ILO EVALUATION

- Evaluation Title: **Employment and Social Affairs Platform**

- ILO TC/SYMBOL: **RER/15/03/EUR**

- Type of Evaluation: **Final end-of-project evaluation**

- Country(ies): **Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo[1], Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia)**

- Date of the evaluation: **28 June to 25 October 2019**

- Name of consultant(s): **Thomas Vasseur**

- ILO Administrative Office: **Decent Work Team/Country Office for CEE (DWT/CO-Budapest)**

- ILO Technical Backstopping Office: **DWT/CO Budapest and Employment and Labour Market Policies Branch (EMPLAB)**

- Date project ends: **30 October 2019**

- Donor: country and budget US$ **EU Contribution (IPA) EUR 1,499,025.00 - Total budget: USD 1,722,515.00**

- Evaluation Manager: **Maria Borsos**

- Key Words: **Employment, Social Affairs, International Labor Standards, Gender, Anti-discrimination, Economic, Regional, EU Accession, Western Balkans**

This evaluation has been conducted according to the 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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[1] **As per UNSCR 1244.**

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS PLATFORM

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ESAP

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Author: *Thomas Vasseur, Evaluation Consultant*

Date: *October 2019*

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Acknowledgments

The evaluator is thankful to all interviewed stakeholders for their availability and insightful contribution, particularly to the ILO ESAP team and the ILO National Coordinators for their outstanding administrative and logistical support in arranging field interviews on the topics reviewed.

1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Full Name
APRLD	Agency for the Peaceful Resolution of Labour Disputes
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DWT/CO	Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office
ERP	Economic Reform Programmes
ESC	Economic and Social Councils
EU	European Union
EUR	EURO
EUD	European Union Delegation
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
HQ	Headquarter
LI	Labour Inspectorate
LED	Local economic development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PES	Public Employment Services
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RS	Republika Srpska
SC	Steering Committee
SLIC	Senior Labour Inspectors Committee
TA	Technical Assistance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	The World Bank

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background and description

The Economic and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) is a 1,725,000 EUR project funded by the EU Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, with a contribution of 1,499,250 EUR from the EU 2015 IPA II Multi-country Action Programme. It was implemented from April 2016 to October 2019. ESAP's overall objective was to assist the governments from the Western Balkan region in advancing employment and social policy reforms as they work towards EU accession. Its specific objective was to create a sustainable platform for governments and the social partners to share good practices and lessons learned related to social dialogue, labour inspection and public employment services at the sub-regional and national levels. It was executed in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244).

The project was comprised of three components: (1) improving the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes, (2) strengthening national labour inspectorates, and (3) providing technical assistance to and cross-fertilization with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

The purpose, scope, and methodology of the evaluation

The overall purpose of ESAP's final evaluation was learning and program improvement. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the strategy and assumptions guiding the project, and to assess the extent to which the project's actions have supported broader ILO strategies and objectives. The evaluation uses the standard OECD and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation approach while assessing ESAP along the following OECD/DAC criteria:

a) relevance and quality of the design in relation to its logical framework;
b) efficiency of implementation with respect to project output and activities;
c) effectiveness (including impact, synergies with other initiatives, and project visibility);
d) potential sustainability (the level of policy support provided, its ability to contribute to institutions, and capacity-building); and
e) good practices and lessons learned for the ILO and the project stakeholders.

This evaluation is expected to inform future project strategy and operational design both within the ILO and for the project stakeholders.
The evaluation is written with the following recipients in mind:
- the ILO tripartite constituents and national project partners;
- the donor country or contracting authority;
- ILO management and technical specialists (in the ILO DWT/CO Budapest, and in cooperating departments at the Headquarters); and
- the project staff.

The evaluation reviewed the project as a whole from April 2016 to October 2019 in all target countries.

The evaluation includes a <u>desk review</u> of the project (analysing the detailed methodology, the data collection tools used and the implementation plan of the project) and a <u>field phase</u> consisting of in-person interviews with key stakeholders. Along with face-to-face interviews and remote interviews with ILO staff in Budapest, country visits were also organized in Albania, BiH, Montenegro, and Serbia in August and September.

Findings

ESAP is a demanding project for several reasons. It engages complex issues such as social dialogue, social policymaking, and labour market governance, and does so at both the regional and national levels. It aims to build a mechanism of regional cooperation while ensuring national relevance, interacting with multiple stakeholders on numerous activities and in coordination with the RCC. This is all the more complicated given its modest budget and limited staffing. Yet, despite these high ambitions and some design imperfections, the ESAP's partners have noted its added value and have praised the quality of expertise brought in by the ILO. This success is largely due to the ILO's unique combination of ILO's in-house (HQ-based and network of consulting experts) expertise, the facilitating and mobilising role of the ILO National Coordinators, the regional platform mechanism and the legitimacy of the Agency acquired over the establishment of long-standing trustful relations.

ESAP is the result of a consultation between the EC, the RCC and the ILO. A strong body of evidence led to the project's intervention into national institutions. All interviewed partners confirmed that the priorities addressed by ESAP were strongly relevant, and these are highlighted in the core EU, ILO and sub-regional strategies and frameworks.

Some of ESAP's shortcomings relate to the logic of the intervention, the insufficient description of the expected effects beyond the activity level, and a lack of indicators allowing parties to grasp the depth of these changes. However, the project delivered all of its planned activities in a timely manner, and in some cases even exceeded the proposal's expectations. For instance, four labour inspectorate awareness-raising campaigns have been implemented instead of two as initially envisaged.

The activities (some 25 in total) have led to several key results. The social dialogue process has been improved upon with varying results across the region. Economic social councils (ESCs) have become empowered through highly effective peer reviews of their organization, functional capacity and visibility.

Alternative dispute resolution has also been mainstreamed as a practice through the capacity-building support provided by ESAP to agencies for the peaceful resolution of labour disputes (APRLDs). This has contributed to a significant number of cases were referred to alternative resolution (out of court) bodies.

The area of occupational safety and health (OSH) also experienced some meaningful positive impacts. Labour inspection campaigns have powerfully raised awareness on the part of thousands of employers on issues related to occupational safety and health, and these campaigns also shed light on the phenomenon of undeclared work. This encouraged labour inspectorates to take a broader approach in tackling this phenomenon.

ESAP's virtual platform offers the potential for regional cooperation, though it has yet to be adopted by most of the project partners as a professional tool. ESAP Online thus could benefit from a revamping of its appearance and structure, making it more user-friendly and accessible to all of its users.

In its objectives, the project attempts to bring about regional cooperation, social dialogue, social policy and labour market reforms, thereby implying that ESAP is more than a project and has responsibilities beyond the project level. Strategically, ESAP is more than a project as it tackles long-term, transformative processes that can only be accompanied over multi-project cycles and whose direction needs to be guided by a longer-term vision backed by long-term commitment.

ESAP's commitment to these objectives also relates to accountability. Social dialogue and labour market reform changes are the result of multiple factors, including the capacity of key actors. However, increased institutional capacities do not systematically convert into formal outcomes, as they also require higher-level political validation. Consequently, ESAP should narrow its scope to those outcomes that lie within its area of responsibility and use indicators which, rather than measuring formal outcomes (especially when the realisation of those outcomes requires political validation), will exclusively grasp a demonstration of the capacity acquired by targeted stakeholders. Using strictly output indicators is a possible alternative. The limited influence of the project partners is also an indicator of their political weight and representativeness in national societies.

ESAP's strategic objectives also require that the project create a model of intervention. The evaluation has found that the project has outlined plans for a solid model, but that it has yet to be finalized. The intervention plan includes the following pillars, delivering national results with a regional approach: (1) establishing formal regional networks as a sustainable mechanism to ensure the continued capacity to advance on social dialogue and labour reforms; (2) stimulating improved practices through emulation and engagement tools such as peer reviews; (3) bringing knowledge and practice up-to-date with the help of the ILO and CEELex experts; and (4) involving ILO National Coordinators to facilitate the engagement of the social dialogue actors in the project.

The ILO is uniquely qualified to satisfy the demands of the four pillars, and the commitment and competency of the ILO staff working on ESAP has to be commended.

While the engagement strategy of ESAP has played a crucial role in ensuring the active participation of all partners (allowing for the delivery of all activities), ESAP has shown some limitations in terms of communication. A number of the interviewed stakeholders never received a formal presentation about the overall ESAP project, and several people were not clear about the distinction between the respective roles of the ILO and the RCC. While stakeholders in all countries of intervention had been introduced with and consulted on ESAP's content, partners have clearly reinstated their desire for greater consultation and more regular direct communication in future ESAP interventions.

Conclusions

In light of this external review, the evaluation has found ESAP to be a worthy project when comparing the modest financial resources available with the results achieved. However, a worthy project does not make a worthy investment with promising results if the commitment is not made over the long term. A second phase is needed for the consolidation of the results achieved to date.

One value created by ESAP was in establishing a model to enhance regional stakeholder engagement. This is potentially applicable in other regional contexts where geographic entities share join strategic interests. It is highly cost-effective, though the resources allocated should not be less than those allocated to ESAP.

ESAP has led to a multiplicity of results obtained through its activity rich Logframe. The shortage of appropriate indicators in the logical framework has limited the ability to get the full measure of ESAP's diverse contributions to the social dialogue in the Western Balkans. \

One project cycle is also too brief to yet grasp the measures that are expected to produce changes yet to happen. However, some significant and concrete changes have been made in the organization and functioning of social dialogue institutions: a new Law on Social Council in Montenegro, Northern Macedonia's new obligation to consult the ESC on economic matters or a significant increase in the allocation funds for the ESC in Serbia

Interviewed stakeholders have also expressed regret over the absence of a formal presentation on the intervention, explaining the joint role of the RCC and the ILO. This would have offered them an opportunity to acquire a broader understanding of the project and helped identify more synergies between the RCC and ILO projects. In any future intervention, a stronger coherence between the RCC and the ILO may be required, as well as a more detailed definition of their coordination and operational modalities.

Lessons Learned

A regional approach can offer an efficient model for instituting change, under certain conditions and provided that it is well thought out. The regional approach elaborated by ESAP shows that this method can be a best practice and can be established as a model for the Western Balkans or other sub-region sharing common characteristics.

Direct, face-to-face, regular communication is key for regional projects, especially when building a regional network and help maintain partners' interest and increase its leverage and impact in the future.

Peer review is a strong tool for capacity-building, stakeholder ownership and regional network construction. While receiving the high appreciation of involved institutions, it has proven to be both an efficient capacity-building tool and regional cooperation galvanizer.

The ESAP virtual platform offers a potentially powerful tool, but this would require a larger investment in its development and promotion. Its impact depends on the success of its design. It should prioritize user-friendliness, targeting stakeholders, promoting good practices, and the clear expression of its intended usage.

Two distinct projects carrying the same name (ILO's ESAP and RCC's ESAP) require a coherent and unified presentation. This distinction needs to be explained to partners in both projects, highlighting their strategic unity and the operational duality.

Good Practices

ESAP is a potential model for institutional strengthening and capacity-building through regional cooperation. It has been identified as a good practice in building the capacities of institutions across the region through stimulating regional cooperation.

Peer review is a key element of ESAP's regional strategy. The sharing of regional and international knowledge has enhanced ownership among stakeholders, raised awareness of their own gaps, and established a strong network likely to remain sustainable if maintained with regular events and supported by a user-friendly virtual platform.

Culturally tailored, direct, regular, and consultative communication is essential. More than just seeking feedback or collecting information from institutions, efficient communication requires direct, personalized relations to grasp the insights into the nuances of the national contexts and encourage thorough stakeholder involvement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated based on the findings of the evaluation.

Key recommendation 1: A second ESAP phase is recommended.

A second phase was requested by the project partners and is justified according to the evaluation. The second phase's funding should be confirmed formally, to avoid gaps between Phases 1 and 2 and to maintain stakeholder commitment.

Key recommendation 2: Although the main lines of ESAP 2 have already been drawn, the evaluation strongly recommends that this be further elaborated in series of preparatory steps.

Through consultation with the stakeholders, it has become apparent that ESAP 2 is already in formation, The preparatory phase should provide an opportunity to increase the project's strategic relevance, improve the logic of the intervention, and encourage more ownership through partner consultation.

This key recommendation suggests the following steps:

Sub recommendation 1: **Formalise the involvement of ILO National Coordinators in the ESAP II project using the definition of a support/facilitation role** (in dispatching information, collecting feedback form stakeholders, facilitating events…) in order to insure a smooth flow of information/collection of feedback. Establish a mechanism

Sub recommendation 2: **Seek the contributions of the ILO National Coordinators to improve ESAP 2 both in its content and approach.** At the country level, the ILO National Coordinators, jointly with ESAP management, should consult the project partners to help formulate realistic expectations at the country level. This would allow for ESAP technical assistance to meet both national and regional demands while creating a knowledge base at the regional level.

Sub recommendation 3: **Provide a formal description of the process leading to the longer-term objective of ESAP, and identify the steps needed to get there.** This could be done jointly between the RCC and the ILO. Stakeholders should be given a clearer vision of the overall ESAP intervention and a more precise roadmap for achieving these goals.

Sub recommendation 4: **Work jointly with the RCC to ensure strategic and operational coherence between both ESAP 2 projects so that they are perceived as one effort by national stakeholders.** This should involve coherence in strategy and clearly defined operational modalities for the organizations' roles and coordinating mechanisms. For instance, the RCC could take advantage of the ILO's presence at the country level and established relationships with the partners by asking them to help relay information about the ILO-RCC activities.[2]

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[2] Identifying the respective assets of the ILO and the RCC will help define the respective roles of each organization in ESAP's implementation. For instance, The ILO should be involved in planning technical expertise events, as regional events require substantial notice. Instilling operational coordination mechanisms at the project design level will also enhance implementation. For example, the ILO presence at the country level could be used by the RCC to foster communication with the national partners.

Sub recommendation 5: **Once ESAP 2 is developed in detail, the RCC and the ILO should hold a joint formal presentation on ESAP I's achievements and introduce ESAP 2 to concerned stakeholders.** *(ESAP's long-term vision and process could be included in this presentation).*

Key recommendation 3: **Build an ESAP 2 Logframe with a clear description of the expected results, ensuring that these results do not overly rely on factors external to the project.** Results should be measured against objectively verifiable indicators of partners having acquired and demonstrated (as long as this demonstrated does not imply "political validation") new capabilities. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that is using such indicators, allowing for so ESAP 2's results to be clearly identified and shared.

Key recommendation 4: **Integrate gender equality and anti-discrimination into the design of ESAP 2.** Set objectives and indicators so ESAP 2's achievements on these dimensions are measurable and more visible.

Key recommendation 5: **Define a development strategy of ESAP Online that explains its expected outcomes and functions and allows for it to become more user-friendly in the future.**

Key recommendation 6: **Ensure that ESAP 2 maintains active communication with the project partners.** As per the Key Recommendation 2 -Sub-recommendation 2, it is suggested for ILO National Coordinators' involvement in ESAP 2 project to be defined through specific functions in relation to ESAP communication. These tasks are to be defined by the project management and could include: relaying official communications, organizing, facilitating consultations with national institutions/stakeholders, assisting in collecting feedback from institutions/stakeholders.

Key recommendation 7: **Develop an engagement strategy targeting political decision-makers.** Organize awareness-raising events, such as parliamentary information-sharing sessions, to obtain further involvement from influential stakeholders that are not project partners.

3. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Economic and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) was created in response to the Western Balkan countries' weak labour market performance. These markets are characterized by low economic activity rates (particularly among women), high unemployment (especially among youth), and high shares of informality and migration. ESAP was developed to address these challenges, taking into account the national governments' limited capacities due to low economic growth, large fiscal deficits, and national contexts where social dialogue processes are constrained by polarized discussions on labour market and labour law reforms.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) have developed ESAP to address these challenges, in line with the priorities of the IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015. ESAP is funded by a grant agreement between the EU Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), and financed by the second phase of Instruments for Pre-Accession (IPA II) and the 2015 Annual Multi-country Action Programme (specific to Western Balkan countries in pre-accession to the EU).

ESAP's project team is based in Sarajevo, where management and human resources administration is carried out. ESAP has received additional financial and administrative support from the ILO regional office in Budapest, and additional technical support from the ILO Budapest office and the ILO office in Geneva. The project has been reporting directly to the DG EMPL in Brussels.

The overall objective of the project, implemented from April 2016 to October 2019, focused on assisting the governments from the region in advancing the employment and social policy reforms in their EU accession processes. ESAP has helped improve regional cooperation in employment and social policymaking, labour market governance, working conditions and social dialogue. Under ESAP, the ILO has supported labour inspectorates, agencies for the peaceful resolution of labour disputes (APRLDs), and economic social councils (ESCs) in strengthening social dialogue, modernizing labour inspection functions along the lines of international labour standards, and enhancing recourse to alternative resolution methods for labour disputes.

ESAP's **specific objective** was to create a sustainable platform for governments and social partners to share good practices and lessons learned related to social dialogue, labour inspection, and public employment services at the sub-regional and national levels. This objective was comprised of the following three components:

- Component 1: Improving the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes.

- Component 2: Strengthening national labour inspectorates.

- Component 3: Providing technical assistance and cross-fertilization with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

Below is a summary of the project's key achievements over its implementation period.

Improved relevance of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes:

• Peer review of the structure, functioning and effectiveness of the seven ESCs was undertaken, with a total of 45 recommendations (14 of which the ESCs have committed to implementing).
• There is improved awareness of the ESCs among policymakers following the implementation of three ESC parliamentary information sessions for more than 80 parliamentarians.
• ESC secretaries have become equipped with the skills and tools to effectively manage the ESCs.
• More than 175 social partners and government officials were trained in policy dialogue on employment policy design and implementation.
• The regional online database on industrial relations, collective bargaining and working conditions was updated and made available for policymakers.
• A regional network of labour law experts was established with 25 members.

Increased recourse to capacities for alternative dispute resolution:

• A Regional Network of Agencies for the Peaceful Resolution of Labour Disputes was established with 28 members, including agency directors.
• There was regional agreement on joint guidelines for the application of mediation as a method for the peaceful settlement of labour disputes.
• More than 120 directors and mediators participated in regional peer learning exercises.
• A multi-language regional case database with 50 selected peer learning cases was created for the agencies.
• Recourse to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms increased by up to 50 per cent.

Improved detection of occupational safety and health (OSH) violations:

• A Network of Labour Inspectorates in the Western Balkans, based on the EU Senior Labour Inspection Committee (SLIC) model, was established for peer exchange and peer learning.
• More than 200 labour inspectors were trained in the design and implementation of labour inspection campaigns.
• Online inspection and monitoring guidelines were developed and tested.
• Four labour inspection campaigns were implemented in the construction sector, comprised of more than 1,500 enterprise visits. OSH violations were detected in 80 per cent of the visits in some countries.

Improved regional online peer learning and knowledge exchange:

• The ESAP online platform was established, promoting the sharing of experiences, good practices, data and information among the six countries. Online inspection and monitoring guidelines were developed and tested.
• Two online Communities of Practices (CoPs) were established with more than 60 members.

3.1. EVALUATION BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND INTENDED RECIPIENTS OF THE EVALUATION

Evaluation purpose and objectives

The overall purpose of ESAP's final evaluation was to provide an opportunity for in-depth reflection on the strategy and assumptions guiding the project for learning and further program improvement. The review has also assessed the extent to which intervention-level actions have supported higher-level ILO strategies and objectives. The period in review covers the whole project duration, from 1 April 2016 until 31 October 2019.

The following criteria have guided the structure of the evaluation:

a. the relevance and quality of the design, related to the logical framework (is the original design well-conceived, and how well has the project adapted to the local contexts and emerging needs during implementation?);

b. its efficiency and implementation with respect to project outputs and activities (including cost efficiency, sound management, and its flexibility in adapting to external factors);

c. its effectiveness (including its impact, synergies with national initiatives, synergies with other donor-supported projects, and project visibility);

d. its potential sustainability (what is the level of policy support provided, how responsive are the recipients, and how does the project contribute to institutional and capacity-building?); and

e. how good practices and lessons learned could contribute to the knowledge of the ILO and the project stakeholders.

The evaluation will serve to:

a) inform future project strategy and operational design; and

b) disseminate these findings within the ILO through the EVAL's i-Track evaluation database. A summary of the evaluation will be made publicly available on the EVAL and ESAP websites.

