community, which agreed to integrate some aspects in their local development plans.



Agriculture in the Bregalnica river basin, NCP, Macedonia

→ [www.bregalnica-ncp.mk](http://www.bregalnica-ncp.mk)



# ARMENIA

## Markets for Meghri (M4M)

HELVETAS provides technical advice to the Markets for Meghri (M4M) project which is funded by SDC and implemented by CARD. The project contributes to a lasting economic development and poverty alleviation in the Meghri region. The project is working with different actors of the horticulture sector, from farmers to traders and service providers, in order to increase the income of poor fruit farmers.

### Project set-up

SDC project implemented by CARD (Centre for Agribusiness and Rural Development) with backstopping support from HELVETAS

### Project value

CHF 3,510,000

### Duration

December 2012 – November 2016 (phase II)

## Highlights 2016

❖ **Better access to high value markets:** M4M focused its efforts on marketing support for small farmers. This included the establishment of collection and fruit processing facilities.

❖ **Innovation:** M4M facilitated value chains based on by-products of fruit orchards, e.g. flowers and partly damaged fruits, in which households, particularly women participate who do not own fruit orchards.

❖ **Expansion and extension:** The project ensured the consolidation of expanded area under irrigation together with IFAD. Horticulture was introduced as a subject into the curriculum and teaching of schools in Meghri. M4M also agreed with SDC on a no-cost extension until end of June 2017.



Dried fruit candy production, M4M, Armenia



Producing new plant varieties in a new greenhouse, MAM, Armenia

## Impact - what do we aim to achieve?

HELVETAS' goal is a fairer world in which every person can determine how he or she lives, their basic needs are satisfied and their human rights guaranteed. In Eastern Europe the intended impact/goal of the economic and skills development projects is to increase employment opportunities and the goal of the governance projects is to improve regional development.

While a development organisation like HELVETAS seeks to measure the extent to which it has achieved its stated goals, this in fact is difficult to realise as many different factors influence the long-term/indirect effects of the project's outcomes (i.e. impact). Nevertheless, it is relevant to understand the projects' impacts (and share the experiences), as this information is critical to improving our work and to managing the (intensified) expectations of clients and stakeholders on the effectiveness of development initiatives.

As the projects implemented by our organisation contribute, directly or indirectly, to changes in people's lives, work and environment HELVETAS aims

to measure these outputs and outcomes constantly in order to steer projects, to report to donors, partners and public and to learn (together with our stakeholders) from mistakes and achievements. This can be attained by applying a variety of tools and methodologies, most notably the development of a functional monitoring and results measurement (MRM) system.

By collecting detailed and relevant information about interventions, the monitoring system helps projects to determine their impacts. To what extent are projects able to attribute certain changes to their interventions? Or have other factors played a significant role? Many stories presented in the next section of the Annual Brief include results derived from the projects' monitoring system.

At the end of a project, HELVETAS usually aims to conduct an independent impact assessment or analysis. In 2016, we commissioned three case studies to assess the experiences of HELVETAS in applying the MSD approach in labour market interventions (job matching services, media and ICT). All three case studies are published on our website: [https://easterneurope.helvetas.org/en/publications\\_\\_blog/publication/](https://easterneurope.helvetas.org/en/publications__blog/publication/)



## Approaches - how do we achieve our goal?

In Eastern Europe, our work is centred on local good governance (political/administrative reforms linked to inclusive quality service delivery) and economic and skills development (focusing on youth employment and rural economy/poverty reduction).

In these thematic areas, HELVETAS applies different but increasingly converging approaches, tools and systems to design, implement and manage the projects. The youth employment and rural economy projects for instance apply market system development approaches and have developed MRM systems based on the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standard. The governance projects, on the other hand, use capacity building and advocacy approaches to provide bottom-up planning, technical and advisory support to local governments in the areas of public financing, waste management, citizen participation (among others) with the aim to achieve visible and tangible improvements in the delivery of services to citizens.

There is increasingly an emphasis on facilitative roles, whereby projects take temporary roles and support permanent actors to perform their functions in improved ways. HELVETAS believes sustainable and inclusive development impacts can only be achieved with an approach that builds on local ownership and initiative, and tackles root causes of underperformance and

not just symptoms. Consequently, the achievements of HELVETAS are directly linked to its reliable partner organisations that work as implementing organisations/consortia, co-facilitators, service providers, and/or beneficiaries, coming from all sectors and include private companies, the government and civil society.

## Measurement - how do we know our impact?

Projects constantly measure progress and assess if interventions are on track in contributing to results and the ultimate goals. Regular analysis of data and reviews of interventions enable projects to either improve, modify/change, or drop the interventions.

Information is collected through the projects' monitoring system. For each outcome or output, a set of indicators has been identified, data collection methods are developed and relevant information is collected (often provided by project partners) and analysed.

The information is not only used for steering projects, but also to report to donors. These reports include information about projects' costs, results, limitations and prospects.

In addition, the monitoring system supports learning processes. By continuously measuring interventions, projects are able to assess what is working well, what is not and why. This is important to design and steer projects in the future for better sustainable and scalable impacts.



