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Youth Employment and Management of Migration in Serbia

TECHNICAL REPORT

**(Review on developing and piloting the integrated
employment and social services delivery model)**

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings on the performance of integrated service delivery model, piloted under the 'Youth Employment and Management of Migration in Serbia' (YEM) Joint Programme in the municipalities of Backi Petrovac, Becej, Novi Sad, Palilula, Savski Venac, Vladicin Han and Vranje that were highly affected by youth unemployment and poverty.

The main purpose of this field research, as stipulated in the TOR, was to gather and analyze information on the progress made by the YEM Joint Programme in developing and piloting the integrated employment and social services delivery model. The research included: (a) gathering and analysis of primary data on young beneficiaries treated with integrated service delivery; (b) Interviews with staff of partner agencies, namely Centres for Social Work (CSW) and National Employment Service (NES); and (c) the assessment of the referral modalities piloted under the aegis of the YEM Joint Programme.

The report begins with a brief background about the YEM Joint Programme. This is followed by the presentation of findings, both quantitative and qualitative, according to the SMART outputs of the programme. Finally, based on the thorough data analysis and available in-country knowledge, the presented report offers conclusions concentrating on the key issues of existing referrals involving the work of CSWs and NES branch offices. We conclude this report with a set of recommendations as well as observations, insights and innovative practices extracted from the field research, highlighting good practices stemming from the implementation of the YEM Joint Programme activities.

BRIEF BACKGROUND ABOUT THE YEM JOINT PROGRAMME

Since May 2009 the International Labour Office (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been providing technical assistance to the Government of Serbia through the YEM Joint Programme, which was centred on a three-pillar strategy touching upon policies, institutions and programmes that concur to the delivery of integrated employment and social services targeting disadvantaged young women and men exposed to migration, especially young returnees.

At the time when the YEM programme was designed, labour market indicators were particularly poor for youth. Compared to their adult counterparts (population between 15-64), young people experienced lower employment (18.7% compared to 51.7% of adults), higher informality (63.2% compared to an overall rate of 43.3%) and higher unemployment (43.7% vs. 18.8%), according to the Labour Force Survey 2007. The share of young workers holding temporary jobs was almost three times higher than that of all-age workers (38% for young workers and 14% for all-age workers).

Moreover, their labour force participation rate was almost half of that of adults, standing at 33.3%. The main reason for such a low rate was low participation rates of

young women (27%), teenagers and youth with low educational attainment (17%). In 2007, nearly 70% of the young unemployed had been jobless for a year or more, emphasizing the problem of long-term exclusion from the labour market.

However, unemployed young people have never been a homogeneous group in the same risk of poverty and social exclusion. The analysis conducted at the beginning of the YEM Joint Programme confirmed that certain young people are more disadvantaged than others. Social class, national origin, sex, educational level, geographical location and disability strongly affect youth employment outcomes. **In particular, young people's transition to decent work proved to be especially difficult for low-educated youth, especially those living in less developed regions and in rural areas.** Individuals with no education or incomplete primary education have the largest poverty index (18.7% in 2007), experience higher inactivity and lower employment rates. It is these groups of most vulnerable unemployed young people that are most often users of both systems: the system of social protection and the labour market.

According to the research on cooperation between NES and CSWs (Veljkovic, 2009) with focus on enhancing the employability of young people from risk groups, **the largest number of unemployed young people registered with CSWs were among users of social assistance**, then in the group of young people with disabilities, young people leaving care and youth in conflict with the law. The research study which included six municipalities (Belgrade, Nis, Novi Sad, Paracin, Stara Pazova, Vranje) showed that about 30% users were young people aged 16-30. The above-mentioned results suggested that **the great deal of potential lied with the younger population in terms of their future activation.**

Poor youth employment prospects result in widespread poverty and strong pushes to migrate, both internally and abroad. Serbia signed a Readmission Agreement with the EU in 2007, and it was anticipated that further pressures would be exerted on the labour market in the areas where these individuals return to. Nevertheless, the group which was not sufficiently recognized as at risk were persons extradited by the Agreement on Readmission. Above-mentioned research showed that there were no reliable statistical indicators available of the number of migrants, that employees in NES and CSWs greatly minimize the problems faced by this population trying to reintegrate, and that measures and services (financial assistance) provided are not in proportion to their needs for various forms of support. Based on the trends of voluntary return programmes recorded before the start of the YEM programme, **it was expected that more than 40% of the returns would be to the districts of Pcinjski, South Backa and Belgrade.**

Having in mind the above-mentioned situation, **it was necessary to create intervention with coordinated multi-sector services for the activation of disadvantaged youth, which would support them in leaving the vicious circle of social exclusion (poverty – lack of employment – low level of education).** In that regard, their activation urged for programmes and policies that would connect people who are at risk of poverty and exclusion to jobs through training and work activation, i.e. at the intersection of social assistance, education and employment.

However, in Serbia, as in all countries, when seeking solutions to the multiple problems of disadvantaged, there is no one single responsible agency or state body, with the required services or expertise, where all of these problems can be addressed. As a result, in order to access the range of required services, disadvantaged people have to separately contact a wide range of both statutory and voluntary bodies on different geographical locations in order to address their complex problems. The cost of seeking help from a range of state and non state bodies has been traditionally born by the vulnerable groups themselves. Over-bureaucratic administrative application processes and limited geographical access to services led to these costs being seen as quite substantial by the clients themselves (Taylor, 2009).

Although both CSWs and NES had programmes focused on disadvantaged groups, the integrated approach was missing before the start of the YEM Joint Programme. CSWs and NES branch offices did not have integrated services and programmes offered to the most disadvantaged groups of unemployed youth. There was an obvious lack of proactive social services that would empower and activate young people and prevent their dependence on the welfare system.

Despite many real obstacles to cooperation and provision of coordinated multi-sector services such as (a) various levels of decentralization of two systems, (b) lack of funds and capacities of CSWs and NES branch offices to cover increasing number of beneficiaries, (c) mutual unawareness of each other's methods of work, (d) lack of protocols and adequate legal framework for cooperation, (e) invisibility of vulnerable groups in the current method of recording the user, (f) dominance of administrative procedures, etc; **NES and CSWs recognized the need to establish and develop mutual cooperation with the support of YEM.**

The objective of YEM was to enhance cooperation between the CSWs and NES branch offices in order to improve the position of unemployed youth by implementing coordinated and integrated services from both systems. **The idea behind was to provide more effective services, bearing in mind the common target groups and a common goal: support for clients to gain independence** (through improvement of their skills which would increase their chances to get the job) **and eventually leave the system.**

Integrated service delivery model envisaged intensifying cooperation between the institutions and introduction of novelties in their work with the aim to provide better access to more effective services according to the individual needs of the beneficiaries/clients. To this end, **the YEM Joint Programme supported disadvantaged youth in the above-mentioned districts of South Backa, Belgrade and Pcinjski by supporting sequence of services offered by CSWs and NES;** starting from (a) identification and assessment of clients in order to individually tailor what is available (individualized counselling and guidance as well as job search assistance), (b) training programmes to remedy poor skills level, (c) employment subsidies to provide an incentive to employers to recruit young unemployed, (d) programmes to promote self-employment among young people, and (e) programmes targeting young persons with disabilities.