Scope

The evaluation covers the project as a whole. The overall evaluation stretched from late June to late October 2019 and involved a field phase with face-to-face interviews with ESAP stakeholders and several remote interviews with ILO staff in Budapest. In-country visits took place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro in July and concluded with meetings in Serbia during the first week of September.

Besides the five standard criteria presented in the previous section, the evaluation also measures the extent to which international labour standards, non-discrimination and gender equality issues have been addressed by the intervention.

Finally, additional attention has been given to how the intervention has proven relevant to national development frameworks (including employment policies and programmes), relevant sectoral policies and programmes, and the ILO, the UN Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) and national sustainable development strategies (or their equivalents).

The intended recipients of the evaluation include:

- ILO tripartite constituents and national project partners;
- the donor or contracting authority;
- ILO management and technical specialists (in the ILO DWT/CO Budapest and cooperating departments at the ILO in Geneva); and
- the project staff.

This evaluation is comprised of the following components, further described in the methodology section below.

Desk Review: Home-based project literature review *(from 28 June to 15 July 2019)*

Orientation Meetings: Remote briefings with ILO Budapest staff and ESAP Project Managers *(from 8 to 12 July 2019)*

Field missions/Interviews: Face-to-face individual interviews and focus group discussions in BiH (from 18 to 22 July), Montenegro (from 23 to 26 July) Albania (from 29 to 31 July), and Serbia (from 3 to 5 September)

Draft report: *Submitted 7 October 2019*

Final report: **A**ddressing comments (*submitted November 2019*)

3.2. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation applied a mixed methodology, analysing both quantitative and qualitative data while integrating gender equality and other non-discrimination issues throughout. All information was collected, presented and analysed with appropriate gender disaggregation.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation's data collection and analysis, the evaluation questions, and present report's structure are organised around the following criteria.

1. Relevance and strategic fit of the intervention

- Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and the countries' needs?
- Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention in line with ILO and EU priorities?
- Is the ESAP intervention linked to national and ILO developmental frameworks (national development plans, UN Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF), Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs), Programme and Budget (P&B), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

2. Validity of the intervention design

- Are the project's assumptions and strategies appropriate for achieving the anticipated results?
- Does the project's intervention strategy and the Reconstructed Theory of Change allow for impact assessment, including hypotheses that are underpinned by evidence and lessons learned from previous project phases?
- Does the project contribute to core ILO issues such as labour standards and social dialogue?
- How well has the project drafted its exit and sustainability strategy?
- What lessons can be learned for the design of future projects in a similar field?
- Within the context of the ILO goals of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues (and related national-level policies), to what extent did the project design take into account specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context?

3. Intervention progress and effectiveness

- To what extent has the project achieved its objectives and reached its target groups?
- At the institutional level, has the capacity of the partner organizations grown in relation to the delivery of outputs and objectives?
- What obstacles did the project encounter in its implementation? What corrective action does the project need to take to achieve its objectives?
- What specific measures were taken by the project to address issues relating to gender equality and non-discrimination?
- How well has the project complemented other ILO projects in the region?

4. Efficiency of resource usage

- Does the project make efficient use of its financial and human resources?
- Is the implementation strategy cost-effective?
- Is the distribution of resources between staff and activities optimal?
- Were the intervention resources used in an efficient way to address gender equality during implementation?

5. Effectiveness of management arrangement

- Have the planned timeframes been respected? How are contingencies dealt with? To what extent is corrective action is taken when required?
- Is the Steering Committee functioning properly, and what value does it add?
- Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring and documenting its progress to allow for impact assessment at a later stage? Does the monitoring framework provide data to measure end-line results? What could be improved?
- Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring, documenting and communicating results, including on gender, at the country and sub-regional levels?
- Is the monitoring and evaluation system practical, useful and cost-effective for project management?
- How effective is the project in sharing good practices within countries, communicating success stories, and disseminating knowledge internally and externally (including those that are gender-related)?

6. Impact orientation

- How effectively has the project built national ownership, and the capacity of people and institutions?
- Are the gender-related outcomes likely to be sustainable?
- Is the engagement strategy sustainable?
- Has the project reached a sufficient scale and depth to justify the investment? Has the right balance been found between the project's scale and its depth? Is the approach (and its results) likely to be upscaled or replicated? Is the project a cost-effective way to strengthen the sub-regional cooperation and institutional capacity of the Western Balkan governments (primarily labour inspectorates) and social partners for devising and implementing sound, evidence-based legislation, policies and programmes in line with ILO and EU standards in the fields of employment, social dialogue, industrial relations and working conditions?
- To what extent has the project been responsive to SDGs and their related targets?

Cross-cutting issues

International labour standards and non-discrimination

- To what extent did the project design take into account non-discrimination and international labour standards relevant to the project context?
- To what extent did the project's strategies remain flexible and responsive overall to emerging concerns regarding gender equality and non-discrimination?
- What were the facilitating (or limiting) factors in the project's potential contribution to gender equality, non-discrimination, and promoting International labour standards?

Lessons Learned and Good Practices

What were the major lessons learned through the project implementation, both substantively (with reference to the policy areas and objectives covered by the project) and operationally (with respect to how successfully EU and ILO procedures were applied to the project's management)?

- Are there good practices to be replicated?
- What were the key factors of success?
- How should these lessons inform the formulation and implementation of a new phase?
- Have local partnerships been set up to maximize the project's impact?

An Evaluation Matrix, annexed to this report, consists of key evaluation questions to guide the collection of data along the lines of the project's rationale and the development of sub-questions and evaluation criteria indicators.

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered using the following tools and methods:
- review and analysis of primary information directly related to the project;
- internet-based research and review of publications relevant to the evaluation context;
- design of an evaluation matrix and evaluation questions; and
- individual and focus group interviews, both face-to-face and remote.

The evaluation process has involved the following activities.[3]
A **Desk Review** of the project's background materials was undertaken.
An **Orientation Meeting** was held involving consultations with the ILO Programme Officer and the Senior Specialist on Social Dialogue and Labour Law, based in Budapest.
Field missions/Interviews were conducted with key project stakeholders, including:
a. ESAP Project Staff: The Project Manager and Assistant, the ILO National Coordinators in Albania, BiH, Montenegro and Serbia, and the ILO Budapest Director; and
b. representatives from the following groups:
➢ government officials (Chairpersons of the ESCs);
➢ ESC secretaries;
➢ employers' and workers' organizations;
➢ agencies for the peaceful resolution of labour disputes;

➢ labour inspectorates (directors and labour inspectors); and

➢ CEELex experts.

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[3] The specific dates for each activity are indicated within an earlier sub-section of this report.

Limitations

The implementation of this evaluation did not encounter any major challenges. The ILO staff based in the Western Balkans provided excellent organizational and logistical support, which was crucial to optimizing the collection of information in the field. However, there was one minor challenge in relation to ESAP's annual report. This report placed too much focus on recounting the project's activities rather than on the skills and knowledge acquired by the project partners. This has made field visits and interviews an even more central source of information to assess the beneficiary institutions' capacity-building results.

Evaluation standards

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with UN Evaluation Group (UNEG, 2016)'s Norms and Standards, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) principles for evaluation of development cooperation, and ILO EVAL Code of Conduct.

The project evaluation is undertaken in accordance with the ILO Evaluation Policy (Oct. 2017) and ILO Policy Guidelines for Evaluation.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1. RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT

EQ 1.1. ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ESAP INTERVENTION CONSISTENT WITH BENEFICIARIES' REQUIREMENTS AND THE COUNTRIES' NEEDS?

Finding 1. **Though ESAP is the result of an EC consultation rather than a beneficiary country's request, the intervention responded to the needs and priorities underlined in all relevant policy papers and confirmed by the country partners.**

ESAP was not created following a formal project development-focused assessment of the relevant social dialogue partners across the Western Balkans. While this was initially a concern (as the absence of a direct field partners' assessment may result in discord between the intervention and the field's needs), ESAP seems to have offered a highly relevant response to the most problematic issues related to employment, the labour market and social dialogue.

ESAP's consistency with the region's needs in these areas was ensured in two ways.

First, the ILO is in permanent dialogue with the relevant national actors in the various Western Balkan countries. Regular exchanges between the relevant stakeholders and the ILO allowed for the project to collect regular and direct feedback, which is essential to understanding the needs related to social policy and employment.

Second, most of the existing national and sub-regional strategic policy documents and monitoring reports pertaining to labour markets and social dialogue agree on the lack of progress in these areas. The essential relevant strategic-level documents are mentioned in the next section. Despite some advancement in each Western Balkan country, most EU and country progress reports underline the slow improvement of social dialogue in general and the insufficient capacity of the labour markets to offer decent working conditions.

For example, the 2019 report accompanying the European Commission (EC)'s Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership to the European Union mentions that there are "serious challenges to be addressed in employment, social inclusion and protection and in poverty reduction, especially related to coordination among the responsible institutions across the country." The 2019 EC report on Albania notes that "social dialogue remains weak in both the private and public sector," and a similar 2019 report on Serbia indicates that "social dialogue remains weak, in particular regarding the involvement of social partners in policy developments relevant to them."

There are different levels of advancement in terms of social dialogue and labour market reform among the Western Balkan countries – especially in relation to EU Accession– and thus ESAP's activities have not produced similar outputs across the region. However, ESAP's consideration of national contexts has helped ensure that the intervention was relevant in all countries.

EQ 1.2 ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ESAP INTERVENTION IN LINE WITH ILO AND EU PRIORITIES?

Finding 1. **ESAP is fully aligned with ILO and EU priorities.**

With regards to the ILO's priorities, ESAP touches upon the core issues of the agency's global mandate and its regional strategic objectives for Eastern and Central Europe. The ILO has been assisting countries from the sub-region in establishing and implementing international labour standards, specifically in ensuring that they meet the standards related to EU accession. ESAP reinforces ILO's key strategic efforts by improving tripartite social dialogue and by strengthening the capacity of governments and the social partners to improve labour market governance. More specifically, ESAP is fully aligned with the ILO's strategy for the region, contained in the ILO's Country Programmes.

ESAP is also fully supportive of the EU's priorities. The project has been developed in line with the IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015's priorities and the Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper, 2014–2020, prioritizing the need to develop the human capital, reduce the size of the informal economy, and increase employment or self-employment levels, in particular among women and minorities. ESAP also contributes to Europe 2020's strategic aims of inclusive growth, targeting higher employment rates and fighting poverty.

EQ 1.3. IS THE ESAP INTERVENTION LINKED TO NATIONAL AND ILO DEVELOPMENTAL FRAMEWORKS (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS, UNDAF, DWCPS, P&B, SDGS)?

Finding 1. **ESAP directly connects with all national and ILO developmental frameworks.**

As briefly mentioned in the previous sections, ESAP is clearly linked to a range of national and ILO developmental frameworks. The following recap table highlights these key connections.

Framework reference	Area of Relevance
United Nations Global Framework	
Sustainable Development Goals	SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. SDG 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
EU-related strategic and policy programme frameworks and instruments	
EU Charter of Fundamental	Arts. 12, 15, 27, 28, 29 and 31.
IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015 Priorities	Calls for "[strengthening] institutional capacity, cross-border cooperation, economic and social development and rural development." Strategic priorities include employment, human capital development and active social inclusion.
Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper, 2014–2020	States that IPA II beneficiaries need to develop their human capital, reduce the size of the informal economy and increase the level of employment or self-employment, in particular among women and minorities.
Europe 2020 strategy	Calls for countries to increase employment rates and fight against poverty.
EC Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges, 2014–2015	States the need to address difficult economic situations, in particular high unemployment. Calls for launching an employment and social platform to help countries share experiences and prepare for dialogue.
Country assessments of the Economic Reform Programmes	Calls for enhancing the quality of human capital in order to boost competitiveness, employment and long-term growth in the Western Balkans.
SEE 2020 Strategies	Calls for a longer-term framework for policy reforms, and for Economic Reform Programmes to strengthen the employment and social dimension of the enlargement process.
Analytical Reports accompanying reports on the Commission's Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the EU (2019)	EU analytical reports indicate the need for greater social dialogue to improve labour reforms that can empower labour markets to create more jobs.
Individual EU Country reports on Western Balkan countries	Improving social dialogue and labour reforms remain priority areas.
ILO Strategic Frameworks and Programmes	
ILO Programme & Budget, 2018-2019	Outcome 7: Promoting safe work and workplace compliance, also in global supply chains.
Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP) for Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Serbia	Calls for strengthening tripartite social dialogue and the capacity of governments and the social partners to improve the governance of the labour market.
Western Balkans Country strategic frameworks	
National sectoral strategies in the Western Balkans	Each Western Balkan country has developed and is regularly updating national sectoral strategies. These include: - social inclusion; - employment improvement; - Roma integration; - improvement of the situation for persons with disabilities; - youth employment; and - gender equality.

Since the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes are fundamental strategic documents for the ILO, it would have been helpful to have had more explicit ties between the project and the ILO country strategies. This would have made it clearer to the national partners how ESAP complements and supports the ILO's country development assistance.

4.2. VALIDITY OF THE INTERVENTION DESIGN

EQ 2.1. ARE THE PROJECT'S ASSUMPTIONS AND STRATEGIES APPROPRIATE FOR ACHIEVING THE ANTICIPATED RESULTS?

Finding 1. **A thorough analysis and proper assumptions have guided the formulation of ESAP.**

The project gathered evidence from key EU reports (as listed under EQ 1.1.), corroborated by the ILO's knowledge and experience at the country level, to highlight their priorities and to address the weaknesses in the region's social dialogue and labour markets. The ILO found shortcomings in the legal and institutional frameworks of the countries, and gaps in the capacities of the targeted national actors. The assumptions underlying these analyses are clearly listed, and assessments related to success factors and mitigation efforts are fully detailed.

Finding 2. **However, ESAP's underlying strategy is insufficiently developed.**

While ESAP's analysis provides a solid foundation for the formulation of the intervention, the long-term strategy describing the process of change, of which ESAP constitutes the initial phase, is insufficiently developed.

The logic of intervention provides the necessary level of details that enables to understand the transformative process up to the project's level objective. However, even if it is yet early to provide a detailed description of potential successive project cycle phases, the definition of key milestones until the overall objective is attained, would have helped clarify the long-term vision of the underlying strategy.

A Theory of Change (which was not included) could have provided the backbone for ESAP's strategy. ESAP also insufficiently makes use of the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes, which should be the underlying strategic layer for ESAP. Indeed, if the regional dimension of ESAP intends to stimulate regional cooperation to support national processes, the specificities of the national contexts and strategies need to be factored in first, as this is what the regional approach intends to support.

More details about the strategic intervention are provided in the following evaluation section.

EQ 2.2. DOES THE PROJECT'S INTERVENTION STRATEGY AND THE RECONSTRUCTED THEORY OF CHANGE ALLOW FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING HYPOTHESES THAT ARE UNDERPINNED BY EVIDENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM PREVIOUS PROJECT PHASES?

Finding 1. **ESAP's assumptions are thoroughly analysed and supported by evidence. However, the absence of a Theory of Change has contributed to weakening the logic of the intervention. This is a missed opportunity to identify the project's potential outputs and its boundaries of influence.**

The project document has proposed a Logframe in lieu of a Theory of Change. This is not a problem as long as the rational of the intervention is well founded and logically relates to the priorities of the project. It should predict the problems that could arise from THE suggested strategy and the appropriate activities that could address them.

The evaluation has found the analysis well founded, as the ILO has used a combination of labour expertise and understanding of the specific Western Balkan context to accurately identify the priorities that need to be addressed.

However, the proposed reconstructed Theory of Change and the Logframe – while logical and clearly formulated overall – have raised concerns for two reasons.

a. The reconstructed Theory of Change seems to directly attribute the expected social dialogue and labour reforms to ESAP. This lacks accuracy, as it implies that good relations among stakeholders, institutional strengthening, and regional cooperation are alone sufficient to ensure new policies and reforms. This ignores potential political obstacles, and fact that any reform needs to obtain support from institutional decision-makers. it also appears to jump from the intervention (developing capacity-building and regional coordination) to results.

   The evaluation believes that ESAP should have limited itself to the institutional-building level (capacity-building) and the level of facilitating regional cooperation. This is because effective labour reforms require leverage with influential stakeholders that is beyond the power of the project.

b. There is confusion between the activities and the expected results, and insufficient indicators to measure the changes expected by ESAP. In some instances, ESAP's Logframe confuses the reader between the two. For example, result 1.1 of Component 1 ("Improving the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes") is that "a peer review exercise … is carried out." This result could have been formulated by describing the transformative effect of the peer review rather than reporting on its completion. The peer review process is sufficiently rich and elaborated that an explanation of its process and effect would have helped understand better the theory of change.[4] While ESAP's Logframe is equipped with activity-level indicators, the proposed result-level indicators do not suffice to measure the extent to which the expected changes have been realized.

> **Finding 2.** **The overly ambitious Logframe has generated imprecise indicators, thus limiting the proper measurement of ESAP's outcomes.**

Indicators are essential to a Theory of Change, to verify whether the intended change has occurred or not and to what extent. Project creators should exercise caution when identifying or developing indicators so that they can capture whether changes result from the project's direct influence or whether they are primarily determined by factors external to the project.

For ESAP, elaborating valid indicators requires distinguishing between the contextual (political) and the technical (institutional capacity-building). For instance, the capacity of an ESC to manage their processes can be measured by capacity indicators (like if they provide expert level recommendations on labour laws). But whether laws integrate these ESC recommendations depends on factors that are beyond the control of ESAP.

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[4] Self-assessment leading to increasing awareness of the strengths and gaps of institutional practice. External (peer-review) assessment acting as a stimulating (exchange and collaboration among institutions from countries in the region) and learning (through observing and analysing practices of "sister" institutions) practices. Peer-review also building an intimate feeling of regional ownership (institutions facing together comparable challenges but working together towards overcoming similar problems and acquiring equivalent skills) through physical encounters. Peer review leading to concrete outcomes ("working" on the implementation of ESC recommendations even when these recommendations do not receive political approval) as an opportunity for institutions to "practice" and "demonstrate" the newly acquired capabilities.

On this basis (and referring to the EC methodology table below), technical indicators correspond to results indicators while wider context indicators correspond to impact indicators.

The evaluation has used the following EC/OECD definitions of indicators and relied on the EC's[5] clarification on the notions of "impact," "outcome" and "results."

Category	Definition
Input indicators	The financial, human, material, organizational or regulatory resources mobilized during the implementation of the intervention.
Activity indicators	The implementation and management processes.
Output indicators	The goods and services that are delivered under the responsibility of the managers of the intervention. Simply put, outputs are the things purchased with public money.
Result indicators	The immediate effects of the intervention for its direct addressees. An effect is immediate if the operator notices it easily while they are in contact with the addressees. Because they are easily acknowledged by the operators, result indicators can be monitored systematically.
Impact indicators	The far-reaching results and indirect consequences of the intervention.

An indicator used to evaluate an effect is not in itself a measurement of or evidence for that effect. The indicator only informs us about changes, which may either result from the intervention (as an effect) or may result from other causes.
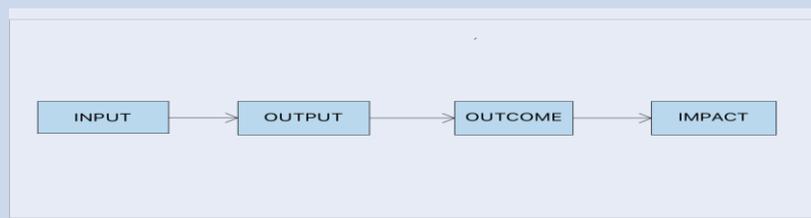
RISKS OF MISUNDERSTANDING		
	OECD	EC
Impact	The "long term effects produced by a development intervention."	A general term used to describe the effects of an intervention on society.
Outcome	The likely or achieved short- and medium-term effects of an intervention.	The longer-term impact usually expressed in terms of broad socio-economic consequences.
Result	"The output, outcome or impact (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention."	"The initial impact of an intervention."

Options taken		
	Basic glossary	Definition
Impact	OECD	The "long term effects produced by a development intervention."
Outcome		*The term has been neither used nor defined.*
Result	EC	"The initial impact of an intervention."

