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Mid-term independent evaluation of project EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships – Phase II (LEP II)

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This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited, but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.

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Acronyms

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CfP	First call of proposals
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil society organization
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ERP	BiH Economic Reform Programmes
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILS	International Labour Standard
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEP	Local Employment Partnership
LEP II	EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II
MIPD	Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
NERP	National Economic Reform Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
P&B	ILO's Programme and Budget
PAB	Project Advisory Board
PES	Public Employment Service
PSB	Project Steering Board
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWD	People with Disabilities
ROM	Results Oriented Monitoring
RS	Republika Srpska
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGD	Small Group Discussion
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
VET	Vocational education and training

Executive Summary

Project Background

Despite some positive developments in the labour market in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the structural challenges pertain. The country faces a low labour force participation, high level of unemployment and a high share of undeclared work. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis influenced the private sector's economic performance significantly. Without external support, the government of BiH would not have been able to stabilize the economy in the short run and to enable recovery when the immediate effects of the crisis start to decline.

The project EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II) focuses on the development of local employment partnerships (LEP) to deliver activation and labour market integration programmes in line with specific local needs, by providing technical assistance and capacity building of local public employment service (PES) offices to use LEPs as tools for the development of active labour market measures in line with local needs. The overall objective of the phase II is to improve socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH, by contributing to better employability in local communities.

The LEP II project is currently in its third year of execution. In the first half of its implementation it has selected 20 selected Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) to deliver activation and labour market integration programs in line with specific local needs. The project was granted a cost extension for an additional 30 months by the donor in September 2023 due to unused funds under IPA II. The project's budget was increased by 45 per cent to EUR 6,501,124 (EU contribution constitutes EUR 6 mln) to ensure the sustainability of initiatives of local partnerships for employment and further monitoring of employment. Also, during the cost-extension period, the project plans to select another 6 LEPs by March 2024.

Evaluation Background

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) is a forward-looking evaluation aimed at reviewing the progress made towards the achievement of the project outcomes, looking for ways on how to improve programming and implementation for the remaining duration on the project. The mid-term evaluation of the LEP II project was carried out from October 2023 to February 2024 by an independent consultant under the supervision of the Evaluation Manager. The MTE covers the Phase II implementation starting from January 2021 to September 2023 inclusive, including 20 LEPs selected by LEP II project.

The principal audiences for this evaluation are the Members of the Project Steering Board and the tripartite Project Advisory Board, ILO Project Management Team, ILO National Coordinator, DWT/CO-Budapest Office, tripartite constituents and the Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation adheres to the ILO standard policies and procedures, the UNEG Norms and Standards, as well as the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. It responds to twelve overarching questions inspired by the Project's Outcomes and by the internationally accepted evaluation criteria. The Evaluation Expert adopted a consultative and transparent approach and made use of the following methods and tools: (i) a desk review of literature, including the documents; (ii) preparation of an evaluation matrix with related evaluation questions; (iii) semi-structured interviews with direct stakeholders (project management teams, stakeholders, and development partner); (iv) mini-focus groups with direct beneficiaries - vocational training and entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries from three target LEPs (Lukavac, Gornji Vakuf- Uskoplje and Banja Luka); (v) surveys among among

partners and beneficiaries (LEPs partners; vocational training program beneficiaries; employers; entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries); (vi) direct observation during field visits to Bosnia and Heteroring; and (vii) virtual Stakeholders workshop consisting of discussion on MTE findings, conclusions and recommendations with senior ILO project staff and stakeholders.

In total, 39 project partners and stakeholders were interviewed, 17 vocational training and entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries participated in mini-FGDs and 93 LEPs partners, 100 entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries, 54 vocational training programme beneficiaries, and 8 employers took part in the online surveys. Main limitations to the MTE includes: qualitative respondents' unavailability for meetings, low level of participation in the online survey of vocational training beneficiaries and employers.

Main Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance

The LEP II project is highly relevant for the country's context of high unemployment, and an employment rate almost half that of the EU, combined with the limited capacities of beneficiary institutions to effectively deal with the magnitude of the problem at the local level. The LEP II project's objectives respond to the needs of key stakeholders and is aligned with the main strategic documents and programs related to the economic development of BiH, such as the National Economic Reform Programme, the BiH Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022, the Strategies for Development of SMEs (2021-2027) in both entities, and reforming secondary vocational education and training (Strategy for Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of VET in BiH (2021- 2030), and Strategy of Education Development for Pre-university Education in the RS (2016-2021). The project also fits closely with the objectives of the cantonal and/or municipal development strategies aimed at enhancing community growth, economic competitiveness, and employment opportunities. The engagement with the Employers' and Workers Organisations is more incidental.

Validity of design

The LEP II project is well-designed to enhance the limited absorption capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders, although its theory of change would benefit from better elaboration of institutional change and the anticipated outcome of LEPs as well as conduction of territorial diagnostics of local labour market needs. The Results Framework of the LEP II project is clear and measurable with 20 indicators (2 impact indicators, 3 outcome indicators and 15 output indicators). Risks identification and the management of risk mitigation measures have been ensured. However, most of LEPs had issues with setting of realistic targets in line with the first call of proposals and taking into account the budget allocations. The targets of four output indicators of LEP II project should be revised further for the cost-extension period to reflect the accomplishments of twenty supported LEPs during the initial half of the project's implementation.

Coherence

The LEP II project contributes to the achievement of the overarching goal of the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2019 (EU4 Employment and Education). It is strategically in line with UNSDCF for BiH (2021-2025). Moreover, the project established a number of synergies with other EU-funded interventions (EU4Business and EU4Employment projects) either through cost-sharing or complementarity of the activities or resources. The project supports four Strategic Objectives of ILO's Decent Work Agenda and contributes to the ILO's strategic policy frameworks i.e., the ILO Programme and Budget (P&B) 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 and related Policy Outcomes 3, 4 and 5. It also complies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the SDGs, in particular Outcomes 3, 4 and 5.

Effectiveness

In overall, the LEP II project is processing well in achieving of its objectives, especially under the Entrepreneurship programme component. However, vocational training component requires attention specifically when it comes to the achievement of targets on the obtaining full-time employment. The project established 20 local partnerships which in the period until September 2023, improved the qualifications of 1,549 unemployed persons, formally employed 410 people, developed 66 certified training programs for the labour market and supported the establishment of 153 small businesses. A number of challenges have been identified by the mid-term evaluation which were encountered by the LEP II project between 2021 and 2023, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the particularly large number of stakeholders to be coordinated, the structural labour market challenges, and capacity of the public employment services to provide quality services to jobseekers. The main success factors which contributed to achieve the progress described in the above include the continuity of support to the LEPs established under LEP I project, strong project management and governance structures.

Efficiency

The allocation of resources (financial, human, institutional and technical) is satisfactory to achieve the results of the LEP II project. Grants administration in response to the first call for proposals was executed with a minor delay, but overall efficiency is satisfactory. Along with a thorough Risk Management Matrix, the LEP II project reporting is timely and effective. Nevertheless, at the level of supported LEPs, there is a room for improvement of the quality of progress reporting and timely sharing of means of verification on the Logframe's indicators. Most of target LEPs have also scope for development in their execution of the communication and visibility strategy. The project management and governance structures are effective as continuously guide and support the selected LEPs. However, enhanced focus is needed on the monitoring of financial expenditures by supported LEPs and the intensification of LEPs results monitoring.

Impact orientation

The project is progressing in the right direction by overseeing and assisting in the execution of twenty LEPs projects at the local level throughout BiH. This ultimately contributes to the enhancement of employability in the local communities. Both vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes contribute to improvement of income, changes in skillset and/or mindset of hard-to-employ groups. However, better results in terms of employability are demonstrated by the entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries rather than vocational training programmes graduates. The main reasons for that are the disparity between the qualifications and experience of unemployed persons with expectations related to the workplace, the scarcity of employment prospects in local communities where the majority of employers are small and medium-sized businesses and poor employment conditions offered by the private sector.

Sustainability

The institutional sustainability of LEPs have been promoted by the project through the formalization of LEPs and strengthening the capacity of LEPs members; meanwhile, policy and financial sustainability have been fostered through the development and adoption of the Local Employment Action Plans (LEAPs). As of the midterm evaluation, a significant proportion of supported LEPs (16 out of 20) had developed LEAPs; however, the current rate of adoption of LEAPs is only half the currently supported LEPs (10 out of 20). Furthermore, there is scope for additional enhancement of the capabilities of LEP partners, particularly local authorities and PES, as well as coordination among all LEP members.

Recommendations

1. For the cost-extension period encompassing 26 LEPs, the targets for a few output indicators in the LEP II project Logframe should be revised so as to accurately reflect the accomplishments of 20 LEPs from 2021 to 2023.
2. Develop the sustainability strategy for the LEP II project to serve as reference framework document and have it adopted by the PSB.
3. Ensure better support for people with disabilities by target LEPs through promotion of better communication and coordination with relevant actors.
4. Ensure that the territorial diagnostics are conducted by newly awarded LEPs prior to the implementation of their respective LEP initiatives.
5. Sustain and further develop partnerships with business and business organizations to promote their involvement in design and implementation of effective LEPs. Continue and expand the mentoring activities under LEPs as beneficiaries have restated their satisfaction and have positively assessed related impacts on their business. SIYB grant amounts for entrepreneurs planning to launch businesses in the production sector should be increased by the newly awarded LEPs. The duration of the IYB trainings should be also revised in order to allocate sufficient time for proper coverage of all training topics.
6. Further harmonize professional training with the requirements of the labour market. It is recommended that newly awarded LEPs place a greater emphasis on retraining, given the greater interest in such types of training among the unemployed people.
7. Continue strengthening the capacity of LEPs partners in M&E (results and financial) and communication for more effective implementation of the LEPs projects. Newly awarded LEPs should consider allocating a supplementary budget for M&E. LEPs should also strengthen evaluation of effectiveness of training programmes to promote improvement.
8. Consider establishing of a computerized Management Information System for ILO Sarajevo particularly for EU-funded projects including the LEP II project which would allow to have a real time data validation, dynamic dashboards, data security and generation of analytical reports.
9. Strengthen capacities of social partners in their particular functions and roles as needed.

Lessons Learned

- Relevance of intervention and consultations at both project design and implementation phase play a vital role towards broad-based “buy-in” and support by stakeholders.
- Political instability and the socioeconomic climate have an impact on project partners; this should be taken into account during the assessment of the level of interest of the partners to take part in the project.
- Almost all LEPs experienced challenges with recruitment of participants for vocational training programmes due to the insufficient utilization of advertising channels, insufficient duration of public calls, lack of interest and motivation of unemployed in trainings in less appealing occupations.
- Employment, and in most cases documenting of beneficiary’s employment proves to be major challenge in vocational training programmes component of LEPs projects. Once participants receive their certificate, they usually stop answering calls or any other communication from LEPs.
- Communications and visibility campaign was outsourced to external consultants by some LEPs. LEPs partners experience suggest that in any future projects this function should be conducted internally.
- Monitoring and evaluation of skills development initiatives need systematic frameworks and follow-up activities to assess results beyond outreach.

Emerging Good Practices

- The implementation of the LEP II project in BiH is a good practice example on how to create jobs through decentralized responses to local labour market needs.
- The LEP II project shows that CSOs show better results as lead partners in comparison with local authorities or local and regional development agencies.
- LEP Banja Luka could serve as a good practice in terms of replication of SIYB by Banja Luka City Council.

I. Background and Project Description

This report documents the main findings and conclusions of an independent mid-term evaluation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) project “EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II” (LEP II project), which was carried out between October and December 2023.

1.1. Project Context

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a small Western Balkans economy of 3.3 million people. Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to a group of upper-middle-income economies. While Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has achieved steady growth of approximately 3 per cent of GDP over the last decade, this growth has not generated sufficient jobs to improve employment outcomes. A large share of BiH’s working-age population (ages 15 to 64) is underutilized, either outside the labour force or unemployed or underemployed. Although labour force participation rates have increased from 43 per cent in 2017 to 48 per cent in 2021, they remain among the lowest in Europe, particularly for women who have a labour force participation rate of 37 per cent, the third lowest in Europe after Moldova and Kosovo¹. A majority of the working age population that is out of the labor force is inactive and neither in education, employment, or training. Only 40 per cent of the working age population was employed in 2021. The country has one of the lowest female employment rates in the Balkans, with a little over one in three working-age women employed (compared with 61 per cent of men). This is for a number of reasons, such as family responsibilities and a lack of affordable (or any) childcare provision (especially in rural areas), but also cultural and religious norms. BiH’s high unemployment rate is of particular concern because despite modest recent dips it has remained persistently high irrespective of the business cycle and appears to be long term in nature, with an estimated 69 per cent of unemployed individuals being out of work for longer than 12 months. Unemployment consistently tops the list of Bosnians’ concerns in opinion polls and a third of surveyed Bosnians consider leaving the country and working abroad.

While the private sector has added jobs in the past decade, most of these are in low-productivity, low-paying sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, transport, and wholesale and retail trade. The share of employment within the informal sector has historically been high, averaging 30 per cent of total². Small (10-49 employees) and micro (<10 employees) enterprises account for almost half of employment in the country and are typically less productive than larger firms³. Firms also complain about not finding adequately skilled workers, in part because of emigration of highly skilled workers, such as doctors and nurses, and in part due to a lack of alignment between educational and training curricula and what employers’ need. BiH has one of the highest shares of emigrants to local population in the world (50 per cent) and in 2018 almost 30 per cent of those who emigrated were between 18 to 35 years old, which is both a cause and a symptom of disequilibrium in the local labor market and of the limited ability of the private sector to attract, recruit, and develop a vibrant workforce⁴. An indication of skills mismatches between what is taught and what is demanded by employers is that only 24 per cent of technicians and associate professionals (construction, mechanical, and electrical workers) have the appropriate level of education to meet the needs of their jobs, based on International Labour Organization (ILO) classifications⁵.

Due to a complex constitutional set-up stemming from its post-conflict reconstruction, the country is institutionally and economically fragmented, without a common economic space. Such a system makes decision-making slow and suboptimal and frequently delays or halts necessary structural reforms. The country comprises two entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and

¹ World Bank (2022). *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report, No.22, Fall 2022: Beyond the Crises*. The World Bank, Washington, DC

² ILO (2019) *Overview of the informal economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. International Labor Organization. Geneva, Switzerland

³ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018)

⁴ World Bank (2020). *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Systematic Country Diagnostic Update*. The World Bank, Washington, DC

⁵ World Bank (2023). *Bosnia and Herzegovina Jobs Diagnostic and Implications of Coal Transition*. The World Bank, Washington, DC

the Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District, whose governments have more powers than the central government – and three “constituent peoples”. The FBiH is further decentralized into 10 cantons, each with its own government. At the local level, both the FBiH and the RS have authority over 79 and 64 municipalities, respectively. This unwieldy structure is superimposed on a country of only 3.2 million people.

Figure 1. Administrative Map of BiH



At the central level, the decision-making process is based on a daunting system of checks and balances, which were designed to protect the interests of the “constituent peoples”, but which often encourage their representatives in the central state bodies to demonstrate their commitment to their respective ethnic communities rather than to the state. The complex administrative structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina and slow progress in addressing the problems in employment, made local communities more active in providing solutions for increasing job opportunities in the last decade. The ILO designed the LEP II project in 2021 considering all conditions mentioned above and initiated the project which will bring together key stakeholders at the local level to work jointly on increasing the employment opportunities.

1.2. Project Description

The EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II was designed as a continuation of the Local Employment Partnerships project (LEP I project) funded by the EU and implemented between 2016-2019, also with ILO as the implementing partner. The LEP II started in 2021 and aims to improve the socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH by ensuring better employability in the local communities.

The implementation of the project foresees both technical and financial support (through grants scheme) to innovative local employment partnerships (LEPs) to strengthen their capacity to detect local labour market challenges and based on that to develop and implement activation and labour market integration programs in line with specific local needs.

The LEP II Theory of Change is that by increasing awareness about the LEP as partnership-driven labour market mechanisms; and by providing assistance to the LEPs to successfully design and implement activation and labour market integration programmes (supported by the intervention through grants and capacity building); and providing institutional development services to the LEPs,

including for advocacy, networking, and employment policy implementation, it will contribute to better employability in targeted local communities, and contribute to improve socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH.

The main goal of the LEPs is job creation and transitions to formal employment. There are two elements to LEP grants. One is to up-skill and/or retrain unemployed persons, also by introducing and certifying new training programmes, and help place them into jobs. Another one is aimed at assisting unemployed persons to start and/or expand their businesses. There was no possibility for already employed persons, having the registered start up to receive the grant and expend thier business. All applicants and grant receiptes were unemployed. Once they were selected for a grant, they were obliged to attend Improve Your Business Training and expand the newly registered business if possible.

Beneficiaries of LEP II are Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, Labour and Employment Agency of BiH, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the FBiH, Ministry of Labour and Veterans of the RS, Public Employment Institute of the RS and Employment Institute of the Federation of BiH.

The target groups for the project are: Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) across BiH composed of municipalities, employment bureaus, private sector (employers), CSOs/NGOs/Regional Development Agencies working on employment and support to (hard to employ) marginalised groups, and education institutions (high schools, universities and VET institutions).

The project management team is composed of a Project Coordinator, a Project Officer, an Administrative and Finance Assistant, a Project Assistant and a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The project team is supported by specialized technical staff: a Senior Employment Specialist and an Enterprise Specialist. The project is oversight by the Project Steering Board and tripartite Advisory Board members, who were nominated by the most relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the project implementation.

The project underwent the Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) by the EU in October 2022 and was a part of the Internal Mid-term Cluster Evaluation of the Projects COVID-19 Investment Response conducted in December 2022.

The LEP II project is currently in its third year of execution; it was granted a cost extension for an additional 30 months in September 2023. The project is scheduled to conclude in June 2026. During the cost-extension period, the project plans to select another 6 LEPs by March 2024.

II. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

This section defines the main objectives of the mid-term independent evaluation and describes the evaluation methodology that was employed to carry out this assessment, explains the methods of data analysis and lists the main limitations of the evaluation.

2.1. Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The purpose of this mid-term independent evaluation was three-fold: (i) determine the extent to which the project made progress towards the achievement of the immediate objectives (outcomes), the kind of changes produced, and the intended or unintended effects; (ii) obtain feedback from the tripartite constituents and partners: what is working, what is not and why, for organizational learning; and (iii) provide recommendations to better target the next steps, adjust the strategies, for project performance implementation.

The mid-term evaluation (MTE) covered the LEP II project implementation since January 2021 to October 2023 and three project components. The 20 LEPs selected by LEP II project were also part of this MTE.

Special consideration was given to how the project results contribute to Outcome 3, Output 3.2 of the ILO's Programme and Budget (P&B), as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), as well as the anticipated outcomes and impact and conditions for sustainability of the project results.

The principal clients for the evaluation are the members of the Project Steering Board (PSB) and the members of the tripartite Project Advisory Board (PAB), ILO tripartite constituents, ILO project staff, and other management and technical staff, as well as the donor, the European Commission NEAR – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Other key stakeholders include the ILO's Government Body, ILO relevant Departments, and the municipalities of BiH that have been selected in the LEP II.

2.2. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

As specified in the Terms of Reference (Annex 6.1), the mid-term evaluation of the LEP II project is based on the analysis of the OECD-DAC⁶ established evaluation criteria: (a) relevance, (b) coherence, (c) effectiveness, (d) efficiency, (e) impact, and (g) sustainability.

The mid-term evaluation seeks to answer the following six groups of questions:

Table 1. Evaluation Questions as per ToR for MTE of LEP II

Evaluation criteria	Key questions
Relevance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did the project objectives attend the constituents' needs and national development objectives? 2. Have the relevant social partners been identified for the establishment of the local employment partnerships and how have they participated in the design and the project implementation? 3. To what extent did the problem analysis, the project design and project strategies identify and integrate specific targets and indicators to attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender equity – Disability and social inclusion – Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education) 4. Is the project design (i.e., Theory of Change), implementation modalities, resource allocation, etc., realistic, and purposeful towards achieving its objectives? Is the project design logical?
Coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To what extent the strategy proposed by the project to foster sustainable partnership driven labour market frameworks at local level for an increased access to formal employment fits on other initiatives (ILO, UN, donor, government, and NGOs) contributing to increase and improve employment in BiH such as the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina, ILO P&B, the UN Framework for Sustainable Development Cooperation and the SDGs?
Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. To what extent the project is in process of achieving its objectives measured by the indicators established in the PRODOC? 7. What were the factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of the project objectives (including unexpected positive and negative outputs and

⁶ OECD DAC: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee

	<p>outcomes)?</p> <p>8. Within the achievement of the project objectives what measures were taken to address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender equity - Disability and social inclusion - Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education) <p>9. How International labour standards, social tripartism and fair transition on the environment have been integrated in the project implementation and outcomes?</p>
Efficiency	<p>10. How efficiently have human and financial resources been allocated and used to provide the necessary support and to achieve the project objectives? Could the same results be attained with fewer resources?</p> <p>11. Is the project M&E system operating and is oriented to accountability to the key stakeholders and learning? Does it provide feedback to project beneficiaries?</p>
Impact	<p>12. To what extent the project has contribute to improve employability in local communities?</p> <p>13. What actions might be needed to enhance longer-term effects?</p>
Sustainability	<p>14. To which extent the project results will have a long term, sustainable positive contribution to a better employability in local communities?</p> <p>15. Has an effective and realistic exit strategy been developed and is being implemented?</p> <p>16. To what extent is the achieved progress likely to be long lasting? Will partners be able to sustain the results beyond the project?</p>

The mid-term evaluation made targeted efforts to ensure that the selection of stakeholders consulted for the evaluation solicit a diversity of perspectives based on gender, ethnicity, geographic locations, and other locally relevant criteria. The evaluation questions under relevance, effectiveness evaluation criteria include specific questions on gender equality and cross-cutting themes (tripartism and social dialogue, International Labour Standards, environmental sustainability).

The gender equality and non-discrimination were mainstreamed in the mid-term evaluation through: (i) applying gender analysis by involving both men and women in consultation and evaluation's analysis, (ii) inclusion of data disaggregated by sex and gender, type of unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education) in the analysis and justification of project documents; (iii) the formulation of gender-sensitive and non-discrimination strategies and objectives and gender-specific indicators; (iv) integration of International labour standards, social tripartism and fair transition on the environment in the project implementation and outcomes, (v) inclusion of qualitative methods and use of mix of methodologies, and (vi) assessing outcomes to improve lives of women and men. The analysis of gender-related concerns and non-discrimination were based on the ILO Guidelines on Considering Gender in Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects as well as UNEG Ethical Guidelines.

2.3. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology was carefully designed to respond to the six groups of main evaluation questions listed above and was based on a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative elements. The mid-term project evaluation used several interconnected methods: (1) document review, (2) field visit to BiH, (3) interviews with key informants, (4) focus groups with LEPs beneficiaries, and (5) surveys among the LEPs partners, vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes beneficiaries and employers.

Document Review: The evaluator conducted a desk review of primary and secondary sources, program documents (e.g., PRODOC and Logframe; progress reports; monitoring reports; Project Advisory Board and Project Steering Board minutes; LEPs Proposals and Progress Reports), and select LEP II analytical products such as assessments, guidelines, Newsletters, training reports. The evaluator employed content analysis and fidelity analysis to understand how the LEP II performed against implementation outcomes. The document review informed the evaluation design and culminated in the Inception report with the evaluation questions and sub-questions and the data collection instruments.

KIIs and FGDs: Qualitative interviews formed the heart of the evaluation approach. Complementing the broad input from the surveys and document review, the evaluator conducted 29 in-depth interviews (17 offline/12 online) with 39 key informants (11-male/28-female) [IP, Donor, Government, Employers Organizations, LEP Lead Partners and LEP partners] which was proportional to LEP II’s general sample of stakeholders; and facilitated 4 mini-FGDs (1 offline/3 online) with 17 vocational training and SIYB beneficiaries (8-male/11-female).

The evaluator conducted KIIs and FGDs with local and national stakeholders and activity participants over two and a half weeks between October 30 and November 16, 2023, through in-person and online interviews, and mini-FGDs. The evaluator developed guides for semi-structured interviews and mini-FGDs were specific to the type of respondent, comprehensive, and addressed the evaluation and learning questions. To gather qualitative data from all stakeholders, the evaluator chose informants by applying a non-probability purposive sampling approach. Analysis of KIIs and FGDs included a summary of themes and outlier findings that emerged for each topic, highlighting the range of responses and experiences that are supported by respondent quotes.

Surveys: All LEP partners, employers and beneficiaries of vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes were invited to participate in surveys. In the course of mid-term evaluation, four types of surveys were organized:

Survey among LEPs partners to determine the level of LEPs partners’ satisfaction with the project’s implementation, communication and results. The questionnaire consisted of 8 key questions and 19 sub-questions. The survey was held via SurveyMonkey between November 7 to November 22, 2023. The response rate constituted 34 per cent. In total, 93 representatives (52 per cent -male/48 per cent -female) from all 20 LEPs took part in the online survey. 80 per cent of the respondents were from FBiH and 20 per cent from RS.

Figure 2. Distribution of survey participants by category of LEPs partners (N=93)

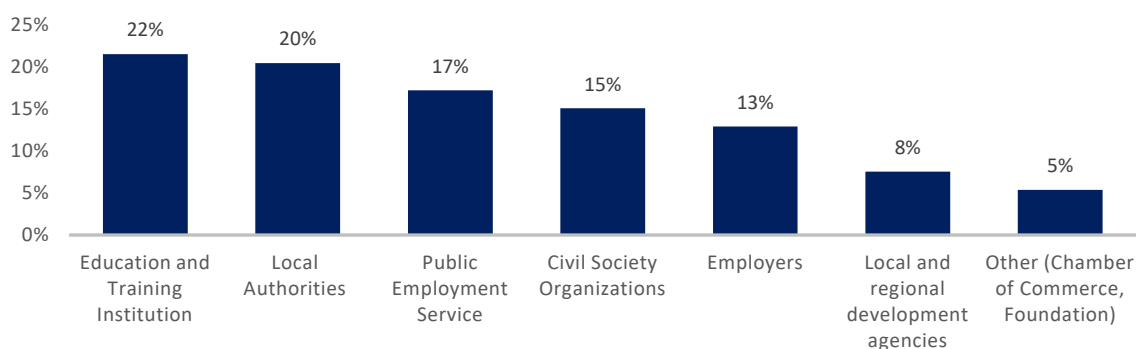
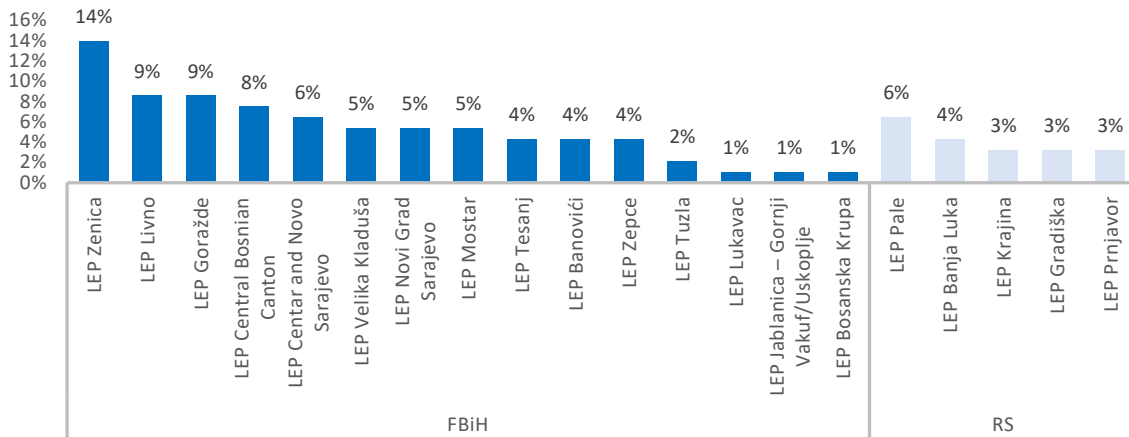


Figure 3. Distribution of survey participants by LEPs (N=93)



Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

Survey among vocational training program beneficiaries to identify the quality, effectiveness and impact of vocational training courses which were organized by the supported LEPs. Survey among Vocational training beneficiaries was consisted of 51 questions. The survey was held via SurveyMonkey between November 16-December 3, 2023. The response rate constituted 10 Per cent.

Respondents with vocational training comprised 54 individuals (43 per cent female and 57 per cent male). 43 per cent are between the ages of 30 and 44, 39 per cent are between the ages of 15 and 29, and 19 per cent are between the ages of 45 and 60. While 33 per cent of the respondents hold a higher education, 22 per cent have completed general secondary education, and 2% have completed elementary school. Specifically, 43 per cent of the respondents have completed vocational and technical secondary education. The project's vocational training modules were successfully concluded by 70 per cent of the respondents in 2023, compared to 30 per cent in 2022. Adult Education, Production and Processing of Medical Plants, Agrotourism, and CNC Operators comprised the majority of the trades. 10 per cent of respondents completed the vocational training program for four months, while 23 per cent did so for three months, 15 per cent for one month, and 12 per cent for two months. Almost 30 per cent of respondents completed the program for six months.