Amongst active labour market measures, which are just one of the instruments leading to the activation of beneficiaries, **competency-based on-the-job training was considered to be mostly appropriate for the persons with low educational attainment, longer unemployment spells and no prior work experience**. Over two thirds of the young beneficiaries participated in those trainings organized by private enterprises for up to 6 months, and with no obligation to retain the trainee, unless the firm trains more than 9 youth.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS ACCORDING TO SMART OUTPUTS

Having in mind the YEM monitoring framework, the following output indicators (SMART outputs) are considered to be particularly relevant in measuring the performance of the integrated service delivery model:

Output Indicator¹:

An integrated service delivery system based on referral targeting disadvantaged youth developed.

This main target of the YEM Joint Programme was achieved. The YEM team managed to introduce change through a wide range of activities which led to the fulfilment of the above-mentioned goal – to develop integrated service system in pilot municipalities.

Design of the programme

Research was a strong component supporting programme design and implementation. At the beginning of the programme, research studies on existing good practices on integrated and/or coordinated employment and social protection services in Serbia and in Central and Eastern Europe (Veljkovic, 2009 and Taylor, 2009) were conducted. These studies, as well as study trip to UK where their practices of integrated service delivery were examined, proved that YEM served as a mechanism for knowledge generation and dissemination of knowledge and experiences in this regard.

In establishing the integrated service delivery model, the inter-ministerial working group, including representatives of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sport, National Employment Service and the Republic Institute for Social Protection, was established. Using this instrument and the above-mentioned generated knowledge, YEM developed a set of Operational Procedures for the integrated services delivery (ISD) to disadvantaged youth which were seen as instrumental in setting the system.

YEM also provided support in developing by-laws of the new Law on Social Protection (adopted in March 2011), which emphasizes more active role of financial social

¹ Contributing to the Output 2.1 of the programme: A system integrating labour market, migration and social services for youth established and functioning.

assistance² (FSA) recipients and a possibility for their activation through education, training, employment, community based work and similar. For the first time the Law stipulates the right and obligation of an individual capable to work to participate in activities that would eventually lead to his/her inclusion in the society. It introduces the possibility for CSWs to sign contracts with beneficiaries related to their future activation (individual activation plans) on one side and the partnership agreements with other relevant institutions, such as the National Employment Service, on the other. All these changes are aimed at increasing self-sufficiency and greater integration in the society. In that regard, YEM commissioned research on 'Social Assistance and Activation: In Search of Inclusive Policy Options' (CLDS, 2011) with the aim to construct a baseline for the impact assessment of the adopted Law on Social Protection in Serbia, i.e. to offer baseline data on the labour market and education status, job search activities, and referrals of the FSA recipients. On-going research of CLDS experts (Matkovic and Petrovic) on 'Non-take up of social assistance in Serbia', to be completed in April 2012, will also represent significant product, done with the support of YEM.

Implementation of the Operational Procedures

As mentioned above, set of Operational Procedures for the delivery of integrated service delivery to disadvantaged youth was seen as the cornerstone of the ISD programme. Operational Procedures covered:

- (a) identification and assessment of clients and their referral,
- (b) provision of immediate support,
- (c) long-term support and social inclusion, and
- (d) evaluation upon the end of measure(s).

In accordance with the procedures, cooperation between the systems which are providing services to disadvantaged youth were defined by Protocols of Cooperation at the national and Partnership Agreements at the local level.

While almost all the steps were covered in the CSWs and NES work, this has been done routinely and the nuances of the ISD and its focus on clients needs and interests has been somehow lost in translation. All institutions carried out entry interviews but adjusted them to the format used in their institutions. Referral was often understood as providing lists of clients from CSWs to NES. Only in two cases the participants of focus groups were informed about the programme by the CWSs case workers. Referrals from NES to CSWs were also rarely made.

Support to clients throughout the process (opening bank accounts, helping them out to reach the employer) was evidenced only on one location (Vladicin Han).

Evaluation upon the end of the measure and mapping of future steps for specific clients towards their activation and social integration has not been made.

² Material security (or *materijalno obezbedjenje porodice* in Serbian) changed its name to financial social assistance, according to the new Law on Social Welfare from 2011.

Assessment of the novelty of the programme

Although a number of the focus groups participants struggled with this block of questions, they all noticed (more in Novi Sad, less in Vranje) that for the first time NES was pro-active in approaching them. 'I am registered as unemployed more than 2 years, and this is the first time that I received a phone call from the NES'³.

The participants expressed satisfaction with such a type of NES approach and in general were glad with being called for the training. In almost all the cases the participants did not see any connection between the two institutions when the provision of integrated social services is in question. When asked about what changes they would introduce to improve the service, the two groups identified financial assistance for the training as the key issue of concern. The participants in Novi Sad complained about the amount: 'They give us 9000 dinars; this is way too little! It's not even for the bus! It doesn't pay off to participate!' In Vranje this issue was raised only by two participants with some humour: 'It's better to work for nothing than not to work for nothing'.

Collaboration between CSWs and NES branch offices

Because of the YEM programme, NES and CSWs exchanged information on the beneficiaries they already have registered in their systems. They all agree that for the first time cooperation between CSWs and NES branch offices was initiated, or at least exchange of information was carried out.

Although systematic effort (through trainings, set procedures, signed protocols of cooperation and partnership agreements, ongoing provision of programme support) has been made by the programme to establish integrated service delivery, each institution applies its own set of procedures when making individual plans for their clients. CSWs and NES did not consult one another in the process of making individual plans or in revising them. Furthermore, no case conferences were made as all the interviewed NES and CSW staff noted that the cases of their selected clients were easy to deal with and did not need case conferencing.

Two institutions differently understand their work on the programme: while for NES this is part of the mandate, in most cases CSWs do not see activation of FSAs as their objective.

The lack of stronger cooperation was also explained by different approach to clients. While NES employment counsellors are in charge of their clients from the first interview and later, in CSWs staff who works on FSA usually does not have a direct contact with the client. Case manager is in charge for the overall treatment of the beneficiaries.

Also, staff from both institutions noted that they have been burdened with the workload which increased lately because of new comers to the system of social protection and unemployment register. In Becej, for example, one employment

³ Focus group in Novi Sad, 17 February, 2012.

counsellor is charge of 5,200 registered unemployed. In Vladicin Han, the work with 4,500 unemployed is taken care by two staff.