Promoting collaboration between social sciences and policy-makers, PERFORM, Albania

## Albania: David and Goliath - How Research Evidence Helped Small Businesses to Lower Taxes

If you are a small business owner in Albania, a bathroom break could cost you up to 3,700 EUR. And so could the failure to display prices of goods or services. Or at least, it appeared so in November 2015 when the Government of Albania passed the Law on Tax Procedures, introducing a series of amendments that increased the penalties for the breach of tax legislation tenfold. This impacted especially small and medium business owners who are the backbone of Albania's economy, forcing some of them to close down. Nisma Thurje, a local grassroots organisation focusing on advocacy and increased citizens' participation in decision-making, together with the Association of Small Traders (a local union), took the law to the Constitutional Court of Albania arguing the disproportionality between the breach of the law and the penalties imposed.

"The previous Law on Tax Procedures was a killer for small businesses in Albania. The fines were completely disproportional to the damage caused to the state. If I were a small shop selling goods for the neighbourhood and during the inventory the tax inspector found that I failed to register one candy that costs 5 ALL (0.04 EUR), for which the tax would be 1 ALL (0.01 EUR), the fine could go up to 10,000,000 ALL (around 74,000 EUR). This not only meant bankruptcy for the business but also for the owner", said Besjan Pesha, activist of Nisma Thurje. During the court proceedings, it became apparent that no research evidence had been used to support the provisions of the law. After reviewing the case, in March 2016 the Court ruled in favour of small businesses, ordering amendments to the Law on Tax Procedures.

Nisma gathered representatives of the scientific community, the Association of Small Traders and tax and legal experts, using research evidence to strengthen their proposals for the new amendments. They developed a methodology for the study, collected historical legal and tax-related data and information on Albania, the Balkans and European best practices.

The set of proposals provided by Nisma "ensured that fines were lowered and made proportional to the offense. It enabled the small business owners to operate in a fair and stable business environment", said Mr Pesha. Instead of paying a fine for having an unregistered worker to watch the store while the business owner is on a break, they are now allowed to leave an unpaid family member on the premises. Penalty for not displaying prices of goods or services was reduced from 3,700 to 370 EUR.

In collecting scientific evidence to reinforce their proposals for the new amendments, Nisma was supported by PERFORM, a project of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and University of Fribourg. According to Nisma Thurje, the Government who had initially ignored the demands and protests of small business owners, agreed to meet with the representatives of Nisma Thurje and Association of Small Traders - and accepted some of their recommendations - after it became undeniable that recommendations for legal amendments should be based on actual research evidence - and not simply be based on concerns or demands of individuals. The model of cooperation introduced by PERFORM's intervention showcased the importance of promoting mechanisms for collaboration between social science and other domains of society and of grounding policies in concrete research evidence.





**Svetlana Kijevcanin,  
Programme Officer PERFORM**

Svetlana is a psychologist, trainer and women's rights and peace activist. She joined PERFORM in November 2015 and is working as a consultant to the Secretariat for Public Policies in Belgrade, assisting in the process of connecting decision makers and researchers in evidence-based policy making. She previously worked at the University of Belgrade, the University of Jonkoping and Princeton University. In addition to this, Svetlana has been an author, implementer, evaluator, coordinator, supervisor and manager on a large variety of projects (ranging from capacity building programmes, the running of reconciliation theatre projects and the creation of educational tools and textbooks to the production of community art campaigns, documentaries and TV series).

*When I started working for PERFORM, I was directly assigned to an intervention with the Public Policy Secretariat (PPS) and this required me to work at their offices four times a week. It was a challenging beginning, as I hadn't had time to bond with my PERFORM team-mates. At the same time I needed to feel part of the PPS team. So I had a bit of a "split personality"; being at two offices, two different working hours, two teams, and two cultures: one representing a government institution (PPS) and another an International NGO. But it had many benefits as well: it was extremely dynamic and inspiring. The aim of the pilot project with PPS was very ambitious and engaged many different stakeholders and partners from two "worlds": decision makers and people who work in governmental institutions, and social science research community. This role of PERFORM, as a neutral and impartial facilitator, ensuring equal treatment of all, as well as high level of commitment, enthusiasm and constant availability and openness, was very inspiring. The whole experience was an ongoing learning process, not just for me, but also for all parties involved, which was very much appreciated by all the partners.*



Students at the hospitality and tourism academy, Risi, Albania

## Albania: Radio wave towards entrepreneurship

Tourism is one of Albania's most promising sectors. Albania is an emerging destination with much to offer for anyone interested in culture, sunshine, nature or fun. Not surprisingly, many international newspapers and tourist guides (New York Times, Le Figaro, Rough Guide) continue to rank Albania as one of the top 5 destinations. Yet, despite its great potential, businesses are still unable to fill the rising number of vacancies in the tourism sector. Gladiola Dona, a graduate from the "Salzburger Tourismusschulen" (one of Austria's best tourism schools) recognised this problem and - inspired by a radio show supported by RisiAlbania - a dream that she had held for many years was awoken. In 2015 she founded Albania's first private hospitality and tourism school.

"Employment News" on Club FM Radio features conversations about finding, or creating, your ideal job. Many entrepreneurs and labour experts who visit the show regularly complain that it is very hard to find qualified people in Albania who can work in keeping with international standards. And, according to Gladiola Dona, this problem is especially true in the tourism sector. "Everyone you speak to in the hotel and restaurant industry basically says the same thing: we can't get trained people. Yet, even before I went to hospitality school I knew that with its unique geographical conditions, Albania is bound to become a popular tourist destination. I think my parents were right: There will be jobs in Albania - for those with good skills. But when I kept hearing businesses on the 'Employment News' go on about how hard it was to find qualified people, I realised that the only thing keeping me from helping Albania become a success, was my indecision."

