

## UNDP RBEC Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS

### Minutes of the Virtual Local Project Appraisal Committee Review

#### Project: Strengthen national and local systems to support the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans

**Date: 04 March 2020**

**In view of COVID-19 situation, the LPAC was put on pause. The work on addressing the comments and finalization of the project document continued during March-November 2020**

**Final discussion and closure of the virtual LPAC: 8 December 2020**

#### 1. Attendance

Name	Title
Gerd Trogemann	IRH Manager, LPAC Chairperson
Limya Eltayeb	Resident Representative, UNDP in Albania, LPAC Member
Steliana Nedera	Resident Representative, UNDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, LPAC Member
Maria Suokko	Resident Representative, UNDP in Kosovo <sup>1</sup> , LPAC Member
Daniela Gasparikova	Resident Representative, UNDP in Montenegro, LPAC Member
Narine Sahakyan	Resident Representative, UNDP in North Macedonia, LPAC Member
Francine Pickup	Resident Representative, UNDP in Serbia, LPAC Member
Bharati Sadasivam	Team Leader, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UNDP IRH, LPAC Member
Farid Garakhanov	Chief, Operations, UNDP IRH, LPAC Member
Ivan Zverzhanovski	Partnerships Team Leader, UNDP IRH, LPAC Member
George Bouma	Team Leader, Sustainable Development Team, UNDP IRH
Ekaterina Paniklova	Chief, CO Solutions/RP Coordination, RBEC/IRH – Quality Assurance

**2. Project Proposal is presented by** George Bouma, Team Leader, Sustainable Development Team, IRH

#### 3. Background information on the project:

**Estimated project budget:** EUR 4,609,988.00, equivalent to estimated amount of \$5,531,986.00

**UNDP contribution:** EUR 109,9880 (est. \$ 131,986)

**Expected donor(s) funding:** EUR 4,500,000.00 (est. \$5,400,000.00) from EU

**Planned project starting date and duration:** 15 October -31 December 2020 inception phase and 1 January 2021 - 30 June 2024

<sup>1</sup>References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

**Geographic coverage:** Western Balkans (Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, included in country level activities) (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\* and Montenegro included in the regional level activities):

**Major counterparts of the project:** DG NEAR, the World Bank, RCC

**Project implementation modality:** DIM

#### 4. **Summary of Strengthen national and local systems to support the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans:**

This **project's overall objective** is to support effective reintegration of vulnerable returnees from the EU with particular attention to Roma. The specific objective is to enhance the capacity of Western Balkan authorities at central and local level to implement successful returnee reintegration policies and respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable returnees. Moreover, the Project will contribute to the socio-economic recovery of IPA beneficiaries from the devastating consequences of COVID-19 pandemic on local economies and vulnerable households.

The **project's target groups** are vulnerable returnees and their family members that need access to social protection and services to avoid poverty and marginalization. Special emphasis is placed on youth and women as most vulnerable section of the population, in particular during and post COVID-19 pandemic

In its activities, the **project supports economic empowerment of returnees their family members and social cohesion of local communities**. Moreover it enhances the capacities of practitioners and decision-makers of the public service providers **and sets up models** for engaging local/sub-national units of governance, private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) in tackling the multiple barriers that vulnerable returnees experience on their path to sustainable reintegration in the labour market and local community.

**Project activities include** country specific advisory services and capacity development support to service providers in introducing innovative models of holistic support for sustainable reintegration of returnees. In addition, proposed activities address the systemic gaps and institutional bottlenecks for effective governance of the process of returnees' integration. Bearing in mind that Roma constitute a large proportion of irregular migrants, results of the project contributes to the implementation of the broader Roma inclusion agenda. The project supports regional peer-learning and policy-dialogue and peer-learning, supported in partnerships with international organizations and think tanks to form a platform for promotion of the inclusiveness agenda in the Western Balkan.

Action results will be achieved through implementation of the following outputs.

Output 1. Local returnee reintegration strategies are developed with selected municipalities

Output 2. Elements of local returnee reintegration strategies are implemented in selected municipalities, including innovative activities on livelihoods, skills building etc.

Output 3. Significant number of urgent administrative issues faced by returnees are addressed.

#### 5. **Summary of LPAC member comments**

- The Strengthen national and local systems to support the effective socio-economic integration of returnees in the Western Balkans has been endorsed by LPAC members; detailed comments are provided in the annex. Comments have been addressed in the final project document;
- The thematic focus and proposed activities are relevant and aligned with national and Country Offices' priorities;
- Budget items related to human resources and operational functioning of the project offices elaborated out in the revised budget.

A detailed comments log is annexed to this document.