CSWs on five locations showed different level of activity and engagement in the project. In Novi Sad, CSW was not interested to cooperate and NES staff deployed different strategies to get necessary information on FSA beneficiaries. In Vranje and Backi Petrovac cooperation between the two went smoothly without such a tension: 'CSW supplied us with the listings of their users, we regularly exchanged information by phone and consulted one another as there was a number of replacements'.

Although on most locations the cooperation on the programme was described in superlatives, it was actually focused on supply of listing of potential beneficiaries by CSWs to NES.

In all the surveyed cases, referrals were made only from CSWs to NES. As for the integrated service delivery, it turned out that there was no need for NES branch offices to refer back the clients who either did not take part in the training (despite initial selection) or interrupted the training. Their return to CSWs was self-regulated by the social protection system itself. As NES employment counsellors reported, they had a number of cases of people who stayed without job, and did not know about the services that CSW provides. Although in a certain number of cases these people were in general referred to CSWs, they could not have been engaged in the YEM as the programme anticipated inclusion of people of specific age and they, because they were above 30, did not match the criteria.

Cooperation with other institutions

Besides NES and CSWs, none of the other institutions was clearly recognized as important for the integrated services delivery. Only in Vladicin Han Youth Offices were noted as potential ally in motivating the beneficiaries, especially at the beginning of the programme. Also, in some views, schools need to be included to tackle the problem: 'We are dealing with half-literate beneficiaries, who cannot benefit the measure even if something is offered'.

The management of the programme

The management by the YEM programme staff, especially ILO and UNDP, was highly rated on five locations. YEM supported number of research studies, delivery of trainings, developed necessary guidelines and procedures, etc. while programme staff also constantly provided technical support, consultancy and other necessary activities in an effort directed at developing the integrated service delivery model. With the support of YEM, the two institutions (CSW and NES) exchanged information on each other's activities for the first time and established communication and cooperation. As noted by the interviewed CSWs and NES staff, the whole new world on other institutions' work appeared.

Training on integrated services was held for professionals from CSW and NES (around 50 people in total). The training was held twice, in February and March 2011, and it was

prepared jointly by the Republic Institute for Social Protection and NES. Having in mind that the need for improving motivation skills was recognized, training of trainers on motivation and activation of young disadvantaged people was held for 15 CSW professionals in February 2012.

Trainings organized by YEM were assessed as perfect match, providing adequate framework and knowledge for the implementation of the programme. It was only noted that in some cases, CSWs and NES offices applied arbitrary approach in selecting participants for YEM trainings on integrated service delivery. The selection in these cases did not take into account the organigram and functional structure of the NES and CSWs and it seemed that the trainings were sometimes assigned based on unclear / inconsistent criteria.

The support of the YEM programme team was highly rated as the communication channels were open all the time, and information and knowledge gained through the programme and other programme activities such as research shared on regular basis.

Output indicators⁴:

Number of NES Branch Offices participating in the delivery of and type of services that are integrated to target the needs of disadvantaged youth;

Number of disadvantaged and returning youth treated with targeted employment and social services, disaggregated by type of assistance they receive from CSW, gender and rural / urban residence;

Number of referrals of disadvantaged young women and men between CSW, NES branch offices and local Youth Offices demonstrating an improved mechanism for integrated service delivery.

As stated above, number of YEM's work consisted of capacity building activities. YEM team worked towards strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders, namely CSWs and NES branch offices, by delivery of trainings, developing guidelines and procedures for delivering integrated services, providing technical support to local implementing partners and coordinating their activities, etc.

Moreover, functional assessment of the NES was carried out with the support of the YEM Joint Programme to identify areas for improvement in providing integrated services to clients. Consequently, a set of action-oriented recommendations and guidelines were formulated for the NES and the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development top management.

The 'Right to Know' Guide was also designed and published in order to present available services and measures of CSWs and NES to the potential clients of the programme and consequently promote their activation.

⁴ Contributing to the Output 2.2 of the programme: The capacity of the National Employment Service, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Youth and Sport to deliver targeted youth employment and social services strengthened.

The piloting of the integrated service delivery model commenced in February 2011 in seven selected municipalities: Palilula, Savski Venac, Novi Sad, Becej, Backi Petrovac, Vranje and Vladicin Han. However, integrated services have been delivered in 5 of the 7 municipalities selected (Novi Sad, Becej, Backi Petrovac, Vranje and Vladicin Han), due to the failure of the Belgrade CSW to participate. Since the beginning of the piloting, 242 young man and women (long term unemployed, beneficiaries of different social services, Roma population groups) have been treated with targeted employment and social services. Currently, 120 CSW beneficiaries are participating to on-the-job training programmes, which proved to be adequate measure for the target group of the YEM programme.

Motivation of beneficiaries and activity on labour market

While motivation of the beneficiaries to take part in the training was in average rated by CSW and NES staff low or below average, after the training their activity on labour market increased. All the interviewed staff agrees that it was hard to motivate them at the beginning. However, as soon as they saw that the programme works (and that employers give salaries), they were ready to participate.

The demand for such type of program is higher during winter season and is lower during summer due to available seasonal work which is more lucrative. The issue stands out in Becej, Backi Petrovac and Vladicin Han, while in Vranje and Novi Sad this topic was not particularly addressed. On average, daily fee for field workers both in the north and the south of the country is 1,000 dinars.

Additional issue is that there are no guarantees that they will remain employed; on the other hand, a fear of losing FSA remains high ('FSA is a guarantee of their existence'). Furthermore, there is a lack of information on other NES programs: hardly anyone heard about other measures in offer, while the one who had mainly list public works and the First Chance programmes.

The issue of trans-generational recipients of FSA, and their low willing to leave the system was particularly raised by both CSWs and NES branch offices in Becej, Novi Sad, and Vranje ('They consider FSA as a salary, and they do not expect to find work any time soon. In essence, they are not really looking for a job').