As a direct result of this exposure, Gladiola founded the Hospitality and Tourism Academy in October 2015. Up to now, 146 students have graduated from the Bar, Restaurant and Reception courses provided by the training centre. The demand for her graduates is large and 98% of her students held jobs upon graduation. The Hospitality and Tourism Academy is capable of sustaining itself economically, and this is very encouraging to Gladiola. "We have a tremendous request by businesses for people who have graduated our courses, we just don't have enough students yet. That's bound to change though. We are now accepting 'The Youth Card' which means that younger students get a 20% discount on the cost of each course they take."

Meanwhile the academy provides extra support, free of charge, to find a job and further professional development. With three free seminars offered every three months, the academy keeps the alumni up to date helping them chase better employment opportunities. The projection for the next year is to train at least 240 young people, and in the long run Gladiola foresees longer training programs, which will exist of a larger number of modules for a more in-depth learning experience. Moreover, all of them got at least one job interview mediated by the academy. Most of the graduates are employed in luxury hotels, gourmet restaurants and lounge bars where a specific level of professionalism is required. In return they earn relatively high salaries.

As Gladiola's example shows, it is not just job seekers and their parents who need to adapt to the realities and

opportunities of an ever-changing labour market. Service providers, policy makers and employers themselves also need to stay abreast of changes and adapt their way of operating.

The “Employment News” weekly broadcast on Radio Club FM started in November 2014 and has seen an annual audience increase of up to 56%. RisiAlbania is also supporting other media to develop their labour market content, such as the “You can do it!” monthly-show on Top Channel TV and “Towards Work” weekly-supplement in

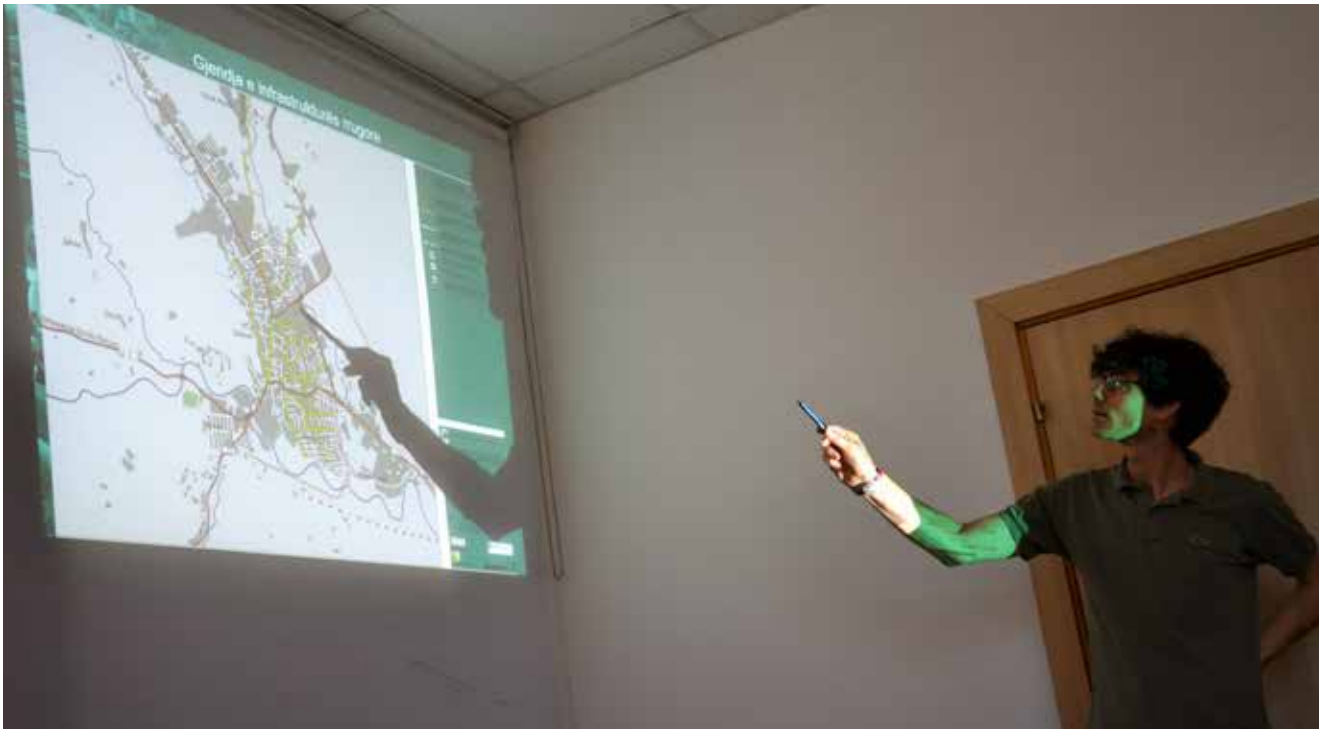
Shqiptarja.com. Risi’s work with media aimed to change the way that media reports on employment in a sustainable way. It was envisaged that the improvement in information would influence the choices that young people make about employment and education, and ultimately realise changes in the ability of young people to find employment. For a detailed analysis of the media intervention, you are kindly invited to visit the website of RisiAlbania, where you will find a case study by Gavin Anderson called “Inspiring and influencing the young job seekers of Albania”: <http://risialbania.al/index/en/labour-market-services-2/>.



**Andi Stefanllari,**  
**Intervention Manager RisiAlbania**

Andi is a development consultant with more than fifteen years of experience in managing competitiveness and private sector development projects. He has extensive experience in identifying bottlenecks to private sector growth and designing interventions for enhancing business growth and competitiveness in a wide range of sectors including ICT, garment, footwear, and agriculture/food processing sectors. His main skills and areas of interest are completing economic analysis for business sectors, conducting marketing research, innovation and workforce development.