Figure 4. Type of vocational training attended by the respondents (N=54)

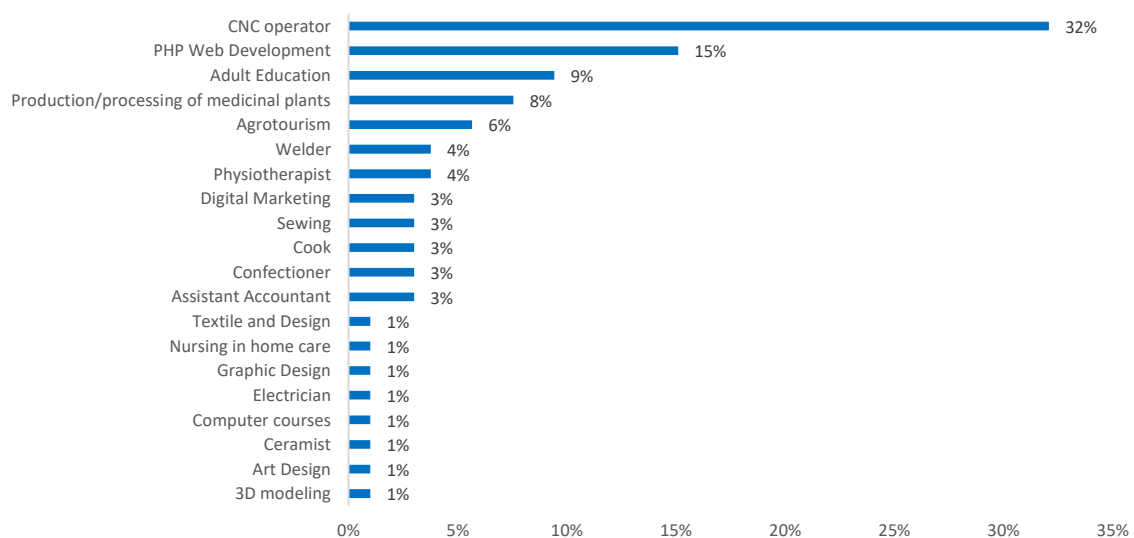
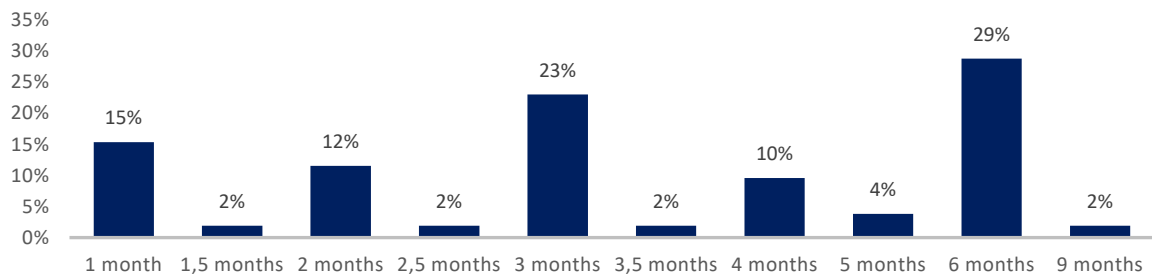


Figure 5. Duration of vocational training of respondents (N=54)



Source: Survey among vocational training beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Survey among entrepreneurship program beneficiaries to identify the quality, effectiveness and impact of SIYB courses which were organized by the supported LEPs. The survey among Entrepreneurship beneficiaries was consisted of 38 questions. The survey was held via SurveyMonkey between November 16-December 3, 2023. The response rate constituted 20 per cent.

The survey was completed by a total of 100 Entrepreneurship program beneficiaries, of which 46 per cent were male and 54 per cent were female. A total of 97 per cent of the respondents completed Start Your Business course, while 3 per cent enrolled in the Improve Your Business course. 73 per cent of the participants reported attending the SIYB training program in 2023, while the remaining 27 per cent did so in 2022. The age distribution of the respondents is as follows: 61 per cent are between the ages of 30-44, 29 per cent are 15-29, and 10 per cent are 45-60. Vocational and technical secondary education is held by 45 per cent of the respondents, higher education by 37%, general secondary education by 16 per cent, and elementary school education by 2 per cent .

Survey among Employers to identify the level of satisfaction with vocational training trainees prepared by LEPs. Survey among Employers was consisted of 23 questions. The survey was held via SurveyMonkey between November 16-December 3, 2023. The response rate constituted 13 per cent.

Most of surveyed employers (56 per cent) are from manufacturing sector, the rest (44 per cent) are from Education, robotics, hospitality and tourism, ICT and construction. 56 per cent of the employers are classified as medium-sized businesses, while the remaining 44 per cent are classified as micro or small enterprises. 78 per cent of surveyed employers export oriented. The main export markets are Europe (EU, Switzerland), USA, Australia and Israel.

The evaluator also facilitated a virtual stakeholder workshop on 27 February, 2024 with stakeholder representatives (tripatriate constituents, LEPs partners, ILO, donor) in attendance. The evaluator presented her initial findings and invited feedback from the participants. The workshop list of participants is included in Annex 6.6.

2.4. Evaluation Limitations

There are a few limitations to this evaluation that deserve mentioning.

Qualitative respondents’ unavailability for meetings: The evaluator was not able to hold meetings with the BiH MOFTER, Government in FBiH⁷, and Workers Organization⁸ due to their busy schedule and inavailability for neither online nor offline interviews.

Mitigation: The evaluator hold additional interviews with the project team to fill the missing gaps as well as reviewed the minutes of the Project Advisory and Project Steering Boards where those

⁷ Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Crafts of FBiH; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the FBiH; Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Crafts of FBiH

⁸ Confederation of Trade Unions BiH

tripatriates constituents took part and expressed their views on the project performance and implementation.

Memory Bias: Because people were asked to recall events taken place up to 36 months earlier, there may have been a degree of memory bias.

Mitigation: Situation and monitoring reports and other documents were cross-checked by the evaluator in order to confirm dates and information.

Selection bias: There may have been a bias with the mini-FGDs because project participants who agreed to participate and took the time to be present were likely either currently participating in the LEPs and/or were those who held a mostly positive view of the LEPs and the LEP II project.

Mitigation: the evaluator explicitly asked about components of the project that could be improved and probed for adverse experiences to facilitate balanced discussions.

Potential lack of willingness of respondents to provide honest responses.

Mitigation: In order to encourage honest responses, the evaluator informed the participants in the interviews, focus groups and surveys that all information they provide would be treated as confidential, and opinions collected during the interviews and focus groups discussions would be analyzed and presented in the evaluation report in an aggregate form.

While important, the above limitations did not affect the overall quality of the report, as a representative sample of the overall groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries was reached.

2.5. Ethics, Norms and Standards

The guiding principles for this mid-term evaluation reflect international good practice principles such as transparency, professionalism, independence, credibility, ethics, and utility, particularly as represented by the ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation (2020)⁹, the ILO Code of Conduct for evaluators, the UN evaluation standards and norms and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Evaluation Quality Standards.

Participants were made aware of the purpose of the interviews and surveys through the email inviting them to participate, and, for those who signed up online, through an information and consent form (see Annex 6.7). There is no known risk of harm to participants from participating as a respondent in this evaluation. The potential risks of providing sensitive information are mitigated by the commitments outlined in the information and consent forms and were discussed with interviewees if sensitive information arose. Interview transcripts and completed online surveys will not be provided. All online surveys were anonymous. The gender dimension was considered as a crosscutting concern throughout the evaluation methodology. The LEP II Project was evaluated through the lens of a diverse range of stakeholders that participate in and are intended to benefit from the intervention, including men and women.

III. Evaluation Findings

The following findings were arrived at following the document review and the collation and analysis of the feedback from the interviews and focus groups. The evaluation findings are organized along the following sub-sections: a) relevance, b) coherence, c) effectiveness, d) efficiency, (e) impact orientation, and (f) sustainability.

3.1. Relevance

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf

3.1.1. Relevance for country priorities and recipients

The mid-term evaluation found that the LEP II project is **highly relevant** and that its objectives respond to the needs of key stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, all stakeholders interviewed underlined that the project was very **timely**.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences have had a relatively high impact on Bosnia and Herzegovina's population and economy as significantly slowed down the economic development processes in the country. Unemployment rose from 16 per cent in 2019 to 17 per cent in 2020, reversing the gains of previous years during which BiH had experienced a steady decline in unemployment¹⁰. Nevertheless, unemployment rates prior to the pandemic (in 2019) were high in BiH compared to other economies in the region, including Serbia (10 per cent) and Albania (11.5 per cent), as well as the OECD (5 per cent) and EU (7 per cent) averages¹¹. This trend is partially attributable to skills gaps. Moreover, almost one-third (30 per cent) of those out of work are long-term unemployed (more than 12 months). BiH faces other employment policy challenges, namely a large informal workforce, high female unemployment¹² and a public sector that tends to offer higher wages and better working conditions compared to opportunities in private companies¹³. The youth unemployment rate in BiH (34 per cent in 2019) is also one of the highest in the Western Balkans, just behind North Macedonia (35.5 per cent) and much higher than the average rate among OECD countries (12.5 per cent)¹⁴. Weak job creation and limited opportunities encourage a significant number of young people to emigrate. This "brain drain" phenomenon is a common issue across the Western Balkans¹⁵. However, it is especially prominent in BiH, which ranked 135th out of 137 countries for "capacity to retain talent" in the World Economic Forum's 2017-2018 Global Competitiveness Report¹⁶. In addition to economic motivations, there is evidence that youth emigration in BiH is also driven by political instability and lack of trust in government institutions¹⁷. On the whole, the LEP II project is aligned with the main strategic documents and programs related to the economic development of BiH, such as the **BiH Economic Reform Programmes (ERP)** for 2020-2022 and for 2023-2025, particularly with the goal for the alignment of the education, training, and retraining and upskilling systems with the needs of the labour market. It supports the implementation of **Republika Srpska's Strategy for Development of SMEs (2021-2027)** and the **Development Strategy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2021-2027)**, Goal 1: Accelerated Economic Growth (1.3. Support development of the business sector) and Goal 2: Prosperous and Inclusive Social Development (objective 2.4 "Reduce inactivity and unemployment, particularly long-term"). The project also fits closely with the priorities for reforming secondary vocational education and training, in particular the objective of linking professional education and labour market as outlined in the **Strategy for Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina - in light of the Riga Conclusions - (2021- 2030)**, and **Strategy of Education Development for Pre-university Education in the Republic of Srpska (2016-2021)**.

¹⁰ OECD (2021), *Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook*, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcbc2ea9-en>

¹¹ World Bank (2022), *World Bank Open Data*, <https://data.worldbank.org/>

¹² Women are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market, with 36% in employment compared to 59% for men.

¹³ OECD (2021), *Competitiveness in South East Europe 2021: A Policy Outlook*, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/dcbc2ea9-en>

¹⁴ World Bank (2022), *World Bank Open Data*, <https://data.worldbank.org/>

¹⁵ World Bank, wiiw (2018), *Western Balkans: Labor Market Trends 2018*, World Bank, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/565231521435487923/pdf/124354-Western-Balkans-Labor-market-trends-2018-final.pdf>

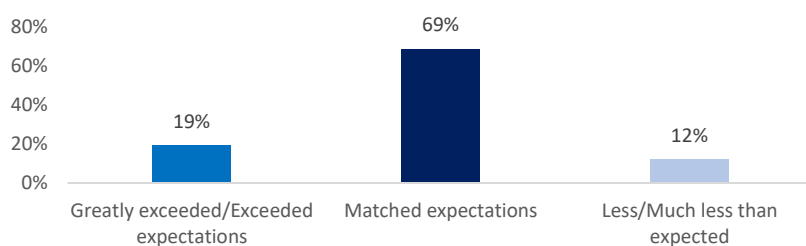
¹⁶ World Economic Forum (2017), *The Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2019*, World Economic Forum, Geneva, <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2017-2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2017%E2%80%932018.pdf>

¹⁷ Turčilo, L. et al. (2019), *Youth Study Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018/2019*, Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung, Sarajevo, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15262.pdf>

As recognised also by the 2021/2022 Labour Market Research in RS and FBiH, the way forward for the PES is to join resources with education institutions and employers to place more people into jobs. Therefore, local PES offices should seek partnerships with multiple stakeholders in order to deliver on their complex set of objectives. LEPs are proving that they can offer such a platform. The LEPs hold significance for local authorities as they align with the objectives of the cantonal and/or municipal development strategies of target municipalities. These development strategies seek to promote community development and growth through the enhancement of economic competitiveness and the creation of more employment opportunities. Given that those with a general secondary education have a higher employment rate (56 per cent) than those with a vocational education (46 per cent) do¹⁸, the project holds significant relevance for the education and training institutions of BiH. The employment rate of women who have followed vocational education and training (VET) is extremely low at 31 per cent compared to those who have followed general education (54 per cent). In 2018, a tracer study of VET graduates found that only 51 per cent of employed VET graduates held jobs related to their education¹⁹. Moreover, the VET system in BiH²⁰ has a small component of practical training through work-based learning (in most cases) organised in school workshops. Co-operation with firms for work-based learning remains limited, making up only 20 per cent of all practical lessons²¹. In its turn, employers report that young people are not leaving education with the competences or practical skills they need to perform a job – according to one survey conducted by the World Bank, more than half of firms in BiH report this issue²². Given the increase of production and service capacities, labour drain and demand for workforce on the part of employers, targeted, quality training programmes developed by LEPs could match the needs of employers. In addition, researches suggest that 44 per cent of businesses in BiH interested in offering work-based learning, it has the highest engagement in the region²³.

In general, the LEPs projects either fully met or greatly exceeded the expectations of the 88 per cent of surveyed LEPs partners.

Figure 6. LEPs partners perception on extent to which LEPs meeting their expectations (N=93)



Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

The Employers' and Workers' organizations were involved in the early phase of the project design when they received a project proposal from the EUD BiH with a request for feedback. In addition, they contributed to the Inception report by providing feedback during the consultations held at the beginning of 2021. The Employers' Association in FBiH and RS opted to be on the Project Advisory

¹⁸ Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ETF Forum Member Institution: Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education, European Training Foundation, April 2020

¹⁹ GIZ (2018), *TVET Education in BiH: Tracer Study Report 2018*, German Cooperation, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Eschborn, <https://wba4wbl.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tracer-Study-Report.pdf>

²⁰ Background information: There are 311 secondary schools in the country: general schools (grammar schools), art schools, religious schools, schools for children with special needs, technical schools and vocational schools. Of these, 235 are VET and technical schools, out of which 148 are in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, three are in Brčko District and 84 technical secondary schools are in Republika Srpska.

²¹ WBA4WBL (2021), *Key Features of WBL in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, WBA4WBL webpage, Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning, <https://wba4wbl.com/bosnia-and-herzegovina/key-features-of-wbl/>.

²² World Bank (2018), *STEP Skills Measurement Employer Survey 2016-2017 (Wave 3) Bosnia and Herzegovina*, World Bank, https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf.

²³ ETF (2020), *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Education, Training and Employment Developments*, https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/Country%20Fiche%202020%20Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20Education%20Training%20and%20Employment%20Developments_0.pdf

Board as they intended to apply for funds. They rather saw themselves as potential applicants than contributors to policy development. Consequently, employers' organizations could not be members of the Project Steering Board as it deals with criteria for Call for Proposals. As a result, based on the decision of the social partners at the entity and state levels, they were included in the LEP II project more in a passive role to provide inputs when requested. In addition, a few employers' organizations are partners in 4 out of 20 LEPs (LEP Banja Luka, LEP Banovići, LEP Goražde and LEP Žepče).

3.1.2. Relevance for beneficiaries

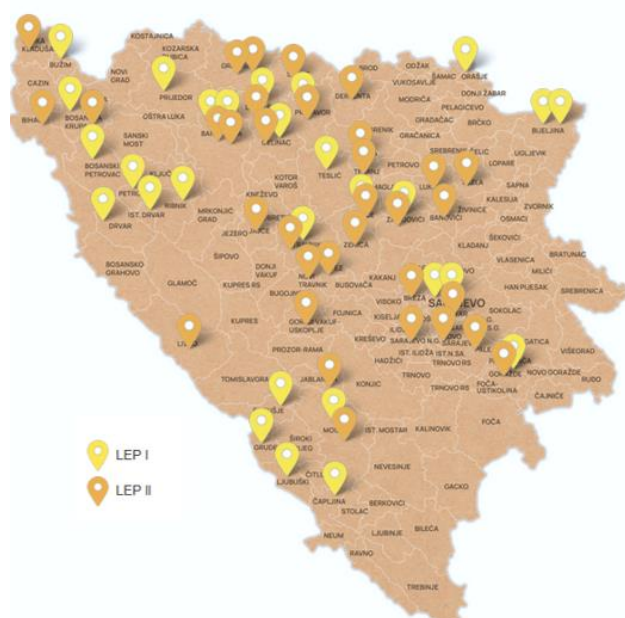
Women and the youth face significant challenges in the access to economic opportunities in BiH.

Employment and activity are substantially lower for women than for men and the country has one of the lowest female labor force participations in the Balkans (37 per cent in 2022) and across Europe and Central Asia (ECA). About 36 per cent of the labor force aged 15 to 24 was unemployed in 2020; among the highest youth unemployment rates in ECA. Of those, a significant part was unemployed for more than a year. Furthermore, about 1 out of 5 young individuals were not in education, employment, or training in 2020. About 57 per cent of young people expressed that they wanted to emigrate, the highest rate in the region²⁴. **Therefore, the project is highly relevant for final beneficiaries** as one of the key elements of the grants administered to Local Employment Partnership (LEPs) within this intervention is offering re-training and up-skilling of unemployed persons to match with the local labour market needs.

3.1.3. Validity of design

This project builds upon the outcomes of the preceding EU-funded project "Local Employment Partnerships in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (LEP I), which was similarly executed by the ILO from 2016 to 2019 and resulted in the creation of nineteen LEPs. From June 2017 to January 2019, a total of 1,584 unemployed individuals received training from these 19 LEPs, of which 517 were successfully placed into employment.

Figure 7. Map of LEPs supported by the LEP II project



The phase 2 of the project differs from the phase 1 in several aspects. To commence, its targets and geographic coverage are more extensive. Furthermore, unlike phase 1, which consisted of a single component (re-training and employment opportunities), phase 2 of this initiative offers assistance to unemployed individuals in BiH through two components—starting own-business support and re-training and employment opportunities (matching labour market demand and supply side).

In total, 75 per cent (15 out of 20) of the LEPs supported under phase 2 are from FBiH, while the remaining 25 per cent (5 out of 20) are from RS²⁵. 11 out of 20 LEPs, or 55 per cent, participated in phase 1.

Source: The LEP II Project website

²⁴ World Bank (2020), *Bosnia and Herzegovina - Systemic Country Diagnostics Update*, World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33870/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁵ LEPs from RS: LEP Banja Luka, LEP Krajina, LEP Gradiška, LEP Pale, LEP Prnjavor

The project is designed to bring financial and technical assistance to LEPs through both grants, and tailor-made capacity building and networking events. The project's specific objective is to 'contribute to better employability in local communities' to be achieved through three specific outputs, but only the first one reflects an institutional change, an outcome, the other two relate to the delivery of activities rather than the result of the activities. The intervention logic assumes the following: (i) LEPs are acknowledged by key stakeholders as labour market mechanisms driven by partnerships that increase access to formal employment at the local level; (ii) activation and labour market integration programmes are effectively designed and implemented by local employment partnerships; and (iii) institutional development services, including advocacy, networking, and employment policy implementation, are provided to the LEPs.

Strengthening the position, function, and capabilities of LEPs so that they become recognized as local mechanisms for expanding access to formal employment in local communities is the focus of the project's theory of change. It is anticipated that this will be accomplished through the promotional efforts and knowledge sharing of key stakeholders engaged in the LEPs. Also by providing institutional development support to the LEPs through actions such as advocacy, networking and developing employment policy and by improving their capacity to develop, design and implement projects with grant scheme funding. **The theory fails to establish a connection between institutional change and the anticipated outcome of LEPs, such as the enhancement of local employment prospects for the final beneficiaries.**

In general, **84 per cent of the partners surveyed expressed satisfaction with the degree of involvement in the design of the LEPs initiatives, while 92 per cent affirmed their understanding of the LEPs objectives.**

Figure 8. Assessment of the LEP II Project design by LEPs partners

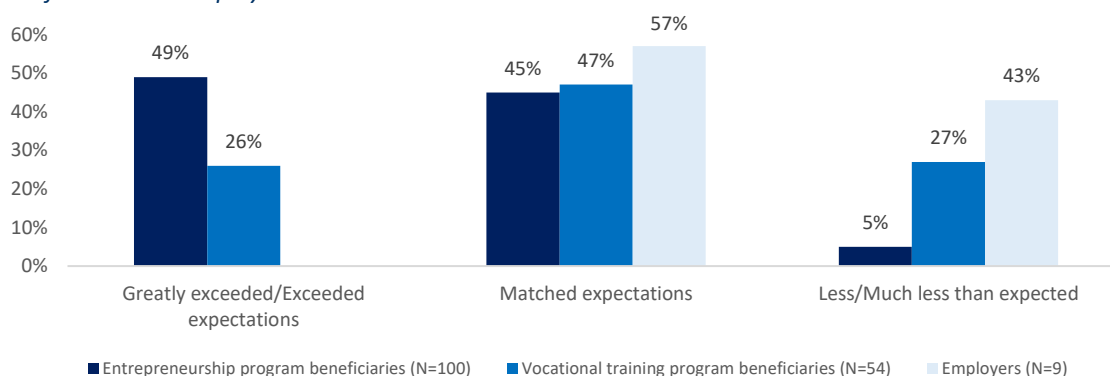


Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

However, **the absence of territorial diagnostics by each LEP** (i.e., innovative methodology for a comprehensive analysis of employment issues) **was identified as a significant gap by the majority of the stakeholders who were interviewed.** The project originally planned it but it was abandoned because of the crisis caused by the COVID-19, so the data obtained by applying the entire methodology would not give a reliable overview of the local labour market needs. This meant that each LEP had to rely on their own resources to identify mismatches between education and labour market in their localities, and plan actions in line with them. Another option was to refer to the most recent Labour Market Research in the country. Even though, this option is more demanding for the LEPs, the outcomes are more relevant to the local context than if the territorial diagnostic was applied.

Consequently, the beneficiary survey data suggests that **47 per cent of vocational training programmes graduates consider that the vocational training programmes completely met their expectations, while 26 per cent report that it had significantly surpassed or surpassed their expectations.** Conversely, *27 per cent of the graduates express dissatisfaction with the vocational training programmes.* At the same time, **a mere 57 per cent of employers express satisfaction with the vocational training programmes,** with the remaining 43 per cent *stating that the training programs failed to meet their expectations.* Overall, **49 per cent of graduates reported that the Entrepreneurship training programme significantly surpassed or surpassed their expectations, 45 per cent reported that it completely met their expectations.** Only 5 per cent of the graduates expressed dissatisfaction with the Entrepreneurship training programme.

Figure 9. Extent to which the vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes met the needs of beneficiaries and employers



Source: Surveys among Vocational Training and Entrepreneurship Programmes Beneficiaries and Employers, November-December 2023

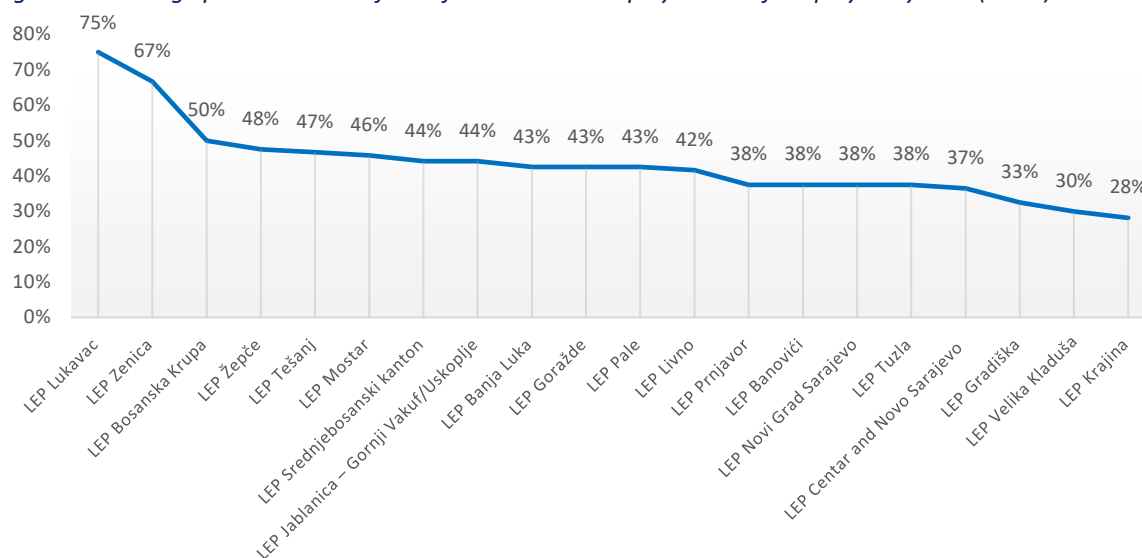
The Programmatic Results Framework (Logframe) of the LEP II project is clear and measurable with 20 indicators (2 impact indicators, 3 outcome indicators and 15 output indicators). The review of the indicators indicate that **10 out of 20 indicators contain sex disaggregated data**, i.e., share of women to be covered, and **1 indicator which is focused on gender equality promotion** (i.e., number of LEPs that develop/update gender-sensitive action plans that improve labour market governance in their communities (including through networking). Also, **5 out of 20 indicators disaggregated by unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances.** At the same time, **the project does not have any specific indicators and targets on disability and social inclusion.**

Risks identification and the management of risk mitigation measures have been ensured. The project risks were analysed during the design and inception phase and described in the PRODOC. During implementation, the LEP II risks are regularly reviewed and reported in the Interim Progress Reports.

The revision of 20 LEPs Logframes indicate that **most of LEPs had issues with setting of realistic targets in line with the first call of proposals (CfP) and taking into account the budget allocations.** On the one hand, 35 per cent of LEPs (7 out of 20) put higher targets for vocational training programmes than was envisioned under the first call of proposals (i.e., between 65 and 100 vs 60 anticipated) and 30 per cent of LEPs (6 out of 20) have higher targets on SIYB training programme (i.e., between 30 and 60 vs 20 anticipated). On the other hand, the first call for proposals stipulated that a minimum of 44 per cent of the beneficiaries must be self-employed or employed (i.e., 35 out of 80 beneficiaries who received vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes). Nevertheless, this criterion was fulfilled by merely 60 per cent of LEPs (12 out of 20), whereas the remaining 40 per cent of LEPs anticipate an average proportion of beneficiaries who are either employed or self-employed ranging from 28 per cent to 38 per cent. In addition, the employment or

self-employment rate target for beneficiaries of two LEPs is notably high at 67 per cent to 75 per cent.

Figure 10. Average planned share of beneficiaries to be employed or self-employed by LEPs (N=20)



Source: LEPs proposals

As a result of the cost extension received from the EUD in the third year of project implementation, the LEP II project duration and targets were revised. An examination of the revised Logframe for the project indicates that **overall targets of four output indicators should be revised further to reflect the accomplishments of twenty supported LEPs during the initial half of the LEP II project's implementation.**

Table 2. Comparison of output indicators targets of LEPs supported by the project

Output Indicator	LEP II project Logframe		Consolidated Targets (LEPs Logframes)		Actual as of Sept 2023 (20 LEPs)
	Initial Project Target (20 LEPs)	Revised Project Target (26 LEPs)	Initial Target (20 LEPs)	Revised Target (20 LEPs)	
# of final beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs and to increase competitiveness	1,600	2,200	1,880	1,836	694
# of unemployed persons trained to start their own enterprise (GIA and SYB)	300	600	565	550	514
# of final beneficiaries employed after participating in the LEPs' interventions	600	783	644	629	229
# of final beneficiaries, trained in GIA and SYB, that registered own enterprise	50	250	190	181	153

Source: LEPs Logframes and quarterly progress reports under the 1st CfP and revised LEP II project Logframe

3.2. Coherence

3.2.1. Coherence with EU priorities

Accession to the EU is an over-arching priority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina formally applied for EU membership in 2016, following years of constitutional reforms and engagements with the Dayton Peace Agreement. The country has been recognised by the EU as a "candidate country" for accession since the decision of the European Council in 2022 and is on

the current agenda for future enlargement of the EU.

As a result, the EU is a strategic partner to the country and is the largest provider of financial assistance, helping the economy realise its reform processes and endeavours that bring it closer to the acquis, while also ensuring improved standards and services for its citizens. The current socio-economic situation of the BiH requires financial support to combat high unemployment. High unemployment rates and a dominating informal economy create obstacles to social and economic recovery. According to the Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD) the pre-accession assistance to BiH needs to support the country in adopting active labour market measures to combat unemployment in particular long-term unemployment, to reduce fragmentation of labour markets, and to improve mobility. The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is the main financial instrument of the European Union to assist beneficiary countries in progressive alignment with the standards and policies of the EU. By enhancing the socioeconomic situation and living conditions in the country, **the LEP II project contributes to the achievement of the overarching goal of the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2019** (EU4 Employment and Education), i.e., to enhance employability in local communities. Moreover, the value added for the EU resources invested in this project is in that it promotes decent work, partnership-based local employment and development in line with EU best-practice.

3.2.2. Coherence with the ILO Programming

The LEP II project supports the four Strategic Objectives of ILO's Decent Work Agenda: 1) "Set and promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work", 2) "Create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income", 3) "Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all" and 4) "Strengthen tripartism and social dialogue".

In addition, **the project contributes to the ILO's strategic policy frameworks**, i.e., *the ILO Programme and Budget (P&B) 2020-2021 and 2022-2023* and related Policy Outcome 3 "Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all", Outcome 4 "Sustainable enterprises as generators of employment and promoters of innovation and decent work" and Outcome 5 "Skills and lifelong learning to facilitate access to and transitions in the labour market".

Moreover, **the project document and its objectives constitute the implementation modality of the ILO Country Programme Outcome BiH128** "Design and delivery of employment and skills policy improved at central and local levels".