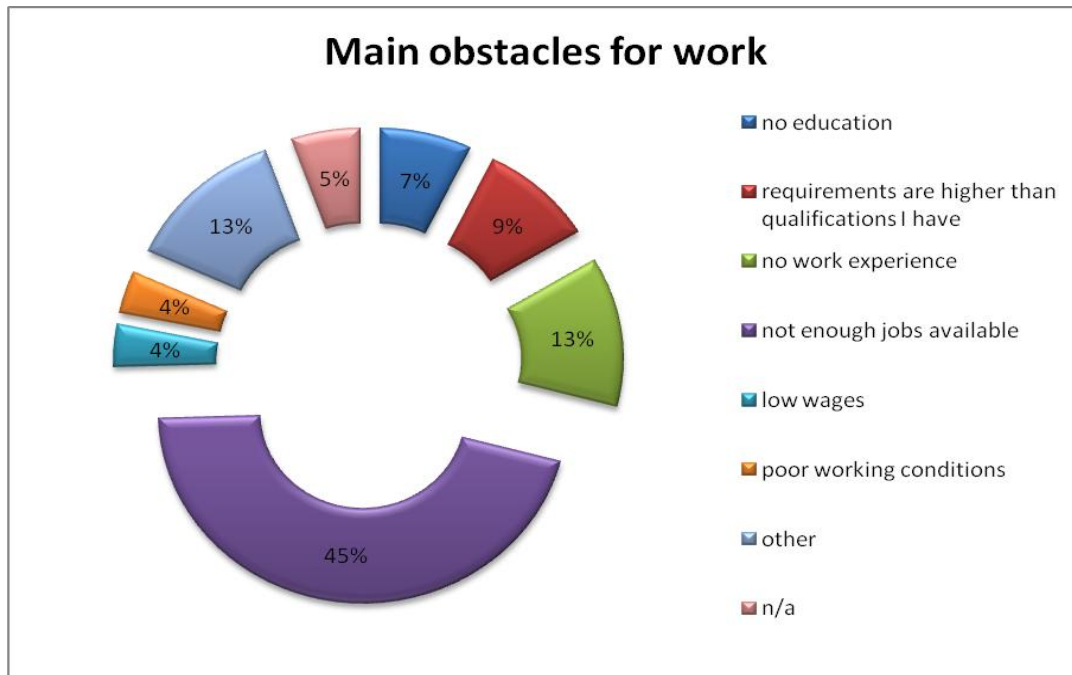
Employment of single mothers, who were also one of the main users of the YEM programme, proved to be a complex issue. As highlighted by NES staff, they cannot fit into fixed work hours because of children, who need to be fed or taken care of.

Despite the remarks, according to the status at the labour market, most of surveyed beneficiaries who completed training are actively looking for a job - 55 out of 79 or 69.6%.

Half of them are looking for a job primarily through the NES (50.9%), then by the help of friends and family (21.8%) and by following advertisements (12.7%).

They find lack of available jobs as the main obstacle by far in finding a job, as seen in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: main obstacles for work, percentage



Apart from the ones currently 'in measure' who responded (16), only 5 of surveyed beneficiaries who completed on-the-job training are again back into the education system.

The great majority of them (19 out of 21, or 90%) have a plan to actively look for a job once they complete the training. Only one of them plans to further continue with the education, while one person plans to stay at home due to personal/family responsibilities. None of them plans to start its own business.

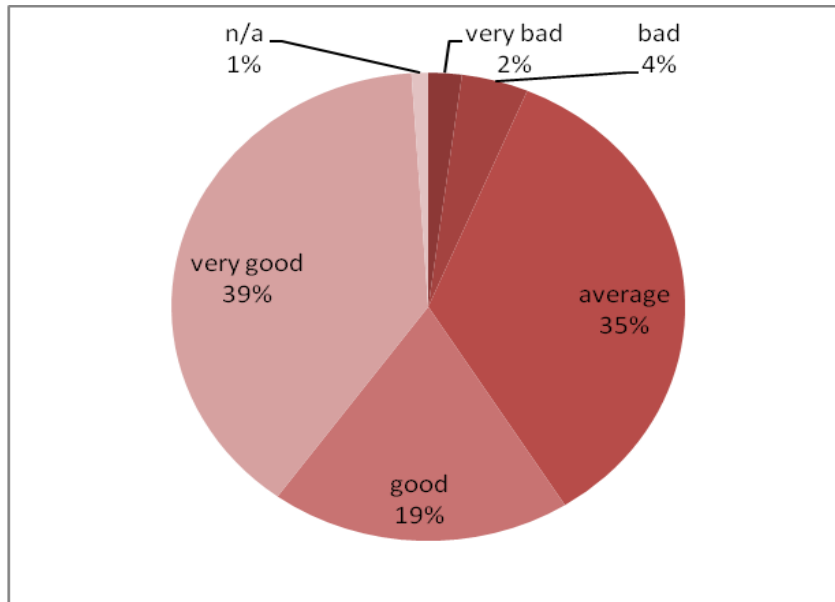
Almost all of them (19 out of 21, or 90%) already started looking for a job. As in the case of the ones who completed training, they do it mostly through NES (42.8%), by the help of friends and relatives (23.8%) and by following advertisements (19%).

Satisfaction with the provided services and their usefulness

Most of surveyed beneficiaries find the services provided in terms of training and support by NES and CSW as above average. When asked to provide a subjective assessment of support on a five-grade scale (very bad, bad, average, good, very good), 58% find the support by CSW and NES good or very good, while only 6% rate it as bad and very bad. One third rates it as average.

Figure 2 below shows the overall satisfaction of beneficiaries with the training and provided support by NES and CSW.

Figure 2: overall satisfaction with the training and support by NES and CSW



Furthermore, 80% of the focus groups' participants in both Vranje and Novi Sad rated the trainings with 'excellent' and 'very good', but concluded that the trainings were not useful as they remain unemployed. 'Training was useful, but it didn't help'. Only those who continued to work after the training were very positive about the usefulness of the programme.

In Novi Sad only employment was recognized as a useful result of the training. As it was not the case in majority of cases, most rated the usefulness of the training as fair.

Answers were different between the two focus groups when assessing the contribution of the financial assistance to wellbeing of the household. Participants from Novi Sad were adamant in their assessment that the contribution was almost invisible: 'Transportation and food – and all the money is spent'. They also pointed out to the fact that financial assistance reached them with delay: 'Money was late two-three months, but nobody asked how we pay your ticket and are we hungry'.

A single mother from Becej was happy about the financial assistance: 'It really helped. I receive only 2000 RSD for child support and with this money from the training it felt a lot'. A baker from Novi Sad underlined extra support received in free meals.

Focus group participants from Vranje felt that the financial assistance helped. 'I have three children, for each I get 5000 RSD. With this 9,300, it is almost 25.000 RSD. You can live with this money'.

Integrated service delivery as an extra curriculum

The work performed by the staff from both CSWs and NES branch who were engaged on the YEM project did not show on the institutions' monthly or annual work plans. As

explained by Becej CSW worker: ‘This project was invisible to the CSW director or other staff in the Center. Nobody knew what the two of us from the Center did’.

In Vladicin Han, Becej and Vranje both employment counsellors and CSWs staff are worried that the collaboration between the institutions will slow down as there are no such requirements in other programmes nor the procedures which would place the communication in institutional framework.

When estimating the time spent per client, there are notable differences between the CSWs and NES branch offices. All CSWs roughly estimated that their staff needs half an hour per client, and this time is mainly spent on the interview. Other activities include compiling required listing for the NES and a few phone calls to the NES.

Most NES employment counsellors calculated that they need 1.5 hours per client, and this only in the part related to interviews and matching between the potential employee and employer. Contact with potential employer takes the largest amount of time.

Contracts and payments to both sides are not a part of this estimate. Only in Vladicin Han it was estimated that at least 8 hours are needed per client as the work includes site visits, negotiation, help to trainees to open bank accounts, etc.