**6. Final LPAC recommendation:**

LPAC recommends approving the project. The project design is of sufficient quality to move to the implementation stage. The recommendation made by the LPAC members have been updated in the final project document. A detailed comments log is in the Annex 1 to this document.

Prepared by: Vesna Djuteska Bisheva, Employment Specialist *Vesna Djuteska-Bisheva*

Cleared by: Ekaterina Paniklova, Chief, *Ekaterina Paniklova*  
COST/RP Coordination

LPAC recommendation is approved by: Gerd Trogemann, IRH Manager, LPAC Chairperson *Gerd Trogemann*

**Annex 1: Comment Log to the draft project document “Promoting Inclusive Labour Market Solutions in the Western Balkans (ILMS II)”**

Comments received regarding the project design	Response
<p><b>UNDP Albania, Limya Eltayeb</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We reviewed the draft project document package and incorporated two minor comments.</li> <li>2. A very interesting project and we are looking forward to start its implementation.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Received comments were of technical nature and no specific follow up is required</li> </ol>
<p><b>UNDP North Macedonia, Narine Sahakyan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The project is well designed, with strong focus and clearly formulated results. It reflects very well the importance to expand the services and the opportunities further to the vulnerable groups that are not primarily covered/prioritized by governmental programme and national system. What is particularly of our interest is engagement of NGOs in the labor and social spheres. Their role in the activation of vulnerable returnees and direct cooperation with the public institutions and private sector, in combination with the governmental active measures for employment, will be our strength in the process for their successful reintegration. Hopefully, the project will help to improve the overall response to the needs of vulnerable groups, as part of the ongoing efforts in social and health protection, as well as in education.</li> <li>2. Let me also commend the approach taken by this project - to bundle the budget as per the outputs rather than individual countries, leaving space for flexible implementation that would hopefully lead to establishing more appropriate country models.</li> <li>3. More on the operational side, I would like to address the costs needed for functioning of the project teams at COs. Since they are not reflected in the Project budget, except for the salaries, it is our</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Considering that outsourcing of public service provision to NGOs is of particular interest to several WB countries, the final version of the Project document, further elaborates the methodology for engagement and performance measurement;</li> <li>2. DG NEAR also recognized the advantage of output/results-based budget and accepted this as a prevailing budget for monitoring the expenses;</li> <li>3. Considering that meanwhile project duration and budget has been increased, the budget for management and operations costs for running the project at country level have been revised. The budget presents explicitly the costs for salaries of national project coordinator and project assistant, costs for IT equipment and basic office related costs rent; internet costs, local transportation and sundries. All budgets are equally distributed among participating COs.</li> <li>4. Partnerships team confirmed that no additional charges, including in a form of 1% levy apply to EU funded project.</li> <li>5. The project team appreciates the comment and reiterates commitment to design and implement the project in full</li> </ol>

<p>understanding that the expenditures needed for renting of the office space, administration and some basic equipment needed for each work space, should be covered by CO budget (costs related to this, for 24 months, would be in the range of 20,000 USD, without any % of DPC). Please confirm if this is so, in which case we'll have to come back to you with an agreement that will be acceptable for all three COs.</p> <p>4. Please also let us know if the 1% levy will be additionally calculated.</p> <p>5. Wishing you all the success in the coming discussions with the EU. Our team is ready to further support IRH on this topic.</p>	<p>alignment with CO priorities and national agendas.</p>
<p><b>UNDP Bosnia Herzegovina, Sukhrob Khoshmukhamedov</b></p> <p>1. Although, the CO Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a direct beneficiary of the project, we find the topic very relevant to BIH context and we would like to propose the modality for cooperation and implementation of activities in BIH. The CO BIH has a several projects that are dealing with service delivery, social inclusion and integration, including the Diaspora for Development project (financed by the Swiss Government) that is indirectly looking into the issues of 'returns', and might be a good platform for cooperation and coordination of proposed activities.</p>	<p>1. The project indeed seeks to ensure the cross-fertilization of different project activities. This was proved to be a fruitful modality in other sub-regional projects implemented in the WB. Furthermore, the project envisages conducting a gap analysis of reintegration of returnees policies and services in the three WB economies, which don't participate in this phase of the project. Also, the project foresees organization of 2 regional conferences for peer learning and cross-fertilization of experiences and lessons learned among all six economies from the Western Balkans.</p>
<p><b>Partnerships Team, Ivan Zverzhanovski</b></p> <p>Levy is not applied to the EU contributions at project level. Moreover, in discussing the levy with donors we should not conflate it with GMS etc.</p>	<p>1. Noted and followed up, accordingly.</p>