3.2.3. Coherence with the UN programming and SDGs

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) provides a collective, coherent and integrated response of the United Nations (UN) to national priorities. It entails the common strategic framework for the operational activities of the UN system at country level. The UNSDCF provides common business plans for UN agencies and national partners, aligned to the priorities of the host country and the internationally agreed development goals. The MTE found the overall objective of **the LEP II project to be relevant and strategically in line with UNSDCF for BiH (2021-2025)**, particularly *Reform Agenda I "Sustainable and Accelerated Economic Growth, Increased Competitiveness of the Economy and Improved Business Environment"* and its *Outcome 1 "By 2025, people benefit from resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth ensured by the convergence of economic development and management of the environment and cultural resources"*. This outcome is supported by the following project contributions: (i) an increase in the number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) registered in sectors of the emerging, low-carbon economy that are experiencing rapid growth; (ii) a greater proportion of these firms with women in ownership

or leadership positions; and (iii) an increase in the number of work spaces made available to members of vulnerable groups.

The LEP II project is supportive of the Framework for the Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Bosnia and Herzegovina until 2030 and domesticated SDG targets, in particular:

- *SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”* (Target 4.4: “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”), and
- *SDG 8 “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”* (Target 8.3: “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises including through access to financial services”; Target 8.5.: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value”; and Target 8.6: “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”).

3.2.4. Coherence with other initiatives

The approach for implementing project outputs ensures coherence and completeness of the LEP II project outputs. The approach taken for implementing the project through proper articulation and synergies with other related technical assistances provided by the EU and other donors ensured the coherence of the LEP II project and of its outputs, and limited the opportunities for duplication or overlapping activities. In practice, there was little duplication or overlapping of individual components and activities. The document review indicates that there are several initiatives in BiH designed to generate employment²⁶. The LEP II project team is fully aware of them and EUD assistance in identifying and facilitating synergies with them is provided.

Several examples of **synergies with other EU-funded interventions** were highlighted in the course of the interviews. The LEP II project created a synergy with the EU4Business project, which finances desk centers to support the development of entrepreneurship for newly registered businesses. The pool of SIYB trainers that have been certified through EU4Business project are available to LEPs to provide SIYB training for minimum 300 unemployed persons²⁷. The GET Ahead trainers, specialised for women in entrepreneurship, are available to deliver training to women in their start-up development. LEPs have the opportunity to choose trainers from the pool, and ILO cover costs of their engagement. The project also referred LEPs partners to use recent 2021/2022 Labour Market Research for both entities in their diagnostic of local labour market needs, developed through another EU supported project “Labor Market Research Project”²⁸. The LEP II project also plans to utilize data gathered through the EU4Employment project and its Functional assessment of the Public Employment Services along with the technical assistance to be provided to the PESs at both the entity and Brcko District levels during the period of 2024-2025. Furthermore, the project did a presentation for LEPs partners on LEPs in Ireland and Scotland in order that the supported LEPs could identify the potential areas of collaboration in the upcoming the Youth Guarantee programme.

²⁶ EU-funded: EU4Business (2018-2022), EU4AGRI (2020-2024), EU4Recovery (2021-2023), EU4Employment (2023-2026), EU4Employment and Education (2023-2026), EU-funded Improvement of Labor Market Research Project (2020-2023); Other donors: World Bank BiH Employment Support Program (2017-2022), Swiss-funded Youth Employment Project (2008-2022), Swiss-funded Integrated Local Development Project (2008-2022), and GiZ-funded Innovation and digitalisation in SMEs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019-2022).

²⁷ Background information: Thanks to the Training of Trainers workshops organised from 2019-2021 within the EU4Business project, Bosnia and Herzegovina has now 14 certified SIYB trainers.

²⁸ <https://trzisterada.ba/index.php/research-and-analysis/>

Additionally, the MTE identified instances of **effective cost-sharing with other initiatives funded by the EU in BiH**. The Project Communication Officer position (50 per cent) has been shared with the EU4Recovery project during 2021-2023 and in the period 2024-2026, this position will be shared with the EU4Employment project. In the period 2021-2023, the project also shared the car obtained through the EU4BusinessRecovery project.

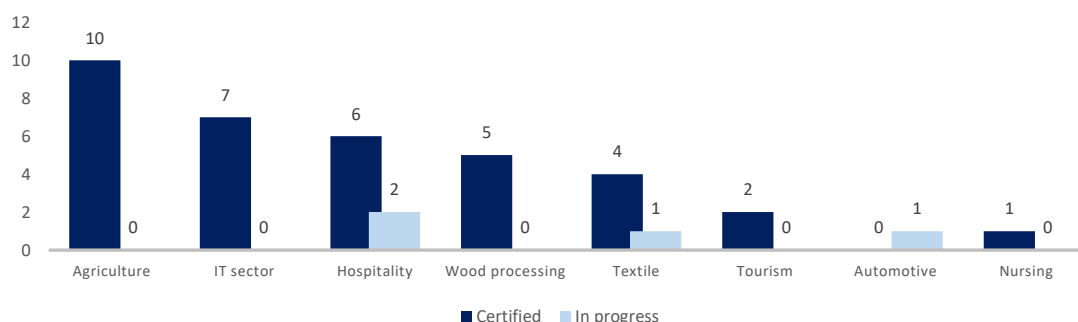
3.3. Effectiveness

3.3.1. Level of achievement of objectives

Taking into account the fact that this is the midterm evaluation and the LEP II project was extended in the autumn of 2023 in terms of duration, scope and budget, the analysis of the project's effectiveness and the level of achievement of the set targets was done against the revised targets of the project. As of September 2023, the LEP II project achieved the following results as evident from document review and interviews:

- **104 (out of 300 planned)** key stakeholders' representatives participated in the training on concept notes and full project proposals for partnership-based interventions on employment. The level of achievement of the target is on 35per cent.
- **20 LEPs (out of 26 planned)** successfully developed local employment development initiatives for EU funding and local resources. The level of achievement of the target is on 77 per cent. This is so as additional six LEPs is planned to be selected and supported only starting from 2024.
- **66 certified new vocational training programmes (out of 52 planned)** available for hard-to-employ individuals in local communities covered by LEPs and **5 are in progress of certification**. Newly certified vocational training programs are most prevalent in the agriculture, IT and hospitality sectors. The target has been substantially surpassed (i.e., on 127 per cent). Many partnerships were encouraged to exceed these indicators. Secondary schools, especially in the Republika Srpska, thanks to the extraordinary cooperation with the Institute for Adult Education, such as in Gradiška and in Pale, established 16 and 6 new programmes respectively thanks to the Secondary Vocational and Technical School Gradiška and High School Center, they exceeded this goal.

Figure 11. Vocational training programmes certified per sector at 20 LEPs as of September 2023



Source: LEPs quarterly reports

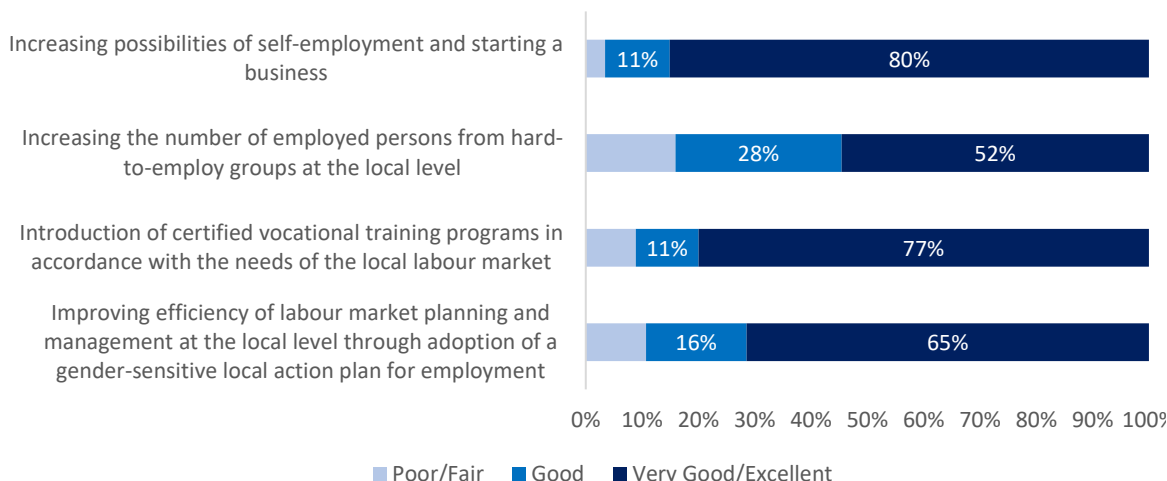
- **1,549 (out of 2,200 planned)** final beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs and to increase competitiveness (972 trained in vocational training and 577 for entrepreneurship). The level of achievement of the target is on 70 per cent. It is important to mention that actual number of vocational training beneficiaries include also currently enrolled in the vocational training programmes. However, the review of the LEPs quarterly

progress reports reveals, nevertheless, that a number of the LEPs have experienced attrition; consequently, not all beneficiaries might successfully complete the vocational trainings.

- **410 (out of 783 planned)** beneficiaries employed after participating in the LEPs' interventions (257 employed and 153 self-employed). The level of achievement of the target is on 52 per cent. The LEPs have experienced challenges with the employment of graduates of the vocational training programmes. There are several main reasons for that. Employers deviating from initial agreements with LEPs, or they fail to communicate essential details, such as salary and working conditions, leading to dissatisfaction and misunderstandings. After completing training programmes, some trainees prefer to seek employment abroad using the acquired certificate rather than to explore local employment opportunities.
- **104 (out of 46 planned)** enterprises actively engaged in LEPs. The target is surpassed on 126 per cent. Nonetheless not all enterprises employ the LEPs graduates.
- **577 (out of 600 planned)** unemployed persons trained to start own enterprise (Generate Your Idea- GIA and Start Your Business-SYB). The target has been achieved on 96 per cent within 20 LEPs, whereas the intended target of 600 is set for 26 LEPs. 20 LEPs surpassed the initial target on 92 per cent (i.e., 577 (actual) vs 300 (initially planned)). Since certain partnerships displayed a greater interest in supporting entrepreneurship, the ILO allowed partners to reallocate funds from other areas to provide additional training.
- **153 (out of 250 planned)** beneficiaries, trained in GIA and SYB, that registered their own enterprise. The level of achievement of the target is on 61 per cent. It is important to mention that the initial target for 20 LEPs was surpassed substantially as it was envisioned that 50 new businesses will be set up.
- **76 (out of 250 planned)** of final beneficiaries that registered own company, trained in Improve Your Business (IYB). The level of achievement of the target is on 30 per cent. A number of LEPs have still to conduct trainings on IYB.
- **91 (out of 220 planned)** representatives of the LEPs that participate in the LEPs' institutional development training workshops. The level of achievement of the target is on 41 per cent.
- **Four (out of 8 planned)** LEP network peer meetings to support knowledge and experience sharing, to strengthen the network, to ensure the development of advocacy actions that contribute to employment at the local level. The level of achievement of the target is on 50 per cent.

The evaluation results align with the partners' self-assessment of the present level of accomplishment of the immediate objectives established by LEPs. LEPs have achieved their greatest success to date, according to approximately 79 per cent of surveyed LEP partners, in expanding opportunities for self-employment and business formation, as well as in introducing certified vocational training programmes that meet the demands of the local labor market.

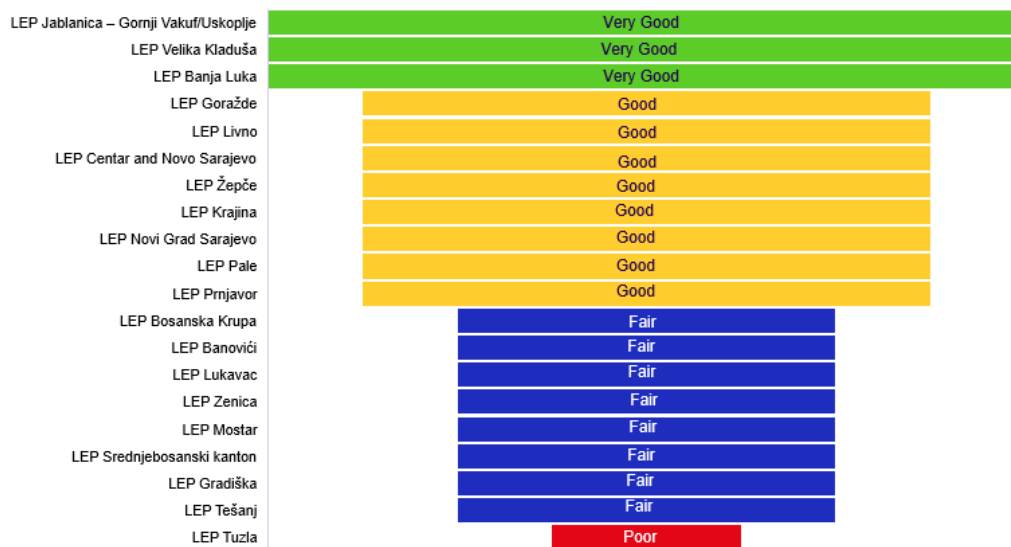
Figure 12. Assessment of the current level of achievement of the set immediate objectives by LEP partners (N=93)



Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

The level of achievements of the set targets by 20 local employment partnerships vary as evident from the document review, interviews and focus groups. **15 per cent of the LEPs** (LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, LEP Velika Kladuša, LEP Banja Luka) **are exhibiting exceptional performance, while 40 per cent** (LEP Goražde, LEP Livno, LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo, LEP Žepče, LEP Krajina, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Pale, LEP Prnjavor) **are performing satisfactorily, 40 per cent** (LEP Bosanska Krupa, LEP Banovići, LEP Lukavac, LEP Zenica, LEP Mostar, LEP Srednjobosanski kanton, LEP Gradiška, LEP Tešanj) **are performing average, and 5 per cent** (LEP Tuzla) **is performing poorly.**

Figure 13. Rating of LEPs by the level of achievement of set targets on vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes as of September 2023



Source: Prepared by Evaluator based on the LEPs proposals and quarterly reports

Main challenges

The main challenges encountered during the implementation of the LEP II project during 2021-2023 are as follows:

- The labour market faces structural obstacles, including persistent youth and long-term unemployment, as well as low levels of women and other vulnerable group participation.

These challenges are compounded by the absence of a comprehensive employment strategy that would establish a lucid framework for generating decent employment opportunities, and reducing youth and women unemployment and discouragement.

- The capacity of the public employment services to provide quality services to jobseekers has been gradually improving but remains weak. The administration of social benefits further limits the ability of PES to assist active jobseekers. In the Republika Srpska, the PES has been discharged from administrative duties related to health insurance and other social benefits for the registered unemployed. This is not yet the case in other parts of the country.
- Limited number of active job seekers, as some individuals are fictitiously unemployed, making it challenging to identify active job seekers through current unemployment registries. High number of individuals are registered as unemployed at employment services while they already have their own business or alternative employment locally or abroad. Their registration primarily serves to access social and health benefits.
- Lengthy duration of some developed and newly certified vocational training programmes (i.e., between 6 months and 12 months) which contribute to the lack of interest of unemployed to participate in the training programmes and/or high drop out rates.
- High expectations regarding salaries among individuals who have successfully completed training programmes and subsequently secured employment. Inadequate wages, unfavourable working conditions, and the prevalence of fixed-term contracts.
- Pronounced emigration trends and brain drain combined with a lack of interest among (young) unemployed people to enrol for the reskilling/upskilling trainings or for the entrepreneurship trainings. The trend of labour emigration from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the EU has been increasing for years, with the number of first residence permits in EU Member States granted to Bosnia and Herzegovina nationals rising steadily from 11,506 in 2011 to 56,363 in 2019 and decreasing to 33,147 only in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The main countries for outgoing migration are Germany, Austria, Croatia.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the economies with the highest labour tax wedges in the region (110 per cent labour tax rate in BiH). High tax wedges might be a discouraging factor for starting up a new business for the unemployed individuals.

Success factors

The main success factors during the implementation of the LEP II project which contributed to achieve the progress described in the above include:

- Continuity of support to the LEPs established under LEP I project. Provision of subsidies and additional grants for SIYB trainees (entrepreneurs) by some target municipalities.
- Hands-on experience of the project team on the topics of employment and entrepreneurship.
- The effective execution of the project was enhanced by the insights provided by the Project Steering Board and the Project Advisory Board, which were represented by ILO constituents and other relevant stakeholders.

Vocational training programmes

The project data suggest that **the vast majority of LEPs (80 per cent) either fully achieved or surpassed the target on the number of new vocational training programmes certified and only 20 per cent of LEPs are still in progress of certification of some programmes. The number of beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs is achieved either fully or on more than on 85 per cent just by 5 LEPs.** Concurrently, two LEPs commenced their vocational training programs belatedly; consequently, no beneficiaries have yet successfully completed the vocational training

programs. In contrast, **four LEPs have not yet assisted any vocational training beneficiaries in securing full-time employment, with only one LEP exceeding the target in this regard.**

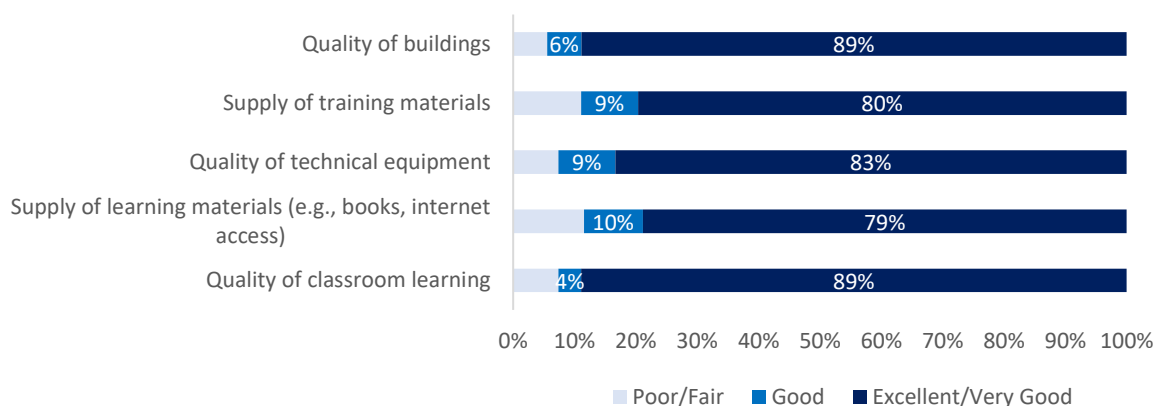
Table 3. Level of achievement of vocational training programmes targets by 20 LEPs as of September 2023

Entity	LEP Partnership	New vocational training programmes certified	Beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs and to increase competitiveness	Beneficiaries obtaining full-time employment
FBiH	LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje	150%	92%	152%
	LEP Velika Kladuša	100%	95%	86%
	LEP Goražde	100%	77%	49%
	LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo	100%	68%	17%
	LEP Bosanska Krupa	100%	40%	20%
	LEP Mostar	150%	57%	10%
	LEP Banovići	100%	22%	37%
	LEP Žepče	100%	37%	13%
	LEP Livno	150%	20%	29%
	LEP Zenica	100%	25%	5%
	LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo	25%	100%	50%
	LEP Srednjobosanski kanton	100%	57%	0%
	LEP Tešanj	100%	57%	9%
	LEP Tuzla	33%	13%	0%
	LEP Lukavac	100%	0%	0%
RS	LEP Pale	120%	90%	56%
	LEP Banja Luka	100%	76%	83%
	LEP Prnjavor	100%	87%	67%
	LEP Krajina	100%	44%	60%
	LEP Gradiška	800%	0%	0%

Source: Prepared by Evaluator based on the LEPs proposals and quarterly reports

The results of the beneficiary survey demonstrate that all vocational training graduates found the application process as either very easy or easy. About 70 per cent of surveyed graduates learned about the public call through social media and the rest through PES, LEP II project website, friends and/or municipalities. The training conditions (quality of buildings and classrooms learning) of education and training institutions were assessed by 89 per cent of survey respondents as very good.

Figure 14. Vocational training beneficiaries assessment of the training conditions and provisions at the education and training institutions (N=54)

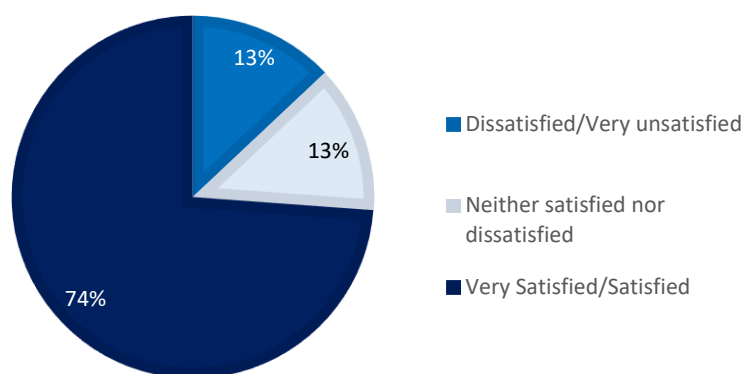


Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

The vast majority of survey respondents (76 per cent) stated that they have not received any compensation benefits from LEPs during the training (e.g., travel costs, hot meals etc.). Ninety six per cent of respondents received a certification after the completion of the vocational training.

The vocational training provided through the LEP II project is regarded as satisfactory or very satisfactory by 74 per cent of graduates surveyed. Eighty three per cent of surveyed graduates verified that they will select the same trade again for studying and 79 per cent stated that they will select the same Education and Training institution for studying.

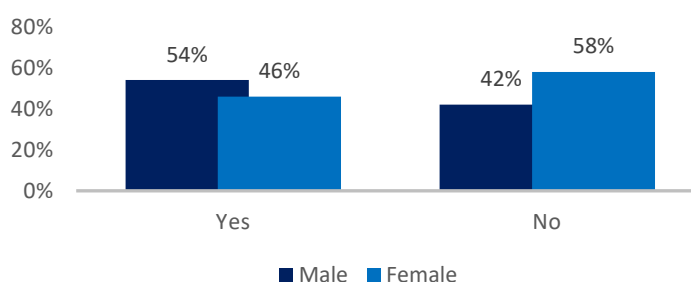
Figure 15. Level of satisfaction of graduates with vocational training under LEP II project (N=53)



Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Figure 16 shows that 73 per cent of the graduates highlighting that they did not undertake any further training (university, evening classes, short courses) after graduation. This pattern is more observed among females than males. Insufficient funds to pay for training or a lack of pertinent courses were cited as the two primary reasons.

Figure 16. Vocational training graduates by further vocational training after graduation and sex (N=49)



Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Design (web, graphic, 3D), information technology, finance, culinary, and CNC operator courses comprise the majority of the additional training attended by 27 per cent of graduates who do so after completing a vocational training program. 88 per cent of graduates, however, are interested in enrolling in additional training programs.

A significant proportion of graduates (52 per cent) propose that vocational training programmes be enhanced by incorporating courses on business startup, communication and working with other people, practical machine and equipment operation, and computer literacy.

Table 4. Employers' responses to the knowledge and skills of vocational training graduates (N=9)

	Very satisfactory/Satisfactory	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied
The technical skills and knowledge needed for the job.	67%	17%	17%
Understands and speaks the language in which business is conducted.	67%	17%	17%
The ability to communicate in speech and writing	67%	17%	17%
The ability to recognize and solve problems that arise on the job.	50%	33%	17%
Initiative needed to fully complete tasks	50%	17%	33%

Accepts other jobs other than specified on the job description	50%	33%	17%
The individual listens to understand and learn	50%	50%	0%
The ability to work well in a group to achieve a goal	50%	33%	17%
Easily adopts on the work environment	33%	67%	0%
Has the ability to handle stress and pressure on the job	33%	50%	17%
The ability to manage their time while working with little supervision	33%	50%	17%
Enthusiasm on the job	33%	33%	33%
Remain accountable for actions taken	33%	33%	33%

Source: Survey among Employers, November-December 2023

Employers surveyed unanimously stated their further intention to hire vocational training graduates of the LEP II project. Concurrently, only 50 per cent of employers surveyed believe that education and training institutions of LEP II project equip graduates with the appropriate skills, while more than one third (33 per cent) believe that they provide a sufficient supply of graduates.

Overall, 50 per cent of the employers surveyed are either satisfied or very satisfied with the work and performance of vocational training graduates at their organizations.

Entrepreneurship programme

A total of ten LEPs either met or exceeded the target for beneficiaries receiving SIYB training, while only three LEPs experienced challenges with recruitment of participants for SIYB trainings and have very low level of achievement of this target thus far. The target on the number of beneficiaries assisted with the start-your-business assistance package is on track in 17 out of 20 LEPs. Concurrently, only three LEPs have reached their target on the number of participants for the Improve Your Business (IYB) Training, while six LEPs have not yet provided it at all.

Table 5. Level of achievement of entrepreneurship programme targets by 20 LEPs as of September 2023

Entity	LEP Partnership	Beneficiaries benefiting from the SIYB training	Beneficiaries assisted with the start-your-business assistance package	Participants at Improve Your Business Training
FBiH	LEP Zenica	307%	67%	53%
	LEP Lukavac	253%	113%	0%
	LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo	144%	100%	67%
	LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje	110%	79%	100%
	LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo	102%	93%	40%
	LEP Velika Kladuša	100%	100%	100%
	LEP Žepče	95%	100%	82%
	LEP Livno	80%	160%	80%
	LEP Srednjobosanski kanton	68%	100%	0%
	LEP Goražde	60%	80%	80%
	LEP Mostar	60%	100%	0%
	LEP Tešanj	50%	71%	25%
	LEP Banovići	35%	60%	40%
	LEP Tuzla	22%	53%	0%
LEP Bosanska Krupa	10%	40%	33%	
RS	LEP Banja Luka	115%	100%	100%
	LEP Krajina	105%	80%	80%
	LEP Gradiška	78%	117%	8%
	LEP Prnjavor	170%	40%	0%
	LEP Pale	100%	13%	0%

Source: Prepared by Evaluator based on the LEPs proposals and quarterly reports

The beneficiary survey reveals that about 45 per cent of respondents learned about the Entrepreneurship training programme through a public call, 23 per cent through social media, 19 per cent through friends, 10 per cent through PES and 3 per cent through other sources (e.g., radio or TV). Overall, 49% of graduates reported that the Entrepreneurship training program significantly surpassed or surpassed their expectations, 45 per cent reported that it completely met their expectations. Only 5 per cent of the graduates expressed dissatisfaction with the Entrepreneurship training programme. In view of 54 per cent of participants, the Entrepreneurship training programme is balanced. The other 38 per cent perceived it as either easy or very easy and only 8 per cent considered it difficult.

More than 90 per cent of respondents perceive the Entrepreneurship training programme materials as easily understandable, relevant and precise. A significant proportion of participants (94 per cent) rate the SIYB trainers as either outstanding or very good.

The entrepreneurship training programme facilitated the development of five key skills among its graduates: *self-assurance in initiating and managing a business, adeptness in marketing products and identifying customer needs, capability of persuading and selling concepts and services to clients, and effective communication of business ideas.*

Table 6. Changes in skillset of entrepreneurs thanks to the Entrepreneurship training programme

	Extremely/ Fairly confident	Moderately confident	A little/Not at all confident
I am able to see myself starting and running a business (N=95)	92%	5%	3%
I understand the mindset of consumers and how to market my product/service to them (N=93)	91%	6%	2%
I know how to pitch and sell ideas and products/ services to people (N=93)	90%	9%	1%
I am able to communicate my business ideas to other people such as potential customers and potential business partners (N=93)	89%	9%	2%
I am confident of developing a product using needs identification techniques (N=91)	88%	10%	2%
I am able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of my business idea in comparison to existing products/ services in the market (N=92)	85%	13%	2%
I am confident of doing up a budget for my business (N=93)	84%	15%	1%
I understand the financial requirements and considerations to start and run a business (N=94)	82%	13%	5%
I am capable of conducting market research by myself (N=94)	81%	15%	4%
I am able now to write good business plans (N=93)	78%	20%	1%
I am able to determine appropriate pricing strategies and channels for marketing (N=94)	74%	21%	4%
I understand how to develop and analyse income statements (N=92)	63%	30%	7%

Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

"I started to better understand the business and what steps should be taken when starting a company".

"A more comprehensive understanding of potential business prospects has been generated for me via SIYB training".

"I became more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of my business idea, and also learned how to solve problems when they arise. I became stronger and more inspired to eventually start and register my own business".

"I gained strengths and hope that I could succeed in business and achieve my goal of opening a business".

"SIYB training was extremely useful as I learned business plan writing, financial planning and pricing skills".

"The presentations imparted knowledge and provided crucial recommendations that facilitated the development of a business plan. In addition, thanks to the grant, I was able to acquire equipment and furnish premises that I had initially been not ready to finance with my own funds".

"Only upon beginning the SIYB training will you realize how ignorant you were of the numerous steps involved in establishing your own business. As such, the SIYB training played a crucial role".

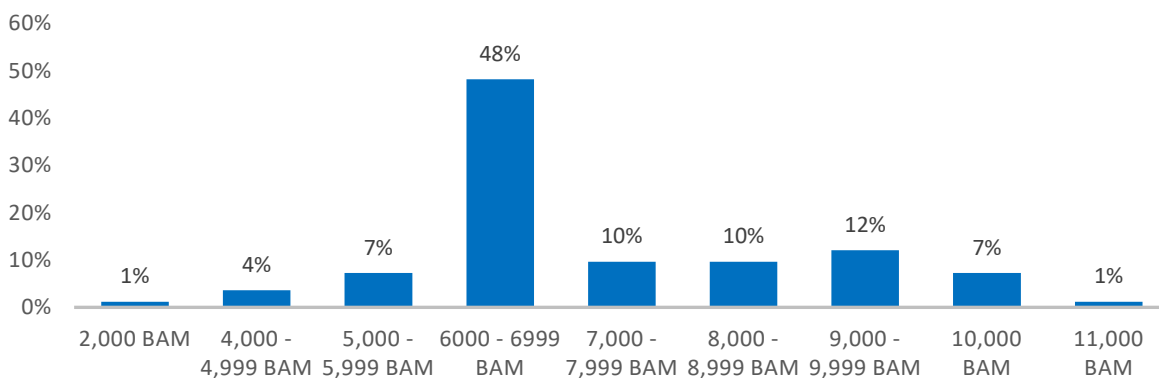
"The training changed the way of my thinking... Before I just thought about the risks associated with starting of the business. Now I am thinking about that in positive manner and look on both benefits and risks".