Output indicators⁵:

Number of secondary eligibility criteria defined to prioritize and coordinate the implementation of employment programmes for disadvantaged youth that are linked to available social services in each NES Branch Office;

Number of CSW offices in 6 key municipalities use referral and information outreach methods targeting disadvantaged youth;

Number of CSW and NES branch offices covering municipalities in the three target districts participating in the delivery of and type of services that are integrated to target the needs of disadvantaged youth.

Looking into the criteria relevant for the systematic assessment of integrated service delivery, focusing on the issues of implementation, facilitation, prioritization, change management, etc, YEM succeeded in targeting disadvantaged youth and providing them with adequate range of services.

YEM supported local partnerships, which encouraged both institutions at the local level to act as partners in action, promoting the benefits of integrated services delivery model.

All 5 above-mentioned municipalities use referral system targeting disadvantaged youth and both CSWs and NES participate in the delivery of integrated services for them.

⁵ Contributing to the Output 3.1 of the programme: Local partnerships for youth employment strengthened to coordinate implementation of employment programmes that are linked to social services.

BOX: Total cost per beneficiary

The amount of transfer to the client has been 9,360 dinars (11,000 including all the contributions) per month with additional transport costs (2,500 dinars) and child care (2,500 dinars) also covered when needed.

On the other hand, the employers have been subsidized in the amount of 14,000 dinars per client per month (for up to 6 months) for the client's preparation for employment.

In total, it means that the cost was 25,000 dinars (up to 30,000 with transport and child care costs) per month, or up to 150,000 (or 180,000 dinars including transport and child care costs) for six months of the training.

Taking into account that dinar/US dollar exchange rate fluctuated during the course of the project implementation, the amount in dollars is between 1,850 and 2,150 depending on the time when you make the calculation, i.e. approximately 2,000 dollars on average.

Targeting of the population

All the surveyed population belong to the initial target group, i.e. to the population between 15 and 29 years old. Men and women were equally represented, 47 and 48 respectively. In terms of education outcomes, more than 62% of surveyed beneficiaries have completed only primary school or less, while 5% has secondary education. Those two groups make 2/3 of surveyed beneficiaries. Having in mind that flexibility was allowed in the implementation of the YEM Joint Programme - as the only formal requirements for participating were age and the fact that persons were users of CSWs - the number of beneficiaries with education level higher than the secondary reached 33%.

The average unemployment spell of surveyed beneficiaries before they entered the measure was 26.76 months. Only 41 people (or 43%) were unemployed for up to 12 months, while for the rest of them unemployment lasted for longer than one year, i.e. 63% were long-term unemployed. This is important indicator in assessing their level of social exclusion.

The eligibility criteria for participating in the programme was unemployment spell of minimum 3 months, unless in case of vulnerable groups (Roma, IDPs, refugees, PWDs) or beneficiaries of CSWs. We had only case of the persons looking for a job for less than 3 months. However, that person did not belong to any of the above-mentioned vulnerable group.

Approximately ¼ of beneficiaries (25 in total) were members of vulnerable groups targeted by the YEM Joint Programme. Two of them were vulnerable according to more than one criteria.

In terms of their previous work experience, 70 persons (74%) did not have any experience at all. The average number of months for those with experience was 14.8.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the population who responded to the survey

	Number of persons			%		
	Total	Novi Sad	Vranje	Total	Novi Sad	Vranje
Men	47	28	19	49.5	54.9	43.2
Women	48	23	25	50.5	45.1	56.8
15-19	23	15	8	24.2	29.4	18.2
20-24	24	15	9	25.3	29.4	20.4
25-30	48	21	27	50.5	41.2	61.4
I	59	34	25	62.1	66.6	56.8
II	5	2	3	5.3	3.9	6.8
III	21	14	7	22.1	27.5	15.9
IV	8	1	7	8.4	2.0	15.9
V	0	0	0	0	0	0
VI +	2	0	2	2.1	0	4.6
1-3 months	3	2	1	3.2	3.9	2.3
4-6 months	14	10	4	14.7	19.6	9.1
7-12 months	24	8	16	25.3	15.7	36.4
13-24 months	25	16	9	26.3	31.4	20.4
24+ months	29	15	14	30.5	29.4	31.8
Without	70	38	32	73.7	74.5	72.7
With	25	13	12	26.3	25.5	27.3
Persons with disabilities	3	2	1	3.2	3.9	2.3
Roma population groups	20	4	16	21.1	7.8	36.4
Internally displaced	3	3	0	3.2	5.9	0
Refugees/returnees	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: NES IIS, February 2012.

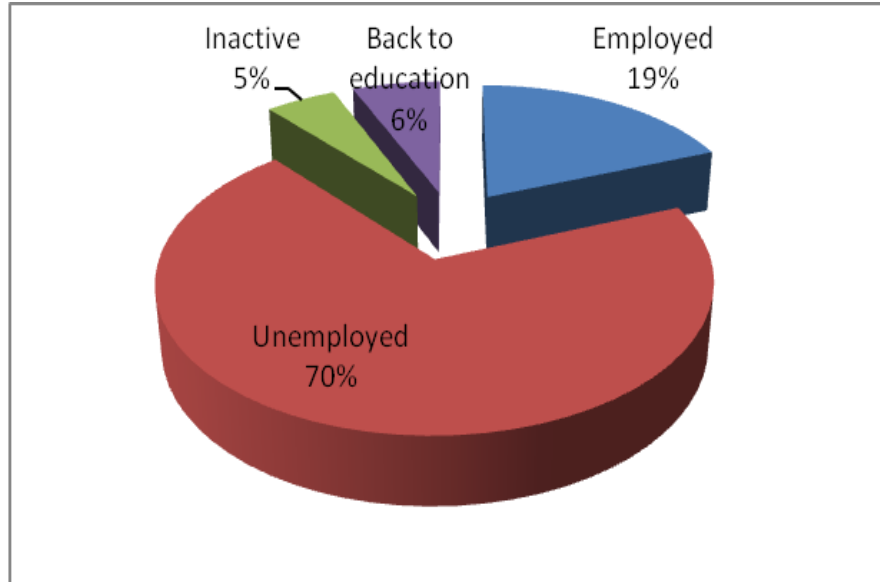
Current status at the labour market

Although the observation window since the end of the measure was much shorter than six months, it is important to note that only 15 of surveyed beneficiaries out of 79 who completed training got the job afterwards, i.e. 19%.

Out of the rest of them who completed training, highest number is actively looking for a job – 55 or 69.6%.

Consequently, 88.6% are active; while 11.4% are inactive. Out of them, 5 persons are again enrolled in some other training or back into the education system while 4 persons are not actively looking for a job at all. They are all female who have kids or are currently pregnant, while one of them wants to be housewife and has no intention to look for a job.