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[5] Evaluation methods for the European Union's external assistance: Methodological bases for evaluation (Joint Evaluation Unit, DG External Relations, 2006).

Taking into account the conceptual approach above, the following observations can be made on ESAP's Logframe indicators.

Intervention level	Indicator level	Observation
Overall objective	New policies and measures are adopted by the Western Balkan countries in the field of labour law, social dialogue, collective bargaining, labour inspection and active labour market policies.	While this is a relevant objective, the adoption of policies and measures reaches beyond the realm of ESAP's direct influence. Instead, the capacity of actors and the systems established to ensure sustainable capacity-building is within the scope of ESAP.
Specific objective	By the end of the Action, constituents and partner institutions have the capacity and the incentives to look for additional resources to extend the functioning of the ESAP.	More detailed indicators providing evidence of institutions' enhanced capacity are needed. Since Western Balkan countries are in different stages of advancement, setting country-specific indicators would allow us to better measure the results of ESAP.
Results indicators	At least three ESCs report having introduced changes in their functioning/legal frameworks to improve their effectiveness and impact on policy and legislative reform, based on the good practices and findings of the peer review exercises.	This indicator is important as it captures the capacity of the ESCs to identify, formulate and implement a recommendation. Special attention should be given to assessing the end result, however – the formal validation (institutionalization and legalization) of the recommendation. Serbia's ESC explained that one of the three peer review recommendations could not be implemented within ESAP's timeframe, for instance, as its implementation depended on a pre-requisite which was not there (that a law be voted on). This is obviously not under the responsibility of the project. Therefore, validation is not strictly an indicator of results. The ability of the ESCs to assess the likeliness of proposed recommendations to be validated prior to selecting it would likely contribute to increasing the impact of the project, even though the evaluation recognises this cannot be considered as a responsibility of the project.

Strategically, ESAP needs to be committed to a vision of intervention above the project level. While the project quotes key EU strategies for the region and ILO sub-regional and country strategies, it does not specifically explain how ESAP supports and complements the ILO. While ESAP cannot control the pace of reform progress, it can develop the necessary capacities of the relevant institutions and build regional cooperation mechanisms that can be used as a platform for capacity-building.

Setting a situational objective (like that "new policies and measures are adopted") implies a primary dependence on a greater context, including within the political realm, over which ESAP has very little influence and for which the project cannot be held accountable.

In contrast, setting a capacitive or "technical" objective for ESAP implies the demonstrated capacity of supported actors and the institutional framework, and effective regional cooperation. This depends on the intervention and is something that the project can be measured against. In the longer run, it is of strategic importance for a project such as ESAP to expect that strengthened institutions will in turn make them more influential actors politically.

For the ESCs, a number of their recommendations on various legal and strategic matters could offer a meaningful indicator of their increased capacity. Verifying the extent to which these recommendations are taken on board by policymakers may provide another type of "accountability indicator," shedding light on where the engagement and political responsibility lies. In turn, this can be used by the project to advocate in front of the EU and relevant ministerial authorities.

A roadmap composed of key benchmarks would help guide projects such as ESAP, where each benchmark could correspond to the objective of a specific ESAP project phase. This would help develop project partners' capacities in the long term. Sharing ESAP's long-term vision in this roadmap could also enhance participants' sense of ownership over the project, as they have explicitly expressed a desire to have been made more familiar with the project's overall strategic vision.

EQ 2.3. DOES THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTE TO CORE ILO ISSUES SUCH AS LABOUR STANDARDS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE?

Finding 1. **ESAP makes a clear contribution to core ILO issues.**

ESAP contributes to social dialogue by strengthening the capacities of key actors in social dialogue: ESCs, APRLDs, employer associations, and trade unions. It also encourages participation from civil society. Additionally, ESAP contributes to labour standards by supporting Western Balkan countries in their reforms and the implementation of EU standard policies and programmes in anticipation of EU accession. These policies and programmes are also aligned with international labour standards. For example, ESAP supported the ESC in Montenegro when they contributed to the improvement of the Labour Law. The awareness-raising campaigns conducted by the labour inspectorates in four countries also contributed to improving the working conditions in the construction sector.

EQ 2.4. How well has the project drafted its exit and sustainability strategy?

Finding 1. **ESAP's original document featured a succinct sustainability strategy, which was further developed during the project and embodied in the development of an ESAP 2 phase.**

The project document provides an explanation of how the sustainability of the results will be ensured. While the description is brief, it is convincing. The regional approach is solid (and confirmed by interviewed stakeholders), and the results can be maintained to a certain extent by the active and continuous support of ILO's National Coordinators in the sub-region.

However, the project mechanisms are a more crucial aspect of sustainability than the activities themselves. While there are no guarantees that the results of labour inspectorate campaigns will last through the long-term, for instance (even if there are indicators that they may), it is the creation of a regional network and learning through exchange that are expected to act as the primary factors for sustainability. The positive feedback from participants in regional networking provides encouragement that this approach is relevant.

Originally, ESAP did not have an exit strategy. It was indicated that ESAP would further be developed into an implementation phase. This is a suitable motive, as long as it contributes to improving the exit strategy. The formulation of an exit strategy became less of a priority once a second ESAP phase was confirmed and a project was formulated for this phase.

Finding 2. **Sustainability of the regional cooperation mechanisms should be made into an exit strategy.**

ESAP relies on the assumption that as long as national institutions benefit from regional networking and these relationships remain active and effective, they will continue to bring their relevant knowledge and experience to the project partners.

The feedback collected from the evaluation seems to confirm that regional networking is indeed an effective approach. It appears that ESAP could be used as a model for regional cooperation (assuming that there are sufficient resources to maintain these dynamics, as through regular in-person meetings).

EQ 2.5. What lessons can be learned for the design of future projects in a similar field?

Finding 1. **A regional approach can offer an efficient model, under certain conditions and provided that it is well considered.**

The Western Balkan sub-region has strong political coherence, as EU accession remains a key objective to all of the countries. This fact alone makes regional intervention effective in supporting targeted countries in achieving this shared objective. However, a regional project requires much more than just bringing countries together or offering a platform to channel knowledge. Considering the various specific national political contexts, the country-level considerations are at least as crucial as the regional ones. This should be factored into the regional approach. For instance, regional activities can be organized with country-specific objectives (following ESC national recommendations) and progress and results indicators.

Finding 2. **Direct, face-to-face, regular communication is crucial for regional projects, especially when building a regional network.**

Distance, geographical and psychological, can strip regional projects of their substance and diminish engagement if inter-regional relations and connections are not carefully managed. There is much competition between and within national institutions: there are other projects, ongoing reforms, multiple strategies, national priorities and regional commitments, and pressing deadlines stemming from political instability. Individual projects can struggle getting the attention of overwhelmed state institutions. In this context, active communication and a degree of proximity are required between the project management and the partners, and among partners from the region. This is crucial for network-building and for continued stakeholder engagement. If too much time elapses between project events or communication, ESAP's overall force could easily vanish. All interviewed stakeholders praised the quality of the activities, while some did regret not having more regular communication.

Finding 3. **Peer review is a strong tool for capacity-building, stakeholder engagement and regional network construction.**

The peer review's conceptual approach, where national institutions review the practices of their neighbouring countries, was highly appreciated by participants. Participants gained awareness of their own shortcomings while acquiring knowledge from contexts similar enough to their own to be applicable. The process of bringing one's own experiences and receiving knowledge in return has connected institutions. They reported becoming increasingly aware that regional networking represented a sustainable channel for continued learning and improvement.

The ILO expert involvement in the peer review methodology, however, could have been more direct. Experts trained ESC members but did not participate in the peer review exercise itself. Since this was a first-time experience for participants, the involvement of experts in the implementation of the exercise could have further increased the quality of the output.

Finding 4. **The potential of some powerful tools requires an investment that is commensurate to their potential.**

The ESAP online platform is a necessary tool to complement capacity-building and the strengthening of the regional network. However, its impact depends on the success of its design. It should prioritize user-friendliness, targeting stakeholders, promoting good practices, and the clear expression of its intended usage. A majority of stakeholders interviewed do not regularly use ESAP online, and some do not use it at all or are hardly aware of it. Only CEELex experts – who are enjoying a clear benefit from it – have regularly adopted ESAP online, mainly for the CEELex database.

ESAP's first phase may have been too early a stage to propose this virtual platform. One lesson learned from the evaluation is that careful attention should be paid to each specific user's interest and readiness to use the tool, and that accessibility (especially linguistically) is a pre-condition to ensuring that a virtual tool be used. A product development approach appears necessary.

Finding 5. **Two distinct projects with the same name require coherence and unity in their presentation.**

While carrying the same name, ESAP is actually two distinct projects that are conceptually close, addressing the same issues and sharing a similar overall objective. However, with separate budgets, teams and different target institutions, each ESAP project develops its own culture and identity. This can be confusing to project partners, who reported that many people were either unaware of RCC's ESAP or unclear about whether ESAP was one or two projects. This distinction needs to be explained to partners in both projects, highlighting their strategic unity and the operational duality.

EQ 2.6. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ILO GOALS OF GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY INCLUSION AND OTHER NON-DISCRIMINATION ISSUES (AND RELATED NATIONAL-LEVEL POLICIES), TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PROJECT DESIGN TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SPECIFIC GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION CONCERNS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT CONTEXT?

Finding 1. **The project gained a more detailed and realistic view related to gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination.**

While the report mentions "gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination," ESAP appears not to have integrated these dimensions thoroughly into the project. No specific strategy or approach has been designed. However, this does not mean that these aspects have been neglected by the project.

The evaluation has identified three observations.

1. Gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination are complex issues to address through a project intervention. Designing specific strategies and committing to producing a measurable impact requires a significant effort and substantial pre-implementation study.

2. Regardless, the evaluation has not found elements in ESAP's project document from which results pertaining to gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination could have been envisioned, or where quantitative or qualitative results about any expected changes could have been reported.

3. Through documentation review and interview feedback, however, it does appear that ESAP made multiple contributions to gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination. These issues, linked to ILO principles, were raised regularly at ESAP events, as they represent standards that the countries are obligated to uphold if they plan to fulfil EU accession standards. There are also various examples where the issue of gender equality or inclusion was tackled through an ESAP activity. For instance, several labour inspection campaigns highlighted the situation of women and migrant workers, who especially vulnerable in face of accessing to and enjoying decent work . APRLs have also learned how to raise general awareness of gender-based discrimination. Still, the evaluation believes ESAP should establish a system to monitor direct or indirect contributions to the advancement of these issues, realized through ESAP activities.

4.3. THE INTERVENTION'S PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

EQ 3.1. To what extent has the project achieved its objectives and reached its target groups?

Finding 1. **ESAP has achieved and sometimes exceeded its objectives in realizing its planned activities.**

Stakeholder feedback and activity reports agree that ESAP has achieved its objectives and reached its target groups. ESAP has completed all planned activities, and the quality and relevance of the project outputs have been praised by all stakeholders. The peer review approach has been very conducive to strengthening institutional capacities and building regional dynamics through informal and formal networking. The knowledge and expertise brought in by the ILO was valued as top quality, and support from the ILO staff was considered professional.

The following is a brief summary of ESAP's key achievements.

Improved relevance of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes.
• Peer review of the structure, functioning and effectiveness of the seven ESCs with a total of 45 recommendations, including 14 of which the ESCs have committed to implementing.
• Increased awareness of policymakers about ESCs through the implementation of three parliamentary ESC informational days with more than 80 parliamentarians.
• ESC secretaries equipped managerial skills and tools.
• Over 175 social partners and government officials trained in dialogue on employment policy design and implementation.
• A regional online database on industrial relations, collective bargaining and working conditions updated and made available for policymakers in the Western Balkans.
• Creation of a Regional Network of Labour Law Experts with 25 members.

Increased recourse to alternative dispute resolution.
• A Regional Network of Agencies for Peaceful Resolution of Labour Disputes established with 28 members, including agency directors.
• Regional agreement on joint guidelines for the application of mediation as a method for the peaceful settlement of labour disputes.
• More than 120 directors and mediators participated in regional peer learning.
• Multi-language regional case database with 50 peer-learning cases used by agencies.
• Recourse to alternative dispute resolution increased by up to 50 per cent.

Improved detection of occupational safety and health (OSH) violations.
• Creation of a Network of Labour Inspectorates in the Western Balkans, based in the EU Senior Labour Inspection Committee (SLIC) model for peer exchange and peer learning.
• More than 200 labour inspectors trained in the design and implementation of labour inspection campaigns.
• Online inspection and monitoring guidelines developed and tested.
• Four labour inspection campaigns implemented in the construction sector, covering more than 1,500 enterprise visits. violations of OSH detected in up to 80 per cent of these visits.

Improved regional online peer-learning and knowledge exchange.
• An ESAP online platform established, promoting the exchange of experiences, good practices, data and information among the six countries. Online inspection and monitoring guidelines developed and tested.
• Two online Communities of Practices (CoPs) established with more than 60 members.

All targeted project partners have been reached, mostly through in-person activities rather than through ESAP online.

While ESAP's objectives have been achieved, the evaluation has found that only part of the Logframe's component-level objectives have been realized. This does not question the realization of the objectives themselves, but how ESAP's activities contributed to achieving these objectives.

Finding 2. **ESAP Logframe's construction makes it difficult to accurately measure the realization of its objectives.**

This challenge relates to the definition of component-level objectives and indicators, as evoked under Section 2.2.

The Component 1 calls for "improving the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes." The effectiveness of social dialogue is complex and depends on various factors: stakeholder capacities, human, financial, and organizational resources, and political willingness. The formulation of the Component 1 appears as overly general as it does not distinguish whether the betterment is the sole result of the activity (verifiable evidence the improvement being the exclusive result of newly acquired capacities) from situations when the change takes into account additional external factors such as the political factor or the availability of necessary resources. In the present situation, and when making this differentiation, the results can be considered as achieved as ESC have delivered on their commitment, even though their actions have not been (yet) validated by higher political instances. In other words, the improved capacities have been verified though the improved effectiveness of the institutional framework cannot be yet verified as the "political validation" is pending.

Similarly, Component 1 could have included indicators that more accurately demonstrated capacity. Indicator 1.1, calls for "at least five policy recommendations issued by ESC's a results of peer exchange." This only captures the number, not the quality (or if they meet the expected relevant technical standards). While relevant, this indicator is limited because it does not entirely allow us to verify whether institutions have demonstrated the capacity, they were trained for under ESAP.

EQ 3.2. AT THE INSTITUTIONAL-LEVEL, HAS THE CAPACITY OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS GROWN IN RELATION TO DELIVERY OF OUTPUTS AND OBJECTIVES?

Finding 1. **Overall, the capacity of partner organizations has grown as expected.**

This review has used direct feedback from stakeholders to grasp the depth of capacity-building, as ESAP's annual reports do not report much on capacity,

ESAP partners have acquired new capacities along the lines of the planned objectives, and these new competences have been expressed through the output and results of the ESAP activities. These are presented in ESAP's summary of achievements under EQ 3.1.

Project partners have expressed (1) an increased level of knowledge, combining EU and international standards, scholarly information, and sub-regional information and practice-based know-how; (2) an increased level of awareness of the gaps and priorities in the specific fields of each institution; (3) an increased openness to multi-stakeholder dialogue; and (4) a more proactive attitude towards networking within the sub-region.

These findings appear to hold for ESCs, APRLDs, labour inspectorates, and to some extent the less-involved stakeholders represented by Trade Unions and Employer's Associations. Project partners have all reported making significant steps forward, regardless of their competency and experience levels.

Economic and Social Councils. The project has produced different effects depending on the country in question. In Albania, where the social dialogue institutional framework is not as advanced, there has been a less visible demonstration of the ESC's increased capacity. However, the agency has been acquiring knowledge that it intends to use over time. The establishment of tripartite working groups is one indicator of progress. ESAP also has helped the ESC gain visibility through parliamentary informational sessions and media events. In Montenegro, ESAP's intervention was particularly timely: a new Law on ESCs was being adopted while ESAP was underway, and the Law ended up addressing all of ESAP recommendations. The ESC tripartite working group on legislation has been actively involved in the labour code reform since then.

Labour Inspectorates: Labour inspectorates have learned a great deal through awareness-raising labour campaigns with their modest budget of 5,000 EUR. Inspection campaigns have primarily been relevant for learning and self-awareness. Inspectorates have learned how to organize awareness-raising campaigns, do prevention work, and educative employers and employees about OSH. Campaigns have also offered an opportunity for the institutions to broaden the scope of their inspections. For instance, inspectors have started to look at the fiscal compliance of employers, and at undeclared work and how to report it. They have also used labour campaign field visits to collect data and produce statistics than can be used for monitoring and policy purposes.

While ESAP may only represent one important step in the long and continuous path to capacity-strengthening, it has fulfilled its objective, especially in relation to the resources allocated. A total of 471,848 EUR was dedicated to learning and practice events, equalling 26,213 EUR per country per year. This is a very modest amount considering ESAP's ambitious overall goal. Additionally, each labour campaign was only given 5,000 EUR. Nonetheless, interviewed labour inspectorate representatives noted how much they benefited from the labour inspection campaigns in terms of lessons learned and awareness-raising among employers and workers.

EQ 3.3. WHAT OBSTACLES DID THE PROJECT ENCOUNTER IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION? WHAT CORRECTIVE ACTION DOES THE PROJECT NEED TO TAKE TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES?

Finding 1. **No major obstacles existed, but there were multiple constraints due to a complex context and broad intervention.**

As a general observation, it is more relevant to refer to constraints than to obstacles. ESAP did not face any significant obstacles, but the project team still had to contend with various complexities: diverse national contexts, multiple stakeholders characterized by different level of capacities speaking different languages, regional political tensions, and the limited availability of the partners. This had a direct impact on the pace of the implementation of activities. Each regional event took a significant amount of time to prepare for, considering that stakeholders need to find suitable time, be consulted, and set up for each event.

Finding 2. **Communication and visibility were challenges for ESAP.**

Overall, ESAP's communication ensured that all planned events were organized with the participation of the targeted stakeholders.

However, communication seems to have been a concern for a number of the project partners. Several stakeholders reported they were never formally introduced to the entire ESAP project, including the RCC and the ILO parts of the intervention. The NIPAC Montenegro was also not aware of the preparation of a second phase. The majority of interviewed partners also felt that ESAP mainly shared information in a reciprocal, exchanged-based communication style, and expressed regrets that they were unable to provide feedback. ILO National Coordinators also complained of a lack of direct communication. They believed a more interactive and direct discussion with the stakeholders would have created more opportunities to fine tune the content of the regional gatherings.

All interviewees pointed out the cultural importance of maintaining direct and personal contact with institutions. While ESAP made efforts towards this in the last period of the project, it should be a key goal for ESAP 2.

Finding 3. **ESAP raised awareness but did not manage to significantly influence key stakeholders in social dialogue.**

While ESAP has successfully managed to raise the visibility of the ESCs and APRLDs, it has not converted this into a concrete commitment from political stakeholders (such as ministries of finance)[6] who are crucial for social and labour market reforms. This is not a project shortcoming, however, since this first phase did not originally intend to target these stakeholders, just ESCs and technical secretariats.

While not a failure of ESAP, it is something ESAP should have expressed more explicitly in its strategic formulation. Indeed, raising awareness and influencing key decision-makers on issues of social dialogue are beyond the limit of ESAP's influence. If ESAP did not yield concrete commitments from key stakeholders while producing positive feedback and raising interest, this provides us with an important lesson: project objectives need to be achievable, their realization needs to almost entirely depend on the performance of the project's activities, and they should not rely on the project's expected leverage beyond its realm of direct influence.

EQ 3.4. WHAT SPECIFIC MEASURES WERE TAKEN BY THE PROJECT TO ADDRESS ISSUES RELATING TO GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION?

Finding 1. **While ESAP expresses the intent of gender inclusiveness, no specific strategy or measures were developed.**

As far as gender equality is concerned, ESAP's project document only refers to mainstreaming gender across all of its outputs. The word "gender" is mentioned three times in the proposal, but the proposal does not provide further details.

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[6] In Serbia, the Minister of Finance participated in several meetings at the invitation of the Minister of Labour. It is true that not all Ministers in the Government give the same priority to tripartite consultations in the ESCs, despite a legal obligation in most cases.