*I have worked with HELVETAS staff and local partners to plan, design and introduce new business services in the market systems of IT and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sectors, which provide high employment opportunities for young urban people. With assistance from the international consulting company Avasant, we developed a promising intervention that focuses on building the capacities of public and private service providers in order to increase investments in the BPO sector. It is exciting to see that the impact goes well beyond direct results of the project activities. You notice that the sector is really transforming itself: diversification in terms of services (not just call centres) and scope (not just Italy) and increased interest from the government and investors in recognition that it's becoming a strategic sector. Achieving such changes in a market system is a true challenge that is well worth working for.*



Workshop in Gjakove on infrastructure and mobility, DEMOS, Kosovo

## Kosovo: How local municipalities are putting a stop to the illegal use of public property

To stimulate local economic development, municipalities need to invest in public property, for example by investing in infrastructure on publicly owned land. In Kosovo, however, municipalities often did not know if certain land or property belonged to the government. "For our municipality it is of utmost importance that we have a list of all public property, as this allows the municipality to draft sustainable plans for the future" says Avni Olluri who is head of the verification of municipal property project in Lipjan. "Until recently, we were often unaware if certain land belonged to the municipality or if it was used illegally by someone."

Since the end of the Kosovo conflict, local municipalities were very slow to identify ownership of government property. While the verification and registration of property was of great need, this was a very slow process, due to inexperienced and semiprofessional staff. What made matters even more complicated, was the fact that municipality officials were often faced with legal suits against individuals who had usurped public property for private gains. And unfortunately, the still fragile local courts also proceeded very slowly to solve those cases.

Nearly two years ago, DEMOS, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) project

implemented by HELVETAS, approached ten Kosovo municipalities to assist them in recording their assets. An expert hired by DEMOS developed the methodology behind the verification process and field researchers (approximately 100 student researchers) completed the list of verified municipal assets for the ten partner municipalities (Prishtina, Gjakova, Rahovec, Shtime, Lipjan, Viti, Kaçanik, Novobërdë, Graçanicë and Peja).

"Thanks to DEMOS we now have accurate information about land and buildings that are the property of our municipality", says Olluri. "After the verification process it is estimated that the municipality of Lipjan possesses 1097 parcels in 58 cadastral areas. The municipality has also instigated procedures against illegal usurpations and we are taking the necessary measures to ensure that the designated agricultural property and business assets are in fact being used for the development of agriculture and commercial purposes respectively".

By enabling municipalities to manage the verification process of public properties, the DEMOS project has contributed to the long-term planning of local municipalities. These municipalities are now able to start drafting plans for utilising these assets, which ultimately benefits the general public as well as local businesses.





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**Ertan Munoglu,**  
**Project Manager DEMOS**

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Ertan holds an MA in European Politics from the University of Sussex. He has vast experience in the field of public administration and local governance, having worked as a lecturer at Universum University College on European Economic Integration, as a national advisor for GIZ on European integration, and programme manager for the Association of Kosovo municipalities. He joined HELVETAS in 2014 where he has been the deputy-manager of the DEMOS project.

*HELVETAS is a value-driven organisation with strong emphasis on the equality and dignity of people. Its policies are development-oriented, which also includes investments in professional and career development of staff. So HELVETAS doesn't just talk the talk but also walks the walk: and being part of this walk has been one of my best professional experiences!*

*Those values, principles and policies have helped me through the last three years to see development work from a different perspective. Local governance in Kosovo has progressed a lot in the last decade or so, but lots of challenges remain to be addressed. And while the development community in local governance is diminishing, HELVETAS is seen as a valuable partner and it continues to strengthen its role in the sector. In fact, DEMOS has become one of the few and main local governance projects in Kosovo. Whereas it is a privilege to represent our organisation, such a position puts a lot of pressure on achieving results and demonstrating that positive developments may take time but they are achievable.*



Building your own 3D printer. EYE, Kosovo

## Kosovo: Skills for the future with 3D printing

Kosovo is the youngest country in Europe and has the youngest population in Europe. This has its advantages, but being the youngest can also have its drawbacks. The educational system, a core factor contributing to the success of a country, is failing to meet the needs of this young, modern, European country. As a result, valuable talent is wasted as schools fail to unleash the creative potential of children, especially in providing practical skills in the field of science and technology.

Lum and Gëzim are two youngsters from Gjakovë in western Kosovo. Like many young kids, they always showed great interest in modern technology, but until recently they were not able to further develop their skills, as suitable training facilities did not exist. When they were introduced to BONEVET Makerspace, a local community centre that provides hands-on skills training with a focus on technology, it immediately sparked their interest – especially in the areas of 3D printing and 3D modelling.

The Makerspace in the city of Gjakova was established by the “Une e du Kosoven” foundation and co-financed by the Opportunity Fund of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation project EYE. BONEVET provides a creative stimulating environment, where people gather to share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network and build. It aims to become a key example for informal education and give young people the necessary skills that especially the ICT sector and the metal industry are urgently looking for: from 3D printing to precision metal machining, electronics, robotics, automation, computer-aided design, programming, etc.