Figure 3: current situation of the beneficiaries who completed on-the-job training



Those 15 who got the job mostly have the first level of education (53.3%), then followed by the third (33.3%) and the second (13.3%).

Women and men are equally represented; 7 and 8 respectively. The same goes for geographical dispersion, 7 in the North (municipalities of Backi Petrovac, Becej and Novi Sad), 8 in the South (municipalities of Vladicin Han and Vranje).

All of them are working for a salary/wage with an employer (80% of them for the employer where they had on-the-job training as a part of YEM Joint Programme), i.e. none of them started its own business.

Although most of them found full-time jobs (86.6%), according to them many are not entitled to health and social contributions (60%) which might imply that they got the job in informal economy.

Their occupation at the job is the following: shoemaker (x3), security guard (x2), paper hanger (x2), chef, baker, hairdresser, welder, mattress maker, seller, chromium platter.

Two thirds of YEM participants earn less than 20,000 dinars, being in the lower wage bracket. According to the above-mentioned occupations, they mostly work in manufacturing sector or low-paid services where wages, especially for entry positions, are particularly low.

All details about dominant characteristics of their jobs, based on the subjective answers of beneficiaries, can be seen in the box below:

Box: Characteristics of the job	
Temporary, 60% Permanent, 26.6% Seasonal, 13.3%	Private enterprise, 86.6% Cooperative, 6.6% State-owned, 6.6%
Full time, 86.6% Part time, 6.6% (n/a 6.6%)	Less than 10 employees, 40% 11-50 employees, 20% 51-250 employees, 20% 250+ employees, 13.3% (n/a 6.6%)
Entitled to health insurance, social security contributions, paid holidays, 33.3% Not entitled to health insurance, social security contributions, paid holidays, 60% (n/a 6.6%)	Salary less than 5.000 dinars, 6.6% Salary btw 5-9.900 dinars, 26.6% Salary btw 10-19.900 dinars, 33.3% Salary btw 20-29.900 dinars, 20% (n/a 13.3%)

Note: n/a – did not want to respond.

The high informality rate, although subjective and not verified by the employers, shows that risk of falling into the poverty for this group of beneficiaries remains high. They would therefore need additional assistance in the process of social inclusion and activation through the cooperation of different institutions.

NES and CSW communication with clients and outreach

For most of the focus groups participants this on-job training was the first NES programme they have taken part in. Very few of them knew about public works and employment fairs.

Participants in the focus group in Novi Sad highly rated the work of the employment counsellors in Novi Sad and Becej in providing information on the training and their approach in consulting and leading programme beneficiaries throughout the whole process. 'They are very nice and friendly'. Some of the programme users got the information on the training from their friends, and cousins and actively approached their employment counsellors. 'If you come on your own to NES, they engage even more'.

On the other side, the work of the CSW in Novi Sad was rated very low. Almost all beneficiaries complained about the treatment by the CSW⁶.

⁶ Focus group in Novi Sad, 17 February, 2012.

In Vranje, however, the participants of the focus groups were less satisfied with the approach of the NES employment counsellors, mainly highlighting the condition that the counsellors put on them: 'They threatened to take me out from the unemployment register in case that I turn down the participation in the training'; 'I'll lose everything if I don't accept to participate in the programme. It's blackmail'⁷! The participants themselves in most cases learned about the programme through their regular visits to the NES, but several also noted that the NES called them instead. They rated the work and the treatment of the CSW as decent but could not see the relation of this institution to the training.

The only deviation was noted in Vladicin Han NES branch office, which has the highest number of activated FSA users and 70 % of them are Roma. In trying to explain such a success NES employment counsellor said: 'We decided to go out and directly contact potential beneficiaries. This happened because most of the phone numbers/contacts we received from the CSW were inaccurate or missing. So, we decided to use our walking boots and get into *mahala's*, flea markets, green markets, wherever we could find programme clients. At first we were treated with distrust but eventually people started coming to us'⁸.

NES staff further noticed that target groups in this project also needed other type of assistance: they did not know how to open bank account, did not have many to do so, did not know how to get from home to work, etc. All this required extra hours of work by employment counsellors, especially in the community where there is a high distrust and misperception of the Roma population.

Weak capacity of CSWs

CSWs in general remained considerably less visible throughout the process of provision of integrated social services and as noted by both institutions, they were generally subordinated. In most cases, integrated service delivery depended on enthusiasm of a few CSW staff, while majority of their colleagues did not even know what they worked on. By and large, CSWs do not see activation of their clients (FSA users) as the goal that they should contribute to.

CSWs note that they are burdened with re-systematization as the new Law on Social Protection was passed in 2011. In addition, the number of beneficiaries/users of different CSW services increased lately as the economic crisis has hit the country.

As highlighted by most of the interviewed case workers, the work on integrated service delivery was not hard but was labour intensive. It is due to the fact that a number of CSWs operate without integrated ICT platform. The data on beneficiaries are still hand-written, often contact information of CSW clients are outdated, and in a few cases (Vladicin Han) the CSW staff does not even have the FSA users phone numbers, which makes their identification harder. Some work with 'integral system' which is limited only

⁷ Focus group in Vranje, 23 February, 2012.

⁸ Interview with Dragan Cvetkovic, NES, Vladicin Han, 24 February 2012.

to the Center. In that sense, CSWs remain isolated from one another and from other institutions with which they share the same beneficiaries.

CONCLUSIONS

The YEM Joint Programme brought important change having in mind the 'zero' baseline at the start of the programme, i.e. the fact that before the programme there was an obvious lack of proactive social services that would empower and activate young people and prevent dependence on the welfare system. As the YEM programme shows, integrated service delivery may indeed work when: i) time is devoted to address the problems the client faces in the labour market, but also in his/her daily life (like using public transport, or opening of a bank account); ii) adequate activation and support services are deployed to pursue the objective of the individual plan, iii) there is a clear recognition of the tasks to be carried out in monthly and annual work plans of the relevant institutions; and iv) individual planning as an instruments to empower the client is used adequately.

1. The implementation of the YEM programme did not entirely follow the designed steps. Operational Procedures for the delivery of integrated services to disadvantaged youth were envisaged as instrumental in setting the system, covering identification and assessment of clients and their referral, provision of immediate support and long-term support, and evaluation upon the end of measure(s). However, NES and CSWs staff routinely followed the procedures and adjusted them to fit their own operational setting. In the process of adjustment some important elements were lost such as the focus on the client's interests, his/her motivation to take part in the programme, and envisaged support after the completion of the measure.

2. Focus groups' participants captured the novelty of the programme by expressing satisfaction with the more active approach of the NES in providing information on training opportunities. CSWs were subordinated in the process and perceived themselves as provider of information on FSA users to NES. This is confirmed by both institutions. The evidence shows that the referral system remains invisible to the clients, as they only rate the integrated delivery as an operational output. Focus groups' participants have not seen any connection between the two institutions when their engagement in active labour market measure is in question. They only perceive NES as service provider and therefore rate the work of the NES employment counsellors higher than the work of the CSWs case workers.