Two observations can be made on this basis. First, while gender equality and anti-discrimination are crucial issues and need to be integrated into social dialogue and labour reforms, the design and activities of ESAP's intervention do not directly address them. Designing a specific strategy and objectives around these issues is a difficult task. ESAP's flexible approach of mainstreaming gender equality and ant-discrimination whenever possible has proven relevant, as these issues have been brought forward and gained attention thanks to the ESCs, the APRLDs, and labour inspectorates, who have all included them among their institutions' obligations.

However, more could have been done at the design level to enable ESAP to produce information on its efforts and results in advancing gender equality and anti-discrimination. First, ESAP's type of intervention did not allow for ambitious objectives to be set on these topics. Specific targets and relevant indicators could have been formulated so as to track and report the project's achievements. For instance, women's participation in all ESAP events could have been recorded. The number and type of gender and anti-discrimination issues tackled during all activities could have been systematically documented. They could have recorded whether issues were discussed during regional meetings, gender and discrimination-based obstacles were raised, or how gender was mainstreamed within ESC recommendations (on women's participation in various gatherings, for example). ESAP failed to report on how its actions impacted these issues. This is a missed opportunity, as the project did indeed tackle these issues in practice.

Finding 2. **ESAP has taken an approach to anti-discrimination that is similar to its approach on gender equality.**

The approach taken on anti-discrimination is overall very similar to the approach taken on gender discrimination described above.

EQ 3.5. HOW WELL HAS THE PROJECT COMPLEMENTED OTHER ILO PROJECTS IN THE REGION?

Finding 1. **The RCC and the ILO did effectively coordinate with one another, though complementarity was limited.**

Prior to reviewing ESAP's complementarity with other ILO projects, assessing how successfully the ILO and the RCC implemented ESAP as one coherent intervention was a chief concern of the evaluation.

While carrying the same name and overall objective, the ILO ESAP and the RCC ESAP are operationally separate in terms of resources, organization and management. The ILO and the RCC made efforts to develop and implement coordination and cooperation modalities to ensure the smooth and timely implementation of the project. The collaborative relationship between the ILO and the RCC has proven efficient from an operational and qualitative perspective, as all activities were implemented in a timely manner and were appraised as highly qualitative by all interviewed parties.[7]

However, field interviews seemed to indicate some insufficiencies. First, several institutions perceived ESAP as two separate interventions. Some were unaware of the existence of the RCC ESAP project altogether. The fact that not all stakeholders were informed or updated on the progress of the overall ESAP action implies that possible synergies or opportunities were missed.

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[7] The evaluation refers to ESAP activities exclusively under the ILO ESAP program. The RCC ESAP program does not fall under the scope of this evaluation.

Finding 2. **ILO National Coordinators have complemented ESAP with national interventions.**

Ensuring the effective complementarity of ESAP with other ILO projects requires ESAP management to consult with national ILO strategies, interventions, and labour reforms. Based on this, they can identify how ESAP can best complement or build synergies with other ILO activities. This was a complex task for ESAP, as the project must address country-level issues and the timing of agenda reforms while maintaining the timely and coordinated implementation of their activities.

Overall, the evaluation found that ESAP complemented national ILO endeavours in some countries, such as Montenegro or Northern Macedonia. In Montenegro, ESAP occurred at a highly relevant time when reforms were underway, and the ESC was involved in commenting on a new Labour Law. The strengthening of the ESC at the time was crucial, empowering the ESC to provide high quality recommendations to improve the Law and integrate many EU and ILO standards. In Northern Macedonia, ESAP's activities enabled the ESC to contribute to the design of the first ILO Youth Guarantee Scheme. In Serbia, ESAP's modest resources were used to contribute to an ILO project tackling child labour.

In these examples, the opportunity for synergy was identified by the ILO National Coordinators, who helped enhance complementarity and significantly increased the results and the impacts of ESAP at the country level. However, these are the results of the National Coordinator's efforts to utilize ESAP, not part of a systematic and anticipated consultation of ILO national staff and the project partners.

4.4. EFFICIENCY OF RESOURCE USAGE

EQ 4.1. DOES THE PROJECT MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF ITS FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES?

Finding 1. **The use of human resources has been optimal.**

ESAP is a complex, activity-intensive project involving multiple stakeholders, several countries and a regional dimension. This indicates that ESAP's human resources structure, comprised of a two-person team in Sarajevo with remote administrative and technical support (based mainly in the ILO Budapest office, with one expert in Geneva), was minimal to meet the implementation plan targets.

In addition to this team, expert ILO consultants were available to ESAP on a range of topics. The ILO National Coordinators also played a crucial role. Indeed, the in-country presence of the ILO Coordinators had an important impact on the RCC ESAP's implementation. National Coordinators do not only relay local information but have ILO and country-specific knowledge. This made them ideally positioned to identify any opportunity to maximize ESAP and enhance the strategic significance of the project.

There was a consensus among interviewees about the need to consult and involve National Coordinators more systematically, especially for regional projects operating remotely from the contexts of the interventions.

The ILO technical expertise provided to the intervention was regarded as unique among international institutions.

Finding 2. **ESAP has also proven financially very efficient, managing to deliver activities involving high-level expertise with limited resources.**

As mentioned earlier, each ESAP regional activity averages to a budget of around 26,000 EUR. These activities are labour-intensive and involve preparation, organization, facilitation, and follow-up. This takes time, energy and human resources.

Improving social dialogue and advancing the progress of labour reforms are mammoth and long-term endeavors whose time and financial costs are impossible to quantify. Aiming to build capacities of key actors in this arena while enhancing regional cooperation with less than 1.8 million EUR means that ESAP was built with tight resources.

EQ 4.2. IS THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY COST-EFFECTIVE?

Finding 1. **ESAP's implementation strategy has proven cost-effective overall, with some variation between countries.**

As noted above, ESAP is a cost-effective operation from the implementation perspective. All of the planned activities were delivered, sometimes in excess of the initial plan. This is mainly the result of a combination of four assets: (1) ESAP and ILO staff dedication and performance on a highly demanding intervention; (2) The availability of ILO in-house expertise; (3) ILO in-country permanent presence through the National Coordinators, ensuring a unique and continuously updated analysis of the key labour stakes at the national levels; and (4) trust and respect among national actors towards the ILO due to years of collaboration. The ILO's technical advice and support is regularly sought after by institutions and other actors.

While activity delivery is a straightforward method of calculating value for money, measuring the costs against the results is also an important way to calculate the project's value. The following table illustrates the cost-effectiveness analysis process.
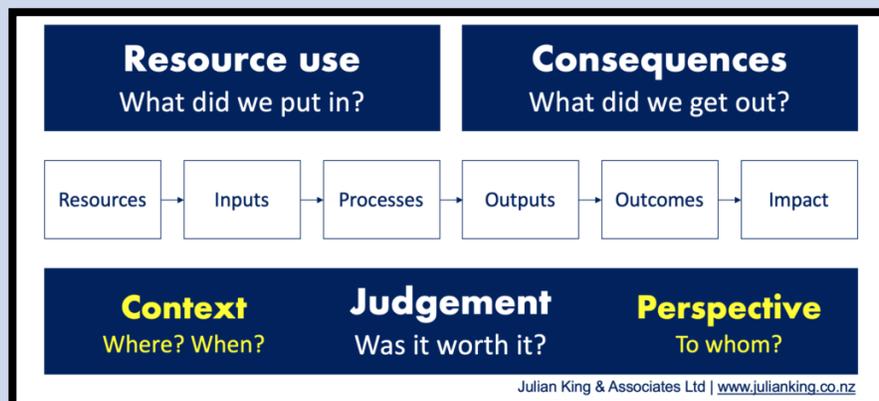
In simple terms, cost-effectiveness can be analysed by answering three basic questions:

a. What resources were made available?

b. What did the beneficiaries get out of ESAP? (Consequences of the resource)

c. Was the investment (of ESAP's resources) worth the results?

The first question was answered at the beginning of this section. The second question was answered during the field visits: in terms of improving knowledge and awareness, ESAP has been strongly beneficial to the project partners in various ways that depend on the particular stakeholder and country context. ESCs could maximize ESAP's resources to make an impact on the Montenegro Labour Law or participate in significant labour initiatives in Albania.

Considering ESAP's key achievements and the partner's critical views, ESAP can be considered a worthy investment. However, this investment could be made more profitable in several ways. First, more consultations can be undertaken at the national level. There could also be greater long-term commitment from the donor and the ILO to achieve the deep-rooted and sustainable changes defined as the project's goals. To achieve these goals the project should be the initial investment in a longer-term process. Interrupting the financial and technical assistance of the project means a risk of losing sight of that long-term goal. From a cost-effectiveness perspective, the ILO, donors and participating institutions should acknowledge that durable and tangible impacts will only be truly measurable after a longer period of time.

EQ 4.3. Is the distribution of resources between staff and activities optimal?

Finding 1. **The balance of resource allocation between staff and activities is coherent.**

As mentioned earlier, the project management staff was minimal and could not be reduced, and most of the remaining budget was allocated to ESAP's activities. This being considered, the allocation of resources was strongly balanced. Given the impressive value of the labour inspection campaigns – a wealth of results generated from a 5,000 EUR budget – more activities such as these could have been considered.

Following the request by interviewees for more direct communication, the evaluation suggests allocating a travel budget to sufficiently cover air and road travel for partners to travel to countries across the region.

EQ 4.4. WERE THE INTERVENTION RESOURCES USED IN AN EFFICIENT WAY TO ADDRESS GENDER EQUALITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION?

Finding 1. **Gender equality has been reasonably integrated in the resource allocation, but not systematically.**

There is too little information available to thoroughly assess the extent to which the resource allocation factored in a gender dimension. This is difficult for projects such as ESAP. The project targets institutions, and ESAP has not been in a position to specifically target women within male-dominant organizations. However, the project management paid specific attention to gender when inviting project partners to regional trainings or similar events, ensuring there a female presence and representation from participating organizations.

The results and the indirect impact of ESAP's activities will continue to benefit female workers, as the EU and ILO standards on gender equality are integrated within the actions of the ESCs and APRLDs. However, estimating the extent to which this impact results from gender-sensitive resource allocation is too complex.

However, this does not prevent future interventions from establishing mechanisms linking gender-sensitive resource allocations with expected targets and results.

4.5. EFFECTIVENESS AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT

EQ 5.1. HAVE THE PLANNED TIMEFRAMES BEEN RESPECTED? HOW ARE CONTINGENCIES DEALT WITH? TO WHAT EXTENT IS CORRECTIVE ACTION TAKEN WHEN REQUIRED?

Finding 1. **Overall, ESAP has met all of its implementation targets and its activity delivery plan.**

ESAP is a particularly challenging project to manage in terms of meeting implementation deadlines. Indeed, most activities take place at the regional level and involve stakeholders from different countries, each with limited availability. Ensuring plans are realized in a timely manner is a substantial challenge. A certain level of political instability characterizes the sub-region, which adds another challenge since political events are often likely to affect the realization of activities.

During its initial phase, the project did accommodate a request from the donor and adjust the order of activities. The project went from the narrow focus of enhancing social partners' involvement in the Economic Reform programme (ERP) processes to a broader focus on social partners' involvement in economic and structural reforms. Consequently, the capacity-building activities under Component 3 aimed to enhance the social partners´ involvement in the design, implementation, and monitoring of employment and social employment policies, and their engagement in broader economic and structural reforms.

The ILO staff involved in ESAP managed to complete all activities smoothly and in a timely manner, regardless of the fact that a six-month no-cost extension was necessary to complete all commitments. This did not negatively affect the result of the project.

In the future, ESAP could allow for sufficient time for the management team to consult with the project partners before each activity. This should be factored into the construction of the implementation plan.

EQ 5.2. IS THE STEERING COMMITTEES FUNCTIONING PROPERLY, AND WHAT VALUE DOES IT ADD?

Finding 1. **The Steering Committee has been fulfilling its role.**

ESAP has been overseen by a Steering Committee that coordinates the joint ESAP interventions and is composed of representatives of the DG EMPL, the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), the ILO, the RCC and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

The Steering Committee has been fulfilling its task successfully. Such a committee adds value to regional projects that are remote, offering a space for consultative decisions to be made on sensitive issues. Steering Committee meetings can also provide a bigger, distanced perspective on the overall intervention, allowing them to formulate general or strategic advice.

The Steering Committee has been involved in monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities, using this information to make suggestions for ESAP's potential improvement.

EQ 5.3. Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring and documenting its progress to allow for impact assessment at a later stage? Does the monitoring framework provide data to measure end-line results? What could be improved?

Finding 1. **The project has systematically monitored and documented its activities.**

ESAP has been informing the donor of its activities with an inception report and with annual reports per the EU's essential reporting rules. In addition, ESAP activities were made available through extensive reports like the peer review reports. These reports have also been made accessible through ESAP's online website. The quality and content of the reporting is satisfactory. However, monitoring has been less systematic.

Finding 2. **ESAP has produced a summary of its key achievements and has used reporting rather than a monitoring framework.**

ESAP's project management has been monitoring the implementation of activities at the regional level and has been assisted in this task at the country level, through exchanges and updates from the ILO National Coordinators.

ESAP has also used the original Logframe indicators to report on the implementation results versus the targets. However, the evaluation has not been provided with more sophisticated tools that would indicate the existence of a more detailed monitoring framework. Much of this information is available in the annual report, or in project-specific publications.

A monitoring framework equipped with a more detailed set of activity and results-related indicators would have been a welcome tool. All achievements could have been assessed in one place, and the lack of visibility and output-related communication reported by several interviewees could have been effectively addressed. This information could also be used for impact assessment.

EQ 5.4. Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring, documenting and communicating results, including on gender, at the country and sub-regional level?

Finding 1. **ESAP documentation and reporting is satisfactory, while communication could be improved.**

As explained above, the level of documentation and reporting of ESAP is qualitatively sufficient. It meets the donor's requirements and provides sufficient information for partners and actors external to the project.

Communication, however, has been considered insufficient by the project partners. The evaluation has looked specifically at formal communication, interactive communication, consultations, and communication tools and products.

ESAP's formal communication has been developed at a satisfactory level, with all events promoted in a timely manner and with a clear project identity.

But several partners felt that the project was insufficiently proactive in its exchanges with the partners. ESAP was not systematically presented to all the actors involved, and its ILO and RCC components were not always fully explained. Some partners also noted that they received insufficient consultation before events, making it difficult for them to prepare. They expected more direct communication from the project. The more proactive stance taken by the project in its later phase was appreciated. ILO National Coordinators seem to have been consulted only to a modest level as well. This is a lost opportunity, since their frequent interaction with local stakeholders could have helped ensure that the ESAP activities fit properly within the national contexts.

The communication tools and products developed by ESAP combined physical visibility (like leaflets) and virtual support (as with the ESAP online platform). The website holds a wealth of information, although the user experience is overwhelming, and the website suffers from a lack of organization. The platform should provide more guidance on how to find what information. Now the website appears to be a depository of ESAP and non-ESAP documents and does not sufficiently target the stakeholders. It also fails to make clear whether this is a project-specific domain.

Finding 2. **The gender dimension has been underreported.**

Activities or results touching upon gender equality are rarely mentioned in ESAP reports. This gap can be considered as a missed opportunity to promote ESAP's contribution to gender equality. While not explicitly at the core of the project, ESAP has made indirect contributions towards gender equality for which little evidence has been collected. This underreporting of gender-specific achievements makes it difficult for ESAP to boast clear and convincing results on gender equality.

Some key data – like the female participation in all project events – could have been reported, illustrating ESAP's contributions to the gender dimension.

EQ 5.5. IS THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM PRACTICAL, USEFUL AND COST EFFECTIVE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT?

Finding 1. **ESAP has not used a formal and systematic monitoring system.**

ESAP is an activity-heavy project, and its actions, like establishing a regional network of APRLDs, do not always produce short-term tangible results.

ESAP has used a narrative model to report on events in its reports. This may not represent the most practical option, given the number of activities and the fact that certain activities were implemented by the partners themselves (as with the awareness-raising campaigns conducted by inspectorates).

Instead, a monitoring format with centralized quantitative and qualitative realizations would have proved useful for tracking the project's implementation and communicating regularly on ESAP's progress through brief updates given to all of the partners. Considering the extensive geographic area of the activities, the ILO National Coordinators could have helped gather local information with their national partners.

EQ 5.6. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE PROJECT IN SHARING GOOD PRACTICES WITHIN COUNTRIES, COMMUNICATING SUCCESS STORIES, AND DISSEMINATING KNOWLEDGE INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY (INCLUDING THOSE THAT ARE GENDER-RELATED)?

Finding 1. **ESAP's regional mechanisms and events have been effective channels for information-sharing.**

There were stronger and weaker aspects of ESAP's role as a communicator of good practices and knowledge dissemination.

The peer review approach was highly appreciated by all ESC interviewees. The tool is efficient because it is lively and interactive, requiring the full and direct participation of the institution's members. The collaborative characteristic of peer review encourages the project partners to memorize and integrate the knowledge they have gained. All ESC interviewees pointed out that they were able to apply the lessons of the peer review meetings when implementing recommendations and beyond.

Various high-level ESAP events, including the recent ESAP closing event, provided strongly visible opportunities to promote the project and present updates on its achievements to influential stakeholders who were not direct project partners. These were impactful sessions that elevated the visibility of ESAP's results, although follow-up is still needed to maintain interest among numerous competing priorities and projects.

Most stakeholders believe that formalizing regional networks is the natural next step for sharing good practices and disseminating knowledge. However, these require at least three conditions to function properly. First, regional activities need to be organized frequently to keep the network active, attractive and beneficial to partners. Second, a minimum level of yearly financial resources must be ensured to fund regional level events. Third, the institutions involved should meet at least once a year, as physical encounters remain the most appreciated and beneficial form of collaboration in the sub-region.

As mentioned above, several interviewees believe they missed the overall objective and vision of ESAP. Getting a wider picture could have made it easier to develop more connections between the ILO and the RCC projects, between key partners, and between the various ILO ESAP components.

Finally, the experience of ESAP online, intended to be a central element of regional communication, has produced mixed feelings. The website is used very differently depending on the stakeholder. CEELex experts are its most frequent users, as the CEELex database is a specifically useful tool for them. APRLDs have been using the platform with varying levels of intensity; they recognize the value of the CEELex database but have noted the site's lack of user-friendliness. ESCs are not regular users of the website.

A virtual platform remains an essential tool for exchanging knowledge. Based on interviewee feedback, it seems there is some room for improvement. First, the site's user-friendliness, accessibility and user-targeting needs to be enhanced. Its strategic role also needs revision. ESAP's virtual platform is destined to be a place for providing resources and sharing technical information. It cannot be a substitute for direct interactions with the partners.

4.6. IMPACT ORIENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

EQ 6.1. HOW EFFECTIVELY HAS THE PROJECT BUILT NATIONAL OWNERSHIP, AND THE CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS?

Finding 1. **ESAP successfully built the capacity of people and institutions in relation to its resources.**

The project's methods, tools, and the ILO expertise have produced top-level quality products and experiences. These have been strongly praised across countries by different project partners.

This explains why, with its limited resources, ESAP has managed to make a difference in the way institutions perform. While there were variations within the region, all participants reported they gained knowledge that they were able to apply and practice.

Labour inspectorates have learned new practices, raised their institutional performance and improved the awareness of their staff while performing inspections. These institutions have in turn raised the awareness of their employers and workers. The longer-term lessons learned from the awareness-raising campaigns are still to be seen.

APRLDs have reported sharp increases in the number of disputes they are adjudicating on a yearly basis. For example, Serbia's APRLD more than doubled its caseload from 2018 to 2019. Agencies have also been increasingly proactive in doing prevention work and are increasingly being solicited by employees and employers.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which these improvements are the result of ESAP, as human performance, political contexts, and the regular advisement and support provided by the ILO National Coordinators also play a role.

Finding 2. **National ownership has been built to a limited extent.**

Reviewing the national ownership of ESAP has raised several questions. Project ownership may not be the most appropriate terminology, since the partners are remotely located from the project management team and are involved in a limited number of events over a three-and-a-half-year period. While ownership can be enhanced through frequent interaction with the project, ESAP has limited capacity to develop this aspect.