"It was really helpful to have all forms for business plan preparation in Excel with connected formulas. It allows to calculate the profitability of your business idea".

-Voices of surveyed SIYB participants-

A total of 77 per cent of surveyed graduates received a grant from the LEPs for starting the business. The majority of the grant amounts to between BAM 6,000 and 7,000.

Figure 17. Grant amounts received from Entrepreneurship Program (N=83)



Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Eighty six per cent of self-employed graduates used the grant for purchase of equipment and another 13 per cent for procurement of raw materials. Each entrepreneur who initiated their own enterprise provided their own co-financing, which accounted for an average of 44 per cent of the LEP grant. One third of graduates also received additional grants mainly from municipalities, city councils, Federal Employment Agency or Youth Bank. The amount of additional grants varied on average from BAM 2,000 to 5,000. There were also additional grants which constituted up to BAM 30,000. In overall, approximately 50 per cent of graduates indicated that they would have initiated the same business even in the absence of the LEPs grant. At the same time, most of graduates underlined the important support received from LEPs in terms of their business set up.

“They [LEP] play a very big role, financially, and a really important role in the development of a person as a future entrepreneur”.

“Knowledge acquisition regarding business and government and client relations is the LEP’s primary role”.

“LEP has become a key factor in the correct and rational launch of my business”.

“Without participation in LEP, I would not be where I am now”.

-Voices of SIYB participants participated in FGDs-

FGDs with SIYB trainees showed that the LEP projects support allowed a number of beneficiaries to launch their businesses. The recommendations provided during SIYB trainings and mentorship support allowed to understand the steps on how to include all costs in the price of each product, how to keep business moving in a positive direction. This helped them to gain self-confidence and made it easier to acquire the necessary equipment for work, and contributed to an increase in the number of clients. One of the FGD participant put it as: “The beginning is difficult, but when you have the support from LEP, and of course positive feedback from clients, you also have a reason to fight for your dream”.

3.3.2. Incorporation of cross-cutting themes

The LEP II project’s approach to gender mainstreaming is in line with the ILO Action Plans for Gender Equality 2018-2021²⁹ and 2022-2025³⁰ which aim to support effective and inclusive gender-responsive delivery of the Decent Work Agenda by operationalizing the ILO Policy on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming. As mandated by the policy, the action plans seek to help achieve, through a mainstreaming strategy, women’s equality and empowerment in the world of work. According to the ILO’s Guidance Note 3.1 on Integration of Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation indicators relating to the ratio of female-to-male participation or representation are supporting factors for achieving gender equality but alone are insufficient. Gender equality is more qualitative in nature and more oriented at outcomes of policies, processes and interventions and adequate indicators for gender equality focus on the substance and the quality of outcomes. The LEP II project has been consistent with these policy objectives by including a ratio of at least 40 per cent to 50 per cent of women in all activities and trainings supported by the project and producing a Guidelines for the Development of Gender Sensitive Local Employment Action Plans to ensure the inclusion of components of gender equality in the labour market in action plans in order to eliminate the disadvantages that women still face at the labour market in BiH. At the same time, no specific targets regarding youth and long-term unemployed have been established by the project.

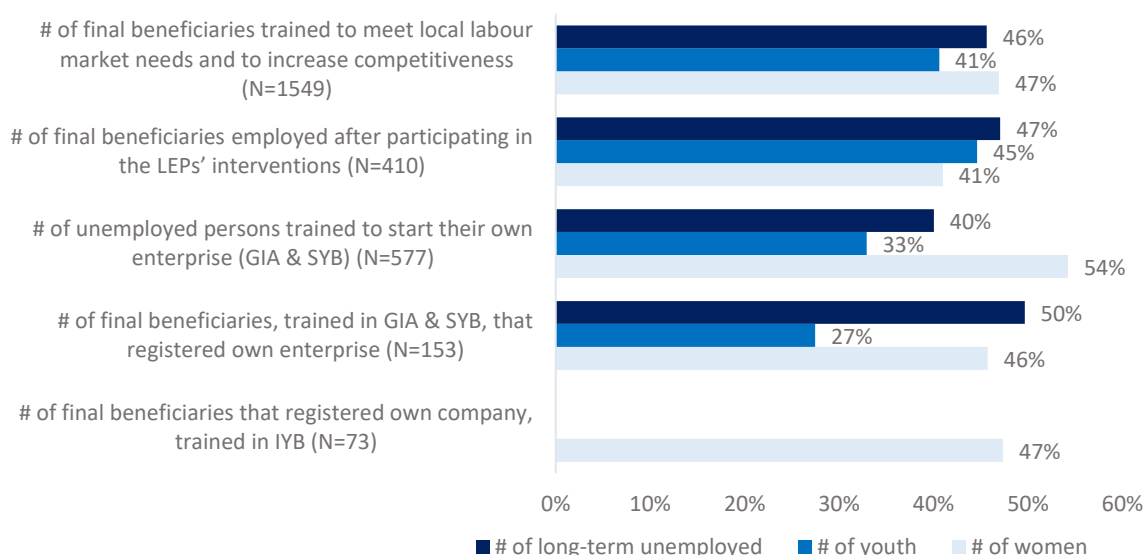
²⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_645402.pdf

³⁰ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_856240.pdf

In addition, all LEPs projects are obligated by the ILO to gather data on beneficiaries who are the focus of vocational training or entrepreneurship initiatives. This includes demographic information such as gender as well as hard-to-employ categories (youth aged 15-29, long-term unemployed, persons with disabilities, minorities, and returnees). ILO did not, however, mandate that the LEP partners disaggregate beneficiary data pertaining to individuals with low levels of education and senior workers.

The document review reveals that as of September 2023, **women represent 49 per cent of the total number of participants in the training programmes (vocational and entrepreneurship programme) and 44 per cent of employed and self-employed** under the LEP II project. Long-term unemployed constitute 45 per cent of the total number of participants in the training programmes (vocational and entrepreneurship) and 47 per cent of employed and self-employed under the LEP II project. Thirty four per cent of youth took part in the training programmes and 45 per cent were employed and self-employed.

Figure 18. Share of women, youth, and long-term unemployed reached by 20 LEPs as of September 2023



Source: The LEP II Project Logframe as of September 2023

Moreover, **15 per cent of LEPs (3 out of 20) have partners which work specifically with disability and social inclusion issues**, i.e., LEP Livno (PUŽ Association, association of persons with disabilities), LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo (TMP company for employment of blind and partially sighted persons) and LEP Pale (Association for support to special needs of children and youth “Sunce” Pale, Nursing home “Natura” Pale). Despite this, as of September 2023, **only seven PwDs participated in the LEPs vocational and entrepreneurship training programmes**. Main challenge with attracting of more disabled people is the legal barrier to employment of PwDs, since if they participate in a programme and receive remuneration, they may lose disability benefits.

Seventy four per cent of surveyed LEP partners believe that gender, disability, and social inclusion were very well incorporated into the formulation and implementation of LEP initiatives.

3.3.3. *Level of integration of ILS, social tripartism and fair transition on the environment in the project implementation and outcomes*

The LEP II project contributes to the implementation of international labour standards (ILS) and principles relating to employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular the *ILO Employment Policy Convention (No. 122), 1964*, requiring governments of ratifying countries, in close collaboration with the social partners, to formulate and implement an active policy promoting full, productive and freely chosen employment. The project also supports the implementation of the *ILO Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142)* and *Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)* which (i) alludes to the responsibility of governments regarding training and especially enhancement of the employability of the population “to secure decent work, in the private and public sectors, through such measures as incentives and assistance” (art. 10, a) and (ii) sustains the need to “promote access to education, training and lifelong learning for people with nationally identified special needs (e.g., youth, low-skilled people, people with disabilities, older workers)” (art. 5, h). Moreover, the LEP II project facilitates also the implementation of the *ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation (No. 111), 1958*, which outlaws “any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation”. In addition, the LEP II project supports the implementation of the standards on employment and labour market policy that are defined by the *European Social Charter* and the core elements of the *Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe (2004)*. The latter states that access to employment for all and the promotion of decent employment are key elements of social cohesion and that “investment in human resources is one of the most crucial areas of investment for future economic growth”.

Regarding social tripartism, the EU has prioritized social dialogue as a means of maintaining employment rights and conditions. In this context, the EC and ILO are strategic partners in the field. An EC–ILO Joint Management Agreement was signed in November 2013 as part of a pre-established strategic partnership between the two institutions. Its main aim was to promote cooperation in social dialogue and industrial relations among both the EU Member States in EU candidate countries against the backdrop of the financial and economic crisis. **Although the LEP II project focuses on contribution to better better employability³¹ in local communities indeed present social dialogue as a component, by involving social partners in consultative processes and creating forums for tripartite constituents to intervene in the design and implementation of LEPs projects through the participation in the project’s governance structures** (Project Advisory Board or Project Steering Board).

When it comes to a fair transition to environmental issues, **the project promotes green entrepreneurship and innovative employment creations in line with the EU’s long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy**. One of the networking meetings with LEPs partners discussed BiH’s fair transition and decarbonization, focusing on its impact on local communities, particularly through mine restructuring, which traditionally employs a large population. As part of the country’s decarbonization strategic priorities, the project team intends to assist LEPs operating directly in mine-dependent zones³² in their pursuit of donor funding to support their economic transformation. **In addition**, training for innovative green entrepreneurship and targeted support

³¹ Background information: The term “employability” relates to portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual’s capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs, and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions.

³² Background information: 5 out of 20 LEPs operate directly in zones that are significantly dependent on mines: LEP Tuzla (Kreka and Marble Mine), LEP Zenica (Black Coal Mine Zenica), LEP Srednja Bosna (Adem Lolic Nova Bila mine), LEP Banovići (Banovići Mine), LEP Livno (Tušnica Mine, currently inactive) and LEP Lukavac (Šikulje mine).

services for entrepreneurs has been also encouraged. Nevertheless, during the midterm evaluation, no particular instances of green entrepreneurship among LEPs were detected.

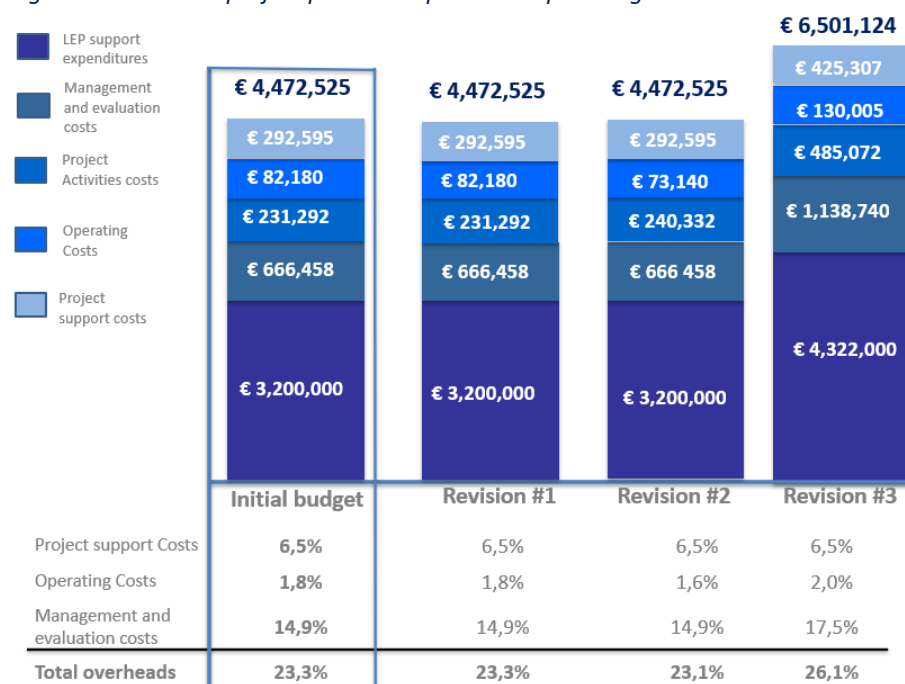
3.4. Efficiency

3.4.1. Efficiency of Resources Use

The LEP II initial project budget amounted to a total of EUR 4,472,525 for 36 months from January 2021 to December 2023. The project received a cost-extension from the donor in September 2023 due to unused funds under IPA II. The project's duration was extended by an additional thirty months, or until June 2026; the budget was increased by 45 per cent to EUR 6,501,124 (EU contribution constitutes EUR 6 mln) to ensure the sustainability of initiatives of local partnerships for employment and further monitoring of employment.

There was a sound relationship between budget allocated and results achieved. Figure 20 shows the budget allocation according to five main categories: LEP support expenditures, project expenditures per activities, management and evaluation costs, operating costs and project support costs.

Figure 19. The LEP II project planned expenditures per budget line



The actual expenditure rate as of September 30, 2023 constituted 59 per cent (or EUR 3,844,667), inclusive of legal commitments, while 55 per cent of the project's time elapsed, evidencing spending in line with the revised budget and timeline.

Table 7. The LEP II project financial performance

Budget category	Allocated (in EUR)	Actual Costs (Expense + Legal Commitment) as of September 2023 (in EUR)
LEP support costs	4,322,000	3,026,367
Project activities costs	516,072	151,731
Operating costs	149,205	43,056
Management and evaluation costs	1,088,540	522,008
Total direct costs	6,075,817	3,743,162
Project support costs	425,307	101,505
Total costs	6,501,124	3,844,667

In total, EUR 4.3 million, or 66 per cent of the budget, is designated for grants to LEPs projects; the remainder is allocated to capacity development and grants administration. Seventy per cent of the project's grant budget for LEPs initiatives had been utilized as of September 2023.

The maximum budget per LEP initiative under the 1st Call for Proposals (May 2021) was EUR 160,000 and it was increased to USD 180,000 under 2nd Call for Proposals (October 2023). At least 10 per cent of the total grant value should be contributed by LEPs as co-financing. As evidenced by the revision of LEP proposals, **the ILO Contributions to LEP initiatives under the 1st Call for Proposals (CfP) comprised 79 per cent of the total budget on average.** Three LEPs (LEP Bosanska Krupa, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, and LEP Srednjobosanski kanton) accounted for the largest proportion of LEP contributions (35%-43%), whereas nine LEPs (LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo, LEP Livno, LEP Zenica, LEP Lukavac, LEP Mostar, LEP Gradiška, LEP Pale, LEP Tešanj, LEP Tuzla) surpassed the minimum eligibility threshold by contributing between 21per cent and 26 per cent.

The document review shows that **the selection procedures under two CfPs varied.** While **the first CfP included two stages—the Concept Note and the Full Project Proposal—the second CfP**, which was time-sensitive, reduced the number of stages to one—**just the Full Project Proposal.** In addition, **the eligibility criteria and objectives for each LEP initiative were revised.** The second CfP is encouraging local communities not covered by the LEP interventions in LEP I and LEP II phases to apply for funding, i.e., Eastern part of BiH and Western part of Herzegovina and Brčko District. The targets for LEP projects were increased due the availability of bigger budget as well as high interest in Entrepreneurship programme. Therefore, the following targets for additional LEPs were revised: (i) number of unemployed persons trained to start their own enterprise (GIA and SYB) (increase from 20 to 40 unemployed individuals) and (ii) number of final beneficiaries, trained in GIA and SYB, that registered own enterprise and trained in IYB (increase from 5 to 10 unemployed persons).

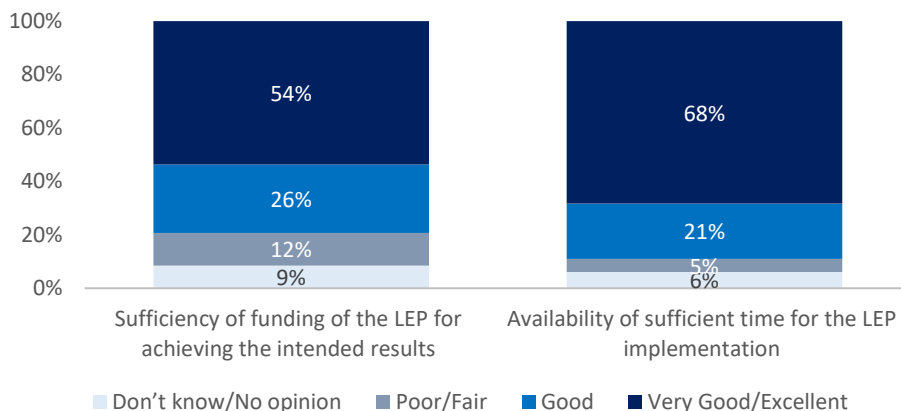
On the whole, **the selection procedure of grantees under the 1st CfP could be perceived as effective and transparent.** The selection of applicants were done by the Evaluation Committee composed of ILO technical experts and panel observers representing the EUD BiH and the Project's Steering Board.

The anticipated duration of each LEP project is supposed to be between 18 and 21 months under both calls. Based on the analysis of the documents, it can be concluded that the initial projected timeframes for 85 per cent of the LEP initiatives were between 20 and 21 months. However, the majority of LEP projects (19 of 20) commenced in March or April 2022 as opposed to December 2021 as originally scheduled. Contracts signing were delayed as a result of budget clearance and corrections from grant beneficiaries and translation of project applications. Consequently, **half of LEPs participating in the 1st CfP requested a no-cost extension (NCE) for being able to finish all**

planned activities and reach the indicators. By December 2023, five LEPs completed the project implementation and other 15 requested no-cost extension in 2024.

The time available for LEP implementation under the 1st CfP on the whole is perceived as sufficient by 68 per cent of the LEP partners surveyed. Concurrently, a mere **54 per cent of the LEP partners who were surveyed held the belief that the LEP projects were adequately funded to accomplish the desired outcomes.**

Figure 20. LEPs partners perception on the sufficiency of funding and time for LEPs implementation under 1st call of proposals (N=82)

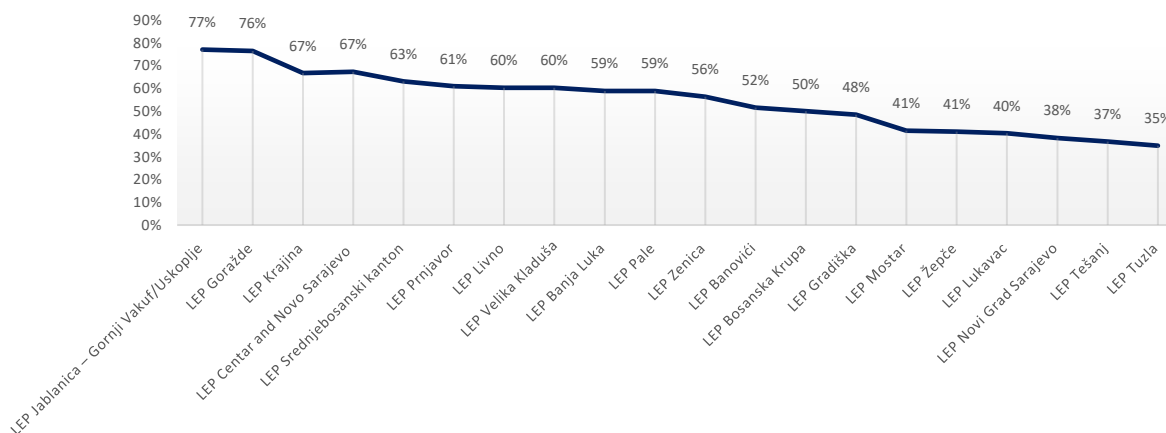


Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

The document review and interviews indicated that in the first year of LEP projects implementation **the LEP partners experienced some challenges caused by the fluctuations in exchange rates of the USD** which impacted LEPs budgets in local currency³³. As a result, as of September 2023, **30 per cent LEPs (6 out of 20) had to revise their performance indicators** related to the number of vocational training beneficiaries (LEP Banja Luka, LEP Žepče), the number of jobs created (LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, LEP Pale, LEP Zenica) and the number of self-employed/registered businesses (LEP Žepče, LEP Mostar, LEP Pale).

At the same time, **as of August 2023, the implementation rate of funds expended by 35 per cent of LEPs (7 out of 20) is below 50 per cent**, which is low considering implementation commenced 16–17 months ago. This relates to the following LEPs: LEP Gradiška, LEP Mostar, LEP Žepče, LEP Lukavac, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Tešanj and LEP Tuzla.

Figure 21. Budget utilization rate by LEPs projects as of August 2023 (N=20)



³³ Exchange rate decreased from 1.84 BAM per 1 USD to 1.82 BAM in 2022

3.4.2. Effectiveness of management arrangements

Project Management

The LEP II project is working under the supervision and with the technical support of the ILO -Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe in Hungary (ILO DWT/CO-Budapest). Originally, the project had four full-time persons charged to the budget in the ILO office in Sarajevo. These include the national Project Coordinator, national Project M&E Officer, national project Communication Officer, national Administrative and Finance Assistant. The project Communication Officer is cost-shared with other EU-funded projects implemented by ILO in BiH. Since January 2024, the Project M&E Officer position was eliminated due to the reduced number of LEPs (six LEPs) to be supported in the period 2024-2026. In 2024, the position of national Finance Officer is introduced in order to provide support to LEPs in their finance management and ensure full compliance with the ILO rules and procedures. The team is supported by the technical staff (Senior Employment Specialist and Youth Enterprise Specialist) and Project Assistant from the ILO Budapest Office. In order to enhance the capabilities of the LEPs for effective and efficient operation, the ILO deploys experts (national and international) to provide technical assistance and support for the particular assignments.

Overall, **the project's management structure is adequate and allows reaching meaningful results.** The roles and responsibilities within staff members are clearly defined. Principally, the LEP II project management team is perceived as knowledgeable and experienced with dedicated staff members. The Project Coordinator's lengthy tenure with the ILO, commencing as a trainer and advancing to the position of project manager for the LEP I project since 2018 (and continuing in this capacity for phase 2 of the LEP project), was highlighted as a noteworthy positive aspect during the interviews. The Budapest-based technical experts are also very supportive and provide all necessary assistance to the project on a short notice.

The LEP II project ensures a sensible and appropriate implementation process which responded very well to the political and socio-cultural context in which the project had to operate. The LEP II project ensures the active involvement of partners, thus contributing to more active participation of stakeholders in decision-making at the municipal level, as well as addressing the problems which are of acute importance for unemployed and inactive young women and men in local communities.

Project Governance

The LEP II project governance structure is represented by two coordination bodies: The Project Steering Board (PSB) and The Project Advisory Board (PAB). The Steering Board involves labour market ministries, entity employment institutes and BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs, EUD and ILO Team. The Advisory Board includes broader set of institutions from area of economic and labour market development. The Advisory Board is involved to keep relevant institutions informed about the project, and to initiate policy changes coming from the lower level of governments and stakeholders.

The PSB and PAB, as the project's main coordination platforms, act in a stable manner and closely guides the implementation process. PAB convenes on an annual basis, whereas the PSB meets biannually. There had been a total of six PSB meetings and three PABs meetings conducted by the conclusion of 2023. The interviews with stakeholders confirmed that all the minutes of the meetings were prepared timely and shared by ILO among PSB and PAB members. As for the higher level of governments involved in PSB and PAB, the participation to date demonstrates solid ownership among all institutional stakeholders, and keeping in mind some, but overall low change in their members' composition. Furthermore, the project facilitates the field visits of the Steering and Advisory Board members to the LEPs. In addition to interacting with the beneficiaries, the

interviewed members of the Steering and Advisory Boards were able to observe the LEPs in action, which increased their satisfaction with these missions and fostered deeper understanding of the project's impact. In the course of 2023, four field visits were arranged by the ILO. One potential aspect for enhancement, as recommended by a few interviewees, is to contemplate providing reimbursement for field visits to nearby locations for Steering and Advisory Board members.

3.4.3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Communication

M&E and Communication at project level

The LEP II project M&E system is robust as based on the project's Logframe and allows collection of relevant information from supported LEPs. The NPC created interim and final report templates, including checklists, and obtained approval from the relevant ILO departments. The project's M&E Officer, under the guidelines of PC, created templates for quarterly reports and risk assessment tools for capturing LEP's key performance data including on number of LEPs coordination meetings, certified vocational training programmes, vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes beneficiaries, information on employed and self-employed beneficiaries, data on private sector who employed participants as a result of LEP, LEAP drafted and approved, equipment procured for LEPs or education and training institutions and rehabilitation works conducted. The field monitoring visits of the project M&E Officer were carried out to all 20 LEPs between October 2022 and June 2023. Additionally, the risk assessments for each LEP were prepared between August and September 2023. This in turn allowed to make internal assessment of LEPs progress and suggest corrective measures to partners when needed.

In overall, **the project's M&E system encountered three difficulties.** The initial concern pertains to the M&E Officer's late entry into the project, commencing in the second year of project implementation, subsequent to the selection of all LEPs under 1st CfP and approval of their proposals, which included the Logframes. The second is the lack of monitoring software that would help to track overall progress and results of big number of LEPs supported. Thirdly, there is an absence of M&E budget allocation at the level of LEPs to assess the quality of certified vocational training programmes as perceived by employers and graduates, and the results of business start-ups.

A positive aspect, however, is that the LEP II project allocated resources for evaluations, such as performance evaluations of the LEPs interventions associated with the PES active labor market measures, in addition to the midterm and final project's evaluations.

Moreover, the EUD conducted the ROM in the second year of the LEP II implementation. **The ROM provided external views on LEP II project implementation.** The ROM was particularly helpful for decision-making in respect of supporting the need for extending the project. Moreover, the ROM put much emphasis on enhancing LEPs projects sustainability.

In terms of communication, the LEP II project uses various media and social and traditional media to announce the CfPs and showcase results. This include project's website³⁴, Facebook page³⁵ and Instagram³⁶. Despite a solid online outreach campaign (due to COVID-19 restrictions) the number of applications received under 1st CfP was fewer than expected (38 vs 80) because of the pre-defined results in the CfP were quite high in view of partnerships which have not established cooperation with local employers.

³⁴ <https://partnerstvo.ba/>

³⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/LEPSupport>

³⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/lepsupport/>

In general, the LEP II project visibility and communication are effectively enhancing the EU's reputation within the BiH. During interviews and focus groups with LEPs partners and direct beneficiaries, the EU was unequivocally identified as the LEP II project's donor.

M&E and Communication at LEPs level

The document review and evaluation interviews show that **only 11 out of 20 LEPs** (73 per cent from FiBH/27 per cent from RS)³⁷ **have an assigned M&E Focal Point within their LEPs projects**. For that reason, the project's M&E Officer had to provide a lot of capacity building support on M&E for the LEPs. As a result, the **vast majority of LEPs have effective M&E system in place**, do regular monitoring and comprehensive reporting. However, **20 per cent of LEPs** (LEP Velika Kladuša, LEP Gradiška, LEP Lukavac, LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo) **experience issues with the quality of reporting**. Reports are occasionally returned by ILO to the LEPs for improvement due to inconsistencies between the narrative and the M&E component. Moreover, a number of LEPs also experience challenges with provision of evidence documentation to the ILO (e.g., grant expenditure documentation for self-employed and/or documentation which proves the employment status of vocational training beneficiaries). In addition, the mid-term evaluation revealed that the supported LEPs capture the information on the new certified vocational training programmes in different ways. The variability in the reporting of vocational training programme durations among LEPs (hours, days, months) introduces a complexity to cross-LEP comparability.

The project data further suggests that **an overwhelming majority of LEPs have effective grievance mechanism in place**. Simultaneously, **15 per cent of LEPs** (LEP Banja Luka, LEP Gradiska, and LEP Pale) **lodged complaints concerning the SIYB selection procedure**. At the time of MTE, 2 out of 3 compliants were resolved, while one complaint is still undergoing resolution.

Most of target LEPs have scope for development in their execution of the communication and visibility strategy. In overall, 9 LEPs either delayed implementation of communication activities (LEP Gradiška), or have low profile of public online communication (LEP Bosanska Krupa, LEP Banovići, LEP Zenica, LEP Žepče, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Mostar, LEP Pale) or there is a lack of reporting on certain communication subcontracted activities (LEP Tešanj). **Only 9 out of 20 LEPs** (67 per cent from FiBH/33 per cent from RS) **have an assigned Communication Focal Point**³⁸. A number of LEPs (13 out of 20) experience issues with the recruitment of participants for vocational training programmes and more efforts could be invested to assist LEPs disseminate their Calls for Proposals across the board.