3. Systematic effort has been made to introduce referral system which lays at the core of the integrated services delivery model by signing protocols of cooperation between the institutions and instituting procedures for coordinated approach. In addition, the staff from both institutions have been introduced to one another and trained to holistically approach the needs of their clients, as defined by the programme. Throughout the duration of programme, knowledge and skills have been provided to the CSW and NES staff by the YEM team.

Nevertheless, in the view of staff of both institutions at the local level, individual plans for clients remain institutionally anchored. This is due to the lack of common goal: while NES recognises this programme as the one that benefits the clients and generally contributes to the overall NES results; in CSWs there is a lack of such a perception.

4. Partnership for integrated services. Possibility of including any other institution in the cooperation was not recognised by any of the interviewed parties. For example, Youth Offices were recognized as a valuable partner only in one case, but mainly on the programmes that engage youth with higher education and aspirations. Education was perceived as barely complementary ingredient: just in few cases, it was noted that the education system in Serbia only gives general education and does not provide people with applicable skills.

5. Overall programme support. The YEM team's (above all ILO and UNDP) efforts to innovate and pilot integrated service delivery model was recognized and the team's work was highly rated in majority of municipalities where the programme was implemented. Particularly, trainings and regular contacts with YEM programme team were considered as a great asset to the project implementation as this provided inflow of information and knowledge to CSWs and NES branch offices.

6. The YEM programme motivated beneficiaries to actively seek employment. Motivation of beneficiaries to take part in the training was low at the beginning, while increasing as the programme gave first results. Participation in the programme contributed to the increase of their activity - as 88.6% of the surveyed beneficiaries are currently either employed or actively looking for a job - including high activation of Roma population in Vladicin Han. There are several reasons for this: (i) the training gives them some work experience, (ii) because they see that they can respond to the requirements of the job they feel more self-confident; (iii) socialization and communication with other people help them feel better, (iv) they get connected with others who are in job search so they learn from one another on new openings, (v) they become more employable as they receive training certificates. However, as noted on all locations by the programme clients, certificates were overdue for several months.

Deviation in activity is noted among females who have kids or are currently pregnant. They belong to the 11.4% of the inactive population as they cannot engage in full time employment because of children. So-called generational users of FSA have been noted as the ones with low motivation to access labour market and change the status. While our evidence shows that this is so, at the same time some examples (Vladicin Han) prove that with appropriate approach Roma beneficiaries can be activated by directly getting in touch in their own habitat (*mahalas*) and promoting the benefits of the programme.

According to the focus group participants and in-depth interviews with CSW and NES staff, beneficiaries would not be motivated to participate in the programme without FSA. This particular target group finds security of FSA as vital and would not be willing to jeopardize FSA monthly assistance with insecure temporary job.

7. Satisfaction with the provided services and their usefulness. Focus groups' participants in most cases highly rated the quality of the training but were dissatisfied that it did not result in employment. This is mostly due to the fact that clients do not see

the difference between the activation programmes, i.e. on-the-job training and the job itself. They do not see activation as a process which consists of many steps towards getting a job, but understand only their current status at the labour market.

There is a north south cleavage when the satisfaction with the financial assistance during the training is in question: while most participants from Vojvodina complained about the low financial contribution, programme participants from the south did not find this amount so negligible.

8. The integrated service delivery system has been treated as an extra curriculum in both CSWs and NES. This work has been added to the regular activities and objectives and it has not been visible in any performance indicator or individual merit. Also, the programme activities have not been a part of the annual or monthly plans of the staff. Therefore, the question remains if the communication/cooperation between CSWs and NES offices will continue after the end of the programme.

Because of this features of the programme, the time used for this work was arbitrary calculated. On average, NES staff spent an hour and a half per client with the exception of Vladicin Han where 8 hours were used; while CSW staff estimated the necessary time per client as half an hour. In general, the time spent on this programme is lower that it should be, as the characteristics and difficulties faced by clients require much more than a couple of hours of counselling (even 8 hours seem surprisingly little).

9. The programme targeting was at high level. Good targeting was ensured throughout the programme implementation. All the surveyed population belong to the initial target group in terms of age, sex, education outcomes, unemployment spell and vulnerability. This is due to several factors: the YEM programme team conducted baseline reasearch and several other studies, it carried out a number of trainings for CSW and NES staff, and provided onoging support to the NES and CSWs offices on five locaitons, etc. At the same time, it allowed necessary flexibility in the implementation of the YEM Joint Programme.

10. Status of the beneficiaries at the labour market. Currently, 19% of the surveyed beneficiaries who completed the training got a job afterwards. It is important to note that 53.3% of those who got the job have the first level of education. These results are to be revisited later, as the observation window since the end of the measure was much shorter than six months, although it seems that the results match other NES activation programmes' results.

11. Outreach of the programme. During the implementation of integrated services supported by YEM, some beneficiaries were contacted for the first time by NES (some even after years at the NES registry) and offered to participate in a programme / measure. Based on the evidence, in half cases beneficiaries were contacted by NES to take part in the training. In other cases beneficiaries found themselves about the programme.

The YEM programme produced good results in municipalities where the CSWs and NES branch offices made an extra mile in ensuring that project results are met. For example, more than average results have been achieved in Vladicin Han where NES activated Roma population, whose discrimination was rather high in this region. The employment

counsellor with the support of NES branch office has been active in approaching potential users of the programme beyond the office desk and working hours. NES branch office has actively engaged with local community in direct contacts and promotion of the benefits of the programme. Roma community was, for instance, approached directly and by the word of mouth with the involvement of inhabitants of *mahalas*, in flea-markets, green-markets. Also, NES staff directly took the beneficiaries to the potential employers! Sic! They also provided support and guidance to their clients in opening bank account and in tackling administrative barriers. It is worth mentioning that even before the start of the YEM Joint Programme, there was a demand from employers who were searching for the labour force to be trained on the job.

12. Social protection system embedded in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and locally present through the work of CSWs remains inadequately equipped to deal with the referral system and challenges of labour market activation of FSA users. Despite central management, there is no institutional support for technical advancement and unification of CSWs. There is no ICT platform and database with information on users of social assistance. The researchers observed that the current welfare system in Serbia is still rather passive and does not encourage the activation of FSA users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Operational procedures for integrated service delivery – They should be reinforced, not only in reference to the formal requirements but also regarding to the CSW and NES understanding why they are set and sequenced in the way they are. Additional trainings for CSW and NES staff addressing content of operational manual should be organized in case that this or similar type of programme is to be carried out in future.

2. Referral system – In order to make referral system visible to the clients, the clients need to see that both institutions work towards the same goal. Joint advocacy communication campaign should include both institutions, and should clearly demonstrate the focus on integrated service delivery aims. Furthermore, institutional procedures should continue to ensure regular exchange of information between the two.