Thus, rather than looking at "project ownership" when analysing the relationship of the stakeholders to ESAP, we can consider how stakeholders have valued their connection to and interest in the project as a result of receiving knowledge that is applicable to their national contexts. Regional networking is probably the most relevant vector for this. ESAP has rightly invested in building regional exchanges that evaluation interviewees have referred to when discussing ESAP. Obviously, the feeling of ownership cannot be implied for institutions, given their differing levels of commitment and other personal factors. Consequently, the evaluation suggests measuring ownership by the level of development in regional networking. Informally, regional networking has been quite active and the demand for more is clear. This is a positive indicator. Formally, these networks are still at an early stage of their development, making it difficult to gauge concrete results. But the demand alone for a continued exchange within the sub-region confirms that there is potential to further develop this area.

EQ 6.2. ARE THE GENDER-RELATED OUTCOMES LIKELY TO BE SUSTAINABLE?

Finding 1. **Gender-related outcomes have not been accurately defined.**

ESAP's project document does not feature any specific gender equality strategy or related outcomes. This has made it difficult for the evaluation to measure this aspect.

However, this does not mean that gender equality was not discussed and tackled through the project's activities. Gender equality is entrenched in international standards that have been presented in various discussions. The Labour inspection awareness-raising campaigns also tackled situations specific to women.

International organizations are pressing institutions to advance the status of women through labour reforms. Thus, the contribution of ESAP on this matter is likely to be sustainable when gender equality is integrated in legal instruments through labour reforms. However, the absence of a strategy and clear outcomes is a missed opportunity for ESAP, and this gap should be addressed in the next phase.

EQ 6.3. IS THE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY SUSTAINABLE?

Finding 1. **Targeting the right institutions and supporting networking is a relevant approach, though sustainability requires more time and resources.**

Rather than assessing whether the engagement strategy is sustainable, it may be more relevant to assess whether the engagement strategy ensures sustainability. It should consider both the sustainability of results and the sustainability of stakeholder commitments to regional cooperation as a means to advance labour reforms.

ESAP has used ILO's long-standing expertise and understanding of the national contexts to identify the relevant stakeholders with the legitimacy to contribute to labour market reforms and social dialogue. These actors may not be the most experienced or influential in their national landscapes, but their mandates lay the foundation for sustainability.

The other pillar of the engagement strategy – dynamizing regional cooperation – is also appropriate. Even if individual countries may achieve EU integration at different times, all are pursuing the objectives of international and EU standards. This approach is thus sound in terms of the scale of economy, and it ensures that no country is left behind in terms of bridging the knowledge and capacity gap when it comes to advancing reforms.

Still, there is a certain degree of disconnect between ESAP's modest financial resources and its elevated ambitions. This observation should be taken as a reminder that ESAP's overarching goals will require long-term and continued resources. ESAP has now built the mechanisms to channel and disseminate technical assistance, so continuing ESAP's capacity-building efforts should be a smooth operation.

In its endeavour to build sustainability, ESAP 1 may have rushed into introducing an online platform. Although the need for a sustained online tool is undeniable, the online platform needs time to be fully integrated. ESAP online needs to be more specific about its strategic use, and the benefits of the virtual space should be made obvious to all stakeholders (especially ESCs).

Finally, ESAP needs to define how much it ultimately aims to influence the progress of social dialogue. The parties to the project only represent some of the key constituents of social dialogue and do not include powerful decision-makers like ministers of finance and others. Thus, the results and impacts of ESAP will depend on the capacity of the current project partners (with the support of international institutions) to obtain the participation and commitment of other key ministries with an influence on labour reform.

EQ 6.4. HAS THE PROJECT REACHED SUFFICIENT SCALE AND DEPTH TO JUSTIFY THE INVESTMENT?

HAS THE PROJECT FOUND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN THE PROJECT'S SCALE AND ITS DEPTH? IS THE APPROACH (AND ITS RESULTS) LIKELY TO BE UPSCALED OR REPLICATED?

IS THE PROJECT A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO STRENGTHEN SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE WESTERN BALKAN GOVERNMENTS (PRIMARILY LABOUR INSPECTORATES) AND SOCIAL PARTNERS FOR DEVISING AND IMPLEMENTING SOUND, EVIDENCE-BASED LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN LINE WITH ILO AND EU STANDARDS IN THE FIELDS OF EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL DIALOGUE, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND WORKING CONDITIONS?

Finding 1. **Despite varying levels of depth, ESAP has raised the level of interest and shows promising potential that justifies the investment, although the project should be continued.**

With all activities completed (yielding several key results), overall positive feedback received, strong appreciation expressed by the partners, and the regional cooperation dynamic boosted, ESAP has shown that its original ambitious objectives have brought a positive contribution. These are encouraging signs, but the project design lacks more elaborate indicators to capture the results and impacts of the activities.

The partners showed motivation, engagement, and appreciation of ESAP's regional exchange activities such as peer reviews. The effects of ESAP are variable between different countries, however. This is to be expected, since the experiences, resources and situations surrounding social dialogue differ from country to country (consider the examples of Montenegro and Albania). But even if the effects are not equally visible or similar, their depth is comparable.

It appears that the first phase of ESAP was given too few resources and too little time to achieve its objectively over-ambitious and broadly formulated goals. To "strengthen the sub-regional cooperation and institutional capacities of Western Balkans' governments," for instance, is quite a lofty aim; it would be hard to produce or measure results to this end. ESAP's achievements are encouraging and show further potential, but they need to be properly gathered and their effects monitored and shared.

Finding 2. **ESAP has more scale than depth, ~~its~~ but depth can be enhanced with more involvement of the ILO National Coordinators.**

As explained in 6.3, ESAP has applied an efficient engagement strategy that has demonstrated that the project's scale was reached, and that it is fit to encompass regional, multi-country interventions. Achieving scale and depth at the same time is challenging, however, especially with modest resources and a limited project staff. If depth is prioritized, this could diminish the regional dimension which was the overall goal of ESAP. If scale is ensured but the results are superficial on the national level, its effects will be insufficiently convincing to maintain stakeholders' interest and commitment.

ESAP seems to have struck a balance between scale and depth: It has achieved regional scale owing to a regional network that stimulated active participation of national stakeholders, and it has achieved depth in these results (in ESC peer reviews and recommendations) with the active facilitation of the ILO National Coordinators. However, ESAP has reached more relative scale than depth. The level of commitment and interest among the regional institutions is strong and if the approach has proven efficient in bringing up the regional dimension, it does not mean that the relative depth of the project is a fundamental limitation.

The issue may well be more practical than far-fetched: the ambitious objective of ESAP may need to be revised to the benefit of a more focused, more impactful intervention. The number of activities, of countries of interventions, of stakeholders and related outcomes may be too many for the scale of a single project. The mobilisation of actors, preparation, time and resources to organise regional events is demanding ; thus the need to concentrate on fewer activities and select those which impact has the highest potential may be prioritised.

With the right level of resources and a clear definition of partners' expected roles and results, ESAP's engagement strategy offers a relevant model for replication. However, ESAP's one project phase appears as too short to reach a completed, ready-to-use model.

Finding 3. **The approach of ESAP offers good value for money in terms of its activities, but more resources are needed to achieve cost-effective results.**

The rationed budget compared to the activities and the budget compared to the obtained results are both indicators of cost-effectiveness. However, these are short-term indicators only, and ESAP is not only about immediate results. ESAP has still been cost-effective in several instances. The project contributed to encouraging the use of amicable (non-judicial) methods for the resolution of labour disputes by workers, trade unions and employers. The number of cases referred to the Serbian APRLD doubled from 2018 to 2019. The project supported the first Youth Guarantee Scheme, a government commitment in Northern Macedonia, and also provided expert support to the drafters of a new Labour Law in Montenegro.

But even if ESAP has built the foundation for a durable and supportive regional cooperation mechanism, its limited resources have necessarily produced limited know-how. The awareness-raising labour inspection campaigns, with their 5,000 EUR budgets, provide an opportunity to realize how much more remains to be done, especially within these institutions that are underfunded and face many challenges (like OSH and undeclared work).

Cost-effectiveness is in the horizon. However, this is a longer-term objective. The regional network needs consolidation, ESAP's results need to be monitored more closely and recorded in further detail, and the impact needs to be reviewed. This will form a more solid basis to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of ESAP.

EQ 6.5. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE PROJECT BEEN RESPONSIVE TO SDGS AND THEIR RELATED TARGETS?

Finding 1. **ESAP has been responsive to a number of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) both directly and indirectly.**

ESAP is primarily linked to the Sustainable Development Goal number 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and the following specific targets:

- Target 6: by 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training. *The Youth Guarantee Scheme in Northern Macedonia contributed to this target.*

- Target 8: protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. *Labour inspector awareness-raising campaigns have contributed to this target.*

ILO's expertise and strategic objectives are particularly relevant here, since contributing to creating an environment conducive to decent work stands at the core of the ILO's strategy.

ESAP has also produced indirect but relevant contributions to the following Sustainable Development Goals and targets:

- **SDG 4: Quality Education:**
  - 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."
- **SDG 5: Gender Equality:**
  - Target 5.5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life."
  - Target 5.9: "Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels."
- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:**
  - Target 10.2: "By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status."
  - Target 10.3: "Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard."
  - Target 10.4: "Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality."

4.7. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

EQ 7.1. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PROJECT DESIGN TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NON-DISCRIMINATION AND INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS RELEVANT TO THE PROJECT CONTEXT?

Finding 1. **ESAP has committed to systematically integrating international labour standards and non-discrimination principles throughout its activities with the ILO's dedicated tools and knowledgeable experts.**

ESAP has committed to promoting non-discrimination and international labour standards in its activities. The evaluation understands this has been the case in multiple instances. Labour inspection awareness-raising campaigns provided an opportunity to remind employers and workers of their obligations and rights in relation to international labour standards. The content of policy dialogue workshops has also been developed based on international labour standards and non-discrimination principles.

The CEELex database and the network of CEELex experts established by ESAP provide strong tools for disseminating these standards and advising on their application in various contexts by the project partners.

EQ 7.2. TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE PROJECT STRATEGIES REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE OVERALL TO EMERGING CONCERNS WITH REGARDING GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION?

Finding 1. **ESAP has applied a flexible approach when it comes to addressing emerging concerns related to gender equality and non-discrimination.**

As explained previously, ESAP has adopted a flexible and responsive approach when it comes to addressing emerging concerns related to gender equality and non-discrimination. The project activities have been designed to systematically take into account and adjust to situations related to gender equality and non-discrimination. The project management and the ILO National Coordinators have maintained a consultative approach with project partners so that these concerns could be addressed throughout the intervention.

EQ 7.3. WHAT WERE THE FACILITATING (OR LIMITING) FACTORS IN THE PROJECT'S POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO GENDER EQUALITY, NON-DISCRIMINATION, AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS?

Finding 1. **The ILO in-house expertise and contextualization capacity were facilitating factors in the project's potential contribution to gender equality, non-discrimination, and promoting international labour standards.**

The ILO has the unique competency to use its expertise relevantly through project interventions. The ILO is able to provide thematic experts on gender equality and international labour standards, as well as experts familiar with contexts characterized by a transition from socialist to market economies. In addition, the ILO is in a position to contextualize the delivery of this expertise with the help of its National Coordinators. They have consultative relationships with national stakeholders and are able to guide experts and ensure that the knowledge delivered is tailored to the local needs. The project partners have singled out the ILO for having constantly provided a high level of technical support that directly responded to their priorities.

The common institutional culture of the Western Balkan countries has facilitated a mutual understanding between them, based on their shared experience of addressing challenges collectively. This is an important reason why regional cooperation is functioning under ESAP. The countries face many of the same challenges, and there is a shared belief that national solutions will be improved by learning from the experiences of neighbouring countries.

The EU accession process is also an undeniable driver for Western Balkan governments to implement EU standards that are mostly aligned with international standards, including on labour and anti-discrimination.

Finding 2. **But there are limiting factors for promoting gender equality, non-discrimination, and international labour standards.**

A first limiting factor is ESAP's financial resources. These limited financial means do not provide ESAP with the capacity to exert a direct influence on labour and anti-discrimination. ESAP does contribute to these issues but indirectly, through building institutional capacity and awareness, in cultural environments where gender mainstreaming still has a way to go.

Another factor is the limited leverage ESAP has on important stakeholders that are external to the project. This includes the ministries of finance across the region. Even if labour legislation is not under their direct responsibility, these ministries are conducting economic and fiscal reforms that play a determining role in improving labour markets, decent work and social dialogue. Similarly, the issue of representativeness among the project partners – among them the trade unions – will grow in importance in the longer term and require consideration by the project.

4.8.   LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

EQ 8.1. WHAT WERE THE MAJOR LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, BOTH SUBSTANTIVELY (WITH REFERENCE TO THE POLICY AREAS AND OBJECTIVES COVERED BY THE PROJECT) AND OPERATIONALLY (WITH RESPECT TO HOW SUCCESSFULLY EU AND ILO PROCEDURES WERE APPLIED TO THE PROJECT'S MANAGEMENT)?

Finding 1. **Policy-level lessons were learned.**

1. ESAP results are not sufficiently visible and communicated.

ESAP is dense in its priorities, strategies and projects, and features two vulnerable aspects: it has limited resources and its management is at the regional level (thus remote from the stakeholders). Thus ESAP needs to be clearly understood and show clear results. This will allow ESAP to maintain partners' interest and increase its leverage and impact in the future.

2. The design of a long-term and more detailed strategy will help connect ESAP's results to the standards of sustainable development.

It is possible that without a targeted strategic formulation and the promotion of tangible results, ESAP's valuable capacity-building assets may lose stakeholders interest and commitment over time. ESAP's strategy has been too wide, while the project formulation is too activity-driven. ESAP needs to focus on its core strengths – institutional building and regional cooperation – and remove politically-induced change from among its ambitions. This can be counterproductive to an otherwise valid approach.

3. Evidence of results needs to be collected so that ESAP can convincingly demonstrate its achievements.

ESAP is a complex, ambitious project that encompasses numerous countries, stakeholders and activities. As explained previously, its credibility will depend on its capacity to demonstrate change. This requires the development of a monitoring framework and results-oriented indicators.

4. ESAP's regional platform approach is relevant and effective for stakeholder engagement and regional capacity-building.

The regional cooperation approach developed by ESAP is valuable, as it combines assets and mechanisms to ensure that institutional capacities are increased across the sub-region. ESAP produces expertise, encourages dynamism and participation among countries in the region, and increases the amount of contextualized knowledge, facilitated by the ILO National Coordinators. This knowledge is circulated and applied throughout the region through networking, communication and ESAP Online.

5. ESAP's limited leverage on influential decision-makers may require a specific engagement strategy.

ESAP and its partners have raised awareness among key stakeholders, such as ministers of finance, on labour market reforms and social dialogue. However, this has not translated into firm commitments. While securing further engagement is beyond the purview of ESAP, developing engagement strategies that specifically target influential external actors may lead to more meaningful results in the future.

Finding 2. **Operational-level lessons were learned.**

<u>1. ESAP is labour intensive, with a high number of activities, stakeholders, and countries, and this requires active communication.</u>

ESAP requires a demanding level of personal commitment from its management, especially in terms of direct communication with the partner institutions. Thus, the roles and responsibilities of the management team need to be exhaustively defined.

<u>2. Regional-level objectives need to be translated into national contexts.</u>

Labour-related national contexts differ from one another in several ways. Institutional and legislative settings can differ, political climates can vary, and social dialogue can be in different stages of development. Consequently, the environment of each country should be considered, and realistic objectives tailored to each national context to maximize the impact of ESAP. This approach should increase ESAP's synergy and complementarity with other ILO country interventions. This relates to the previous lesson, as it requires a great deal of consultation.

<u>3. Direct, face-to-face and regular communication is key for regional projects, especially when building regional networks.</u>

Distance, geographical and psychological, can threaten regional projects and beneficiaries' engagement if these dimensions are not carefully managed and relationships are not maintained. National institutions are extremely overextended, with projects, ongoing reforms, multiple strategies, national priorities, regional commitments, and pressing deadlines conditioned by political instability. Individual projects, especially those with limited resources, must accommodate the limited availability and absorption capacity of the institutions in region, already pressed with reforms. In this context, active communication and a degree of proximity is required between the project management and the partners, and among the partners in the region. This is crucial for network-building, and for continued stakeholder engagement. If too much time elapses between project events or communication, ESAP could lose its momentum. While all interviewed stakeholders praised the quality of ESAP's activities, some regretted the lack of regular communication.

<u>4. Peer review is a strong tool for capacity-building, building stakeholder ownership and constructing a regional network.</u>

The peer review's conceptual approach, where national institutions review the practices of neighbouring countries, was highly appreciated by the participants. Participants reported that it raised their awareness of their own shortcomings and provided them with knowledge from contexts similar enough to be applicable. The process of sharing and receiving knowledge linked institutions, and they believe that regional networking represents a sustainable channel for continued improvement.

The level of involvement of the ILO in the peer review has raised the attention of the evaluation. ILO experts trained ESC members but did not participate in the peer review exercise itself. Since this was participants' first time doing the exercise, the involvement of experts in its implementation could have further increased the quality of the output.

- ARE THERE GOOD PRACTICES TO BE REPLICATED?

Finding 1. **ESAP is a potential model for institutional strengthening and capacity-building through regional cooperation.**

As explained previously, ESAP is a model that can be applied to other regions with political and geographic coherence. In all of the Western Balkan countries, EU accession is a common political priority. This enables ESAP to build the capacities of institutions across the region through stimulating regional cooperation.

The first phase of ESAP still needs to be improved to become a replicable model. It should be made more intensive and direct, with a better formulation of its strategic objectives, clearer tracking and promotion of its achievements, a greater role given to the ILO National Coordinators, and improved client tools (ESAP online). However, the programme's platform and the quality of the expertise show potential for a future model.

Finding 2. **Peer review is a key element of ESAP's regional strategy.**

The sharing of regional and international knowledge has enhanced ownership among stakeholders, raised awareness of their own gaps, and established a strong network likely to remain sustainable if it is maintained with regular events and an accessible, user-friendly virtual platform. Peer review requires appropriate consultation and preparation, and the accurate targeting of beneficiaries with decision-making leverage.

Finding 3. **Culturally-tailored, direct, regular, and consultative communication is essential.**

Consultation of the partners requires more than seeking feedback or collecting information from them. It ideally involves a personalized conversation that will help provide the necessary insight into the nuances of the national contexts to encourage thorough stakeholder involvement. The ILO National Coordinators, who have already built strong, trusting relationships with national actors, can complement project management in this process.

- WHAT WERE THE KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS?

Finding 1. **There were several key factors of success.**

1. ESAP utilized ILO expertise and ILO staff in the region.

The ILO is awash with high-quality and relevant expertise to ESAP. The ILO National Coordinators and the ILO's technical assistance team provided ESAP with substantial support throughout the project.

2. ESAP has converted a request-based, regional initiative in a project providing tangible results at the national levels.

The fact that ESAP is the result of a requested intervention (and not a specific need expressed by local institutions) presented a potential challenge to the project. However, the project partners have experienced the intervention as beneficial. Items 1 and 3 are probably the most responsible for the project's capacity to convert a high-level initiative into a success in practice.

3. ESAP took a regional approach.

The success of ESAP's approach, developed by the ILO, can be attributed to the ILO's analytical power, the value of its human resource capacity, and the use of lessons learned from a long history of providing technical assistance in the region. A more detailed analysis of this approach is provided in several sections of the report.

- HOW SHOULD THESE LESSONS INFORM THE FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW PHASE?

Finding 1. **Under certain conditions, a thoughtful regional approach can offer an efficient model.**

The Western Balkans is a sub-region with strong political coherence, as EU accession remains a key objective to all of the countries. This shared objective alone makes a regional intervention a logical choice. However, a regional project requires more than bringing countries together to share their knowledge. The various specific national social and political developments also need to be taken into account, since they are at least as crucial as the regional layer. This has to be factored into the regional approach, with things like regional activities that have country-tailored objectives (like ESC national recommendations) and local results indicators.