When the centre opened its doors in 2014 it was already equipped with many up-to-date technologies, however, they were lacking investment in 3D printing equipment. BONEVET and the EYE project partnered to solve that problem, purchasing four new 3D printers to help ignite the start of new training curricula. “As soon as I joined BONEVET I was intrigued on how 3D printers work” says Gëzim. “That is why I started tinkering with them, trying to understand their logic. Soon after that, I started to create from scratch a 3D printer myself”. Lum concurs enthusiastically “Anything we see in the real world is three dimensional and now is our chance to create everything through 3D printing!”

After Gëzim, Lum, and 45 other young Kosovars learned how to use the equipment in 2016, they were able to apply this knowledge to produce their own prototypes of 3D printers, and also inspire others to do the same. When these 3D printers are completed and functional, BONEVET will make them available to public schools for free so that all young students have the opportunity to be inspired and gain new skills.

One of the most successful achievements deriving from these two motivated individuals is the creation of a prosthetic arm for a young Kosovar girl who was born with a congenital amputee. With this prototype BONEVET was able to be part of the worldwide e-Nable project, an inspiring group who are using their 3D printers to create free 3D-printed hands and arms for those in need of an upper limb assistive device. By the time this article was published another prosthetic arm was completed, while new orders are planned for 2017. During 2017, BONEVET expects to expand its training throughout Kosovo, including new facilities in Prishtina and Mitrovica. With this expansion, the use of this equipment will be available to everyone: and as the case of the prosthetic limb suggests, the potential benefits of this initiative are almost inconceivable.



Waste management in Northern Albania, dldp

## A breath of clean air - Improving waste management services in Albania's new and enlarged municipalities

When visiting the towns of Shkodra and Koplik in northwest Albania, you will notice the remarkably clean roads. 'Remarkable' because, clean roads, are not (yet) a common feature in large parts of Albania. In Shkodra and Koplik, however, you will find many small garbage bins but very little trash along the roads. How did these two towns succeed in cleaning up their trash and what could others learn from them?

Kledis Kukaj is a public services expert and responsible for the waste management of Malësia e Madhe municipality. "Before 2015 our waste situation in Koplik was a disgrace. We had very few bins and what we had, was old and damaged. Unfortunately the same was true for our garbage trucks. And still, the situation was better than in neighbouring villages, where a waste service didn't exist at all. Then in 2015, after the 'territorial reform' came into effect, we began collaborating with dldp to improve our waste management system."

In 2015 the local and national governments agreed to reorganise the municipal territories and administration of Albania, reducing the number of municipalities from 373 to 61. This major reform (known as the TAR) provided many opportunities as well as challenges for the new municipalities and for their citizens. Having worked with local municipalities in northern Albania for more than 10 years, dldp played a facilitative role during the reform process and has been very committed in supporting local

governments during this transition on various topics, including integrated waste management.

Integrated waste management does not just mean 'putting your garbage in a bin'. It is about both waste management and waste reduction. So firstly, you need to improve processes of collecting, transporting, processing/disposing, managing and monitoring waste materials. And secondly, you need to control waste production. The amount of garbage produced increases annually, which puts a heavy burden, not only on the environment and people's health, but also on the municipal budget, because of the high costs associated with waste management.

After the TAR, the remaining 61 municipalities existed of much bigger territories with many different typologies (rural, urban, remote mountain, touristic, seaside, poor, industrial areas). Dldp realised that the new municipalities would need to redesign and adapted their waste management systems to this new reality. The project provided the 5 partner municipalities (Shkodra, Lezha, Malësia e Madhe, Puka and Kukës) with support to carry out an "Audit of the initial situation of the waste sector". During the audit they scanned the situation and defined the resources necessary to ensure improved services. Afterwards, dldp contracted experts to support municipalities with writing Local Waste Management Policies (LWMP). The LWMP enabled municipalities to consider the quality of the services and to consider risks and opportunities regarding environmental and institutional sustainability. And it obliged municipalities to monitor performance of the waste sector. It was also the first step to implement a benchmarking of waste management throughout the country – an opportunity to increase the scalability of integrated waste management plans throughout Albania.

Kledis Kukaj explains his experiences: "Together with dldp we carried out an audit of the local services situation, we identified emergency problems and developed a plan for integrated urban management for the entire municipality. We made a list of needs that the waste management sector had to fulfill for a satisfactory service delivery to the citizens. With the budget available to us, we were able to start making the necessary changes. After two years, we managed to implement a sustainable waste service in all the administrative units of Malësia e Madhe at a cost that our municipality could afford. Increasing the quality of service has also raised citizens' awareness to protect their environment and to throw the garbage in the designated places. Nevertheless, as we are a small municipality with limited financial resources, we of course still have many challenges to resolve; for instance, we have not yet been able to introduce a differentiated waste collection system"

The waste management policies that the municipalities and dldp developed together resulted in two key improvements: Firstly, the new policies led to the creation of local financing of waste management following the polluter-pays principle. Secondly, it contributed to reducing the cost of waste management to an affordable minimum. These are outcomes of a waste management system that aims to be environmentally and economically sustainable, taking into account all costs and benefits. Finally, this also means that the waste of Shkodra and Koplik is being managed as near to the place of production as possible (e.g. by recycling, reusing, and reducing (prevention) as the transportation of waste has environmental, social and economic costs.





Business zone in Gračanica Municipality after DRM intervention, MarketMakers, BiH

## BiH: The business case for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in key economic areas

In 2014 BiH was affected by major floods that caused large-scale damages to private and public property, agricultural land and the natural environment. The international community focused its relief actions on the recovery of residential areas, households and individual SMEs. Two important issues, however, received little attention: flood prevention and the need to develop a DRM system for economic infrastructure.