3. Common goal – In case of the integrated services delivery model, it is neither recognized by CSWs nor NES. Therefore, integrated service delivery should be a part of the CSWs and NES work and targets. Joint performance indicator(s) that link CSW and NES performance should be established with regards to integrated service delivery.

4. Partnership with others – The role of youth Offices has not been recognised and in this regard no collaboration was established between the CSWs/NES offices on one side and Youth Offices on the other. In future, Youth Offices should be excluded from the programme, or their participation and potential contribution needs to be newly assessed. Only sporadically it has been noted that the education system in Serbia does not provide match to the key market demands, namely primary and secondary school graduates remain only with general knowledge and without any applicable skills. The YEM Joint Programme from the very beginning envisaged rightly so participation of the

Ministry of Science and Education in the project implementation and this should be reinforced in case that the programme continues.

5. Change management – During the course of the programme implementation, the YEM team continuously supported change management in both CSW and NES in delivering integrated services. To achieve results in implementing novel programmes, NES should consider applying the same system of the programme support embedded in timely research, trainings and ongoing counselling, and information sharing.

6. Motivation and activity – The target group of YEM programme is rated to have low motivation in seeking employment before the training. Given that FSA is considered as vital to their livelihood and existence, all the already envisaged steps, introduced by the new Law on Social Protection and relevant by-laws, need to be explicitly communicated to client: (a) right to have FSA during other trainings provided by NES; (b) simplified procedures for applying again to FSA upon the end of training/job; (c) in getting back to FSA, the training income is not to be taken into account when calculating FSA so that the beneficiary can be eligible for FSA immediately after the end of activation measure/training.

As the evidence show, it is important to understand the specifics of this group and sub-groups and consequently tailor particular approach. For single mothers who cannot afford to work full-time and on on-going basis/continuously since they do not have adequate support to take care of their children, it is important to support flexible forms of employment (part-time, work from home, etc). For Roma beneficiaries, it is necessary to win their trust by going directly to the spot. Un-orthodox methods in approaching and activating are required.

7. Satisfaction with the provided services and their usefulness – Clients do not see the difference between the activation programmes, in this case on-the-job training and the job itself. Thus, communication campaign regarding activation programmes should be tailored. Both CSW and NES staff should engage in explaining to their clients what are the ALMPs benefits. This needs to happen throughout the process of engaging the client.

It would be also important to consider weighting financial contribution in accordance to regional GDP per capita in the future.

8. Regular curriculum – The integrated service delivery system has to be treated as a regular curriculum in both CSWs and NES. It shall be included as a part of regular daily and monthly activities and annual objectives. As already mentioned, performance indicators should be introduced in both CSWs and NES in relation to integrated service delivery. As there is a clear prioritization of FSA recipients in the actions to be deployed through the National action Plan on Employment (2011 and 2012), this would prevent failure to translate policy and programme priorities into operational procedures and would ensure the achievement of the policy/programme objectives.

9. Targeting – The YEM programme can provide useful recommendations and tips to NES and CSWs on how to ensure good targeting of the population. YEM team might consider producing guidelines for these institutions or, if possible, organise additional training for the staff engaged on these issues.

10. Status at the labour market – Intervention at the intersection of social assistance, education and employment is needed to activate disadvantaged youth and ultimately increase their employment. It is necessary that NES and CSW (a) establish common goals and translate them into their institutional work plans; (b) identify and implement particular approach for specific target groups; (c) make an outreach plan; (d) have a clear understanding of the needs of employers; (e) have adequate internal institutional support in terms of training, capacity development, appraisal, etc. Moreover, it is vital to include schools in the future interventions, as education system need to provide potential beneficiaries with adequate skills and knowledge matched to the real needs of the labour market.

11. Outreach – In case of both institutions, the outreach towards their clients’ needs to be strengthened. CSWs should provide life coaching services to help clients cope with daily tasks they never carried out (opening bank accounts, dealing with transport) as these services falls in the mandate of social caseworker rather than in those of the public employment services. Also, the fact that many clients learned about the YEM programme through regular visits to NES branch offices rather than active outreach (as it was planned), points to necessity to market the NES available services among the most vulnerable by stronger outreach.

12. Social protection system – If it wants to deal with the current challenges of labour market activation of FSA users, social protection system needs improvement. Vital to the integrated services is establishment of technical platform that corresponds to other institutions including the ICT system of NES so that both agencies can efficiently access basic info about their beneficiaries and consequently tackle the problem. CSWs should possibly introduce performance indicators for CSWs in relation to reducing the number of people on the evidence. Systematic staff training on CSWs tasks under new Law on Social Protection which promotes activation needs to be carried out as a part of performance management.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Programmes should take account of the needs of specific groups and consider targeted approaches to ensure that there is opportunity for all, including Roma, single parents, etc. whatever their background, skills and ability. In the case of Vladicin Han, outreach proved to be of crucial importance for the activation of Roma population. Making extra mille in efforts to reach service users should be starting point in all activation programmes, which often requires getting beyond usual procedures of everyday office work. In Vladicin Han, this meant direct approach to Roma population in *mahalas* where they live, as this is sometimes the only way to contact them at all (no phone numbers or wrong numbers).
- The referrals between CSWs to NES offices have been limited because they were not encouraged by the system. For institutions to achieve common results there is a need to structure common goals, which has not been the case so far. Better cooperation between the institutions requires legal obligations (stipulated for

- instance by the new Law on Social Protection) and fully implemented partnership agreements (developed with the support of the YEM Joint Programme), but also use of similar (ICT) tools in assessing their clients.
- Internal appraisal system for the staff based on the number of referrals would enhance motivation of CSW/NES staff and bring institutional change. Without such a merit, all efforts of the staff remain individual, such is the case in Vladicin Han and Becej, and cooperation lasts only during project implementation.
 - FSA users need guidance by the CSW and NES professionals. Thus, it is absolutely necessary to include FSA users in case management, which urge for greater involvement of professionals on all sides and require additional effort that especially CSWs should invest in the future.
 - While participation in the labour market is limited, education proves to be a bottleneck for the FSA users to activate and eventually find a job. Therefore, activation of vulnerable groups start outside the labour market, i.e. in schools which need to provide them with adequate skills and knowledge matched to the real needs of the labour market.
 - The use of flexible forms of work needs to be promoted. On one hand, the use of flexible forms of work has expanded with the need of employers to adjust their production profile and costs to market conditions and the economic crisis, while on the other it helps in harmonisation of working and family life, which is especially suitable for women and single mothers. This can increase activation of those groups, as lack of flexible forms of work is many times huge barrier for them to activate.

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Annexes

- 1. Purpose and methodology**
- 2. Questionnaires for beneficiaries and NES/CSW staff**
- 3. List of beneficiaries (NES IIS table)**
- 4. List of interviewed NES/CSW staff**