Finding 2. **A more detailed, longer-term strategy should be formulated as part of ESAP 2. This should be focused on the country contexts and equipped with SMART indicators.**

ESAP's next phase should focus on achievements that rely more directly on the project, such as capacity-building. Thus ESAP will set more achievable and measurable objectives.

- HAVE LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS BEEN SET UP TO MAXIMIZE THE PROJECT'S IMPACT?

Finding 1. **Local partnerships are maximizing the project's impact.**

Regional networking, in terms of local partnerships at the sub-regional level, has been essential to maximizing the project's impact. These networks generate another layer of technical assistance besides the ILO expertise, since countries learn and improve from the experiences and practices of their neighbours.

Regional networks are just now in the process of being formalized. Thus, a follow-up ESAP phase will provide an opportunity to strengthen these networks, ensuring that they continue to disseminate and exchange knowledge and experiences efficiently.

Partnerships among stakeholders involved in separate ESAP activities could have been developed further. A closer interaction between the ESCs and the APRLDs could have benefited both institutions in terms of capacity-building and enhancing their roles across national territories.

The CEELex network is operational and already routinely providing technical support to institutions. However, it could be further promoted among all project partners to be utilized more systematically.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. **ESAP has been worthy investment so far.**

With a valid approach that can potentially be modelled In the future, ESAP has implemented numerous activities that resulted in newfound expertise and practices perceived as highly relevant to the project partners.

Conclusion 2. **However, one project cycle is too short to see a return on the investment.**

ESAP has realized key achievements though its activities. However, it has also generated effects and changes that have not been sufficiently reported and promoted. These effects need to be recorded and eventually expanded upon. Strategically, ESAP represents the first phase of longer-term engagement.

Conclusion 3. **Project partners were engaged in ESAP, but they expect a further and deeper involvement.**

The establishment of regional networks has opened the door to the possibility of future dynamic regional cooperation. However, project partners expect an intervention that is more receptive to their challenges and with a longer-term vision.

Conclusion 4. **The potential of some powerful tools requires an investment that is commensurate with their potential.**

The ESAP online platform is a necessary tool to complement capacity-building and establishing regional networks. The impact of this tool depends on its design, and how well it takes into account the needs of its users. It should be user-friendly and target stakeholders, and its intended usage should be clearly defined. A majority of the stakeholders interviewed are not regularly using ESAP online, in the best case, and some are not using it at all. Only CEELex experts are enjoying a clear benefit from it, mainly for the CEELex database. ESAP's first phase may have been too early a stage to propose this tool. It seems that careful attention needs to be given to each specific user's interest, readiness and language to ensure that the virtual tool will be used. A product development approach is necessary.

Conclusion 5. **Two distinct projects carrying the same name require coherence and unity in their presentation.**

ESAP was divided into two distinct but conceptually close projects with the same name. They addressed the same issues and shared a similar overall objective. However, with separate budgets, teams, and different targeted institutions, each ESAP project had its own culture and identity. This was confusing to some of the project partners, who reported that they were either unaware of RCC's ESAP or unclear about whether ESAP was one or two projects. The unity and duality of the two ESAPs should have been communicated in both projects, highlighting their strategic unity and operational separation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Recommendation 1. | **A second ESAP phase is recommended. It was requested by the partners and is justified according to the evaluation.**

The evaluation recommends the funding of a second phase to be confirmed formally, to avoid gaps between phases 1 and 2 and to maintain stakeholder commitment.

To be implemented by: DG EMPL (funding confirmation), ILO (implementation)

Specific suggested action: DG EMPL (official funding confirmation), ILO (communicate funding decision to project partners and stakeholders)

Degree of priority: High

Implementation time frame: ASAP

Required resources: (budget already established)

Key Recommendation 2. | **Although the main lines of ESAP 2 have already been drawn, the evaluation strongly recommends that this be further elaborated in series of preparatory steps.**

The evaluation understands that ESAP 2 has been formulated on the basis of limited stakeholder consultation. The preparatory phase will provide an opportunity to increase the project's strategic relevance, improve the logic of the intervention, and encourage more ownership through partner consultation.

To be implemented by: ILO ESAP Team Leader, in consultation with the ILO National Coordinators (and project partners, to a degree to be evaluated by ILO ESAP Team Leader and National Coordinators)

Specific suggested actions: Within the key project components already established for ESAP 2, conduct consultations to fine tune the project's specifics (activities, national priorities, and the timing of project events). *Please see the sub-recommendations below.*

Degree of priority: High

Implementation time frame: During the initial period of ESAP 2 implementation

Required resources: Stakeholder time and ESAP/ILO National Coordinator human resources

This key recommendation suggests the following steps:

Sub Recommendation 1. **Establish a simple but formal mechanism ensuring that the ILO National Coordinators are consulted for each important project decision or activity (such as the preparation of regional events) and are invited to local events to facilitate country-level consultations with national partners.**

Sub Recommendation 2. **Seek the contributions of the ILO National Coordinators to improve ESAP 2 both in its content and approach.** At the country level, the ILO National Coordinators, jointly with ESAP management, should consult the project partners to help formulate realistic expectations at the country level. This would allow for ESAP technical assistance to meet both national and regional demands while creating a knowledge base at the regional level.

Sub Recommendation 3. **Provide a formal description of the process leading to the longer-term objective of ESAP, and identify the steps needed to get there.** This could be done jointly between the RCC and the ILO. Stakeholders should be given a clearer vision of the overall ESAP intervention and a more precise roadmap for achieving these goals.

Sub Recommendation 4. **Work jointly with the RCC to ensure strategic and operational coherence between both ESAP 2 projects so that they are perceived as one effort by national stakeholders.** This should involve coherence in strategy and clearly defined operational modalities for the organizations' roles and coordinating mechanisms. For instance, the RCC could take advantage of the ILO's presence at the country level and established relationships with the partners by asking them to help relay information about the ILO-RCC activities.

Sub Recommendation 5. **Once ESAP 2 is developed in detail, the RCC and the ILO should hold a joint formal presentation on ESAP 1's achievements and introduce ESAP 2 to concerned stakeholders.**

Key Recommendation 3. **Build an ESAP 2 Logframe/TOC with a clear description of the expected results, ensuring that these results do not overly rely on factors external to the project.** (Results can be defined by the achievements of the partners as a result of their demonstrated capacity, for instance). Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework so that ESAP 2 results are clearly identified and shared.

To be implemented by: ILO ESAP Team Leader, in consultation with the ILO National Coordinators

Specific suggested action: A TOC and a Logframe have already been elaborated. The TOC and the Logframe are recommended to be reviewed to ensure that ESAP 2 properly indicates its expected results. The initial consultation under Recommendation 1 can be an opportunity to ensure that the appropriate indicators are used.

Degree of priority: High

implementation time frame: ASAP

Required resources: ESAP/ILO National Coordinator human resources

Recommendation 4.	**Integrate gender equality and anti-discrimination into the design of ESAP 2.** Set objectives and indicators so ESAP 2's achievements on these dimensions are measurable and more visible.
To be implemented by:	ILO ESAP Team Leader, in consultation with the ILO National Coordinators
Specific suggested action:	This recommendation should be implemented together with the ToC and Logframe review. The project's gender equality and anti-discrimination objectives and contributions. even if they are indirect or limited, should appear in the Logframe.
Degree of priority:	High
implementation time frame:	ASAP
Required resources:	ESAP/ILO National Coordinator human resources

Recommendation 5.	**Define a development strategy of ESAP Online that explains its expected outcome and function and allows for it to become more user-friendly in the future.**
To be implemented by:	ILO ESAP and RCC ESAP
Specific suggested action:	Review the strategic objectives, expected results, and modalities of ESAP Online, and consider a user-friendly redesign.
Degree of priority:	Medium
implementation time frame:	In the course of ESAP 2's implementation
Required resources:	IT expertise and appropriate financial resources

Recommendation 6.	**Ensure that ESAP 2 maintains active communication with the project partners. ILO National Coordinators should be given a formal role in the direct communication efforts of ESAP 2, relaying information and facilitating national-level consultations in the countries of intervention. Regular implementation updates should be shared with all partners.**
To be implemented by:	ILO ESAP and, to a lesser extent, RCC
Specific suggested action:	Define a communication strategy (involving the ILO National Coordinators) and style that prioritizes regular, direct encounters with institutions in the region
Degree of priority:	High
implementation time frame:	Early in ESAP 2's implementation
Required resources:	Time, logistics (including travel), and related costs

Recommendation 7.	**Develop an engagement strategy targeting political decision-makers.** Organize awareness-raising events, such as parliamentary information-sharing sessions, to obtain further involvement from influential stakeholders that are not project partners.
To be implemented by:	ILO ESAP
Specific suggested action:	Develop a strategy to advocate for more supportive involvement of key ministries with a stake in the validation of project outcomes. Set "accountability indicators" to identify when the validation of outputs depends on the project rather than on political factors.
Degree of priority:	Medium
implementation time frame:	In the course of ESAP 2's implementation, and in the long term
Required resources:	Time

7. ANNEXES

7.1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE
FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Title of project:	"Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)"
Project DC Code:	Project 105619-RER/15/03/EUR
Geographical coverage:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244)
ILO Administrative Office:	Decent Work Team/Country Office for CEE (DWT/CO-Budapest)
ILO Technical Unit:	DWT/CO Budapest
Type of evaluation:	Independent
Timing of the evaluation:	Final
Duration of the evaluation:	June to October 2019 (4 days of desk work, 2 days of interviews with ILO staff, 2 days of inception report, a 12-day mission to 4 selected countries, a 6-day data analysis and drafting of the report, 1 day presentation of the findings, and 3 days to finalize the report).
Preparation date:	June 2019
Duration of the project:	1 April 2016 – 31 October 2019 (43 months, including a 7 month no-cost extension)
Links to ILO Programme and Budget Outcomes:	ILO Programme and Budget, Outcome 7: Promoting safe work and workplace compliance, including in global supply chains
Budget:	1,725,000 EUR (USD 1,722,515)
Donor (contracting authority):	EUR 1,499,025
ILO contribution:	EUR 225,975
Beneficiaries' contribution:	
Donor (contracting authority):	European Commission, DG EMPL

I. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1.1 **Introduction**
Candidate countries in the Western Balkans still suffer from weak labour market performance, which translates into low economic activity rates (particularly among women), high unemployment (especially among youth), and a large share of informality and migration. Governments have limited capacities to address these challenges due to low economic growth and large fiscal deficits. National social dialogue processes are also constrained by polarized discussions on the labour market and labour law reforms.

In response to these challenges, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) developed the "Economic and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)" project, in line with the IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015's priorities.

The project's aim was to strengthen the sub-regional cooperation and institutional capacities of Western Balkan governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and tripartite institutions. This would enable them to adopt and effectively implement labour market and social policy reforms, thus advancing their EU pre-accession processes.

The ILO intervention was part of an overall 3 million EUR project, which is financed by the European Commission (EC) and jointly implemented by the ILO and the RCC in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined by the UN Security Council Resolution 1244). The ILO project team was based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project duration was 42 months.

This document describes the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the independent final evaluation to be undertaken, adhering to ILO's policies and procedures on evaluations (see Annex 1). It will be conducted by an external independent evaluator and managed by an Evaluation Manager who is an ILO staff member with no prior involvement in the project.

The project's performance will be strictly reviewed with regards to the following six evaluation criteria, and will mainstream gender equality.

1) Relevance and strategic fit of the intervention
2) Validity of the intervention design
3) Intervention progress and effectiveness
4) Efficiency of resource usage
5) Effectiveness of managerial arrangement
6) Impact orientation and sustainability of the intervention

The evaluation is expected to:

• independently assess the progress of ESAP against its Logframe[8];
• inform the ILO on whether the current project strategy is working, and provide recommendations for Phase 2; and
• identify good practices and lessons learned that would contribute to the knowledge development of the ILO and the project stakeholders.

1.2. Theory of Change

The project did not have a specific Theory of Change, but it had a Logframe. Based on the project document and the Logframe, the following Theory of Change was reconstructed.

Candidate countries in the Western Balkans still suffer from weak labour market performance, which translates into low economic activity rates (particularly among women), high unemployment (especially among youth), and a large share of informality and migration. Governments have limited capacities to address these challenges due to low economic growth and large fiscal deficits. National social dialogue processes are also constrained by polarized discussions on the labour market and labour law reforms.

If the ILO adds to the ongoing effort of developing governments' and social partners' capacities to engage in effective social dialogue by facilitating a peer review exercise on the structure, functioning and effectiveness of existing national economic and social councils (ESCs); by creating a collaboration platform for agencies for the peaceful resolution of labour disputes (APRLDs); and by creating a CEELex database and network of national legal experts on labour and industrial relations in Central and Eastern Europe; and,

If the ILO contributes to developing close trusting relationships between sub-regional labour inspections, promotes information and knowledge-sharing related to the alignment of national legislation to international labour standards and EU directives in the field of occupational health and safety (OSH), promotes strategies and tools for the formalization of informal employment and undeclared work, promotes institutional responses to compliance problems, and works on *strengthening national labour inspectorates* by facilitating agreement on *c*ommon mechanisms and action plans for networking and sub-regional cooperation; and,

If the ILO provides t*echnical assistance and facilitates cross-fertilization with the RCC by* strengthening the existing PES

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[8] Changes were made in the Logframe during the liftime of the project, as seen in the Annual Progress Reports.

network, enhancing cooperation with EURES (European Employment Services), supporting effective participation of the social partners in PES advisory boards and their involvement in policy dialogue, and by supporting the development and maintenance of the ESAP's virtual platform;

Then, sub-regional cooperation and the institutional capacities of the Western Balkan governments (primarily labour inspectorates) and social partners will be strengthened. This will help them devise and implement sound, evidence-based legislation, policies and programmes in line with ILO and EU standards in the field of employment, social dialogue, industrial relations and working conditions.

This would lead to new policies and measures being adopted by the Western Balkan countries in the fields of labour law, social dialogue, collective bargaining, labour inspection and active labour market policies. These reforms are needed for advancing their progress towards EU accession.

1.3. **Project links to ILO's strategic framework and other partners' work**
This project is linked to the ILO Programme & Budget 2018–2019, Outcome 7: Promoting safe work and workplace compliance, including in global supply chains. It is also linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically to SDG 8, Target 8.8. The intervention supports implementation of the Europe 2020 and the SEE 2020 Strategies, which provide a framework for policy reforms that should be translated into Employment and Social Reform Programmes (ESRP).

1.4. **Gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination concerns**

The ILO has been mandated to actively promote gender equality in the world of work. As mentioned above, the ILO will actively seek to engage women in all of the Action's activities so that they can benefit both from the activities themselves and from their results. Gender issues will be mainstreamed in all of the Action's outputs, as considered relevant. Women participation will be monitored, and remedial activities will be planned (if needed) for ensuring their participation.

1.5. **Management framework**
The project is managed and technically and administratively supported by the ILO Decent Work Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe (DWT/CO), based in Budapest. A project office is set up in Sarajevo to manage and coordinate activities, with one Chief Technical Advisor and two administrative support staff (one in Budapest and one in Sarajevo) for the entire duration of the project. The project team reports directly to the Senior Specialist for Labour Law and Industrial Relations based in the DWT/CO Budapest office.

1.6. **Brief account of the project's development**
The **overall objective** of the project is to assist the Western Balkan countries in adopting and implementing reforms in the areas of employment, labour markets and social policy that are needed for advancing their EU pre-accession processes.
The **specific objective** is to create a sustainable platform for governments and social partners to share good practices and lessons learned related to social dialogue, labour inspection and public employment services at the sub-regional and national levels. The three project components are:

  Component 1: Improving the effectiveness of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes

  Component 2: Strengthening national labour inspectorates

  Component 3: Technical assistance and cross-fertilization with the Regional Cooperation Council

The project document describes the intervention strategy and outlines a project implementation framework.

The key results of ESAP 1 are as follows:

  ➢ ESAP online platform was created, with two Communities of Practice, two databases, and chat forums.
  ➢ A peer review was undertaken of the structure, functioning of effectiveness of the ESCs, with a total of 45 recommendations (of which 14 will be implemented).

- ➢ A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed, formalizing the Regional Network of Agencies for the Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes and establishing the Regional Network of Labour Inspectorates in the Western Balkans.

- ➢ A regional case database for disputes was established.

- ➢ The Central Eastern European Labour Legislation database was updated.

- ➢ National reports on non-standard forms of work were drafted.

- ➢ A total of 200 labour inspectors were trained in the design and implementation of labour inspection campaigns.

- ➢ Four labour inspection campaigns were implemented in the construction sector, covering more than 1,500 enterprise visits.

- ➢ Two regional Tripartite Workshops on Employment Policy Design were organized.

- ➢ Six national workshops on policy dialogue processes were implemented.

- ➢ More than 175 social partners and government officials were trained in dialogue on employment policy design and implementation.

II. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

As the total budget of ESAP is over USD 1 Million, the ILO must go through a final independent evaluation per its evaluation policy. This requirement was specified in the project document and agreed upon by the donors. The overall purpose of the final evaluation is to provide an opportunity for in-depth reflection on the strategy and assumptions guiding the intervention. It is also a means to assess how well intervention-level actions support higher-level ILO strategies and objectives. The project evaluation consultant should review and assess the progress and achievements of the project from its start.

The evaluation will focus on:

- the relevance and quality of the design, relating to the logical framework (is the original design well conceived, and how well has the project adapted to the local contexts and emerging needs during implementation?);
- the efficiency of implementation with respect to the project's outputs and activities (including cost efficiency, sound management, and the flexibility of the project in adapting to external factors);
- its effectiveness (impacts, synergies with national initiatives, synergies with other donor-supported projects, project visibility);
- its potential sustainability (what is the level of policy support provided, what was the response of the recipients, and how is the project contributing to institutional capacity-building?); and
- identifying good practices and lessons learned that could contribute to the knowledge development of the ILO and the project stakeholders.

The evaluation will be used in the following ways:
a)   the findings and recommendations will inform future project strategy and operational design; and
b)   the evaluation report will be disseminated within the ILO for organizational learning, through the EVAL's i-Track evaluation database. A summary of the evaluation will be made publicly available through the EVAL and ESAP websites.

The key users of the evaluation are:
- the ILO tripartite constituents and national project partners;
- the donor/contracting authority;
- the ILO management and technical specialists (in the ILO DWT/CO Budapest and in cooperating departments at Headquarters); and
- the project staff.

III. EVALUATION SCOPE

The project evaluation will take place from June to October 2019 and will cover the project as a whole. Evaluation missions will take place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

The evaluation should generate findings on the six evaluation criteria (and the global components) for all country projects, and compare the lessons learned from the different countries' implementations.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality and non-discrimination as cross-cutting concerns throughout its methodology and its deliverables, including in the grantees' final reports.

The evaluation should address, in particular, the sustainability of the platform and the collaboration networks established by the project.

IV. **EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS**

4.1. **Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation will examine the project along the following **six standard evaluation criteria, taking into account gender equality concerns**[9]. A more detailed analytical framework of questions and sub-questions will be developed by the evaluator in agreement with the Evaluation Manager.

1) **Relevance and strategic fit of the intervention**

   - Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and the countries' needs?
   - Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention in line with ILO and EU priorities?
   - Is the ESAP intervention linked to national and ILO developmental frameworks (national development plans, UNDAF, DWCPs, P&B, SDGs)?

2) **Validity of intervention design**

   - Are the project's assumptions and strategies appropriate for achieving the anticipated results?
   - Does the project's intervention strategy and the Reconstructed Theory of Change allow for impact assessment, including hypotheses that are underpinned by evidence and lessons learned from previous project phases?
   - Does the project contribute to core ILO issues such as labour standards and social dialogue?
   - How well has the project drafted its exit and sustainability strategy?
   - What lessons can be learned for the design of future projects in a similar field?
   - Within the context of the ILO goals of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues (and related national-level policies), to what extent did the project design take into account specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context?

3) **Intervention progress and effectiveness**

   - To what extent has the project achieved its objectives and reached its target groups?
   - At the institutional level, has the capacity of the partner organizations grown in relation to the delivery of outputs and objectives?
   - What obstacles did the project encounter in its implementation? What corrective action does the project need to take to achieve its objectives?
   - What specific measures were taken by the project to address issues relating to gender equality and non-discrimination more generally? DELETE MORE GENERALLY

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[9] Key questions under each evaluation criteria have been designed to help address the extent to which the mainstreaming of gender equality has been integrated into the implementation of the intervention. They also address the effectiveness and efficiency of mainstreaming gender equality, the outcomes delivered in terms of gender equality, and an estimate of the implementation's impact on equality.