3.5. Impact

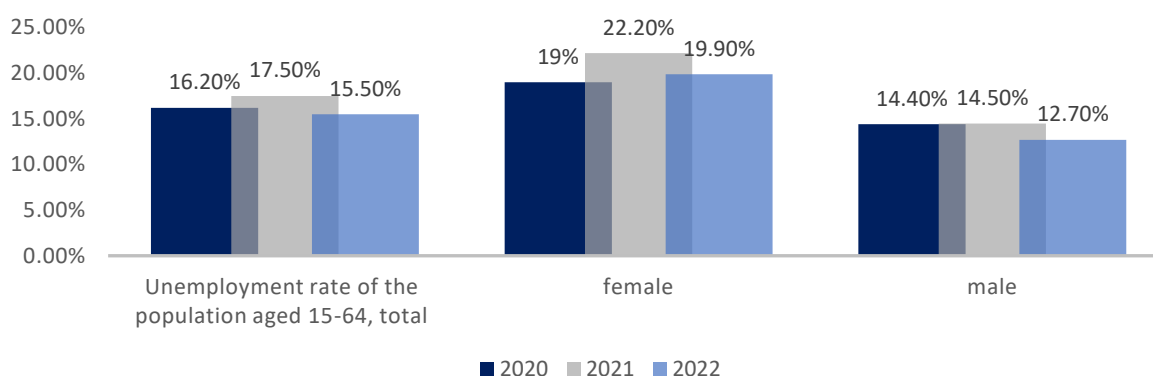
3.5.1. Overall impact

The vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes implemented as part of the LEP II project contribute positively to the enhancement of employability in local communities. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) registered a decline in the LFS unemployment rate in BiH from 17.5 per cent in 2021 to 15.5 per cent in 2022. In the first half of 2023, the average LFS unemployment rate continued to decline to 13.4 per cent. The registered labour force continued to decline, by 1.3 per cent in the second half of 2022 and 1.1 per cent in the first half of 2023.

³⁷ LEPs with assigned M&E Focal Point: LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo, LEP Bosanska Krupa, LEP Banja Luka, LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, LEP Velika Kladuša, LEP Tešanj, LEP Prnjavor, LEP Gradiška, LEP Mostar, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Zenica

³⁸ LEPs with assigned Communication Focal Point: LEP Banja Luka, LEP Goražde, LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, LEP Zenica, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Mostar, LEP Gradiška, LEP Prnjavor, LEP Velika Kladuša

Figure 22. Unemployment rate in BiH (2020-2022)



Source: Labour Force Survey

A comparable pattern can be discerned in the municipalities that receive support from LEP initiatives, as evidenced by the comparison of unemployment data from 2021 to 2023. The unemployment rate decreased in all LEPs apart from LEP Zenica. The average reduction in the unemployment rate in local communities is 23 per cent in RS as opposed to 11 per cent in FBiH.

Table 8. Unemployment rate in target LEPs

Entity	LEP	# of unemployed persons		Trend
		2021	2023	
FBiH	LEP Mostar	29,811	25,369	↓ 15%
	LEP Bosanska Krupa	10,852	9,176	↓ 15%
	LEP Goražde	3,297	2,791	↓ 15%
	LEP Velika Kladuša	32,716	28,019	↓ 14%
	LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo	16,026	13,948	↓ 13%
	LEP Centar and Novo Sarajevo	14,002	12,230	↓ 13%
	LEP Banovići	4,183	3,654	↓ 13%
	LEP Srednjobosanski kanton	17,562	15,695	↓ 11%
	LEP Tuzla	15,912	14,514	↓ 8%
	LEP Lukavac	7,534	6,958	↓ 8%
	LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje	4,377	4,013	↓ 8%
	LEP Tešanj	5,627	5,187	↓ 7%
	LEP Žepče	10,136	9,721	↓ 4%
	LEP Livno	8,590	8,308	↓ 3%
LEP Zenica	17,360	18,033	↑ 4%	
RS	LEP Banja Luka	6,877	4,935	↓ 28%
	LEP Krajina	12,033	8,627	↓ 28%
	LEP Pale	2,304	1,727	↓ 25%
	LEP Prnjavor	818	684	↓ 16%
	LEP Gradiška	1,977	1,674	↓ 15%

Source: LEPs, December 2023

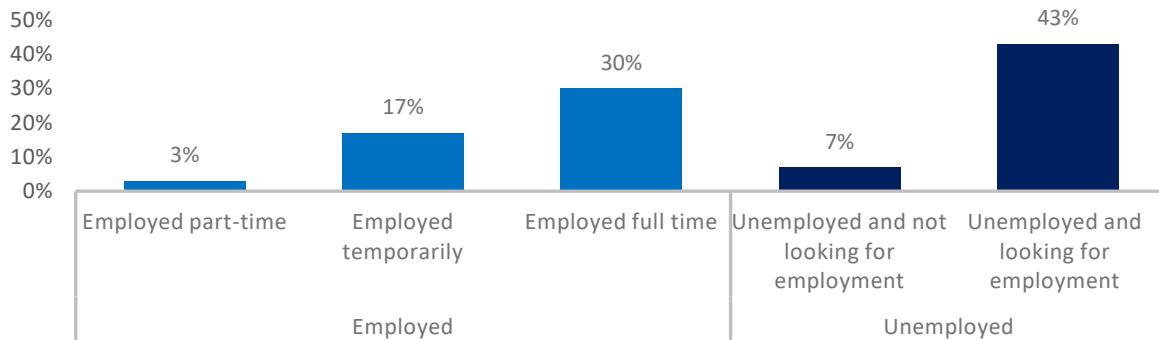
3.5.2. Vocational training programmes

A total of 65 per cent of surveyed vocational training graduates indicated that they were unemployed prior to completing the vocational training programme. Approximately 50 per cent of the respondents possessed work experience ranging from one to five years, 31 per cent had between seven and twelve years, 10 per cent had more than twelve years, and 12 per cent had no prior experience.

The employment rate among respondents is 50 per cent. The majority of these graduates are employed fulltime and the rest are employed on a temporary basis or part-time. The vast majority of the employed vocational training graduates are working in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a few in Croatia. Unemployment is more prevalent among females aged 45-60 years old, while employment is higher among males aged 30-44 years old. The manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, education and ICT trades recorded the highest proportion of those in employment.

Of the currently employed graduates, 61 per cent work 7.5 to 8.5 hours per day, which matches for the most time the regular, 8-hour working day stipulated by national legislation. On the other hand, 13 per cent work longer hours, between 9 and 13 hours per day. The rest (26 per cent) are working between 4 to 7 hours per day.

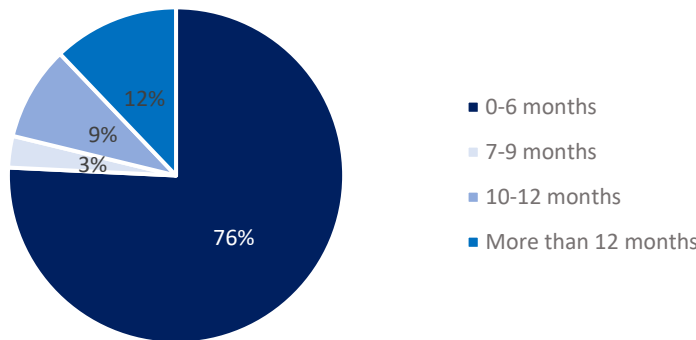
Figure 23. Current employment status of vocational training beneficiaries (N=54)



Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Seventy six per cent of the employed vocational training beneficiaries managed to secure their employment within six months after the graduation. About 12 per cent of the graduates took more than one year to secure a job, while the rest 12 per cent between seven to twelve months.

Figure 24. Time to secure the job after vocational training (N=27)



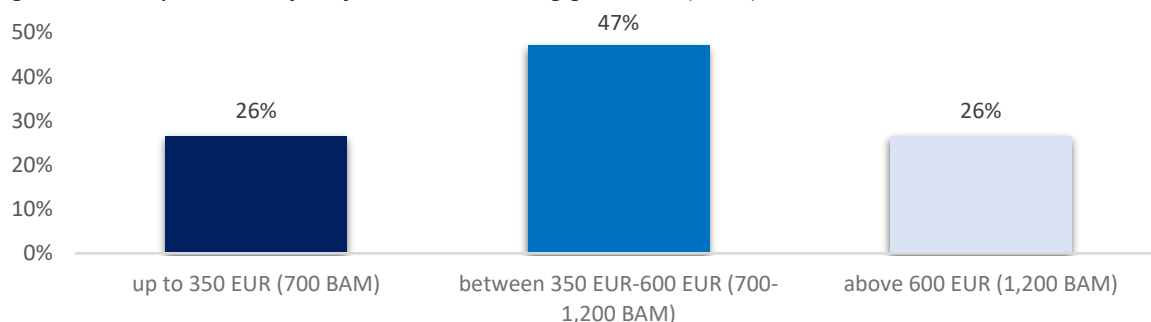
Source: Survey among Vocational Training Program Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Lack of work experience, restricted employment opportunities in the regions where they reside, and protracted job search times are the three primary factors contributing to the employment challenges encountered by graduates of vocational training programmes.

The surveyed employers stated that up to 25 per cent of the positions in their companies require a post-secondary degree, diploma or programme certificate. 9 of the employers surveyed hired 41 vocational training graduates of the LEP II project within the last two years, with 63 per cent being male and 37 per cent being female. 29 out of 41 graduates are still employed by the surveyed employers.

As **Figure 25** shows, most employed vocational training graduates (47 per cent) stated that they received a monthly salary of between BAM 700 and 1,200 (approximately EUR 350 to 600). Another 26 per cent of graduates reported that they earned above BAM 1,200 (above EUR 600). The other 26 per cent stated that they earn less than BAM 700 (up to EUR 350), which is very low, and just a bit more than the statutory minimum wage of BAM 596 in 2023 in net terms.

Figure 25. Salary at current job of vocational training graduates (N=27)



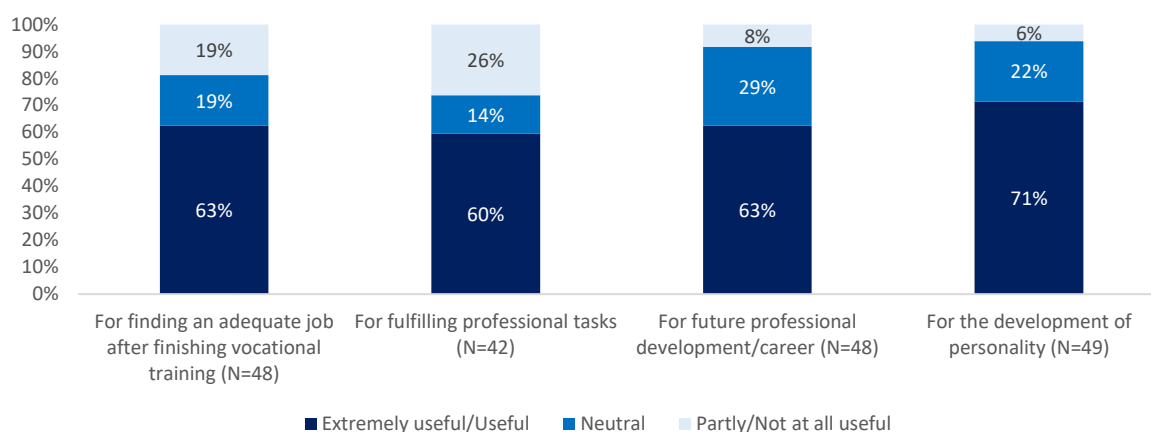
Source: Survey among Vocational Training Program Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

As far as remuneration fringe benefits are concerned, about 18 per cent of the employed graduates reported that they receive transportation allowances and food, while 10 per cent covered by pension insurance, 8 per cent indicated that they received in-kind benefits for education and training and 5 per cent mentioned that they receive housing allowances.

When asked about salary increases, 63 per cent of vocational training graduates stated that their salary had increased compared to their previous salary as a result of the vocational training. 41 per cent of individuals obtained their present employment through job advertisements or announcements, 29 per cent via alternative channels (such as direct contact from employers, private employment agencies, or independent contact with employers), 19 per cent via personal connections (family, friends), 8 per cent via job attachments following vocational training programme graduation, and a mere 3 per cent via the Public Employment Service. 50 per cent of employed graduates have been with their current employer for less than six months, 15 per cent for six to twelve months, and 35 per cent for more than twelve months.

Figure 26 shows the perceptions of employed vocational training graduates regarding the usefulness of their studies as assessed by several criteria. More than three-quarters (71 per cent) of respondents believe that the vocational training programme were useful or very useful for the development of their personality. A large percentage (60 per cent and more) found the vocational training useful or very useful in finding a suitable job, professional/career development or fulfilling their professional tasks.

Figure 26. Perception of graduates on the level of usefulness of vocational training programme under LEP II project



Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Vocational training facilitated employment for 51 per cent of the respondents, whereas a mere 27 per cent regarded the certificate or diploma as crucial or extremely crucial in the job search. In overall, 74 per cent of graduates believe that the skills they obtained through vocational training programme were either highly applicable or sufficient for the execution of their professional duties.

Almost half of the employed vocational training graduates are very satisfied or satisfied with their current job situation (e.g., possibility of using acquired knowledge and skills, working setting, job security, tasks), 44 per cent are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, whereas 9 per cent are dissatisfied.

Table 9 summarizes the graduates’ responses of what they identify to be the most important aspects that influence job satisfaction. When vocational training graduates were asked about the most important aspects that determine job satisfaction for them, income was by far the most important (80 per cent) followed by possibility of acquiring new skills and knowledge (52 per cent) and work settings (50 per cent). The career prospects from the job (48 per cent) and working hours (36 per cent) were identified as the fourth and fifth most important, while the least important aspects were type of tasks they are required to perform (8 per cent) and work from home (4 per cent).

Table 9. Key aspects of job satisfaction for vocational training graduates

Aspects for job satisfaction for vocational training graduates	% of responses for top three aspects
Income	80%
Possibility of using acquired knowledge and skills	52%
Social climate/work setting	50%
Career prospect	48%
Working hours	36%
Management	16%
Type of tasks	8%
Other (work from home)	4%

Source: Survey among Vocational Training Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

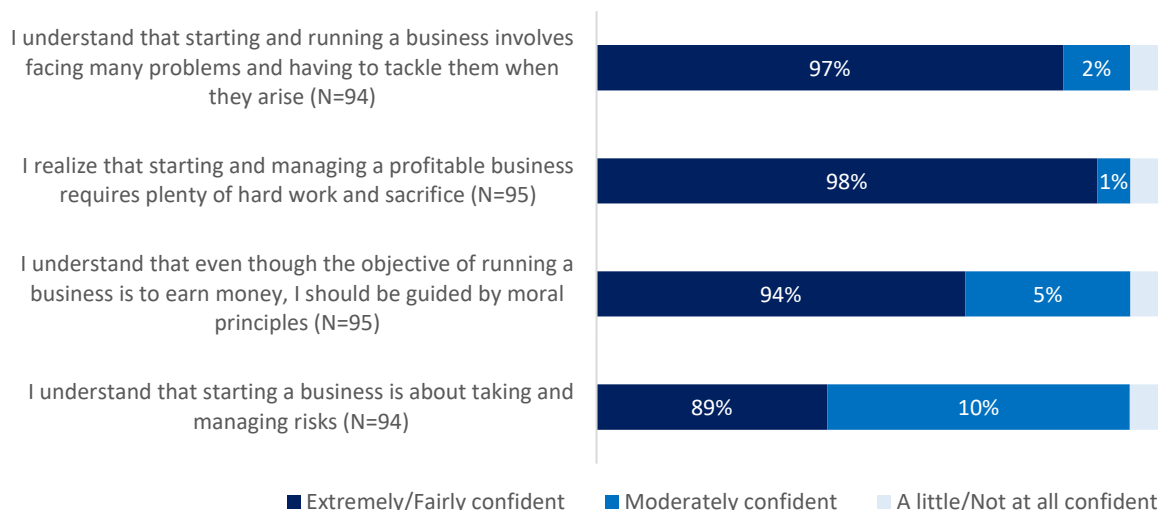
These results perhaps reflect several important aspects of the vocational training system where motivation and self-esteem of graduates may be low, and graduates only wish to earn money, job security and have decent working hours. However, some of the graduates surveyed in the study appeared to want to gain further skills that they did not acquire in the vocational training system. Overall, the results to these questions reflect the lack of awareness about prospects in the system

that is perhaps due to a lack of career guidance and employer engagement in terms of long-term career paths and expectations.

3.5.3. Entrepreneurship programme

The entrepreneurship training programme contributed to changing the mindset of its graduates regarding starting and managing business: the necessity of diligent effort to achieve predetermined objectives and ensure profitability, the accountability for one's own actions, preparedness for challenges and risk mitigation, and adherence to business ethics.

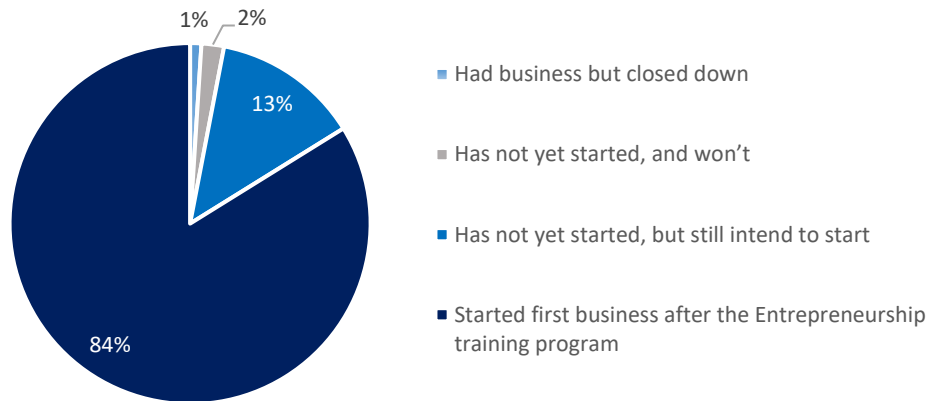
Figure 27. Changes in mindset of entrepreneurs thanks to the Entrepreneurship training programme



Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

The vast majority (84 per cent) of the graduates started their first business after the Entrepreneurship training programme and all of them formally registered their businesses. More females (56 per cent) compared to males (44 per cent) started their own business. 74 per cent are classified as craftsmen, while 26 per cent operate as sole proprietors. Motives for starting a business included the desire to operate their own business or the belief that their knowledge and abilities were most suitable for an entrepreneurial role. Access to markets, including export markets; government support/assistance programmes; and financing, business support services, and training programmes are among the most significant benefits of having a registered (formal) business from the perspective of Entrepreneurship training programme graduates.

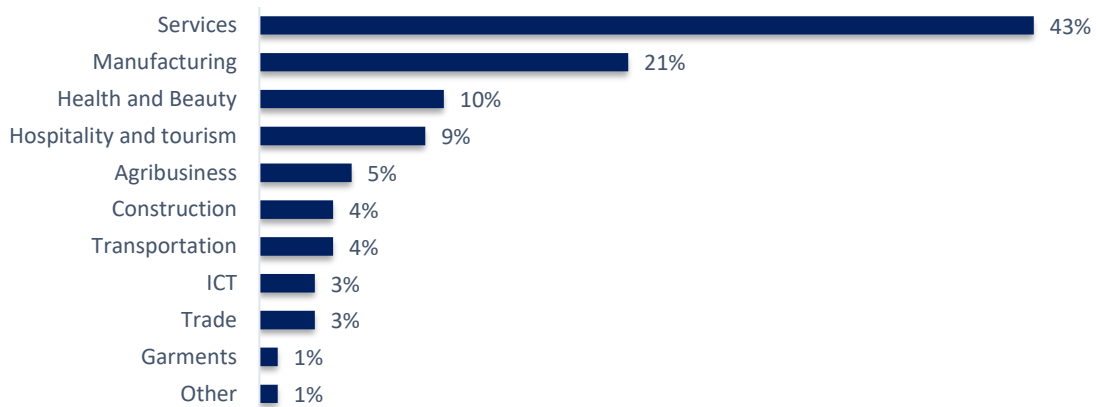
Figure 28. Current business situation of entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries (N=100)



Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

Forty three per cent of the created businesses are related to services (see Figure 30). Manufacturing, health and beauty and hospitality and tourism also have a good share in new start-ups.

Figure 29. Businesses created by economic activity (N=83)

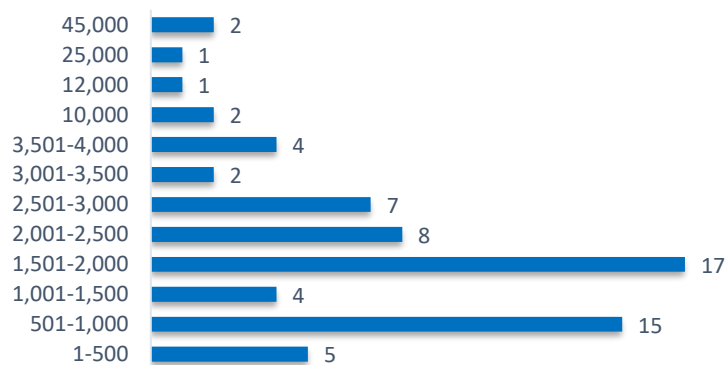


Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

According to 96 per cent of the graduates, the enterprises they have established do not have an adverse environmental impact.

79 per cent of start-ups operate independently, whereas the remaining 21 per cent have between one and three employees. In 2023, the mean monthly revenue generated by nascent enterprises ranged from BAM 500 to 2,000.

Figure 30. Average monthly revenue (in BAM) of start-ups in 2023 (N=80)



Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

By means of the entrepreneurship training programme, emerging businesses were able to expand their clientele, improve their marketing and financial management, and establish new strategic alliances, among other operational enhancements. Lack of access to capital, personnel, office space, and equipment are among the most significant obstacles that nascent businesses have been currently confronting.

Figure 31. Domains in which nascent enterprises enhanced their operations due to the knowledge acquired through the entrepreneurship training programme (N=83)



Source: Survey among Entrepreneurship Programme Beneficiaries, November-December 2023

The majority (82 per cent) of the new start-ups reported that they have competitors in their village, town or city. About 71 per cent stated that the method used to align their business to remain competitive is good customer care, followed by marketing (15 per cent).

On the whole, 92 per cent of the self-employed graduates expect that their businesses would perform better in 2024.

3.6. Sustainability

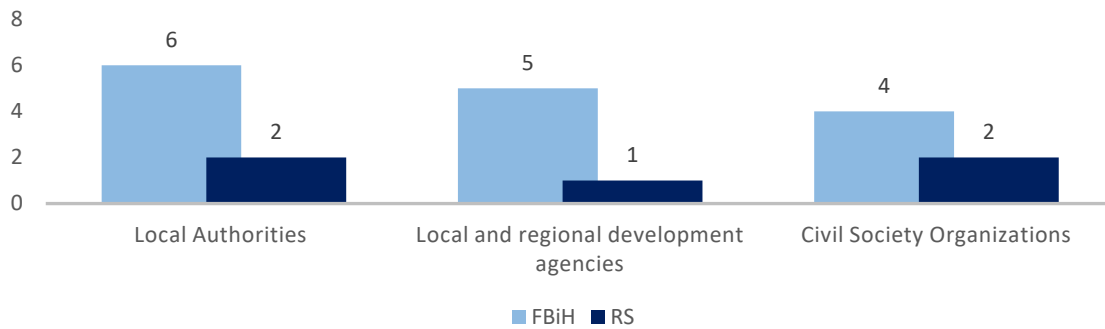
The PRODOC and the proposals for the LEPs projects outline the intended approach to assuring the sustainability of LEPs; however, the LEP II project lacks a distinct written exit strategy. Financial, institutional, and policy sustainability are all factors considered when evaluating the sustainability of LEPs.

3.6.1. Institutional sustainability

All 20 supported LEPs are formalized through LEP partnership agreements (Memorandum of understandings). This form of LEPs formalization was chosen by the project based on the consultation with LEPs. This flexible form of cooperation proved to be effective as allow them to expand their membership easily to other members.

Forty percent of the LEPs supported by the 1st CfP are led by local governments (city or municipal administrations), while the remaining **sixty percent** are **led by either CSOs or local and regional development agencies**. In the FBiH, LEP lead partners are either local authorities or local and regional development agencies, whereas in RS, this is mainly local authorities or CSOs. **Out of 20 LEPs, not for a single 'project' has the PES as the Lead partner.**

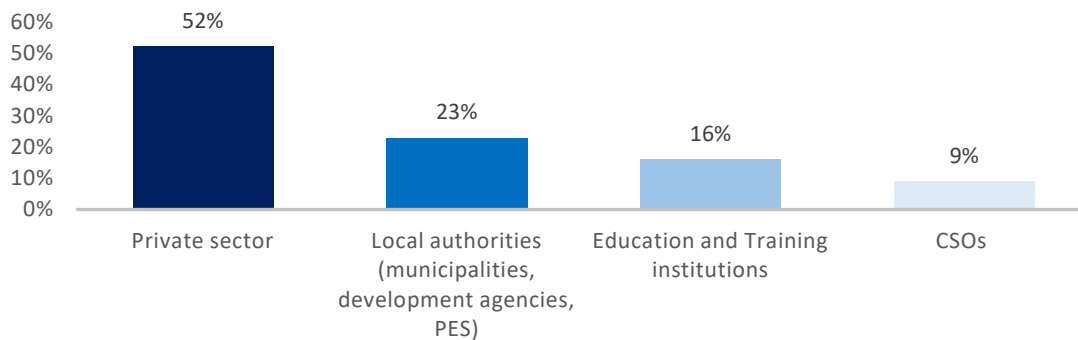
Figure 32. Types of lead partners in target LEPs under 1st Cfp (N=20)



Source: LEPs proposals

Each LEP consists of Public Employment Service (PES), NGOs/CSOs or a regional development agency, employers, local administrations, and education institutions. **50 per cent of LEPs have from ten to fourteen partners, 35 per cent have four to eight partners, and 15 per cent have between fifteen to seventeen partners.** In total, **20 LEPs have 211 partners.** Employers constitute over 50 per cent of the LEP partners, with local authorities (including local administrations, regional development agencies, and PES) following closely at 23 per cent. Education and training institutions and CSOs account for the remaining 16 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively.

Figure 33. Types of other LEPs partners in 20 LEPs under 1st Cfp (N=211)

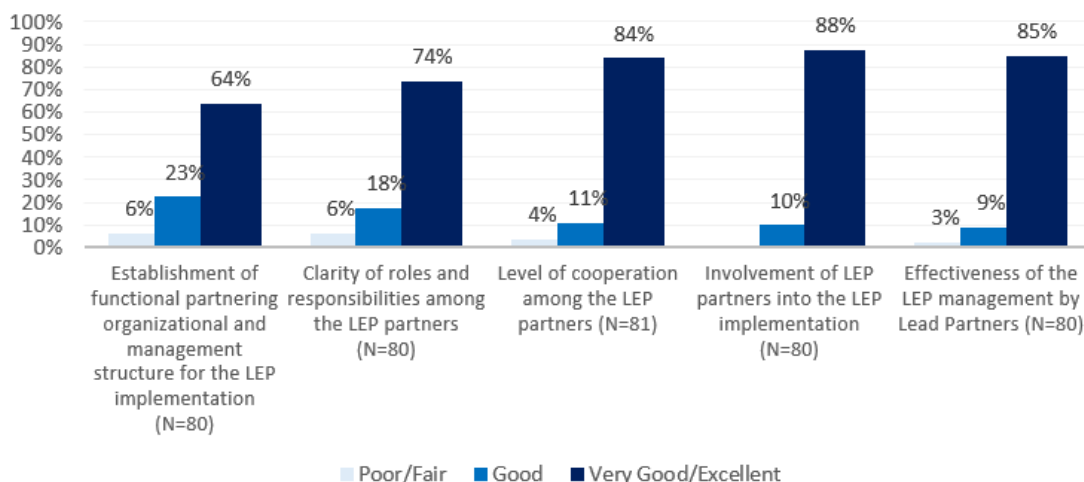


Source: LEPs proposals

Since the inception of the LEP initiatives, 55 per cent of LEPs have held no more than ten LEP coordination meetings, 30 per cent have held between ten and twenty-five LEP coordination meetings, and 15 per cent have held more than twenty-five LEP coordination meetings, according to the quarterly reports of the LEPs. This is much less than anticipated as per the LEPs proposals.

Overall, 74 per cent of surveyed LEP partners affirm that roles and responsibilities are well-defined among LEP partners. However, only 64 per cent of respondents indicated that functional partnering organizational and management structures had been established for the LEPs projects implementation. The interviews and field visits to selected LEPs revealed that, due to logistical and personnel constraints, the involvement of PES in practical work of LEPs remain insufficient along with limited capacity in organization of training for unemployed people. In addition, public employment institutes frequently do not inform LEPs about existing training activities. 85 per cent of partners believe that lead partners manage LEPs effectively, and 88 per cent of partners indicated that they are actively involved in the implementation of LEP projects.

Figure 34. LEPs partners perception on the effectiveness of LEPs partnership arrangements



Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

All participating partners undoubtedly enhance their capabilities in project implementation by carrying out their individual LEPs projects and utilizing the capacity building services provided by the ILO project team.

The sustainability of jobs created, and businesses supported remaining in business, following the project end is another aspect of sustainability of the interventions' introduced benefits. The interviews demonstrate that the survival rate of the businesses established in the framework of LEP II project constitutes no less than 65 per cent. Meanwhile, the level of employment of vocational training graduates as evident from the mid-term beneficiary survey constitutes 50 per cent. However, currently both vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes are lacking the monitoring of the level of employment of vocational training graduates and the sustainability of the enterprises established by SIYB graduates one year after their participation in LEPs projects.