The MarketMakers project, together with the co-facilitator NERDA, believed that these two areas had to be addressed too and they saw a strong business case to incorporate a greater Disaster Risk Management dimension (DRM) in the flood recovery efforts for BiH's economically important areas. Ensuring that key economic areas, such as business and customs clearance zones are better protected against floods means that local economic activities can continue even if natural disasters strike. Moreover, improving the protection of major economic areas will attract more businesses, which means that the measures also contribute directly to future economic growth, development and job creation.

MarketMakers partnered with four municipalities (Gračanica, Orašje, Domaljevac Šamac and Tuzla) where business zones were affected by floods and investments were needed for future protection. In Gračanica, the municipality and MarketMakers reconstructed and elevated the Sočkovac road that links businesses in Radna Zona 1 to Gračanica's main street. The Municipality of Orašje reconstructed and cleaned 4.876 m of the main

Objeda canal-bed around the business zone Dusine, which had not been maintained since the 1990s making it highly susceptible to flooding. In Tuzla, MarketMakers and the Development and Entrepreneurial Center Tuzla ensured that the Joševica river was cleaned and repaired. Finally, on the border between BiH and Croatia one of the buildings heavily affected by the floods was the customs. Floods completely destructed the terminal's ground floor, which forced all companies to vacate the building, leaving it empty for more than a year. The DRM intervention in Domaljevac-Šamac focused on rehabilitating the customs terminal building according to the build-back-better principle, ensuring that the reconstruction process included measures to minimise vulnerability to future floods.

Of all 4 municipalities, the most significant changes were noticed in Gračanica where the business zone was able to expand in a very short period of time. DRM measures ensured that 21 companies were protected from flood risks, securing 991 existing jobs. In addition, 40 new jobs were created (and 50 new jobs are expected in the upcoming period), new investments of 10.000.000 BAM were made and active participation of the business community led to the donation of own land for road reconstruction, investments in street lighting and expansion of the business zone to neighboring location (among many other things).

A number of key lessons can be drawn from this intervention: in the first place facilitation is key in successfully combining MSD and DRM. By aligning diverse interests all relevant stakeholders who took part in continuous, long-term DRM discussions were motivated into action. And by allowing for sufficient flexibility the parties involved managed to identify key DRM challenges and design appropriate and well-planned solutions. Secondly, by using infrastructure-

related DRM intervention as an entry point for bringing together relevant stakeholders from the government, private sector and civil society, the project managed to achieve awareness and understanding of DRM and put a greater focus on building back better. It encouraged municipalities to invest in measures to reduce the risk of flooding in business zones by seeking the involvement and input of tenant businesses and to launch DRM discussion platforms among respective municipal departments and businesses.

While implemented and designed in a relatively short amount of time, the intervention illustrated

that relatively simple strategic DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) infrastructure investments can be catalytic in terms of promoting future growth and employment. The interventions triggered total capital investment of over 5.000.000 EUR in 70 protected companies that led to the creation of over 300 new jobs. Additionally, 1464 existing jobs are secured and 600 agricultural producers are protected from future floods. The next step is to instill greater DRM awareness among other municipalities in BiH. Under the Small Grant Program of the Swiss Embassy in BiH, NERDA developed DRM project proposals (business cases) with three additional municipalities. A funding decision is expected in 2017.



**Sara Šalji,**  
**Food sector leader and GSE**  
**focal point MarketMakers**

Sara's main interest is 'women and their empowerment'. Sara's first career steps were made in the civil society sector, where she worked with youth and women. In her engagement with the Centre for Refugee and IDP studies at the University of Sarajevo, Sara worked as a researcher, covering the Western Balkans. This focus was maintained in her work with The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, where she worked in the field of peace building and reconciliation, negotiation and advocacy for women's rights in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia. She holds an MA in Psychology from University of Sarajevo, and is currently enrolled in an MA programme for International Relations and Diplomacy.

*I joined the MarketMakers team in November 2016 and what I have most enjoyed during my short stay so far, is the importance that HELVETAS and our project give to accountability of our interventions. With the research-supported approach and our strategies, the team manages to bring the simplest, and yet the most elegant solutions to the market constraints. In such a dynamic environment, learning is not only inevitable and strongly appreciated, but encouraged and supported by my supervisors. Such attitude and treatment helps me grow, knowing that what I do is important, appreciated and acknowledged.*





Value Chain Development for homemade processed products, S4RE, Kosovo

## Kosovo: Developing local partnerships to ensure improved service provision for poor smallholders

For poor smallholders in Kosovo it is often very difficult to access the market (due to lack of information, no networks, limited marketing experiences) and at the same time they have very few opportunities to further develop their business skills. To help producers manage these problems the Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) Project targeted four municipalities during phase 1 of the project (2013-2016): providing direct support to rural smallholders in the areas of skills development and facilitating linkages with the market.

Results of the first phase were impressive: the project managed to bring together 2,539 farmers in 180 learning groups. They jointly developed business skills, learned new ideas and techniques from each other and gained opportunities to explore new potential markets. At the same time the project successfully raised awareness and responsiveness of smallholders to training programs.