- How well has the project complemented other ILO projects in the region?

4) **Efficiency of resource usage**

- Does the project make efficient use of its financial and human resources?
- Is the implementation strategy cost-effective?
- Is the distribution of resources between staff and activities optimal?
- Were the intervention resources used in an efficient way to address gender equality during implementation?

5) **Effectiveness of management arrangement**
- Have the planned timeframes been respected? How are contingencies dealt with? To what extent is corrective action is taken when required?
- Is the Steering Committee functioning properly, and what value does it add?
- Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring and documenting its progress to allow for impact assessment at a later stage? Does the monitoring framework provide data to measure end-line results? What could be improved?
- Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring, documenting and communicating results, including on gender, at the country and sub-regional levels?
- Is the monitoring and evaluation system practical, useful and cost-effective for project management?
- How effective is the project in sharing good practices within countries, communicating success stories, and disseminating knowledge internally and externally (including those that are gender-related)?

6) **Impact orientation, and the sustainability of the intervention**

- How effectively has the project built national ownership, and the capacity of people and institutions?
- Are the gender-related outcomes likely to be sustainable?
- Is the engagement strategy sustainable?
- Has the project reached a sufficient scale and depth to justify the investment? Has the right balance been found between the project's scale and its depth? Is the approach (and its results) likely to be upscaled or replicated? Is the project a cost-effective way to strengthen the sub-regional cooperation and institutional capacity of the Western Balkan governments (primarily labour inspectorates) and social partners for devising and implementing sound, evidence-based legislation, policies and programmes in line with ILO and EU standards in the fields of employment, social dialogue, industrial relations and working conditions?
- To what extent has the project been responsive to SDGs and their related targets?

V. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Additional criteria specific to the ILO mandate:

International labour standards and non-discrimination

To what extent did the project design take into account non-discrimination and international labour standards relevant to the project context?

To what extent did the project's strategies remain flexible and responsive overall to emerging concerns regarding gender equality and non-discrimination?

What were the facilitating (or limiting) factors in the project's potential contribution to gender equality, non-discrimination, and promoting International labour standards?

Lessons learned and good practices

What were the major lessons learned through the project implementation, both substantively (with reference to the policy areas and objectives covered by the project) and operationally (with respect to how successfully EU and ILO procedures were applied to the project's management)?

• Are there good practices to be replicated?
• What were the key factors of success?
• How should these lessons inform the formulation and implementation of a new phase?
• Have local partnerships been set up to maximize the project's impact?

VI. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will apply a set of mixed-methods, analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. It will integrate gender equality other non-discrimination issues as cross-cutting ILO concerns throughout its methodology and in all deliverables, including in the final report. Data and information should be collected, presented and analysed with appropriate gender disaggregation, even if the project design did not take gender into account.

The methodology should include examining the intervention's Theory of Change, or reconstructing one if there is no TOC in place. The evaluation methodology should allow for an assessment of outcomes and the likelihood of impacts by reviewing and analysing quantitative data with qualitative assessments and case studies.

The evaluation will be conducted in a participatory manner, and the methodology will ensure the involvement of key stakeholders in the evaluation's implementation and dissemination (through stakeholder workshops or debriefings).

The evaluator may make adaptations to the methodology, subject to the agreement of the evaluation manager and reflected in the inception report.

Desk review:
The evaluation consultant will review the project's background materials before conducting any interviews or trips to the region. These include:
- ESAP project documents;
- the ESAP virtual platform, which can be used to access annual progress reports, training materials, and project reports; and
- any other documents that might be useful for the evaluation.

Data review / data collection:
The evaluation will review the project's annual reports to track progress in achieving its goals and objectives. The evaluator will review the existing quantitative and qualitative data, and collect more data where necessary.

Interviews:
Individual interviews or focus group discussions will be conducted with project staff and tripartite partners at the different project locations. Meetings will be scheduled in advance of field visits by the ILO, in accordance with the evaluator's requests. A tentative list of individuals to be interviewed include:

- ILO staff in Budapest and Sarajevo who participated in the management and implementation of the project;
- selected individuals from the following groups and organizations:
➢ government officials (especially Chairpersons of the ESCs);
➢ ESC secretaries;
➢ employers' and workers' organizations;
➢ agencies for the peaceful resolution of labour disputes;
➢ labour inspectorates (Directors and labour inspectors); and

➢ donor representatives.

The evaluator will develop a systematic survey or questionnaire as part of the inception report. This should guide the interviews, capture qualitative and quantitative data, and ensure objectivity and consistency in the different countries. This will also help the evaluator identify knowledge gaps that need to be verified and validated through the interviews.

The evaluator will ensure that the opinions and perceptions of women are equally reflected in the interviews and that gender-specific questions are included.

Debriefings:

On the final day of the field evaluation, the evaluator will present their preliminary findings to the ILO project staff, the Budapest Director, and other staff designated by the Director. Upon completion of the report, the evaluator will take part in a teleconference to provide a debriefing to the DG EMPL and to the ILO on the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as on the evaluation process.

VI. **MAIN DELIVERABLES**

Outputs	Description	Approximate length	Tentative completion date
0. Contracting	The contract is signed and code of conduct for evaluators is finalized.		28 June 2019
1. Desk review and inception report	During the desk review, the evaluator is expected to review all documents related to the project and submit an inception report outlining the evaluation approach and methods, a final work plan and questionnaire (refer to Annex 2 Checklist: Writing the Inception Report).	10 pages + Annexes	10 July 2019
2. Field missions	The evaluator is required to visit Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia	3 workdays per country (12 days in total)	31 July 2019
3. Draft evaluation report	The draft evaluation report describes the findings and recommendations for each project component. The report will follow the EVAL format template, including a title page, lessons learned and good practices (following the relevant template).[10] The quality of the report will be determined based on conforming to the EVAL quality standards.	30 pages + Annexes	15 September 2019

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[10] *See* Annex 3: Preparing the evaluation report, Annex 4: Filling in the evaluation title page, and Annex 5: Rating the quality of evaluation reports.

4. Final evaluation report	A final evaluation report is to be submitted within one week after receiving final comments on the draft report. The final evaluation report is subject to approval by the ILO Evaluation Office.	30 pages + Annexes	25 October 2019
5. Evaluation summary	An evaluation summary is to be submitted based on the evaluation report executive summary (elaborated upon in Annex 6: Writing the evaluation report summary).	4 pages	25 October 2019
6. Debriefing	A debriefing is to be provided by the evaluator at the end of the missions to the ILO DWT/CO Budapest country Director, and at the end of the evaluation process.	half-day	TBD

Specifications:

- Gender equality issues shall be explicitly addressed throughout the evaluation activities of the consultant and in all outputs. Final reports and events need to be gender mainstreamed, and this needs to be included in the evaluation summary.
- All deliverables must be prepared in English, using Microsoft Word, and delivered electronically to the ILO. The ILO will have ownership and copyright of all deliverables.
- Deliverables will be regarded as delivered when they have been received electronically and confirmed as accepted by the Evaluation Manager.
- Acceptance will be acknowledged only if the deliverable(s) concerned are judged to be in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract, reflect the agreements reached and plans submitted during the contract process, and incorporate or reflect the consideration of amendments proposed by the ILO.

The Contractor will be responsible for:

- designing, planning and implementing the evaluation, and writing up the evaluation report using an approach agreed on by the ILO, and delivering it in accordance with the ILO's specifications and timeline;
- consulting and liaising, as required, with the ILO and any other partners to ensure the evaluation's satisfactory delivery; and
- being available, if required, to take part in briefings and discussions, online or at the ILO office or other venues if necessary, on agreed-upon dates and in line with the work outlined in the ToR.

VII. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The final independent evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator. The evaluator can organize their team as they choose; for example, they can hire additional staff from local countries. All members of the evaluation team (including the additional staff) thus fall under the evaluator's supervision and responsibility.

The **independent evaluator** is responsible for conducting the evaluation according to the terms of reference (ToR). They will report to the ILO Evaluation Manager.

Requirements:
The Evaluation Consultant should meet the following requirements:

- advanced university degree in social sciences or economics;
- understanding of the ILO's tripartite foundations and standards;
- expertise in industrial relations, working conditions and/or employment issues;
- adequate expertise in gender equality, diversity and non-discrimination issues;
- experience in evaluation of international development initiatives (at least seven years);
- knowledge of evaluation methods, qualitative and quantitative research;

- knowledge of the region;
- analytical skills;
- fluency in English; and
- knowledge of the official languages of the target countries is an advantage.

The **Evaluation Consultant** will:

- review the TOR and provide input and propose any refinements to the assessment questions, as necessary;
- review the project background materials (including the project document and progress reports);
- conduct preparatory consultations with the ILO prior to the assessment mission;
- develop and implement the assessment methodology (including preparing interview guides for the assessment questions);
- conduct meetings and interviews;
- prepare an initial draft of the assessment report and submit it to the evaluation manager;
- conduct a briefing on the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the assessment; and
- prepare a final report based on the comments received in the initial draft report.

The evaluation will be supervised by the ILO Evaluation Manager. The **Evaluation Manager** will be responsible for:

- drafting the TOR;
- finalizing the TOR with input from colleagues;
- preparing a short list of proposed candidates for the evaluation consultant position, which is submitted for senior management approval;
- hiring the consultant;
- ensuring that meeting schedules are set up by the project manager or the project staff in the countries;
- assisting in the implementation of the evaluation methodology (participating in interviews, observing committee meetings), but as appropriate to minimize bias in evaluation findings;
- reviewing and providing comments on the evaluation report;
- ensuring that the evaluation is conducted in accordance with the TOR, and discussing this with the evaluator, beneficiaries and stakeholders; and
- Llaising with project staff whenever needed to fulfill the requirements above.

The Project Manager is responsible for:
- reviewing the draft TOR and providing input as necessary;
- providing project background materials such as progress reports, surveys, studies, analytical papers, activity reports, tools, and publications produced;
- participating in preparatory consultations prior to the assessment mission;
- coordinating all logistical arrangements;
- preparing a list of recommended interviews and scheduling all meetings;
- reviewing and providing comments on the draft assessment report;
- participating in a debriefing on the project's findings, conclusions, and recommendations; and
- following up on the evaluation's recommendations.

VII. **LEGAL AND ETHICAL MATTERS**

The evaluation of the project outcomes will be conducted in accordance with UN Evaluation Group (UNEG, 2016)'s Norms and Standards and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC)'s principles for evaluation of development cooperation. The evaluation will examine the results achieved and their contribution to broader ILO and UN programming and country cooperation frameworks, including Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs) and UNDAFs.

The project evaluation is undertaken in accordance with the ILO Evaluation Policy (Oct. 2017) and ILO Policy Guidelines for Evaluation.[11] These provide for the systematic evaluation of programmes and projects in order to improve the quality, accountability and transparency of the ILO's work, strengthen the decision-making process, and support constituents in promulgating decent work. It is also the part of the Office's Evaluation Work Plan.

The evaluation consultant should not have any links to project management, or any other conflict of interest that would interfere with the independence of the evaluation. Also, in carrying out the evaluations, the evaluation consultant will abide by EVAL's Code of Conduct.[12] Key actors in the evaluation process should aspire to conduct high quality work guided by professional standards and ethical and moral principles as enshrined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines.[13]

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[11] ILO policy guidelines for evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations, 3rd ed. (Aug. 2017), *available at* https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_571339.pdf.
[12] *See* https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_649148/lang--en/index.htm
[13] *See* http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102

7.2. LESSONS LEARNED

ILO Lesson Learned No. 1

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   **Date: 03.11.2019**

The following lesson was identified during the course of the evaluation. Further explanation is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	**A regional approach can offer an efficient model for instituting change, under certain conditions and provided that it is well thought out. The regional approach elaborated by ESAP shows that this method can be a best practice, and can be modelled.**
Context and any related preconditions	**The Western Balkans is a sub-region with strong political coherence, as EU accession remains a key objective for all countries. This fact alone makes a regional intervention relevant to supporting the targeted countries in achieving this objective. However, a regional project requires more than just bringing countries together or offering a platform for them to exchange information. The various specific national political situations are at least as crucial and must be considered within the regional approach. For instance, regional activities should have objectives (like the ESC national recommendations) and progress and results indicators that are tailored to the specific countries.**
Targeted users / beneficiaries	**The beneficiaries are the national project partners, relevant stakeholders, and CEELex experts in the Western Balkan region.**
Challenges /negative lessons - causal factors	**The potential of the ESAP virtual platform is not yet realized, and the site is insufficiently user-friendly. ESAP's limited financial resources only provide for a limited number of regional events, which are key to maintaining a sense of ownership and engagement within the network. Finally, the regional approach needs to maintain more regular direct contact with all project partners.**
Success / positive issues - causal factors	The practices and tools developed to enhance regional cooperation have produced positive results and enabled stakeholder interest and engagement. The elements of the regional networking engagement strategy form a model that is potentially replicable in other regions where countries share strategic interests or objectives. The network needs to be formalized, however.
ILO administrative issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	The regional approach requires the administrative support of the ILO, and the resources to organize events and communicate within the region.

ILO Lesson Learned No. 2
Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)
Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR
Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   Date: 03.11.2019
The following lesson was identified during the course of the evaluation. Further explanation is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	Direct, face-to-face, regular communication is key for regional projects, especially when building a regional network.
Context and any related preconditions	Distance, geographical and psychological, can strip regional projects of their substance and diminish engagement if inter-regional relations and connections are not carefully managed. There is much competition between and within national institutions: projects, ongoing reforms, multiple strategies, national priorities and regional commitments, and pressing deadlines stemming from political instability. Individual projects can struggle getting the attention of overwhelmed state institutions. In this context, active communication and a degree of proximity are required between the project management and the partners, and among partners from the region. This is crucial for network-building and for continued stakeholder engagement. If too much time elapses between project events or communication, ESAP's overall force could easily vanish. All interviewed stakeholders praised the quality of the activities, while some did regret not having more regular communication.
Targeted users / beneficiaries	National project partners and relevant stakeholders, CEELex experts in the Western Balkan region
Challenges /negative lessons - causal factors	A regional network remains active, engaged, and beneficial to stakeholders only if it is formalized, direct relations are maintained, and regular events are held. This requires human commitment, active communication and resources.
Success / positive issues - causal factors	The peer review practice and its outcomes have convinced stakeholders of the benefits of regional exchange.

ILO administrative issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	A proactive communication and a culturally-sensitive approach is required to maintain relationships with national institutions.

ILO Lesson Learned No. 3

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   Date: 03.11.2019

The following lesson was identified during the course of the evaluation. Further explanation is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	**Peer review is a strong tool for capacity-building, stakeholder ownership and regional network construction.**
Context and any related preconditions	The peer review's conceptual approach, where national institutions review the practices of their neighboring countries, was highly appreciated by participants. Participants gained awareness of their own shortcomings while acquiring knowledge from contexts similar enough to their own to be applicable. The process of bringing one's own experiences and receiving knowledge in return has connected institutions. They reported becoming increasingly aware that regional networking represented a sustainable channel for continued learning and improvement. The ILO expert involvement in the peer review methodology, however, could have been more direct. Experts trained ESC members but did not participate in the peer review exercise itself. Since this was a first-time experience for participants, the involvement of experts in the implementation of the exercise could have further increased the quality of the output.
Targeted users / beneficiaries	**National project partners and relevant stakeholders, CEELex experts in the Western Balkan region**
Challenges /negative lessons - causal factors	**Peer review is labour-intensive and costly, as it requires expertise and substantial preparation work. It also requires a level of political and cultural sensitivity to national contexts. For ESAP, the project has appropriately arranged sub-groups according to the language spoken – Albanian or Bosnian/Montenegrin/Serbian.**
Success / positive issues - causal factors	**The peer review practice and its outcomes have convinced stakeholders of the benefits of regional exchange.**

ILO administrative issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	This requires proactive communication and a culturally-sensitive approach to maintain good relationships with national institutions.

ILO Lesson Learned No. 4

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   Date: 03.11.2019

The following lesson was identified during the course of the evaluation. Further explanation is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	**The ESAP virtual platform offers a potentially powerful tool, but this would require a larger investment in its development and promotion.**
Context and any related preconditions	The ESAP online platform is a necessary tool to complement capacity-building and the strengthening of the regional network. However, its impact depends on the success of its design. It should prioritize user-friendliness, targeting stakeholders, promoting good practices, and the clear expression of its intended usage. A majority of stakeholders interviewed do not regularly use ESAP online, and some do not use it at all and are hardly aware of it. Only CEELex experts – who are enjoying a clear benefit from it – have regularly adopted ESAP online, mainly for the CEELex database. ESAP's first phase may have been too early a stage to propose this virtual platform. One lesson learned from the evaluation is that careful attention should be paid to each specific user's interest and readiness to use the tool, and that accessibility (especially linguistically) is a pre-condition to ensuring that a virtual tool be used. A product development approach appears necessary for ESAP.
Targeted users / beneficiaries	**National project partners and relevant stakeholders, CEELex experts in the Western Balkan region**
Challenges /negative lessons - causal factors	**The website is not very user-friendly, and does not specifically target different relevant institutions. As a result, ESAP online has low registered visit scores and the extent to which it could be useful for institutions is still unknown.**

Success / positive issues - causal factors	The CEELex users of ESAP online demonstrate that it can be useful when its function for the user is clearly defined. If it is similarly designed for ESCs or APRLDs, this platform could be recognized by these institutions as a helpful tool.
ILO administrative issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	The website needs to be redesigned, its purpose reevaluated, and it should be made more user-friendly.

ILO Lesson Learned No. 5

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   Date: 03.11.2019

The following lesson was identified during the course of the evaluation. Further explanation is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief description of lesson learned (link to specific action or task)	Two distinct projects carrying the same name (ILO's ESAP and RCC's ESAP) require a coherent and unified presentation.
Context and any related preconditions	While carrying the same name, ESAP is actually two distinct projects that are conceptually close, addressing the same issues and sharing a similar overall objective. However, with separate budgets, teams and different target institutions, each ESAP project develops its own culture and identity. This can be confusing to project partners, who reported that many people were either unaware of RCC's ESAP or unclear about whether ESAP was one or two projects. This distinction needs to be explained to partners in both projects, highlighting their strategic unity and the operational duality.
Targeted users / beneficiaries	ILO ESAP and RCC ESAP, national project partners and relevant stakeholders, CEELex experts in the Western Balkan region
Challenges /negative lessons - Causal factors	Project partners do not have a clear overall picture of ESAP as a single intervention, implemented by two different agencies. Furthermore, no formal presentation of the overall ESAP intervention has been made to the project partners.
Success / positive issues - causal factors	A formal presentation would help partners gain an overview and a better understanding of the project. This can also positively impact the partners' engagement.
ILO administrative issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	A joint ILO-RCC presentation should be prepared.