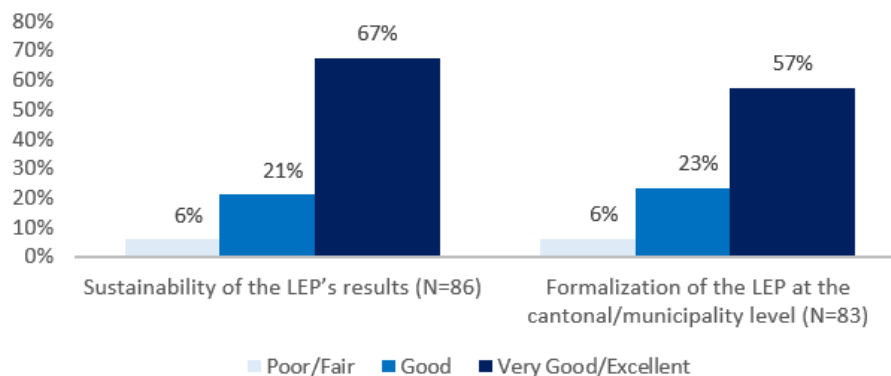
3.6.2. Financial and policy sustainability

The funding for the continuity of functioning of LEPs beyond the intervention's is planned to be ensured by the development and adoption of the Local Employment Action Plans. Based on the analysis of the needs of the labour market, the partnerships had the task of developing action plans for employment. Local action plans are a guarantee of the sustainability of partnerships because in this way partnerships formally enter in their role and can contribute to the additional activation of the unemployed and the realization of the plans of the Employment Institutes. ILO has prepared and shared with target LEPs the Guidelines for the Development of Gender-Sensitive Local Employment Action Plans which was followed for creating strategic documents.

As evident from document review, 16 out of 20 LEPs (81 per cent from FiBH/19 per cent from RS) have prepared Local Employment Action Plans (LEAPs). As of November 2023, LEAPs were adopted in 10 LEPs (70 per cent in FiBH and 30 per cent in RS) including LEP Velika Kladuša, LEP Tešanj, LEP Prnjavor, LEP Pale, LEP Žepče, LEP Bosanska Krupa, LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo, LEP Zenica, LEP Krajina (adopted thus far only in Laktasi) and LEP Jablanica – Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje (adopted thus far in in Gornji Vakuf). Typical LEAP objectives are as follows: (i) to promote the development of entrepreneurship, (ii) to create an active area for work and development of human resources, (iii) to create a favorable business environment and to achieve investment, and (iv) to strengthen the institutions of the labor market and the promotion of partnerships for employment. The political turmoil impedes cooperation between some LEP members and is the primary obstacle encountered for the adoption of LEAPs in the remaining LEPs.

As for the sustainability of LEPs results and the level of formalization at the cantonal/municipal level, over 55 per cent of surveyed LEPs partners agree that these aspects are in excellent or very good condition.

Figure 35. Assessment of LEPs sustainability by surveyed LEPs partners



Source: Survey among LEPs, November 2023

At the same time, there are some reassuring institutional elements towards sustaining LEP initiative in RS. The strategic levels acknowledge the LEP modality in ALMP; for instance, the RS Employment Strategy for the period 2021-2027 acknowledges LEPs as an ALMP implementation modality. In the absence of FBiH Employment Strategy, the FBiH government adopted FBiH Development Strategy 2021-2027. Its priority 2.4 focuses on reducing unemployment and employment inactivity, especially long term one, trough, inter alia, strengthening capacity and function of PES. Additionally, in 2023, the Employment Institute organized the "training and work" programme, which facilitated the consolidation of funding from various stakeholders with the common objective of employing individuals. Funds are allocated by the government every year for employment measures (in 2022, in FBiH, 62 million BAM were allocated, and in RS, 35.78 million BAM). Nevertheless, due to the magnitude of unemployment in the country, the impact of these funds is constrained and the continuity of donor funding seems essential. Moreover, assessment of the sustainability and effectiveness of the active employment measures enabled through LEPs is not planned.

In addition, the vocational training programmes developed in the framework of the LEP II project have good prospects of sustainability as all of them were certified by the relevant government authorities in each entity in accordance with the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education and the Framework Law on VET and could be further offered by the education and training institutions. ILO also provides assistance to secondary education institutions in their transition from teaching students to training of adults. A number of educational and training institutions were provided with toolkits for practical exercises during the delivery of newly certified vocational training programmes as an integral component of the project. Educational and training institutions may continue to utilize them following the conclusion of the project. As of now, neither the project nor the supported LEPs have established a sustainable framework for the SIYB programme.

IV. Conclusions

Evaluation Criteria	Conclusions
<p>Relevance</p>	<p>The LEP II project is highly relevant for the country's context of high unemployment, and an employment rate almost half that of the EU, combined with the limited capacities of beneficiary institutions to effectively deal with the magnitude of the problem at the local level. In addition, all stakeholders interviewed underlined that the project was very timely, as was launched in a period of recovery from the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crises. Therefore, the project holds significant relevance for the final beneficiaries (unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances). The LEP II project's objectives respond to the needs of key stakeholders and is aligned with the main strategic documents and programs related to the economic development of BiH, such as the National Economic Reform Programme (NERP), the BiH Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2020-2022, the Strategies for Development of SMEs (2021-2027) in both entities, and reforming secondary vocational education and training (Strategy for Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of VET in BiH (2021- 2030), and Strategy of Education Development for Pre-university Education in the RS (2016-2021). The project also fits closely with the objectives of the cantonal and/or municipal development strategies aimed at enhancing community growth, economic competitiveness, and employment opportunities. The engagement with the Employers' and Workers Organisations is more incidental.</p> <p>Overall, the LEP II project is well-designed to enhance the limited absorption capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders, although its theory of change would benefit from better elaboration of institutional change and the anticipated outcome of LEPs as well as conduction of territorial diagnostics of local labour market needs. The Results Framework of the LEP II project is clear and measurable with 20 indicators (2 impact indicators, 3 outcome indicators and 15 output indicators). Risks identification and the management of risk mitigation measures have been ensured. However, most of LEPs had issues with setting of realistic targets in line with the first call of proposals and taking into account the budget allocations. The targets of four output indicators of LEP II project should be revised further for the cost-extension period to reflect the accomplishments of twenty supported LEPs during the initial half of the project's implementation.</p>
<p>Coherence</p>	<p>The LEP II project contributes to the achievement of the overarching goal of the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2019 (EU4 Employment and Education). It is strategically in line with UNSDCF for BiH (2021-2025). Moreover, the project established a number of synergies with other EU-funded interventions (EU4Business and EU4Employment projects) either through cost-sharing or complementarity of the activities or resources.</p> <p>The project supports four Strategic Objectives of ILO's Decent Work Agenda and contributes to the ILO's strategic policy frameworks i.e., the ILO Programme and Budget (P&B) 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 and related Policy Outcomes 3, 4 and 5. It also complies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the SDGs, in particular Outcomes 3, 4 and 5.</p>
<p>Effectiveness</p>	<p>In overall, the LEP II project is processing well in achieving of its objectives, especially under the Entrepreneurship programme component. However,</p>

	<p>vocational training component requires attention specifically when it comes to the achievement of target on the obtaining full-time employment.</p> <p>The project established 20 local partnerships which in the period until September 2023, improved the qualifications of 1,549 unemployed persons, formally employed 410 people, developed 66 certified training programs for the labour market and supported the establishment of 153 small businesses. A number of challenges have been identified by the mid-term evaluation which were encountered by the LEP II project between 2021 and 2023, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the particularly large number of stakeholders to be coordinated, the structural labour market challenges, capacity of the public employment services to provide quality services to jobseekers. The main success factors which contributed to achieve the progress described in the above include the continuity of support to the LEPs established under LEP I project, strong project management and governance structures.</p>
<p>Efficiency</p>	<p>The allocation of resources (financial, human, institutional and technical) is satisfactory to achieve the results of the LEP II project. The project received a cost-extension from the donor in the third year of implementation due to unused funds under IPA II. Consequently, the budget, scope, and duration of the project were expanded, potentially leading to enhanced sustainability of the supported LEPs.</p> <p>Grants administration in response to the first call for proposals was executed with a minor delay, but overall efficiency is satisfactory. Along with a thorough Risk Management Matrix, the LEP II project reporting is timely and effective. Nevertheless, at the level of supported LEPs, there is a room for improvement of the quality of progress reporting and timely sharing of means of verification on the Logframe's indicators. Most of target LEPs have also scope for development in their execution of the communication and visibility strategy. On the whole, the LEP II project monitoring system is robust as based on the project's Logframe and allows collection of relevant information from supported LEPs. One of the area of enhancement though is the project's evaluation system, in particular post-activity follow-up, monitoring of results at the outcome level, in terms of intervention's contribution to decent job creation, improvement in job conditions, and changes in income of employed or self-employed beneficiaries.</p> <p>The project management and governance structures are effective as continuously guide and support the selected LEPs. On the whole, the project management team is implementing the project with a strong results-based-management approach. However, enhanced focus is needed on the monitoring of financial expenditures by supported LEPs and the intensification of LEPs results monitoring.</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>The project is progressing in the right direction by overseeing and assisting in the execution of twenty LEPs projects at the local level throughout BiH. This ultimately contributes to the enhancement of employability in the local communities. The evidence collected in the course of mid-term evaluation indicate that both vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes contribute to improvement of income, changes in skillset and/or mindset of hard-to-employ groups. However, better results in terms of employability are demonstrated by the entrepreneurship programme beneficiaries rather than vocational training programmes graduates. The main reasons for that are the</p>

	<p>disparity between the qualifications and experience of unemployed persons with expectations related to the workplace, the scarcity of employment prospects in local communities where the majority of employers are small and medium-sized businesses and poor employment conditions offered by the private sector.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>The institutional sustainability of LEPs have been promoted by the project through the formalization of LEPs and strengthening the capacity of LEPs members; meanwhile, policy and financial sustainability have been fostered through the development and adoption of the Local Employment Action Plans (LEAPs). As of the midterm evaluation, a significant proportion of supported LEPs (16 out of 20) had developed LEAPs; however, the current rate of adoption of LEAPs is only half the currently supported LEPs (10 out of 20). Furthermore, there is scope for additional enhancement of the capabilities of LEP partners, particularly local authorities and PES, as well as coordination among all LEP members.</p> <p>The vocational training programmes developed in the framework of the LEP II project have good prospects of sustainability as all of them were certified by the relevant government authorities in each entity; in the meantime, the sustainability of the SIYB programme is not yet defined.</p> <p>At the same time, a systematic monitoring process is not implemented by LEPs to assess the level of employment of vocational training graduates and the sustainability of the enterprises established by SIYB graduates one year after their participation in LEPs projects.</p>
<p>Cross-Cutting Issues</p>	<p>The evidence suggests that the gender responsive approach has also been consistently reflected in the LEP II project implementation. At the same time, no specific targets regarding youth and long-term unemployed have been established by the project. In terms of the disability and social inclusion issues, it is promoted in particular by a few LEPs. However, the level of participation of disabled in the LEPs vocational and/or entrepreneurship training programmes is still very limited.</p> <p>The LEP II project supports the integration of ILS and employment-related principles in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, it fosters social dialogue at the local level through the established local employment partnerships as well as promotes green entrepreneurship and innovative employment creations in line with the EU's long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy.</p>

V. Recommendations

The recommendations formulated on the basis of the findings of the present evaluation are as follows:

Recommendation 1: For the cost-extension period encompassing 26 LEPs, the targets for a few output indicators in the LEP II project Logframe should be revised so as to accurately reflect the accomplishments of 20 LEPs from 2021 to 2023. It relates to the following set of output indicators: number of final beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs and to increase competitiveness, number of unemployed persons trained to start their own enterprise (GIA and SYB), number of final beneficiaries employed after participating in the LEPs' interventions and number of final beneficiaries, trained in GIA and SYB, that registered own enterprise.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
• Project Management	high	low	short-term

Recommendation 2: Develop the sustainability strategy for the LEP II project to serve as reference framework document and have it adopted by the PSB. It could also serve as a guidance paper for actively working on sustainability together with LEPs partners. It is recommended to formally adopt this Strategy and to present the document, together with the status of sustainability achieved, at the PSB and PAB meetings as well as final project event. Besides contributing to the justification of results, the Sustainability Strategy might also serve for informing donors and seeking support for possible future activities resulting from the LEP II project.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
• Project Management • PSB	high	low	short-term

Recommendation 3: Ensure better support for people with disabilities by target LEPs through promotion of better communication and coordination with relevant actors (e.g., Institute, Rehabilitation Fund, Center for Social Work).

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
• Project Management • LEPs partners	high	low	medium-term

Recommendation 4: Ensure that the territorial diagnostics are conducted by newly awarded LEPs prior to the implementation of their respective LEP initiatives. This would allow to have a comprehensive overview of the local labour market needs and select right targets and approaches for the vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
• Project Management • LEPs partners	high	medium	short-term

Recommendation 5: Sustain and further develop partnerships with business and business organizations to promote their involvement in design and implementation of effective LEPs. Continue and expand the mentoring activities under LEPs as beneficiaries have restated their satisfaction and have positively assessed related impacts on their business. SIYB grant amounts for

entrepreneurs planning to launch businesses in the production sector should be increased by the newly awarded LEPs. The current grant amount of between EUR 3,000 and 3,500 on average is inadequate to purchase the necessary equipment. Additionally, it is recommended that either the number of certified SIYB trainers be increased or that current SIYB trainers be granted a greater travel allowance so that they may cover small municipalities participating in LEPs initiatives more effectively. The duration of the IYB trainings should be also revised in order to allocate sufficient time for proper coverage of all training topics.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • ILO Sarajevo 	high	high	medium-term

Recommendation 6: Further harmonize professional training with the requirements of the labour market. It is recommended that newly awarded LEPs place a greater emphasis on retraining, given the greater interest in such types of training among the unemployed people. Due to its cost-effectiveness and time efficiency, the professional training/advancement is more likely to result in increased retention of trainees throughout its duration. Apart from that LEPs need to develop a clear strategy on how to handle potential drop outs.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • LEPs partners 	high	low	short-term

Recommendation 7: Continue strengthening the capacity of LEPs partners in M&E (results and financial) and communication for more effective implementation of the LEPs projects. LEPs should intensify the coordination and increase the frequency of LEPs coordination meetings as it could contribute to better sustainability of LEPs following the project closure. **Additionally, newly awarded LEPs should consider allocating a supplementary budget for M&E**, specifically for the subscription to the financial database (which costs EUR 1,200 per year)³⁹. This subscription would enable the provision of evidence for proof of employment of target beneficiaries. **LEPs should also strengthen evaluation of effectiveness of training programmes to promote improvement.** Where appropriate consider testing the “transfer to the job” aspect of training or whether the participants have been actually enabled to put what they learned into practice in their job roles. Developing a structured training evaluation methodology will provide a clear value added for the whole vocational training sector in BiH.

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • LEPs partners 	high	medium	short-term/ medium-term

Recommendation 8: Taken into account the scope of the LEPs projects (geography and number of partners), it is recommended to consider establishing of a computerized Management Information System (MIS) for ILO Sarajevo particularly for EU-funded projects including the LEP II project which would allow to have a real time data validation, dynamic dashboards, data security and generation of analytical reports. The MIS should combine both activity monitoring (Implementation Plans, Sustainability Plans, Communication Plans) and results monitoring (i.e. Logframe). The M&E software

³⁹ Database of the FBiH Financial Information Agency

which are suggested to consider for the future LEPs projects implemented by ILO include the following online software: WebMo⁴⁰, M&E Online⁴¹, Logalto⁴².

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILO Sarajevo • ILO DWT/CO-Budapest 	medium	high	long-term

Recommendation 9: While participation of social partners in the LEP II project mainly through PAB meetings is important, it should be recognised that it is, by itself, not a sufficient measure to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of LEPs. **Strengthen capacities of social partners in their particular functions and roles as needed.** Capacity strengthening may include covering a wide range of organizational capacity skills (management, decision-making, analysis, bargaining) and knowledge (emerging issues, sector- specific knowledge, etc.).

Addressed to	Priority	Resource	Timing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • ILO Sarajevo • ILO DWT/CO-Budapest 	medium	medium	short-term/ medium-term

⁴⁰ <https://webmo.info/>

⁴¹ <https://www.mandonline.com/>

⁴² <https://www.logalto.com/en/>

IV. Lessons Learned and Potential Good Practices

Lessons Learned

Design

- Relevance of intervention and consultations at both project design and implementation phase play a vital role towards broad-based “buy-in” and support by stakeholders.
- Political instability and the socioeconomic climate have an impact on project partners; this should be taken into account during the assessment of the level of interest of the partners to take part in the project.

Logframe:

- Although the project’s Logframe contains all relevant indicators, it would benefit of having a few additional indicators which would assess: (i) the level of institutionalization of LEPs (e.g., a sustainability model/guideline for LEPs is presented to policy and decision makers in the sector), (ii) the quality of certified vocational training programmes (e.g., dropout rates, vocational training programmes duration, ratio of theory/practice), (iii) the quality of employment or self-employment of final beneficiaries (e.g., changes in the income of unemployed individuals who took part in LEPs projects, survival rate of newly established businesses) and matching the needs of employers in terms of labour force (e.g., level of satisfaction with vocational training graduates).

Project duration:

- The LEP II project was given sufficient time to build up trust and understanding. Project implementation, like overall development processes, rarely follows linear trends but is characterised by uncertainty and temporary instability. Building up trust and understanding takes time and eventually LEP II project got this time through the cost-extension and LEPs projects were effectively established. Whilst result-orientation has to remain the clear focus of development interventions it needs to be recognised that an essential element of beneficiary learning, in particular in respect to complex local employment partnerships projects, stems from the actual preparation and implementation processes.

Vocational training programmes:

- Almost all LEPs experienced challenges with recruitment of participants for vocational training programmes. This happened due to the following main reasons: (i) insufficient utilization of advertising channels to effectively distribute information regarding training opportunities to unemployed individuals, (ii) insufficient duration of public calls, leading to individuals applying after the deadline or after the training program has ended, and (iii) lack of interest and motivation of unemployed in trainings in less appealing occupations.
- Employment, and in most cases documenting of beneficiary’s employment proves to be major challenge in vocational training programmes component of LEPs projects. Once participants receive their certificate, they usually stop answering calls or any other communication from LEPs. Lack of communication responsiveness by beneficiaries (in order to provide contracts or JS 3100 form as a proof of employment) have partially been resolved by LEPs partners with PESs providing report on persons that are removed from services listings due to employment. However, the major challenge of proofing unofficial employments remains to be resolved.

- Communications and visibility campaign was outsourced to external consultants by some LEPs. LEPs partners experience suggest that in any future projects this function should be conducted internally.

Entrepreneurship programme:

-
- IYB training took place only a month apart following disbursement of grants, interviewed beneficiaries said that this would have been more useful if more time was allowed to gain better insight into the operational everyday issues. IYB training covers 6 handbooks which the trainers are expected to cover in 3 days. This is not a realistic expectation hence consultant days need to be better planned in the future.

Good Practices

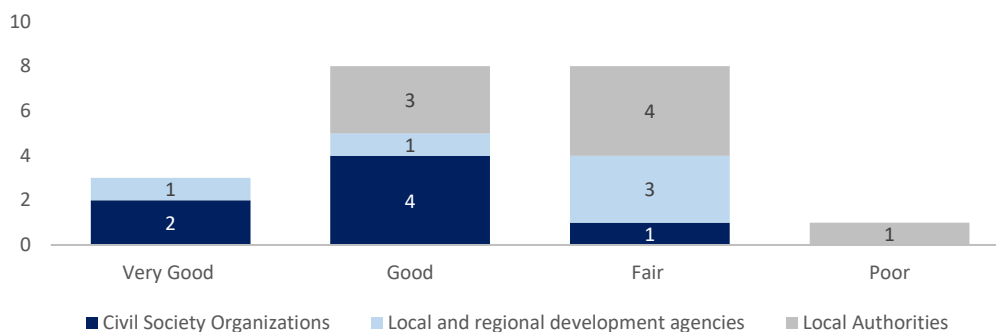
Entrepreneurship programme:

- LEP Banja Luka could serve as a good practice in terms of replication of SIYB by Banja Luka City Council. Based on the project’s experience, the City Council introduced the requirement to participate not only in trainings but also to submit the business plan when applying for the entrepreneurship grants in the same manner as it is done under the SIYB programme.

LEPs:

- The LEP II project shows that CSOs show better results as lead partners in comparison with local authorities or local and regional development agencies. At the same time, local/regional development agencies and local authorities have better prospects for sustainability as operate within the government structures.

Figure 36. Comparison of LEPs performance based on the type of lead partner (N=20)



Source: Prepared by Evaluator based on the LEPs quarterly reports

- LEP Mostar has developed a mobile application for job search and service provision, which is called SHTELA. Its function is to facilitate the connection of supply and demand of jobs and services, which means that on one side there will be providers of services or jobs, and on the other side job or service seekers. The mobile application is available on the google store and play store.

VI. Annexes

Annex 6.1. Terms of Reference

Key facts

Title of project being evaluated	EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II)
Project DC Code	BIH/20/02/EUR
Type of evaluation	Independent
Timing of evaluation	Mid-term
Donor	European Commission, NEAR- Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
Project timeframe and duration (months)	from 1 January 2021 until 31 December 2025 (60 months)
Administrative Unit in the ILO responsible for administrating the project	DWT/CO-Budapest
Technical Unit(s) in the ILO responsible for backstopping the project	Employment
P&B outcome (s) under evaluation	Outcome 3: Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all Output 3.2. Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy
SDG(s) under evaluation	Goal 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” Target 4.4: “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship” Goal 8 “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” Target 8.5.: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” and Target 8.6: “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”
Project Budget	US\$ 7,168,458 (EUR 6,000,000)
Evaluation timing	From September to November, 2023
Evaluation manager	Maria D. Edeso

Background information

The project “EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships – Phase II (LEP II)” is an EU-funded intervention implemented by the International Labour Organization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, aiming to improve the socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH by ensuring better employability in the local communities. The project has a duration of 60 months (January 2021-December 2025). The project budget is EUR 6 million¹.

The theory of change states that:

If the ILO increases awareness about the LEP as partnership-driven labour market mechanisms; and
 If the ILO provides assistance to the new employment partnerships to successfully design and implement activation and labour market integration programmes; and

If the ILO provides institutional development services to the LEPs, including for advocacy, networking, and employment policy implementation, then, the newly established, sustainable, partnership driven labour market frameworks will contribute to the increased access to formal employment in selected municipalities, leading to more and better decent work opportunities in local communities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The principal project output is to foster sustainable, partnership-driven labour market frameworks at the local level for an increased access to formal employment. The following table presents the three project outputs and their indicators, and the activities carried out to achieve them-

Outcome 1: To contribute to better employability in local communities
Principal Output: To foster sustainable, partnership-driven labour market frameworks at the local level for an increased access to formal employment
Output 1.1.: Key stakeholders recognize LEPs as a partnership-driven labour market mechanism for an increased access to formal employment at the local level
Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI): At least 200 representatives of local communities, private companies, educational institutions, NGOs, development agencies and public employment services that participate in the knowledge and promotional activities about LEPs
Output 1.2.: Local employment partnerships successfully design and implement active labour market measures
Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI): At least 160 representatives of target group (at least 40% women) participate in the training on concept note and full project proposals for partnership-based interventions on employment Up to 80 concept notes received from local employment partnerships 20 LEPs successfully developed local employment development initiatives for EU funding and local resources Up to 1600 final beneficiaries trained to meet local labour market needs and to increase competitiveness Up to 600 final beneficiaries employed after participating in the LEPs’ interventions. At least 38 enterprises actively engaged in LEPs
At least 10 programs and services provided to the hard-to-employ categories (including vulnerable youth and women, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and minorities) Up to 300 unemployed persons (out of 1600) trained to start own enterprise (Generate Your Idea- GIA and Start Your Business-SYB). At least 50 final beneficiaries, trained in GIA and SYB, registered own enterprise. At least 50 final beneficiaries that registered own enterprise, attended training in “Improve Your Business”
Output 1.3.: Institutional development services are provided to the LEPs, including for advocacy, networking, and employment policy implementation

Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI):

20 local public employment offices whose capacity has been strengthened

Up to 160 representatives of the LEPs that participate in the LEPs institutional development training

At least 40 representatives of the LEPs that participate in the training for management of the partnership-based projects

At least 40 representatives of the LEPs that participate in the training on development/update of local action plans for employment and facilitate that process at the local level

At least 40 employers, active members of the LEPs that participate in the training on Decent work and promote better working conditions at the local level

At least 40 representatives of the LEPs that participate in the training on institutional development and sustainability of the LEPs and facilitate that process at the local level.

At least 4 network thematic meetings (max 40 representatives of 20 LEPs participate at each) to support knowledge and experience sharing, to strengthen the network, to ensure development of advocacy actions which contribute to employment at local level.

The project results contribute to the Outcome 3 “Economic, social and environmental transitions for full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all” of ILO’s Programme and Budget 2022-2023, more specifically to Output 3.2. Increased capacity of Member States to formulate and implement policies and strategies for creating decent work in the rural economy.

The project responds to the overall objective of the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina for year 2019 (EU4 Employment and Education) by contributing to the improvement of the socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH.

The project results are linked to the two Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):

- Goal 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Target: 4.4: “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”.
- Goal 8 “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”. Targets: 8.5 “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” and 8.6: “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”.

The project design looks for a balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making structures, the increment of employment of women and the increased level of entrepreneurial activity among women.

Additionally, the project promotes green entrepreneurship and innovative employment creations. Training for innovative green entrepreneurship and targeted support services for entrepreneurs has been encouraged.

Project management team is composed of a Project Coordinator, a Project Officer, an Administrative and Finance Assistant, a Project Assistant and a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The project team is supported by specialized technical staff: a Senior Employment Specialist and an Enterprise Specialist.

The project is oversight by the Project Steering Board and tripartite Advisory Board members, who were nominated by the most relevant institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the project implementation”.

The members of the Project Steering Board (PSB) represent the following institutions:

- Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a chair, represented by the Programme Manager,
- Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Ministry of Labour and Veterans of the Republika Srpska,
- Public Employment Institute of the Republika Srpska,
- Employment Institute of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and
- International Labour Organization
- The members of the tripartite Project Advisory Board (PAB) represent the following institutions:
 - Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
 - Directorate for European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
 - Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Crafts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
 - Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the Republika Srpska,
 - Department for Economic Development, Sports and Culture of the Brčko District BiH Government,
 - Employment Institute of the Brčko District BiH,
 - Association of Municipalities and Cities of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
 - Association of Employers of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
 - Union of Employers' Associations of the Republika Srpska,
 - Union of Employers' Associations of the Brčko District of BiH, and
 - Confederation of Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In October 2022, a donor-commissioned Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission was conducted. Additionally, in November and December 2022, the LEP II project, together with project EU\$BUSINESS Recovery, participated of an internal mid-term cluster evaluation of projects COVID-19 investment response.

Purpose, objectives, and scope of the evaluation

Based on ILO Evaluation Policy, an independent mid-term evaluation is a requirement for projects with a duration over 30 months and a budget over US\$ 5 million. The duration of this project is 60 months, and the approved budget is US\$ 7,168,458.

Purpose

At this stage of the project, and thinking on the clients and use of the evaluation recommendations, this evaluation has three purposes: project performance improvement, organizational learning and accountability, i.e. to identify learning lessons to improve project present and future actions and to demonstrate that interventions have achieved the expected results.

The objectives of this mid-term independent evaluation are to:

- assess the relevance of the project implementation strategy and outcomes regarding national policies, UNSDCF, SDGs and ILO P&B and final beneficiaries needs;
- assess the extent to which the project outcomes have been achieved or are on track to be achieved regarding the targeted groups;
- determine the level and quality of the produced outputs;

- Analyze the efficiency of the project implementation;
- establish the extent to which the project outcomes will be substantiable and which additional measures need to be taken for it;
- identify positive and negative factors in obtaining the expected outputs; and
- establish lessons learnt, good practices and recommendations for the project stakeholders on the current project as well as for similar interventions.

Scope

The evaluation scope will cover the entire duration of the project from January 2021 up to the evaluation date. The three project components will be evaluated.

The 20 Local Employment Partnership (LEP) selected will be part of the evaluation.

The evaluation will give specific attention to ILO's cross-cutting issues such as International labour standards, social dialogue and tripartism, gender equity and non-discrimination (i.e. people with disabilities) and a fair transition to environmental issues (ie,. green entrepreneurship).

Special attention will be provided to how the project results contribute to the Outcome 3, output 3.2 of ILO's Programme and Budget; as well as to the SDGs of Agenda 2030 and the UNSDCF and the expected outcomes and impact and conditions for sustainability of the project results.

Clients

Primary clients

The main clients of the mid-term evaluation are the members of the Project Steering Board (PSB) and the members of the tripartite Project Advisory Board., ILO tripartite constituents, ILO project staff ILO Country office Director, Decent Work team and other management and technical staff, as well as the donor, the European Commission NEAR – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

Secondary clients

Secondary clients are the ILO's Government Body, ILO relevant Departments, and the municipalities of BIH that have been not selected in the LEP II

Evaluation criteria and questions (including Cross-cutting issues/ issues of special interest to the ILO)

The evaluation will follow the key evaluation criteria defined by the ILO's Evaluation Policy: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The following evaluation questions are based on these criteria.

The evaluator could adapt the evaluation criteria and questions, but any fundamental changes should be agreed with the evaluation manager and reflected in the inception report. The evaluation questions should integrate the crosscutting themes of ILO at the inception phase. These are International Labour Standards, Social dialogue and tripartism, gender and non- discrimination (e.g., people living with disabilities), and fair transition to sustainable environment.

Relevance

- Did the project objectives attend the constituents' needs and national development objectives?
- Have the relevant social partners been identified for the establishment of the local employment partnerships and how have they participated in the design and the project implementation?

- To what extent did the problem analysis, the project design and project strategies identify and integrate specific targets and indicators to attend:
 - Gender equity
 - Disability and social inclusion
 - Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education)
- Is the project design (i.e., Theory of Change), implementation modalities, resource allocation, etc., realistic, and purposeful towards achieving its objectives? Is the project design logical?

Coherence

- To what extent the strategy proposed by the project to foster sustainable partnership driven labour market frameworks at local level for an increased access to formal employment fits on other initiatives (ILO, UN, donor, government, and NGOs) contributing to increase and improve employment in BiH such as the Annual Action Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina, ILO P&B, the UN Framework for Sustainable Development Cooperation and the SDGs?