Importantly, the project experiences also confirmed that there remains a great need for improved extension services. For this reason, the project decided that for the next phase it would focus on developing more and stronger partnerships with local actors in an effort to tackle the

underperforming service provision in rural areas. The project will build on the technical capacities of local actors to identify the skills gap of smallholders and the sectors with the greatest market potential. One of the key project partners is the Rural Development Network and its Local Action Groups (LAG)<sup>1</sup>. In Kosovo LAGs are local municipal parties that are tasked to design and implement the local development strategy. For S4RE the partnership with the LAGs is of crucial importance to ensure the sustainability of the intervention: in this set-up the ownership of the project approach will ultimately lie with the local actor. Furthermore, partnering with RDN has not only been important to transfer ownership but also to ensure that the model is replicated throughout Kosovo, including municipalities where S4RE project is not active.

Fadile Demelezi, head of the LAG in Viti explains that "in partnership with S4RE we have successfully implemented projects in 2016 targeting 166 farmers and 91 secondary school students in fruit, beekeeping and dairy sectors. We have identified value chains with the highest potential and increased outreach using the knowledge and good practices of S4RE project. By adopting these tools we managed to identify gaps in supply chains and design appropriate interventions. This has resulted in increased credibility and trust in the technical capacities of municipal authorities. And because of the positive experiences a specific municipal budget for the LAG to implement similar activities in 2017 (targeting 436 farmers) has already been allocated".

<sup>1</sup> LAGs are established by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development following LEADER approach, an EU initiative to support rural development projects initiated at local level in order to revitalise rural areas and create jobs. They associate public and private partners, representing existing local interest groups from different socioeconomic sectors.





Training tourist guides in Berat, Risi, Albania

## To fully enjoy the Albanian experience: professionalising the tourism sector by providing better trainings for tourist guides

"Have you ever imagined how you would describe to your international friends how people lived in traditional Gjirokastra houses 300 years ago?" Ervin Budo asks. "The challenge is to make them experience the 300-years old world, to feel it and see it with their own eyes".

Ervin Budo works as a tourist guide since 2000 and has a strong passion for travelling and learning foreign languages. "After 15 years of experience I decided to invest in myself and become a professional tourist guide". He registered and attended the first training for national tourist guides provided by the National Association of Tourist Guides of Albania (NATGA). "The training - which was certified by the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) - was very useful. We learned that even small details, like the way you're standing, your posture, body language and voice of tone can make a big difference between a professional tourist guide and an amateur", says Ervin, who was one of the 17 certified participants on this training.

With the support of the RisiAlbania Project, the first efforts of NATGA focused on preparing the training curricula and the training manuals and on certification of the tourist guides (according to official standards). Today, NATGA offers trainings for national, local, and special interests

tourist guides. 150 guides were trained, certified and attended NATGA workshops during 2015-2016, making NATGA an important player in the Albanian tourism industry. The challenge ahead of NATGA is to offer qualitative services, like trainings, workshops, events, and increasing its membership. Visitors and tour operators are able to search for qualified tourist guides among the CV's of association members, using NATGA's webportal ([www.natga.al](http://www.natga.al)), which was developed with assistance from RisiAlbania.

Risi's long-term objective is two-fold: In terms of the job itself, the project aims to ensure that there is more work for experienced and highly qualified tourist guides - and that youth consider it a decent job to make a living. In terms of the tourism sector, the projects wants to contribute to the experience of visitors in Albania, in the sense that the quality of the tourism product (including the guides themselves) is improved, that people stay longer in Albania and that they spend more money.

"It was RisiAlbania project that realised the potential of NATGA as a key actor and moderniser of the Albanian tourism industry" - says Adrian Mitrovassili, NATGA coordinator. He believes that the investment of RisiAlbania will have a high rate of return: NATGA has a very ambitious business plan that seeks to ensure continuous and sustainable enlargement of the association. The association estimates that the tourism industry in the country needs at least 1,500 tourist guides, which is ten times more than what the market offers today. This will result in 1,500 new jobs for young people who all need professional training, qualification and certification.



## Albania: Networking for women in politics

“A woman has great power’ is a well-known expression in Albania that inspires us every day”, says Ms. Valbona Karakaçi, Programme Manager of dldp. “We are a team; a programme; a network; a group of 468 members.” Dldp established this network in 2011 in cooperation with women local councilors of the regions of Shkodra and Lezha (now existing of three more regions). It is called the Women in Politics Network (WiPN) and is an informal network of women who are part of a political party working for decision-making bodies, such as local councils or the national parliament.

To appreciate the purpose and function of the WiPN it is important to understand Albania’s political and cultural context. The WiPN emerged against a challenging political background. Relationships between Albania’s main political parties have been, and continue to be, volatile. Moreover, society’s traditional views of gender roles have kept women largely away from politics. As a result, women have been greatly underrepresented in local and national governance bodies. Through the WiPN, women politicians started working together across party lines and in a short time they managed to produce important changes to the political system at local and national level - and at a ‘personal’ level.

Irma Kopliku, Member of Parliament and former member of the Shkoder Municipal Council, explains what she means by changes at personal level: “Being a member of the local council and part of the decision-making process, gives you the possibility to watch in practice how laws are implemented and how support [for realising ideas] can be gained. This experience has made it easier for me to be an

active part of the Albanian Parliament”

Emine Bershi shares her experiences about the changes she has observed at the local level. In Emine’s village, Klos, the Alliance of Women Councilors proposed and voted to abolish the water irrigation tariff for female-headed households. “Life for a woman-head of family is very difficult. For example, I have three children and my economic situation is not good, as I am unemployed. I have nothing. This year the municipality abolished the irrigation water tariff and I thank the municipality for it. I am now able to use this money for my children and support their living”.