Effectiveness

- To what extent the project is in process of achieving its objectives measured by the indicators established in the PRODOC?
- What were the factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of the project objectives (including unexpected positive and negative outputs and outcomes)?
- Within the achievement of the project objectives what measures were taken to address
 - Gender equity
 - Disability and social inclusion
 - Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education)
- How International labour standards, social tripartism and fair transition on the environment have been integrated in the project implementation and outcomes?

Efficiency

- How efficiently have human and financial resources been allocated and used to provide the necessary support and to achieve the project objectives? Could the same results be attained with fewer resources?
- Is the project M&E system operating and is oriented to accountability to the key stakeholders and learning? Does it provide feedback to project beneficiaries?

Impact

- To what extent the project has contribute to improve employability in local communities?
- What actions might be needed to enhance longer-term effects?

Sustainability

- To which extent the project results will have a long term, sustainable positive contribution to a better employability in local communities?
- Has an effective and realistic exit strategy been developed and is being implemented?
- To what extent is the achieved progress likely to be long lasting? Will partners be able to sustain the results beyond the project?

Methodology

The evaluation should be carried out according to UN Evaluation GROUP (UNEG) Norms and Standards, OECD/DAC recommendations and ILO Evaluation Policy Guidelines.

The evaluator will present the detail approach and methodology, including the workplan, in the inception report. The evaluator may adapt the methodology, but any fundamental changes should be agreed with the evaluation manager.

The evaluation will apply multiple methods; both qualitative and quantitative evaluation approaches should be considered for this evaluation. To enhance the data quality and analysis as well as overcome bias that comes from single information sources and the use of single methods the evaluator is expected to employ data triangulation technique.

The methodology should ensure involvement of key stakeholders, including disaggregated sampling of beneficiaries (men and women, age groups, vulnerable groups, tc.) in the implementation as well as in the dissemination processes.

The evaluator will outline in the evaluation report the limitations of the evaluation (e.g., timing, availability of stakeholders for interviews, etc.) and the mitigation measures taken to address this limitation to maintain the validity of the report findings.

The evaluation methodology will include:

Theory of Change review

The Theory of Change will be examined in detailed, particularly to identify assumptions, risk and mitigation strategies, and the logical connect between levels of results (outputs-outcomes-impacts). It should look also to the link of the project Theory of change with ILO's strategic objectives and outcomes at the global and national levels, as well as with the relevant SDGs and related targets.

Secondary information review

It consists of the review of project documents such as PRODOC, progress reports, reports of the internal mid-term evaluation and the donor-commissioned Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission, etc.

A monitoring and evaluation system has been developed and implemented since the first year of the project. This is a crucial source of information where data regarding the LEP has been recorded.

Primary information gathering

Primary information can be collected through interviews, focus groups, field observation or other techniques targeted key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders are representatives of the local employment partnerships, final beneficiaries' men and women, members of the Project Steering Board (PSB) and the tripartite Project Advisory Board and ILO project staff and Country office staff.

When gathering information from stakeholders the evaluator will follow the UNEG and ILO ethical standards and code of conduct protecting the confidentiality of the respondents.

Analysis of the information

Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data will carry out in such a manner that capture intervention's contributions to the achievement of expected and unexpected results.

The data and information should be collected, analyzed and presented with appropriate gender disaggregation. It should consider ILO’s cross-cutting issues such as ILS norms, social dialogue, gender and non-discrimination (e.g., people with disabilities and fair transition to environment (e.g., green entrepreneurship).

When analyzing the impact in the final beneficiaries, it will be appropriate, as far as possible, to disaggregate the data according to type of unemployed population, per example: inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education, etc.

Evaluation preliminary results presentation

Following the conclusion of the data collection phase/the development of the draft evaluation report the evaluator will present preliminary findings and recommendations to the project stakeholders in a face to face or virtual workshop. This is an opportunity to invite the participants to provide feedback and fill in any data gaps.

Main deliverables

The following table presents the expected deliverables and their submission deadline

Deliverable	Submission deadline
a) Inception report	1 week after contract start
b) Draft evaluation report	8 weeks after contract start
c) Stakeholder workshop report	10 weeks after contract start
d) Mid-term evaluation report	12 weeks after contract start

The documents related to the deliverables will be written in English and will adhere to the international standards for evaluation and EVAL checklists (see annex I).

The inception report:

This short and concise document, maximum 12 pages, will follow EVAL checklist 4.6 and present in detail:

- The purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation.
- The project theory of change.
- The evaluation methodology: the methods for data collection and analysis including sampling rationale and numbers of people to be interviewed (desegregated by category).
- The evaluation question matrix addressing the TORs evaluation questions. This matrix will contain the questions for each criterion, the measure or indicator, the data source, data collection methods, informants and data analysis and assessment.
- The work plan and chronogram with the evaluation activities.
- The data collection tools
- Full list of people to be interviewed

Draft evaluation report

The draft evaluation report will follow the EVAL Checklists 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 and present the key findings, conclusions, lessons learned, good practices and recommendations of the evaluation. The analysis will be based in evidence and critical thinking.

This report will be reviewed and approved by the Evaluation Manager and the ILO Regional evaluation officer t. After this, the draft report is sent to the stakeholders for comments.

Stakeholder workshop report

The evaluation stakeholders are called to a workshop to discuss the main findings, recommendations and conclusions presented in the draft report.

The evaluator will address the comments collected in the workshop in the final report.

Final evaluation report.

The document, of maximum 40 pages, will follow EVAL checklists 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. It will be presented in ILO Template following the ILO style manual; and it will have the following content:

- Title page: with main project information
- Table of contents
- Executive summary
- Project background
- Evaluation background
- Criteria and questions
- Evaluation methodology
- Main findings
- Conclusions
- Lessons learned and good practices
- Recommendations
- Annexes (including lessons learned and good practices template)

The approval of the mid-term evaluation report might take a couple of weeks since it has to go through three ILO internal control layers (evaluation manager, Regional Evaluation Officer and EVAL).

Annex 6.2. Bibliography

PRODOC and Logframe

PRODOC: Bosnia and Herzegovina Action Programme 2019 EU4 Employment and Education. Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), Adjusted Version, August 2023

Logical Framework of the Project LEP BiH 2nd Phase (2021-2026)

Progress Reports

Inception report. EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II), March 2021

Annual Progress Report for period 1 January 2021– 30 April 2022 “European Union Support to Local Employment Partnerships – Phase II”

Annual Progress Report for period 1 May - 31 December 2022 “European Union Support to Local Employment Partnerships – Phase II”

Assessments

Final ROM report, December 15, 2022

Internal Mid-term Cluster Evaluation of the Projects COVID-19 Investment Response – EU4BUSINESS Recovery and EU. Support to Local Employment Partnerships – Phase II, December 20, 2022

Guidelines produced by LEP II

Guidelines for the development of Gender-Sensitive Local Employment Action Plans, October 2022

Project Advisory board minutes

Advisory Board - First meeting via the Microsoft Teams platform, April 27, 2021

Second meeting of the Advisory board, July 19, 2022

Third Meeting of the Advisory Board, May 08, 2023

Steering and Advisory board meeting, July 5, 2023

Project steering board minutes

Steering Board - First meeting via the Microsoft Teams platform, March 29, 2021

Steering Board - Second Meeting via Microsoft Teams Platform, October 13, 2021

Steering Board - Third meeting via the Microsoft Teams platform, April 14, 2022

Steering Board - Fourth meeting, Sarajevo, November 18, 2022

Steering Board – Fifth Meeting, Sarajevo, March 9, 2023

Steering board – sixth meeting, Banja Luka, July 5, 2023

Network Meeting reports

The first meeting aimed at connecting and exchanging experiences, May 31 – June 1, 2022

The second meeting aimed at connecting and exchanging experiences, November 22-23, 2022

The third network meeting, April 25-27, 2023

European Union Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II. Progress overview, April 2023

Fourth Network Meeting - Status Update. Addressing Employment Barriers after Labor Market Training, July 13-14, 2023

Newsletters

Newsletter #1

Newsletter #2

Newsletter #3

Newsletter #4

Newsletter stats

Training Reports

Orientation training. Minutes of preparatory Meetings within the project "European Union Support to Local Partnerships for Employment" April 26-28, 2022

Institutional development trainings. Minutes BHS: Banja Luka March 13-15, 2023 and Sarajevo March 16-17, 2023

National Consultant Report on consultancy services provided to deliver the training workshop „Local Action Plan for Employment” within the project “EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships-Phase II” (LEP II). October 19, 2022 in Sarajevo and October 21, 2022 in Banja Luka

LEPs Project Proposals

Municipality of Bosanska Krupa. Project title - Mobilisation and integration of unemployed persons in the USC labour market. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

CEFE - Association of Trainers in BiH. Project title - Mind Your Own Business. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Banja Luka City Development Agency – CIDEA. Project title - Integration of unemployed persons in the labour market with LEP Banja Luka support. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

EDA-Enterprise Development Agency. Project title - Sustainable Partnership for Employment. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

City of Goražde. Project title - A new approach to job creation: Innovation towards a prosperous labour market. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

City of Gradiška. Project title - Local Employment Partnership in action. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

LINK Entrepreneurship and Business Association. Project title - Through mentorship to stronger local employment partnerships - LEP Mentor. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Technology Park LINNOVATE (LINNOVATE Foundation). Project title - Synergy of LIVNO LEP for greater competitiveness and employability of the labour force. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

LIR Evolucija. Project title - LEP Krajina / Improving the labour market and increasing employment in Northern Krajina. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Lukavac Municipality. Project title - 3 P - Partnership, jobs, entrepreneurship. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Citizen Association Nešto više. Project title - From a Partnership to Jobs. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Municipality of Novi Grad Sarajevo. Project title - Local partnership for mobilisation and integration of the unemployed in the labour market. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Chamber of Crafts of Una Sana Canton. Project title - Development and implementation of employment programme through retraining driven by labour market demand. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Pale Municipality. Project title - Through a local employment partnership to employment in Pale. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

REDAH Economic Development association, Mostar. Project title - Support to IT sector youth employment. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Regional Economic Union REZ d.o.o. Project title - Cooperation for Better Competitiveness – CBC. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Tešanj Municipality Development Agency – TRA. Project title - TECH-LAB. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

City of Tuzla. Project title - Partnership approach to local development Tuzla. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

City of Zenica. Project title - iSKOrak – A partnership for new jobs. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

Žepče Development Agency. Project title - T4E (Training for employer) - Training to meet employers' needs. Concept Notes and Full Applications EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships Phase II (LEP II). Reference number: 2020/421-573-1/21

LEPs Progress Reports

Association of CEFE trainers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Summary of the LEPs' progress in 2022 based on submitted interim reports

Monitoring Reports

Field Visit Report - Banovici. Citizen Association Nešto više, June 7, 2023

Final Field Visit Report - Bosanska Krupa. City of Bosanska Krupa, November 9, 2022

Field Visit Report - CEFE - Association of Trainers in BiH. Project title - Mind Your Own Business, October 13, 2022

Field Visit Report - Banja Luka City Development Agency – CIDEA. Project title - Integration of unemployed persons in the labour market with LEP Banja Luka support, October 20, 2022

Field Visit Report - City of Goražde. ALDI NGO, TVC doo Goražde. Project title - A new approach to job creation: Innovation towards a prosperous labour market, May 4, 2023

Field Visit Report - City of Gradiška. Project title - Local Employment Partnership in action, March 13, 2023

Field Visit Report – Jablanica. LINK Entrepreneurship and Business Association. Project title - Through mentorship to stronger local employment partnerships - LEP Mentor, May 25, 2023

Field Visit Report - LIR Evolucija. Project title - LEP Krajina / Improving the labour market and increasing employment in Northern Krajina, October 20, 2022

Field Visit Report – Livno. Technology Park LINNOVATE (LINNOVATE Foundation). Project title - Synergy of LIVNO LEP for greater competitiveness and employability of the labour force, July 6, 2023

Field Visit Report - The city of Lukavac. Lukavac Municipality. Project title - 3 P - Partnership, jobs, entrepreneurship, June 6, 2023

Field Visit Report – Mostar. REDAH Economic Development association, Mostar. Project title - Support to IT sector youth employment, May 23, 2023

Field Visit Report - LEP Novi Grad Sarajevo. Project title - Local partnership for mobilisation and integration of the unemployed in the labour market, October 11, 2022

Field Visit Report - Chamber of Crafts of Una Sana Canton, Bihac. Project title - Development and implementation of employment programme through retraining driven by labour market demand, November 8, 2022

Field Visit Report - Pale. Pale Municipality. Project title - Through a local employment partnership to employment in Pale, November 17, 2022

Field Visit Report – Prnjavor. EDA-Enterprise Development Agency. Project title - Sustainable Partnership for Employment, July 25, 2023

Field Visit Report – REZ. Regional Economic Union REZ d.o.o. Project title - Cooperation for Better Competitiveness – CBC, December 15, 2022

Field Visit Report – REZ. Regional Economic Union REZ d.o.o. Project title - Cooperation for Better Competitiveness – CBC, April 13, 2023

Field Visit Report - TRA Tesanj. Tešanj Municipality Development Agency – TRA. Project title - TECH-LAB, December 22, 2022

Field Visit Report – Tuzla. City of Tuzla. Project title - Partnership approach to local development Tuzla, June 6, 2023

Field Visit Report - Zenica. Grad Zenica – City of Zenica. Project title - iSKOraK – A partnership for new jobs, April 13, 2023

Field Visit Report – Zepce. Žepče Development Agency. Project title - T4E (Training for employer), June 6, 2023

Annex 5.3. List of Persons Interviewed

#	Organization	Type of stakeholder	Gender	Mode
1	ILO LEP II Project Coordinator	ILO	f	online
2	ILO LEP II Communication Officer	ILO	f	online
3	ILO LEP II MEL Specialist	ILO	f	online
4	ILO Senior Employment Specialist	ILO	f	online
5	ILO Enterprise Technical Specialist	ILO	f	online
6	ILO CO BiH	ILO	f	online
7	EUD BiH	Donor	f	online
8	Public Institute Employment Institute of the Republika Srpska	Government	f	online
9	Directorate for European integrations	Government	m	online
10	Labour and Employment Agency of BiH	Government	m	Sarajevo
11	Association of Employers of the Federation of BiH	Social Partners	m	online
12	Association of Employers of the Federation of BiH	Social Partners	f	
13	Union of Employers' Associations of Republika Srpska	Social Partners	m	online
14	Employment Institute of the Federation of BiH	Social Partners	f	online
15	Lukavac Municipality	Local self-government units	f	Lukavac
16	Tuzla Canton Public Employment Service	PES	f	Lukavac
17	Mixed Secondary Electric and Mechanic School in Lukavac	Education Institutions	m	Lukavac
18	Beauty studio Exclusive Lukavac (hairdressing and beauty services)	Employers	f	Lukavac
19	Provision d.o.o. (production of machines for the cardboard industry)	Employers	f	
20	PMP Mikron metalno d.o.o. (processing of steel)	Employers	f	
21	LiNK	LEP Lead Partner	f	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje
22	Jablanica Municipality	Local self-government units	f	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje
23	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje Municipality		f	
24	HNC Employment Service	PES	m	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje
25	CBC Employment Service		m	
26	Secondary School in Jablanica	Education Institutions	f	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje
27	Secondary School in Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje		f	
28	Jablanit d.o.o.	Employers	f	Gornji Vakuf - Uskoplje
29	ATT d.o.o.		f	
30	CIDEA	LEP Lead Partner	f	Banja Luka
31	CIDEA		m	
32	CIDEA		f	
33	Ministry of Labour and Veterans of RS	Government	f	Banja Luka
34	RS Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship	Government	f	Banja Luka
35	Institute for Adults Education	Government	m	Banja Luka
36	Banja Luka University	Education Institutions	m	Banja Luka
37	The School for Adult Education "Optimus-NUBL"		f	
38	RS PES	PES	f	Banja Luka
39	The City of Banja Luka	Local self-government units	m	Banja Luka

Annex 6.4. List of Focus Groups Participants

#	Name	Gender	Training attended	LEP	FGD Date	Mode
1	Hasan Gvozden	m	Vocational Training	LEP Gornji Vakuf	02.11.2023	online
2	Reana Šabanović	f	Vocational Training	LEP Gornji Vakuf		
3	Adna Idrizović	f	Vocational Training	LEP Gornji Vakuf		
4	Nejra Duvnjak	f	Vocational Training	LEP Gornji Vakuf		
5	Said Ivković	m	Vocational Training	LEP Gornji Vakuf		
6	Čajić Mehemed	m	SIYB	LEP Lukavac	03.11.2023	online
7	Selma Bleković	f	SIYB	LEP Lukavac		
8	Amina Halilović	f	SIYB	LEP Lukavac		
9	Amela Mujagić	f	Vocational Training	LEP Lukavac		
10	Hamustafić Senad	m	Vocational Training	LEP Lukavac		
11	Bijedić Denis	m	Vocational Training	LEP Lukavac	03.11.2023	online
12	Danijela Vujsin	f	Vocational Training	LEP Banja Luka		
13	Marija Kostic	f	Vocational Training	LEP Banja Luka		
14	Daliborka Veris	f	Vocational Training	LEP Banja Luka	10.11.2023	offline
15	Tatjana Praštalo	f	SIYB	LEP Banja Luka		
16	Luka Četojević	m	SIYB	LEP Banja Luka		
17	Gorica Arežina	f	SIYB	LEP Banja Luka		

Annex 6.5. List of Participants of Stakeholder Workshop

Institution	Name	Role
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Jasmina Khechan Babic	Member of LEP II Steering board
	Ermina Bulbulusic	Deputy member of the LEP II Steering board
Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mersa Tinjak	Member of LEP II Steering board
Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Husein Terzic	Member of LEP II Steering board
	Zvezdana Jelic	Deputy member of the LEP II Steering board
Ministry of Labour and Veterans of the Republika Srpska	Rajko Lajic	Former Member of the Steering board
Employment Institute of the Republika Srpska	Tanja Markus	Member of LEP II Steering board
Federal Employment Institute/Federalni zavod za zapošljavanje	Senada Bibic	Member of LEP II Steering board
	Snjezana Dedic	Former member of LEP II Steering board
Delegation of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ljiljana Pandzic	Member of LEP II Steering board
International labour organization	Lejla Tanovic	Member of LEP II Steering board
Trade Unions the Republika Srpska	Goran Stankovic	Deputy member of the LEP II Advisory board
Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Crafts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Zdenko Peric	Deputy member of the LEP II Advisory board
Directorate for european integrations	Srdjan Mitrovic	Member of LEP II Advisory board
Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of the Republika Srpska	Milka Latincic	Member of LEP II Advisory board
	Bojana Sombolac	Deputy member of the LEP II Advisory board
Employers' Associations of Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Seval Suljkanovic	Member of LEP II Advisory board
Employment Institute of Brcko District BiH	Admir Galijatovic	Deputy member of the LEP II Advisory board

Annex 6.6. Evaluation Matrix

Question/Sub Question (if any)	Measure(s) or indicator(s)	Data sources	Data collection method	Stakeholders/Informants	Analysis and assessment
Relevance					
1. Did the project objectives attend the constituents' needs and national development objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives and strategy of the project support national priorities. The project supports priorities identified in the Annual Action Programme for BiH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National development plan/relevant policy Annual Action Programme for BiH document Project partners and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project steering committee and advisory board members Project staff and technical specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of relevant plan & policies, including UNFSDC and Annual Action Programme for BiH Triangulation based on different data sources
2. Have the relevant social partners been identified for the establishment of the local employment partnerships and how have they participated in the design and the project implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of established LEPs. Extent to which relevant social partners participated in the design and the project implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders Progress Reports LEPs Proposals LEPs Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project steering committee and advisory board members Project staff and technical specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative content analysis Triangulation based on different data sources
3. To what extent did the problem analysis, the project design and project strategies identify and integrate specific targets and indicators to attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equity Disability and social inclusion Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congruence between project strategy and root causes. Embeddedness of gender equality, disability and social inclusion in project framework (methodology, deliverables). Extent to which outputs are benefiting men and women and unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders PRODOC Logframe Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project steering committee and advisory board members Project staff and technical specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative content analysis Pattern analysis
4. Is the project design (i.e., Theory of Change), implementation modalities, resource allocation, etc., realistic, and purposeful towards achieving its objectives? Is the project design logical?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plausibility of intervention logic. Time availability for implementation. SMART quality of indicators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project partners and stakeholders PRODOC Logframe Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk review KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project steering committee and advisory board members Project staff and technical specialists Donor LEPs partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative content analysis Triangulation based on different data sources

Coherence					
<p>5. To what extent the strategy proposed by the project to foster sustainable partnership driven labour market frameworks at local level for an increased access to formal employment fits on other initiatives (ILO, UN, donor, government, and NGOs) contributing to increase and improve employment in BiH such as the Annual Action Programme for BiH, ILO P&B, the UNFSDC and the SDGs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which LEP II is supportive of Annual Action Programme for BiH, UNFSDC, SDG's and ILO's strategic policy frameworks. • Alignment of LEP II fits with other initiatives (ILO, UN, donor, government, and NGOs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Strategic policy frameworks • Previous assessments • PSC/PAB Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • LEPs partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Quantitative content analysis • Pattern analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
Effectiveness					
<p>6. To what extent the project is in process of achieving its objectives measured by the indicators established in the ProDoc?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of achievements against targets (as outlined in the ProDoc and Logframe). • How quality compares to international standards. • How stakeholders assess quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Beneficiaries • PRODOC • Logframe • Progress Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Mini-FGDs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • LEPs partners • Final beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis of gaps between desired and actual performance; and causes of the gaps
<p>7. What were the factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of the project objectives (including unexpected positive and negative outputs and outcomes)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual constraints affecting implementation of the project's expected results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Progress Reports • PSC/PAB Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • LEPs partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Pattern analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
<p>8. Within the achievement of the project objectives what measures were taken to address <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Gender equity o Disability and social inclusion o Unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances (inactive young people, older workers, individual with low level of education) </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which outputs are benefiting men and women, vulnerable groups (PwDs, unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances) in line with ILO Convention No. 111. • Documentation and analysis of stakeholder opinions about extent to which the main group of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Mini-FGDs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • LEPs partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Quantitative content analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources

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<p>SQ: How ILS, social tripartism and fair transition on the environment have been integrated in the project implementation and outcomes?</p>	<p>beneficiaries were included/impacted by the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of LEPs that develop/update gender-sensitive action plans that improve labour market governance in their communities (including through networking). • Number of green entrepreneurship established. 				
Efficiency					
<p>9. How efficiently have human and financial resources been allocated and used to provide the necessary support and to achieve the project objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of resources used to achieve particular outputs/outcomes, having regard to value of output/outcome achieved. • Sufficiency of funding for achieving the intended outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Financial reports • Previous assessments • PSC/PAB Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • Project steering committee and advisory board members • LEPs partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Quantitative content analysis • Comparative analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
<p>SQ: Could the same results be attained with fewer resources?</p>					
<p>10. Is the project M&E system operating and is oriented to accountability to the key stakeholders and learning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and quality of M&E system. • Systematic collection of monitoring data. • Existence of sex disaggregated data. • Usage of process monitoring during project implementation and existence of feedback mechanism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • LEP II M&E system • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • LEPs partners 	
<p>SQ: Does it provide feedback to project beneficiaries?</p>					
Impact					
<p>11. To what extent the project has contribute to improve employability in local communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share of LEPs that deliver activation and labour market integration programs in line with specific local needs. • Share of final beneficiaries employed after participating in the LEPs' interventions. • Number of enterprises actively engaged in LEPs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Beneficiaries • PRODOC • Logframe • Progress Reports • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Mini-FGDs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • LEP Partners • Direct beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Quantitative content analysis • Pattern analysis • Comparative analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
<p>12. What actions might be needed to enhance longer-term effects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinions of stakeholders on proposed actions may be required to improve long-term outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Progress Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Mini-FGDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis

Mid-Term Independent Evaluation of LEP II Project

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project staff and technical specialists • LEP Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative content analysis • Thematic analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
Sustainability					
<p>13. To which extent the project results will have a long term, sustainable positive contribution to a better employability in local communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share of local communities with functioning partnership-based mechanisms that improve employment outcomes and the delivery of active labour market programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Progress Reports • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • Donor • LEP Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis • Quantitative content analysis • Triangulation based on different data sources
<p>14. Has an effective and realistic exit strategy been developed and is being implemented?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence and quality of the sustainability strategy in project document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Progress Reports • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • LEP Partners 	
<p>15. To what extent is the achieved progress likely to be long lasting?</p> <p>SQ: Will partners be able to sustain the results beyond the project?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which measures taken built national ownership of project results • Extent to which the management and institutional capacity of LEPs partners have been strengthened in such areas as advocacy, networking/peer learning, and employment policy Implementation. • Number of network thematic meetings organized to support knowledge and experience sharing. • Availability/Commitment to provide resources (human and financial) necessary for continued implementation of activities from national sources after the project end. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners and stakeholders • Progress Reports • Previous assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk review • KIIs • Online surveys • Site visits to selected LEPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project steering committee and advisory board members • Project staff and technical specialists • LEP Partners 	

Annex 6.7. Data Collection Instruments

GENERAL KII GUIDE

Date:	
Name(s) and function(s) of interviewee(s) (for evaluation data analysis only):	
Gender (f/m):	
Organization:	
Location:	
Type of interview (online/offline):	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. My name is Katerina Stolyarenko. I am an independent evaluation expert and was invited by the ILO to undertake the mid-term independent project evaluation of the 'EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II)'. I am carrying out this evaluation to assess how well the project is meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholders like you and to find out how various aspects of the project have been working during January 2021-September 2023.

This interview is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time, either before or during the interview. There are no right or wrong answers. I want to hear your thoughts, based on your experience and your involvement with the project. The interview should not take more than 60-90 minutes to complete. Following the interview, I may want to contact you again in a few days to confirm or clarify some of the information you have shared with me.

Are you willing to be interviewed for this evaluation?

Yes No

The information you provide will be essential to understanding the achievements and limitations of the project. The information that will be provided by you is confidential and your name, position and organization will not be displayed in the evaluation report. I will not attribute any information that we receive to you, either in any report, transcript or notes from this discussion, or any conversations.

If you have no objections, I would like to record this discussion, but I wish to assure you that all recordings and notes will remain confidential and will be kept in a safe place. The recordings will be used for data analysis purposes only.

Do you mind if we record the interview? Yes No

Questions for Discussion⁴³

Target groups: ILO, Donor, Tripartite Constituents, LEP Partners

Introduction	Please describe your role in the LEP II
Validity of design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think the foundational information base upon which the project was conceptualized & designed was adequate (which information)? 2. Have the relevant social partners been identified for the establishment of the LEPs? Did they participate in the project design? 3. Were your needs as stakeholders taken into account in the design? (only for stakeholders) 4. How plausible is the linkage between activities/outputs & anticipated outcomes & impact and the broader development objective? 5. Do you think project design addresses adequately? 6. Do you think the project timeline is adequate? If not why and what should it have been? 7. How effective were the applied LEPs model (s)/strategies? 8. Was there baseline data? 9. Do you think performance indicators and targets are sufficient and did they comply with the SMART principles? 10. Do you think project targets were realistic given the project timeline, resources (human, finance and other), geographical coverage, number and mix of stakeholders involved, quantity and mix interventions? 11. What risks did the project face and do you think the project has had adequate systems for risk analysis and assessment? 12. Do you think project design addresses adequately ILO's cross-cutting issues such as the gender, disability and social inclusion, unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances, ILS, tripartism/social dialogue and a fair transition to environmental issues (i.e., green entrepreneurship)? Explain 13. Did the project have a communication strategy and how effective was it? If not what has been the implications?
Relevance and strategic fit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. What are the specific needs of each stakeholder group? (PES, Local authorities, Employers, Education and training institutions, NGOs, Local and regional development agencies)? Do the LEP II strategies adequately address these needs or are adjustments needed to better address them? 15. How relevant are project's interventions to Government policies/strategies and which ones in particular? (e.g., alignment with National Economic Reform Programme (NERP), BiH Economic Reform Program 2020-2022, Employment Strategy for period 2018-2021 and requirements related to the European integration process as per IPA II)
Coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Are the project interventions relevant/complementary/well linked to the objectives/priority outcomes under: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual Action Programme for BiH? ○ ILO programming and implementation frameworks (e.g., P&B (Outcome 3, output 3.2)? ○ IPA II/EU development initiatives ○ UN Framework for Sustainable Development Cooperation ○ SDGs of Agenda 2030 (e.g., SDG-4 and SDG-8) ○ Other ongoing ILO programmes/projects in BiH (which ones?)

⁴³ Questions to be tailored in accordance with the type of respondent being interviewed...that is to navigate around the evaluation questions depending on relevance to, and the nature of involvement of the respondent

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other UN & non-UN (donor, government, and NGOs) initiatives on increasing and improving employment in BiH (which ones?)
<p>Project Performance and Effectiveness</p>	<p>17. Could you describe the main achievements of the LEP II thus far?</p> <p>18. Have the achievements been in line with work plans? If not why?</p> <p>19. Which aspect of the project was most successful (geographic, component, issue etc)? In what way and what were the explanatory factors?</p> <p>20. How do the outputs and outcomes contribute to the ILO's mainstreamed strategies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do they contribute to gender equality ○ How do they contribute to disability and social inclusion? ○ How do they contribute to support of the unemployed population in vulnerable circumstances ○ How do they contribute to the strengthening of the social partners and social dialogue? ○ How do they contribute to strengthening the influence of labour standards? ○ How do they contribute to a fair transition to environmental issues (i.e., green entrepreneurship)? <p>21. In your view, does this project have any unintended results (positive/negative)? If yes, please name them.</p> <p>22. What internal and external factors (positive/negative) influenced the performance of the project?</p>
<p>Project Management Arrangement</p>	<p>23. How is the project management /governance arrangement (PAB and PSC) organized? Is it adequate?</p> <p>24. Do all relevant stakeholders get involved in project activities an appropriate and sufficient manner?</p> <p>25. Do the various parties understand their respective role & responsibilities?</p> <p>26. How were the working relationship between within and between stakeholder groups (team work)?</p> <p>27. How LEPs partners have been selected? Please explain your response. (only for project team)</p> <p>28. What is your level of satisfaction of the performance of LEP partners? What explanation can you give for the differences in the level of performance? (only for project team and LEP Lead Partners)</p> <p>29. How would you assess the support and guidance by the LEP Lead Partner? (only for Other LEP Partners)</p> <p>30. What improvements could be made in terms of how the LEP Lead Partner team supports LSG, PES, Education and training institutions, and NGOs? Please elaborate (only for Other LEP Partners)</p> <p>31. Does the project have an adequate M&E system and how effective is it?</p> <p>32. How regularly/effectively is project performance monitoring done?</p> <p>33. Is relevant information systematically collected and collated?</p> <p>34. Is data disaggregated by sex (and by other relevant characteristics if relevant)?</p> <p>35. Is there adequate political/administrative support by national stakeholders?</p> <p>36. How effective was backstopping support by ILO CO, DW-Budapest and HQ-Geneva?</p>

	37. Has the project been collaborating with other ILO programmes/other donors' Initiatives in the country/region to increase its effectiveness and impact?
Adequacy and Efficiency of resource use	38. Are available resources (human resources & expertise, finance/budget, timeline and other) adequate to fulfil the project plans? 39. Are the resources strategically allocated and used efficiently? 40. Are financial disbursements and project expenditures in line with expected budgetary plans? If not, what are the bottlenecks encountered? 41. What resources does the project leverage from external sources? 42. To what extent are you satisfied with reporting (progress and financial)? <i>(only for donor)</i>
Impact Orientation	43. In what ways did the project contribute to the long-term goal of the LEP II (i.e., better employability in local communities?) 44. What actions might be needed to enhance longer-term effects? 45. What changes LEP II brought to your institution? Explain <i>(only for LEPs partners)</i>
Sustainability	46. What is the project's exit strategy ? In your view, how effective and realistic it is? <i>(only for project team)</i> 47. How do you plan to sustain the results beyond the project? <i>(only for LEPs partners)</i> 48. Are there any sustainability measures in place? What are these measures? How effective do you think they are? 49. What contributions has the project made thus far in strengthening the capacity of stakeholders (<i>Government, social partners and LEP partners</i>) in terms of knowledge base to encourage ownership? 50. What is the level of commitment, policy support, technical and financial capacity of partners including government to continue local employment partnerships programmes for an increased access to formal employment? 51. Are local institutions sensitized well enough on the project? 52. Are there possibilities of replicating all or part of the LEP methodology in different locations or on a bigger scale in BiH?
Lessons Learned/ Best Practices	53. Has the LEP II produced any important practices or lessons thus far?
Recommendations	54. What further support should the ILO provide to Tripartite Constituents and LEP partners to ensure the achievement of the set targets? 55. What can LEP II do now to increase the likelihood of sustainability?
Closure	Is there anything more you would like to add?

MINI-FGD GUIDELINES

Date:	
Total # of participants:	; # of male - ; # of female -
LEP name:	

Introduction:

1. Turn on Tape Recorder
2. Welcome

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group. I appreciate your willingness to participate.

3. Introduction

Introduce ourselves, and send the Sign-In Sheet around to the group while you are introducing the focus group.

My name is Katerina Stolyarenko. I am an independent evaluation consultant and was invited by the ILO to undertake the mid-term independent project evaluation of the "EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II)" Project. This project aims at improving the socio-economic situation and living conditions in BiH by ensuring better employability in the local communities. I am carrying out this evaluation to assess how well the project is meeting the needs of end-beneficiaries like you and to find out how various aspects of the project have been working during January 2021-September 2023.

4. Explanation of the process

About the purpose of the focus group

We gathered today in order to discuss your experience in participation of LEP training programmes and follow-up services. I need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with me.

Duration of FGD

- Focus group will last up to 1.5 hours

5. Ground Rules

- *I would like everyone to participate. Every person's experience and opinion are important. Speak up whether you agree or disagree. I want to hear a wide range of opinions.*
- *The information you give me is completely confidential, and I will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.*
- *I would like to record the focus groups so that I can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas we hear from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups and the recordings will be destroyed as soon as they are transcribed.*
- *You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at anytime.*
- *I understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. I will ask participants to respect each other's confidentiality.*

Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

6. Introductions

- Go around table: name, age, where are you from

Discussion begins, make sure to give people time to think before answering the questions and don't move too quickly. Use the probes to make sure that all issues are addressed, but move on when you feel you are starting to hear repetitive information.

1. Why did you decide to take part in the LEP?
 - Probes: Were you unemployed or you wanted to get a better job or start/expand the business?
2. What were the major barriers for you to find a job and/or set up/improve your business?
 - Probes: What are the barriers in finding employment in your locality/trade?
 - Probes: What are the barriers to gaining start-up capital? What are the barriers to maintaining a business?
3. How were you selected for participation in this Project?
4. In which training courses have you participated and what was the training course(s) duration?
5. How would you evaluate the overall quality of the trainings, training materials, equipment and expertise of tutors?
 - Probes: Were the trainings sufficient/adequate in terms of training themes and trainings duration? Were the provided training materials relevant and useful? Did you receive certificates of completion? What else needed?
6. Which skills/knowledge were most important to you, least important, or not offered during these trainings?
7. How would you assess the level of improvement of your knowledge and skills after the participation in these trainings?
8. Were you able to find a job/start or expand your business after completion of the trainings? If yes, please be specific and bring examples. If no, why not?
9. How have you utilized or plan to utilize the knowledge and skills obtained during the trainings in your work/business? Please be specific and bring examples
10. Did the LEP's training(s) influence on the level of your monthly income? How?
11. Did your participation in trainings contributed to the establishment of (informal) knowledge-exchange and networking among course participants? If yes, bring examples. If no, why?
12. How you are going to use further the acquired knowledge and skills in your work/business?
13. Suppose that you were in charge and could make one change that would make the trainings better. What would you do?

SURVEY FORMS

Survey among VET Beneficiaries

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are kindly requested to spare some few minutes to help complete a survey regarding employment outcomes of vocational training graduates. The data obtained will assist ILO and its partners to effectively formulate and implement training plans and labour market strategies. All information obtained with utmost confidentiality.

If you agree to participate, please proceed with completing this survey.

Thank you again for your help in collecting this valuable information!

Q.N.	Question	Answers	Skip To
SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION			
1	What is your gender?	Male Female	
2	What is your age?	15-29 30-44 45-60 above 60	
3	What is your educational background?	Elementary school General secondary school Vocational and technical secondary education Higher education	
4	What municipality do you reside in?	_____ (name of municipality)	
5	What is your current marital status?	Single Engaged Married Divorced Widow(er) Separated	
6	What was the title of the vocational training you received?		
7	State the institution where you did your vocational training	_____ (name of Education and Training Institution)	
8	In which year did you complete the vocational training?	2022 2023	
9	What was the duration of your vocational training?	_____ (in months)	
10	How have you learned about the public call?	Website Social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, etc) Municipality Public Employment Service Other (please specify)	
11	How did you find the application process?	Very Easy Easy Difficult Very difficult	

SECTION B: EVALUATION OF STUDY CONDITIONS AND FACILITIES AT EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS			
12	How would you rate the training conditions and provisions you experienced at the Education and Training institution?		
	Quality of classroom learning	1 (Poor) 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)	
	Supply of learning materials (e.g., books, internet access)	1 (Poor) 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)	
	Quality of technical equipment	1 (Poor) 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)	
	Supply of training materials	1 (Poor) 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)	
	Quality of buildings	1 (Poor) 2 3 4 5 (Excellent)	
13	Have you received any compensation benefits from LEP during the training (e.g., travel costs, hot meals etc.)?	Yes	
		No	
14	Did you receive a certification after the completion of the vocational training?	Yes	
		No	
SECTION D: PERCEPTION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING			
15	Looking back, would you again choose the same trade?	Yes	
		No	
16	Would you choose the same Education and Training institution again?	Yes	Go to Q18
		No	Go to Q17
17	If not, why?		
18	Overall, to what extent are you satisfied with your trade training?	Very Satisfied	
		Satisfied	
		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	
		Dissatisfied	
		Very Satisfied	
SECTION E: EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORY			
19	Were you employed before your study at the Education and Training institution?	Yes	
		No	
20	What is your total number of years of working experience?		
21	What is your current employment status?	Employed full time	Go to Q24
		Employed part-time	Go to Q24
		Employed temporarily	Go to Q24
		Unemployed and looking for employment	Go to Q22
		Unemployed and not looking for employment	Go to Q22
22	What are the difficulties you encountered in looking for a job?	Takes too long to find one	Go to Q23
		Employers not interested in my level qualifications	
		Employers not interested in my area of specialization	
		Lack of work experience	
		Limited employment opportunities in my area	
		Other (please specify)	
23	How long have you been looking for a job after training?	Less than 6 months	Go to Q39
		6 – 12 months	
		over 12 months	

24	In which country are you employed?	Bosnia and Herzegovina Germany Austria Slovenia Croatia Other (specify)	
25	How many hours per day you work?		
26	How many hours per week you work?		
27	What is the name of your current employer?		
28	In what industry sector are you working in?	Trade Construction Manufacturing ICT Hospitality and tourism Transportation Garments Health and Beauty Services Agribusiness Other (please specify)	
29	Is this your first job after the training?	Yes No	Go to Q30 Go to Q31
30	How long did it take you to find your present job?	0-6 months 7-9 months 10-12 months If more than one (1) year, please specify how long	
31	How long did it take you to find your first job after training?	0-6 months 7-9 months 10-12 months If more than one (1) year, please specify how long	
32	What is your average monthly income at your present job?	up to 350 EUR (700 BAM) between 350 EUR-600 EUR (700-1,200 BAM) above 600 EUR (1,200 BAM)	
33	What kind of fringe/other benefit(s) do you receive? Multiple answers are possible	Housing (subsidy, rent allowance) Transportation (car/transport allowance) Education and training (staff development, family study rebate) Retirement (pension, gratuity) Food Other (please specify) _____ None	
34	Has your salary increased as a result of the vocational training?	No previous salary Yes No	Go to Q35 Go to Q36
35	If yes, by what percentage?		

36	How did you find your current job? Choose only one answer.	Replied to job ads/announcements (e.g., newspaper, internet, notice)		
		With the help of family contacts of parents, relatives		
		With help of personal contacts of friends, fellow students etc.		
		Through independent contact to employers		
		Through job attachments during my training program		
		Through job attachments after graduation		
		Through part-time jobs during s training program		
		Through part-time jobs after training		
		I was contacted by an employer		
		Through registration at Public Employment Service		
		Through private employment agencies		
		Through internet (social) networks (e.g., Facebook)		
Other (please specify) _____				
37	How long have you been working for your current employer?	Less than 6 months		
		6 – 12 months		
		over 12 months		
38	How many employers did you work for before the current one?	0		
		1		
		2		
		More than 2		
SECTION H: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT				
39	(Compare the skills you acquired from your training and your ability to perform on your current or previous job), would you say your training was:	Very relevant		
		Adequate		
		Not relevant		
40	Overall, how do you rate the usefulness of your vocational training?			
		For finding an adequate job after finishing your vocational training		1 (Not at all useful) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely useful)
		For fulfilling your present professional tasks, if applicable		1 (Not at all useful) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely useful)
		For your future professional development/career		1 (Not at all useful) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely useful)
		For the development of your personality		1 (Not at all useful) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely useful)
41	Do you believe the vocational training enabled you to find employment?	Yes		
		No		
42	To what extent was the certificate/diploma important for finding the job?	Very Important		
		Fairly Important		
		Important		
		Slightly Important		
		Not important at all		

SECTION J: FURTHER VOCATIONAL TRAINING AFTER GRADUATION			
43	Did you participate in other training (university, evening classes, short courses) since you completed vocational training program?	Yes	Go to Q44
		No	Go to Q45
44	If yes, please describe the type of course		
45	If No, why not?	No relevant course available	
		No need for further training	
		No money to pay for training	
		Other, please specify _____	
46	Would you like to attend further training courses?	Yes	
		No	
SECTION I: JOB SATISFACTION			
47	To what extent are you satisfied with your current job situation?	Very Satisfied	
		Satisfied	
		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	
		Dissatisfied	
		Very Unsatisfied	
48	How satisfied are you with the following aspects		
	Job security	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Income and benefits	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Career prospect e.g. (chances for promotion, and professional development)	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Possibility of pursuing further studies	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Social recognition and status	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Possibility of using acquired knowledge and skills	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Good social climate / work setting	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Tasks	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Management	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
	Chance of doing something useful for society	1 (Not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Absolutely)	
Other, please specify			
49	Which aspects are most important for job satisfaction for you? (check the three most important)		
	Income		
	Career prospect e.g. (low chances for promotion, and professional development)		
	Working hours		
	Management		
	Type of tasks		
	Possibility of using acquired knowledge and skills		
	Social climate / work setting		
	Other, please specify		

SECTION F: COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS			
50	Based on your present work, what do you suggest to improve in the implementation of the vocational training? (Check all that applies)	Theoretical training related to the occupation	
		Practical use of computers	
		Practical use of working tools	
		Practical use of machines and equipment	
		Practical use of materials and parts	
		Theory and practice of equipment maintenance	
		Doing measurements at work	
		Use of written instructions and working guides	
		Communication and working with other people	
		Knowledge of national laws	
		How to do your work in a safe way	
		How to do high quality and (better paid) work	
		Discipline and accuracy at work	
		How to start my own business	
General education subjects			
Other, please specify			
51	In overall, to what extent the Vocational training program met your expectations?	Greatly exceed expectations	
		Exceeded expectations	
		Matched expectations	
		Less than expected	
		Much less than expected	
Thank you for completing the survey! Your participation is greatly appreciated.			

Survey among Entrepreneurship Beneficiaries

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are kindly requested to spare some few minutes to help complete a survey regarding outcomes of entrepreneurship program graduates. The data obtained will assist ILO and its partners to effectively formulate and implement training plans and labour market strategies. All information obtained with utmost confidentiality.

If you agree to participate, please proceed with completing this survey.

Thank you again for your help in collecting this valuable information!

Q.N.	Question	Answers	Skip To
SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION			
1	What is your gender?	Male Female	
2	What is your age?	15-29 30-44 45-60 above 60	
3	What municipality do you reside in?	_____ (name of municipality)	
4	What is your current marital status?	Single Engaged Married Divorced Widow(er) Separated	
5	What is the highest level of your education?	Elementary school General secondary school Vocational and technical secondary education Higher education	
6	In which Entrepreneurship training program, you took part?	Start your Business Improve Your Business	
7	In which year did you complete from the Entrepreneurship training program?	2022 2023	
SECTION B: BUSINESS INFORMATION AND FACILITIES AT THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP INSTITUTION			
8	What is your current business situation?	Started first business after the Entrepreneurship training program Had business but closed down Has not yet started, but still intend to start Has not yet started, and won't	Go to Q9 Go to Q33 Go to Q33 Go to Q33
9	What was the main reason why you decided to start your business? (Select one)	I have always wanted to run my own business I had no other option to earn a living I thought my knowledge & skills were best suited to being an entrepreneur I thought I could earn more money by having my own business I was inspired by a successful entrepreneur in person I was inspired by a successful entrepreneur in the media Friends/relatives suggested that I become an entrepreneur	

		Other (please specify)	
10	Is your business formally registered?	Yes	Go to Q11
		No	Go to Q12
11	What type of business registration is it?	Sole Proprietor	
		Craft	
		Limited Company	
		Partnership	
		Cooperative	
		Other (please specify)	
12	In your view, what are the major advantages of having a registered (formal) business? (Check all that apply)	Registered businesses have better access to markets, including export markets	
		Registered businesses can benefit from social insurance or social protection programs	
		Registered businesses are able to access government support/ assistance programs	
		Registered businesses do not have to fear the fines or harassment by police and other authorities that informal enterprises do	
		Registered businesses have better access to finance, business support services and training programs	
		Registered businesses can compete for government contracts as suppliers	
		Don't know/Difficult to say	
		Other (specify)	
13	Have you received grant for your business from the program?	Yes	
		No	
14	What was the amount of grant?	_____ (in BAM)	
15	What was the grant amount used for?	Equipment	
		Raw materials	
		Other (specify)	
16	What was the amount of co-financing by yourself?	_____ (in BAM)	
17	Did you receive any additional grants?	Yes	Go to Q19
		No	
18	If yes, from whom and how much?		
19	Would you have started the same business without the grant that you received?	Yes	
		No	
		Don't know	
20	How LEP has played a role in helping them set up a business?		
21	Was any additional assistance provided by LEP in the post-award grant period (e.g., mentoring, etc.)?	Yes	
		No	
22	In which sector do you have a business? (Select one)	Trade	
		Construction	
		Manufacturing	
		ICT	
		Hospitality and tourism	
		Transportation	
		Garments	
		Health and Beauty	
Services			

		Agribusiness	
		Other (please specify)	
23	What is the specific nature of your business?		
24	What is your position in business?	Owner/manager	
		Shared owner	
		Employee/member	
25	Do you think your business has an [negative] impact for the environment?	Yes	
		No	
		Unsure	
SECTION C: BUSINESS OUTCOMES			
26	How many people does your business employ at the moment (including owner)?	Only myself	
		1–3 employees	
		4–5 employees	
		6–10 employees	
		Over 10 employees	
27	What is the average monthly revenue of your business this year (2023)?	_____ (in BAM)	
28	What aspects of your business have improved due to the knowledge gained from the Entrepreneurship training program? (Check all that apply)	Increased client base	
		Established new partners to contribute towards the business	
		Improved sales	
		Improved financial management and systems	
		Improved business processes	
		Relationship management	
		Improved marketing	
		Improved digital sales	
		Hired new staff	
		Was able to receive a loan for my business	
		Other (please specify)	
29	Are there any competitors in your village/town/city?	Yes	
		No	
30	How do you align your business to remain competitive?	Niche	
		Good customer care	
		Marketing	
		Lower prices	
		Other (please specify)	
31	How do you expect your business to perform over next year?	Better	
		Same	
		Worse	
		Much worse	
32	What are the major challenges that you have been experiencing with your business?	I do not have enough finance	
		I lack access to markets	
		I can no longer keep up with the competition	
		I do not have all the right skills or knowledge	
		Other (please specify)	
SECTION D: PERCEPTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM			
33	Please assess the impact of the Entrepreneurship training program on your knowledge and skills:		
	I am able to see myself starting and running a business	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	

	I am confident of developing a product using needs identification techniques	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand the mindset of consumers and how to market my product/service to them	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am able to communicate my business ideas to other people such as potential customers and potential business partners	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am capable of conducting market research by myself	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I know how to pitch and sell ideas and products/ services to people	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am able now to write good business plans	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am able to determine appropriate pricing strategies and channels for marketing	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am confident of doing up a budget for my business	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand the financial requirements and considerations to start and run a business	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I am able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of my business idea in comparison to existing products/ services in the market	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand how to develop and analyse income statements	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand that starting a business is about taking and managing risks	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand that even though the objective of running a business is to earn money, I should be guided by moral principles	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I realize that starting and managing a profitable business requires plenty of hard work and sacrifice	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
	I understand that starting and running a business involves facing many problems and having to tackle them when they arise	1 (Not at all confident) 2 3 4 5 (Extremely confident)	
SECTION E: PERCEPTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM			
34	How did you know about Entrepreneurship training program?	Through a Public Call	
		Public Employment Service	
		Sector association	
		Education and Training Institution	
		From a friend	
		Social media	
		Newspapers	
		Radio or Television	
		Trainers	
		Others (please specify)	

35	What do think of level of complexity of the Entrepreneurship training program?	Very Easy Easy Balanced Difficult Very difficult	
36	Were the training materials		
	Easily understandable?	Yes No	
	A bit complex?	Yes No	
	Relevant?	Yes No	
37	What was the quality of the trainers?	Precise?	Yes No
		Excellent	
		Very Good	
		Good	
		Fair	
38	In overall, to what extent the Entrepreneurship training program met your expectations?	Poor	
		Greatly exceed expectations	
		Exceeded expectations	
		Matched expectations	
		Less than expected	
Much less than expected			
Thank you for completing the survey! Your participation is greatly appreciated.			

Survey among Employers

Dear Sir/Madam,

You are kindly requested to spare some few minutes to help complete a survey regarding employment outcomes of vocational training graduates of the LEP Program. The data obtained will assist ILO and its partners to effectively formulate and implement training plans and labour market strategies. All information obtained with utmost confidentiality.

If you agree to participate, please proceed with completing this survey.

Thank you again for your help in collecting this valuable information!

Q.N.	Question	Answers	Skip To
SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT EMPLOYER			
1	To which sector of the economy does your company belong?	Trade Construction Manufacturing ICT Hospitality and tourism Transportation Garments Health and Beauty Services Agribusiness Other (please specify)	
2	Main Activity/Product:		
3	Secondary Activity/Product:		
4	What is your position in the company?	Senior level manager or owner (Director, Deputy Director, President, Board Chairman and similar) Mid-level manager (Head of a department or a manager of a group of people, HR Manager, Chief Financial Officer) Specialist (technologist, engineer, sales manager, accountant etc.) Other (please, explain):	
5	What is an estimated size of your company?	Micro (1-15 employees) Small (16-50 employees) Medium (51-200 employees) Large (over 200 employees)	
6	In which municipality your company is located?		
7	What was your annual turnover in 2022?	_____ (BAM)	
8	Does your enterprise export oriented?	Yes No	Go to Q9 Go to Q10
9	On which markets?		
10	Did your company have previous experience in any VET training programs either through LEP 1 program or other similar interventions?	Yes No	
SECTION B: LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT OF LEP PROGRAM GRADUATES			
11		None	

	In general, what percentage of the positions in your company require a post-secondary degree, diploma or program certificate?	1% to 25%	
		26% to 50%	
		51% to 75%	
		76% to 100%	
12	How many people have you employed at your company in the past 2 years?	_____ (total number)	
13	How many vocational training graduates of LEP program has your company hired in the last 2 years?	_____ (total number)	
		_____ (# of male)	
		_____ (# of female)	
14	When did your company last hire vocational training graduates of LEP program (indicate month and year, for example August 2023)?		
15	How many vocational training graduates of LEP program are still currently employed in your company at the time of survey?		

SECTION C: SATISFACTION WITH LEP PROGRAM GRADUATES HIRED

The following is a list of various types of skills and personal qualities that vocational training graduates of LEP program may be expected to have. We prefer that you take a generalized or composite approach in framing your opinion. Please try to consider the graduate-employee(s) in terms of their level of preparedness as a new employee rather than one who has worked in the field for a number of years.

Rate the following skills of the vocational training graduates of LEP program under your employ using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is "very unsatisfactory" and 5 is "very satisfactory".

16	The technical skills and knowledge needed for the job.	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	The ability to recognize and solve problems that arise on the job.	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Understands and speaks the language in which business is conducted	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	The ability to communicate in speech and writing	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	The individual listens to understand and learn	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	The ability to work well in a group to achieve a goal	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Enthusiasm on the job	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Initiative needed to fully complete tasks	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	The ability to manage their time while working with little supervision	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Remain accountable for actions taken	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Easily adopts on the work environment	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Has the ability to handle stress and pressure on the job	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
	Accepts other jobs other than specified on the job description	1 (Very unsatisfactory) 2 3 4 5 (Very satisfactory)	
17	Have the vocational training graduates of LEP program contributed to	Yes	Go to Q18
		No	Go to Q19

	improvements in the performance of your company?			
18	How?			
19	Overall, how would you rate your level of satisfaction with the work and performance of the vocational training graduate or graduates of LEP program in your company?	Very Satisfied		
		Satisfied		
		Moderately Satisfied		
		Dissatisfied		
		Very Dissatisfied		
20	Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statements. Education and training institutions of LEP II program respond to the needs of my enterprise by:			
		providing an adequate supply of graduates		1 (Strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (Strongly agree)
		providing appropriate skills to graduates		1 (Strongly disagree) 2 3 4 5 (Strongly agree)
21	Based on your experience employing LEP II program vocational training graduates in your company, will you continue to hire them?	Yes		
		No		
22	In overall, to what extent the LEP II program met your expectations?	Greatly exceed expectations		
		Exceeded expectations		
		Matched expectations		
		Less than expected		
		Much less than expected		
SECTION D: COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS				
23	Based on your experience of hiring graduates of LEP II program, what do you suggest to improve further in the implementation of the vocational training? (Check all that applies)	Theoretical training related to the occupation		
		Practical use of computers		
		Practical use of working tools		
		Practical use of machines and equipment		
		Practical use of materials and parts		
		Theory and practice of equipment maintenance		
		Doing measurements at work		
		Use of written instructions and working guides		
		Communication and working with other people		
		Knowledge of national laws		
		How to do work in a safe way		
		How to do high quality and (better paid) work		
		Discipline and accuracy at work		
General education subjects				
Other (please specify)				
Thank you for completing the survey! Your participation is greatly appreciated.				

Survey among LEP Partners

Introduction

Dear partner,

At the moment, ILO is conducting an independent mid-term evaluation the **EU Support to Local Employment Partnerships - Phase II (LEP II)** which started its implemented since January 2021. The goal of this evaluation is to assess how well the project is meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholders, like you, and to find out how various aspects of the project have been working.

This survey is voluntary; you can choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the survey. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your thoughts, based on your experience and your involvement with the project. The survey should not take more than 5 minutes to complete.

The information you provide will be essential to understanding the achievements of the LEP II project thus far. All information you provide through this survey will remain confidential. In case you provide enough detail in your answers that may identify you and/or your organization, please be reassured that your answers will be kept strictly confidential (only researchers would know/be able to identify you and your organization). No information or responses will be linked to you.

Please note that all answers will remain strictly confidential. We will not connect the responses, which you provide via survey, to you, in any reports, transcripts, notes, or any conversations that we may have.

If you agree to participate, please proceed with completing this survey.

Thank you again for your help in collecting this valuable information!

7. In overall, to what extent the LEP is meeting your expectations thus far?

- Greatly exceed expectations
- Exceeded expectations
- Matched expectations
- Less than expected
- Much less than expected

8. Any additional comments and feedback

Thank you for completing the survey! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Annex 6.8. Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Lessons Learnt

ILO Lesson Learned No1: Monitoring and evaluation of skills development initiatives need systematic frameworks and follow-up activities to assess results beyond outreach.

Project Title: EU Support to Local Employment Partnership – Phase II (LEPII)

Project TC/SYMBOL: BIH/20/02/EUR

Name of Evaluators: Katerina Stolyarenko

Date: 18 January 2023

The following lessons learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	Existing monitoring data of LEP II project skills development interventions (vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes) mostly focus on the outputs, i.e. the number of hard-to-employ trained, secured employment, number of young entrepreneurs supported and number of starts-up registered. The percentage of participants in skills development activities who were able to sustain employment and sustained their businesses is assessed in some cases.
Context and any related preconditions	LEPs should have a coherent monitoring and evaluation framework for post-activity follow-up and monitoring of results at the outcome level, in terms of projects' contribution to decent job creation and improvement in job conditions.
Targeted users / Beneficiaries	LEPs, project management, and ILO
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	LEPs are not able to assess the cost-effectiveness of the project nor its impact at the individual level, since follow-up monitoring is not conducted with project participants to collect data on income and business earnings.
Success / Positive Issues - Causal factors	For emerging areas of engagement such as digital economy, continued monitoring is particularly needed to assess the results of the pilots for learning from experience so as to develop a more coherent programmatic approach.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	N/A

Good Practices

ILO Emerging Good Practice No1: The implementation of the LEP II project in BiH is a good practice example on how to create jobs through decentralized responses to local labour market needs.

Project Title: EU Support to Local Employment Partnership – Phase II (LEPII)

Project TC/SYMBOL: BIH/20/02/EUR

Name of Evaluators: Katerina Stolyarenko

Date: 18 January 2023

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text can be found in the full evaluation report.

GP Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The practice of delivering the project in cooperation with and through LEPs local partners provides the project inter alia with good access to the project stakeholders and beneficiaries; a more cost-efficient means of delivering services; and the opportunity to develop local capacities and skills.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The approach to grant the local partners considerable autonomy in the design and implementation of the activities, thereby recognizing the professionalism of the local partners, and backing this up by defined performance targets and close monitoring, contributed to ensure their commitment and service quality.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The key achievements of the practice are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In the first half of the project implementation, 104 key stakeholders’ representatives participated in the training on concept notes and full project proposals for partnership-based interventions on employment. ▪ 38 concept notes received from local employment partnerships. ▪ 20 LEPs successfully developed local employment development initiatives for EU funding and local resources. ▪ In total, 20 LEPs have 210 partners which are represented by local authorities, local and regional development agencies, PES, private sector, education and training institutions as well as civil society.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public employment services ▪ Local authorities ▪ Local and regional development agencies ▪ Education and training institutions ▪ Employers ▪ Civil society organizations

Potential for replication and by whom	<p>Necessary condition for replication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the participation of all partners (representatives of the labour and employment sector, public administration, employers and the education sector) in the development of partnership principles ▪ Clear understanding by each partner of their role in the LEP and how they will benefit from the partnership in the activities in which they operate ▪ Identification of the local needs of the labour market and design those measures that are a response to local needs
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ILO Country Programme Outcome BiH128 ▪ ILO Decent Work Agenda ▪ ILO Programme and Budget (P&B) 2022-2023
Other documents or relevant comments	N/A