At the national level, two former members of the WiPN were elected as members of parliament. The WiPN has established links with the independent Alliance of Parliamentary Women in the Albanian Parliament. “The alliance pushed parliament to make amendments to the electoral code to ensure that 50% of municipal council candidates are women. As a result, the number of women councilors increased significantly (from 12% in 2009 to 35% in 2015). Moreover, the alliance was able to disseminate a model of cooperation: when women councilors see women in parliament cooperating on important issues, they are inspired to do the same in their own councils.” Mimoza Hafizi, member of the Parliament.

Thanks to the WiPN, many women politicians have been able to further develop their political careers through trainings and coaching. This has helped members of the WiPN to feel more secure about their political career and take action to further progress within political parties. Moreover, issues around social inclusion have been put higher on the political agenda and decisions concerning the use of public resources and policy-making have become more gender-sensitive, both nationally and locally.

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation implements projects in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus on behalf of funders. We therefore express our deepest gratitude to those that have awarded us with a mandate and provided us the opportunity to make a difference.

Our projects are often implemented together with international and national partners. Complementary expertise and experience is key to successful implementation of development initiatives. We therefore thank our partners for their collaboration.

Within the frame of specific project interventions, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation works together with a multitude of national and international organisations, companies, service providers and consultants. Without the support from and ownership of these partners, we could not achieve the impact that we have. The list of names is exhaustive; we would therefore simply like to extend a big thank you for your collaboration in 2016 and look forward to work with you in 2017!



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

## Julius Bär

**medicor**foundation  
Liechtenstein

**RIETER STIFTUNG**



**PARTNERËT SHQIPËRI**  
PËR NDRYSHIM DHE ZHVILLIM



UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG  
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG

Management  
Development  
Associates **MDA**





# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

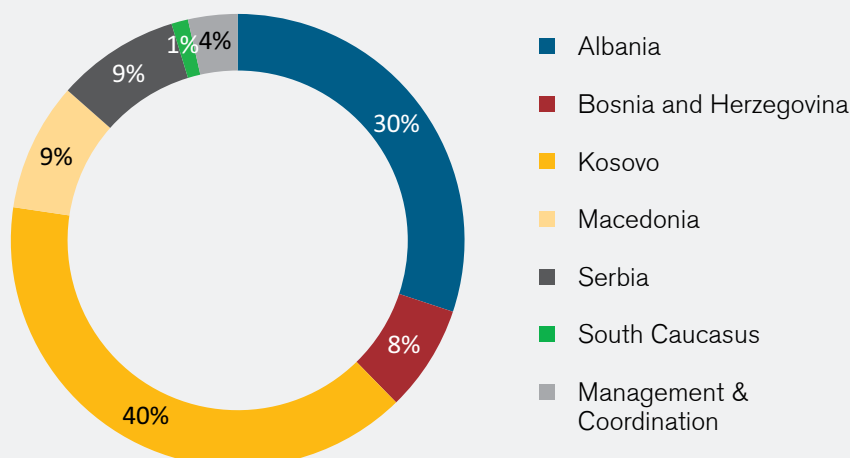
## for EASTERN EUROPE 2016

The overall expenditures of HELVETAS in Eastern Europe in the year 2016 amounted to CHF 13.9 million against the approved budget of CHF 16.2 million. This sums up to an 86% budget execution mainly due to careful spending and accrual accounting (especially grants). The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation continues to be the main donor in the Western Balkan (94.4% - all acquired mandates), followed by two foundations (Medicor and Canton of Bern – 2.1%). 3.5% of the funds came from the organisation's own resources and was used for running the Programme Coordination in Kosovo and Head Office Switzerland.

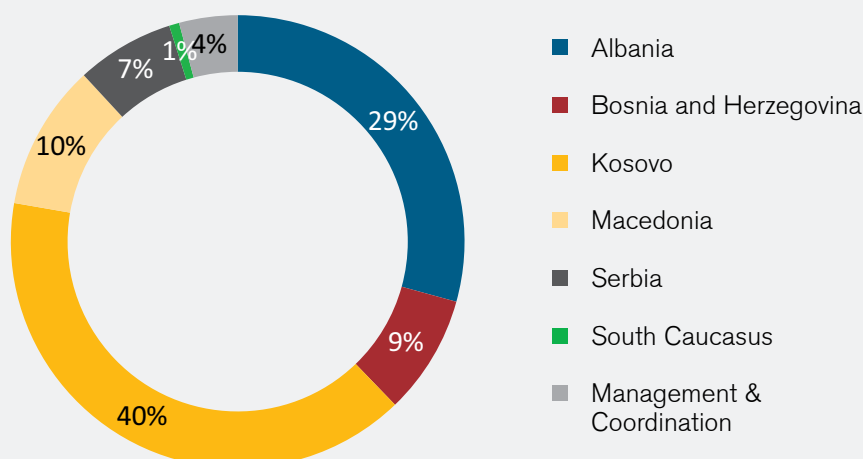
The portfolio remained stable in 2016 compared to 2015, though neither new projects were acquired nor old ones closed. The overall budget increased 22% from 2015 to 2016 mainly because of bigger annual budgets in most projects. Of the overall expenditure, approximately 14% are invested in the working area Rural Economy, 19% in Skills Development and Education, 52% in Governance and Peace, and 10% in Environment and Climate Change.

KPMG audited the accounts and the financial statements on Head Office level and has approved them. All projects got audited also at country level by accredited audit firms who approved all their accounts .

**Budget 2016**  
(Total CHF 16'238'023)



**Expenses 2016**  
(Total CHF 13'922'016)





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