7.3. BEST PRACTICES

Best Practice No. 1

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   **Date: 03.11.2019**

The following best practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the practice is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	**Under certain conditions, a well thought-out regional approach can offer an efficient model for an intervention.** ESAP is a potential model for institutional strengthening and capacity-building through regional cooperation. It has been identified as a good practice in building the capacities of institutions across the region through stimulating regional cooperation.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The practices and tools developed to enhance regional cooperation have produced positive results in stakeholder interest and engagement. The elements of the regional networking engagement strategy form a model that is potentially replicable in other regions of the world where countries share strategies interests or objectives. The networks need to be formalized, however.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	**When countries share a strong strategic objective or common interest (such as EU accession or European Neighbourhood Policy objectives), regional projects are cost-effective, efficient and appropriate ways to introduce international standards and build the institutional capacity to adopt and implement them.**
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	**Regional networks are contributing to knowledge-sharing and stakeholder engagement in regional activities and are producing national-level results.**
Potential for replication and by whom	**This approach can be replicated in other regions (the EU, and potentially South American or Asian sub-regions as well), and in other capacity-building interventions.** For instance, the six signatory countries to the Eastern EU Partnership agreement seem to be fulfilling such conditions.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	**Supported realization of DCWP objectives**
Other documents or relevant comments	

Best Practice No. 2

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   **Date: 03.11.2019**

The following best practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the practice is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Peer review is a key element of ESAP's regional strategy. The sharing of regional and international knowledge has enhanced ownership among stakeholders, raised awareness of their own gaps, and established a strong network likely to remain sustainable if maintained with regular events and supported with a user friendly virtual platform.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	The Peer Review methodology is likely to be more appropriate under similar conditions applying to coherent sub-regional contexts as described under the Good Practice number 1. The language dimension is also very important.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The Peer Review approach is an efficient capacity-building tool as it first stimulates cross-border exchanges among "sister" institutions. Further, it also facilitates the integration of newly acquired knowledge the similarities of challenges and responses experiences by institutions, as well as the introduction other experiences from selected relevant countries since recipient institutions can relate and therefore apply or adjust the knowledge.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Indicators include the extent to which experiences and practices from neighbouring countries and other appropriate contexts are used and applied/adjusted in the national context of institutions.
Potential for replication and by whom	This approach can be replicated in other regions (the EU, and potentially South American or Asian sub-regions as well), and in other capacity-building interventions. For instance, the six signatory countries to the Eastern EU Partnership agreement seem to be fulfilling such conditions.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	**Supported realization of DCWP objectives**
Other documents or relevant comments	

Best Practice No. 3

Project Title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)

Project TC/SYMBOL: RER/15/03/EUR

Name of Evaluator: Thomas Vasseur   Date: 03.11.2019

The following best practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation. Further text explaining the practice is included in the full evaluation report.

LL Element	Text
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	Culturally tailored, direct, regular and consultative communication is essential. More than just seeking feedback or collecting information from institutions, efficient communication requires direct, personalised relations to grasp the insights into the nuances of the national contexts and encourage thorough stakeholder involvement.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Such a communication requires both a systemic approach (with a well organised communication system using a user-friendly virtual platform, information products – regular project updates and local communication relays with ILO National Coordinators) as well as pro-active project management team that maintain a level of direct communication, whenever possible, through actual encounters with national stakeholders.
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	This pro-active communication efforts is important to stimulate the engagement of project partners.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Frequency of communication exchange (written communication, use of ESAP virtual platform, physical meetings or regional project visits or events)
Potential for replication and by whom	This approach can be replicated in other regions (the EU, and potentially South American or Asian sub-regions as well), and in other capacity-building interventions. For instance, the six signatory countries to the Eastern EU Partnership agreement seem to be fulfilling such conditions.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO's Strategic Programme Framework)	**Supported realization of DCWP objectives**
Other documents or relevant comments	

7.4. LIST OF REVIEWED DOCUMENTS

List of reviewed documents	
Document Title	**Author and date**
EU Pillar Assessed Grant Agreement ESAP Project + Annexes (Logframe, Budget, Workplan)	EU, Feb. 2016
ESAP Inception Report + Annexes	ILO, July 2016
ESAP Annual Progress Report, April 2016–March 2017	ILO, May 2017
ESAP Annual Progress Report, April 2017–March 2018	ILO, May 2018
ESAP Annual Progress Report, April 2018–March 2019	ILO, May 2019
ESAP Report on the peer review of Economic and Social Councils in the Western Balkans	ILO, 2017
ESAP Guidelines for benchlearning among Western Balkan Employment Services	ILO, 2017
ILO Decent Work Country Programme, Albania, 2017–2021	ILO, 2017
ILO Decent Work Country Programme, Montenegro, 2019–2021	ILO, 2019
ILO Decent Work Country Programme, North Macedonia, 2019–2022	ILO, 2019
ILO Decent Work Country Programme, Serbia, 2019–2022	ILO, 2019
National tripartite social dialogue	ILO, 2013
Common principles for labour inspection in relation to health and safety in the workplace	Committee of Senior Labour Inspectors (SLIC), November 2017
Analytical Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	EC, 29 May 2019
Albania 2019 Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	EC, 29 May 2019
Kosovo 2019 Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	EC, 29 May 2019
Montenegro 2019 Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	
North Macedonia 2019 Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	EC, 29 May 2019

Serbia 2019 Report accompanying "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council Commission, Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for membership of the European Union"	EC, 29 May 2019
Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	EC, 2010
Sustainable Development Goals	UN, *available at* https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/
Commission Implementing Decision adopting a Multi-country Action Programme	22 July 2015
ANNEX to the Commission Implementing Decision amending Commission Decision C(2014)4293 of 30 June 2014, adopting a Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper for the period 2014–2020	31 May 2018
South East Europe 2020: Jobs and prosperity in a European perspective	RCC, Nov. 2013

7.5. LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

		Name and surname	Position
		ILO Staff	
1.		Susanne Nielsen	ESAP Chief Technical Advisor
2.		Melissa Osmic	ESAP Project Assistant
3.		Maria Bosos	Programme Officer, ILO Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest
4.		Cristina Mihes	Senior Specialist on Social Dialogue and Labour Law, ILO Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest
5.		Markus Pilgrim	Director, ILO Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest
6.		Zhulieta Harasani	ILO National Coordinator for Albania
7.		Lejla Tanović	ILO National Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina
8.		Nina Krgović	ILO National Coordinator for Montenegro
9.		Jovan Protić	ILO National Coordinator for Serbia
		Bosnia and Herzegovina Stakeholders	
10.		Zoran Mikanović	Assistant Director to the Chief Labour Inspector, Republic Department of Inspection Affairs of Republika Srpska, Labour Inspectorate
11.		Momćilo	Labour Inspector, Head of Banja Luka region, Republic Department of Inspection Affairs of Republika Srpska, Labour Inspectorate
12.		Ranka Mišić	President, Association of Trade Unions of Republika Srpska
13.		Nand Shani	Regional Cooperation Council, ESAP Team Leader
		Montenegro Stakeholders	
14.		Nataša Vukašinović	Social Council of Montenegro, Secretary
15.		Tatjana Dzudović	Trade Union of Montenegro, Deputy Director
16.		Marko Piljak	Association of Employers of Montenegro
17.		Zdenka Burzan	Agency for Amicable Settlement of Labour Disputes of Montenegro, Director
18.		Edina Dešić	Ministry of Labour of Montenegro, Directorate for Labour Market and Employment
19.		Boban Gledović	Ministry of Labour of Montenegro, Directorate for Labour Market and Employment

20.		NIPAC
21.	Vesna	CEELex Expert
22.	Angelina Medjedovic	Labour Inspectorate of Montenegro, Chief Labour Inspector
23.	Zlatko Popović	Labour Inspectorate of Montenegro, Inspector for Occupational Safety and Health
Albania Stakeholders		
24.	Luljeta Krasta	Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, National Labour Committee
25.	Bashkim Sala	Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, National Labour Committee
26.	Irida Peqini	State Labour Inspectorate of Albania, Director
27.	Eda Beqiri	State Labour Inspectorate of Albania
28.	Dorina Nika	CEELex Network Expert
Serbia Stakeholders		
29.	Mile Radivojević	Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour, Director
30.	Ivica Lazović	Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour, Deputy Director
31.	Senad Jasarević	CEELex focal point
32.	Dusan Petrović	Economic and Social Council, Secretary
33.	Bojana Stanić	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, State Secretary
34.	Dragan Kralj	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Head of Social Dialogue Unit
35.	Duško Vućković	Conferation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia, Head of International Relations
36.	Cedanka Andrić	UGS Trade Union, Secretary General
37.	Svetlana Budimcević	Serbian Employers Association, Legal Advisor
38.	Dejana Kuzmić	Serbian Employers Association, Head of International Relations

7.6. EVALUATION MATRIX

<table>
<tr><td colspan="7" align="center">ESAP PROJECT EVALUATION MATRIX</td></tr>
<tr>
<th rowspan="2">EVAL. CRITERI</th>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
<th>Judgement Criteria / Indicators</th>
<th>Data Sources
(Objective sources, such as project reports and official data, and subjective sources, like evaluation interviews and analytical publications)</th>
<th>Data collection Methods / Tools</th>
<th>Indicators / Success Standards
(to the extent such information relating to these indicators exists and is accessible to the evaluator)</th>
<th>Methods for Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
<tr></tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC FIT</td>
<td>1. Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and country needs?</td>
<td>- Beneficiaries were consulted and their needs were identified
- Country needs were identified
- The ESAP project document explains how its objectives respond to the identified needs and requests</td>
<td>- Project documentation
- Stakeholder interviews
- Relevant international, EU, and sub-regional policies and programmes in targeted Western Balkan countries
- Relevant publications</td>
<td>- Review of project documentation
- Review of additional relevant documents
- Evaluation interviews
- Concrete project examples</td>
<td>- Verifiable references to local, national, regional, EU, UN SDG, and ILO priorities in the oolicy, strategy, and action plan of the oroject proposal
- Level of clarity of the formulation of strategic and programme objectives
- Coherence with existing policies relevant to the sector of intervention
- Confirmation from stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>Review, comparison and triangulation of gathered information (review. web-based research, interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Are the objectives of the ESAP intervention in line with ILO and EU priorities?</td>
<td>- ESAP project document refers to ILO and EU priorities and explains how its objectives are aligned and contribute to the achievement of ILO and EU priorities</td>
<td>See above</td>
<td>See above</td>
<td>- Evidence of ESAP objectives supporting of ILO and EU priorities.
- Evidence of project targets and results contributing to progress towards the realization of ILO and EU priorities.</td>
<td>See above</td>
</tr>
</table>

			See above	See above		See above
	3. Is the ESAP intervention linked to national and ILO development frameworks (national development plans, UNDAF, DWCPs, P&B, SDGs)?	- ESAP project document refers to national and ILO development frameworks - Clear linkages are formed between ESAP objectives and national and ILO development frameworks	See above	See above	- Evidence of project-level indicators that are related to policy indicators - Evidence of project targets and results contributing to progress towards the realization of policy objectives - Project rationale is clear and evidence-based	See above
VALIDITY OF INTERVENTION DESIGN	1. Are the project strategies, objectives and assumptions appropriate for achieving the planned results?	- Project provides evidence-based assumptions and risk analysis - Project explains how the strategy is based on assumptions, how objectives support the strategy, how activities lead to results, and how results lead to achieving the specific objective	See above	See above	- Evidence and post-implementation verification that ESAP's strategy, objectives and assumptions are appropriate for achieving the expected results	See above
	2. Does the project's intervention strategy/Reconstructed Theory of Change allow for impact assessment, including assumptions and hypotheses that are underpinned by evidence and lessons learned from previous project phases?	- Project provides clearly articulated logical framework - ESAP's project document includes evidence-based and experience-based assumptions and hypotheses - Logical relationship established between assumptions, hypotheses and strategy	See above	See above	- The Logframe/Reconstructed Theory of Change allows for impact assessment, including assumptions and hypotheses that are underpinned by evidence and lessons learned from previous project phases	See above
	3. Does the project contribute to core ILO issues such as labour standards and social dialogue?	- ESAP project document explains how activities and expected results contribute to core ILO issues	See above	See above	- Clear linkages of ESAP activities contributing to the advancement of core ILO issues such as labour standards and social dialogue	See above
	4. How well has the project drafted an exit and sustainability strategy?	- Project provides an exit and sustainability strategy in its project document - Exit and sustainability strategies are clearly defined with indicators, actions and resources enabling their implementation and measurement	See above	See above	- The exit and sustainability strategy exists, and is clearly defined and realistic	See above

	5. What lessons can be learned for the design of future projects in a similar field?	- There are specific lessons learned that are relevant to inform the design of future projects or similar interventions	See above	See above	- Identified lessons learned	See above
	6. Within the context of the ILO goals of gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination (and national level policies in this regard), to what extent did the project design take into account specific gender equality and non-discrimination concerns relevant to the project context?	- Evidence of the assessment of gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination issues in the ESAP design - Explanation of how ESAP intends to address these issues - Clear explanation of how the expected results contribute to achieving ILO-related goals and national level policy objectives	See above	See above	- Project document featuring clear descriptions on expected results, resources, actions, and indicators related to gender equality, disability inclusion and non-discrimination - Description of expected gender equality results at the programme level - Gender equality, disability inclusion and other non-discrimination results	See above
INTERVENTION PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS	1. To what extent has the project achieved its objectives and reached its target groups?	- Evidence of quantitative achievements of ESAP (comparison of quantitative results and targets) - Evidence of qualitative achievements (key changes resulting from the activities, including changes in practices and progress in social dialogue)	See above	See above	- Verifiable evidence of the achievement of results (through field visits, interviews, reports) - Verifiable evidence of stakeholders effectively producing results - Satisfaction of beneficiary with intervention results	See above
	2. At the institutional level, how far has the capacity of partner organizations been built in relation to the delivery of the outputs and objectives?	- Evidence of the delivery of project outputs by partner organizations - Project provides indicators allowing for the measuring of output delivery to the capacities built	See above	See above	- Identified relevant capacities, and performance demonstrated by partner organizations	See above
	3. What obstacles did the project encounter in its implementation? What corrective action does the project need to take to achieve its objectives?	- Obstacles were encountered by the project in its implementation - Corrective actions were taken to address the obstacles faced - Identified remaining obstacles and recommended actions	See above	See above	- Examples of corrective actions successfully overcoming obstacles	See above

	4. Within its overall objectives and strategies, what specific measures were taken by the project to address issues relating to gender equality and non-discrimination?	- Identified specific measures (in the project design) to address gender equality and non-discrimination - Identified the effects of these actions - Identified corrective measures of such issues during implementation			- Examples of such corrective measures and their effects
	5. How well has the project complemented other ILO projects in the region/country?	- Specific complementarities with other ILO projects in the Western Balkans are explained in the ESAP Project document	See above	See above	- Examples of such complementarities and benefits to the countries in the region	See above
EFFICIENCY OF RESOURCE USAGE	1. Does the project make efficient use of its financial and human resources?	- Identified issues (strengths and weaknesses) in relation to the use of financial and human resources - Identified indicators of financial and human resource efficiency - Identified alternative resource allocation possibilities	See above	See above	- Human resources are qualified and enjoy decent conditions to deliver project activities - Financial resources are sufficient to implement activities	See above
	2. Is the implementation strategy cost-effective?	- A cost-effectiveness analysis is undertaken, taking into account the quality, sustainability of results, and the potential longer-term effects of ESAP - Strategic cost-effectiveness analysis of the design stage is undertaken	See above	See above	- Project outputs are produced timely, quantitatively and qualitatively	See above
	3. Is the distribution of resources between staff and activities optimal?	- Staff is appropriate in terms of their professional profile, skills, and experience required to deliver activities	See above	See above	- ILO ESAP staff has sufficient time and resources to support the timely delivery of activities	See above

	4. Were the intervention resources used in an efficient way to address gender equality in the implementation?	- Specific resources (or actions) are identified that are used to address gender equality (women invited to participate to project events, resources that have supported actions specifically benefiting women)	See above	See above	- Reports on the use of resources to address gender equality	See above
EFFECTIVENESS AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT	1. Are time frames and work plans respected? How are contingencies dealt with? To what extent is corrective action taken when required?	- Identified issues related to or affecting the timely delivery of activities - Contingency measures are foreseen for activities where stakeholder's availability or context constraints are an issue - Identified corrective actions taken in related to the timely delivery of activities - Analysed the appropriateness and results of these corrective actions	See above	See above	- Reports of timely implementation of activities - Reports of corrective actions taken, if any	See above
	2. Is the Steering Committee functioning and what value does it add?	- Evidence of the SC effectively fulfilling its roles and enabling ESAP implementation	See above	See above	- Identified issues in relation to the functioning of the SC - Identified specific value created by the SC	See above
	3. Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring and documenting information to allow for impact assessment at a later stage? Does the monitoring framework provide data to measure end-line results? What could be improved?	See above	See above	See above	- Type of data collected, indicators allowing measure later impact assessment developed. - Evidence of monitoring used to inform later impact assessment	See above
	4. Is the project systematically and appropriately monitoring, documenting and communicating results, including on gender, at the country and sub-regional levels?	- Existence of an appropriate monitoring system enabling the communication of results, including on gender, at the country and sub-regional levels	See above	See above	- Relevant monitoring information, user-friendly data collected - Monitoring system is functional, and the data collected is being used	
	5. Is the monitoring and evaluation system practical,	- The system is user-friendly, and the collected information is accessible and clear	See above	See above	- Identified challenges in the collection and use of this data	

	useful and cost-effective for project management?	- The system allows for the collection of relevant information in a timely manner, and reports timely to project management - The information is useful for corrective actions			- Examples of how this data was used to the benefit of ESAP	
	6. How effective is the project in sharing good practices between country components, communicating success stories, and disseminating knowledge internally and externally (including gender-related results and knowledge)?	- Existence of an effective knowledge exchange - Shared knowledge reaches its targeted audience internally and externally - Evidence of shared knowledge being used by targeted users	See above	See above	- Identified examples of ESAP platform and activities allowing partners to share good practices	See above
IMPACT ORIENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF	1. How effectively has the project built national ownership and the capacities of people and institutions?	- ESAP project document features a capacity-building and ownership strategy - This project strategy has been effectively implemented with results - Indicators and tangible results achieved in relation to capacity-building and ownership	See above	See above	- Evidence of ESAP project document featuring a capacity-building and ownership strategy	See above
	2. Are the gender-related outcomes likely to be sustainable?	- ESAP project document features a strategy to enhance gender-related outcomes' sustainability	See above	See above	- Existence of identified indicators/elements of gender-related outcomes' sustainability - Evidence of these indicators and elements being fulfilled	See above

	3. Is the engagement strategy sustainable?	- ESAP project document features a clear and sustainable engagement strategy - Extent to which related strategic objectives have been achieved. - Threats or weaknesses to sustainable engagement identified	See above	See above	- Strategy for achievement of solutions for sustainable results exists, is clear and realistic	See above
	4. Has the project reached sufficient scale and depth to justify the investment? Has the project found the right balance between scale and depth and the trade-off between them? Is the approach and its results likely to be up-scaled or replicated? Is the project a cost-effective way to strengthen sub-regional cooperation and institutional capacity of Western Balkan governments (primarily labour inspectorates) and social partners for devising and implementing sound, evidence-based legislation, policies and programmes in line with ILO and EU standards in the fields of employment, social dialogue, industrial relations and working conditions?	- Indicators of expected scale and depth are defined in the project document - Achievements of ESAP are compared to the defined indicators - Has the project assessed and acknowledged all risks and constraints in the Western Balkans that can potentially affect projects seeking long-term transformation, such as reaching an effective social dialogue (constraints include sufficient State resources, change of government, political tensions, slow progress of reforms…) - Review of ESAP's cost-effectiveness in light of the quality and sustainability of its results and changes brought - Cost-effectiveness reviewed against a conceptual model of longer-term investment for social transformation, considering the complexity of achieving cost-effective results	See above	See above	- Availability of relevant indicators - Examples of achievements - Evidence of the project having assessed and acknowledged all risks and constraints in the Western Balkans - Cost-effectiveness analysis	See above
	5. To what extent has the project been responsive to SDGs and related targets?	- There are tangible project results and potential longer-term indirect effects that relate to specific SDG targets (as defined in the project document)	See above	See above	- Examples of tangible project results and potential longer-term, indirect effects that relate to specific SDG targets	See above
INTERNATIONAL LABOR STAND	1. To what extent did the project design take into account non-discrimination and international labour standards relevant to the project context?	- Direct reference is made to non-discrimination and international labour standards in the project document and linkages to activities and results in the project document - Direct reference is made to how ESAP supports national, sub-	See above	See above	- Verification of project strategies and objectives being responsive to gender equality and non-discrimination	See above

		regional and international strategies and policies on both issues				
	2. To what extent did the project strategies, within their overall scope, remain flexible and responsive to emerging concerns with regard to gender equality and non-discrimination?	- Evidence of a responsive, flexible mechanism allowing responses to emerging concerns with regard to gender equality and non-discrimination in the project document - Evidence of situations where ESAP mechanisms allowed for responses to such emerging concerns	See above	See above	- Examples of responsive, flexible mechanisms allowing responses to emerging concerns with regard to gender equality and non-discrimination	
	3. Within the project's thematic area, what were the facilitating and limiting factors in the project's contribution to gender equality, non-discrimination and promoting International labour standards?	- Limiting factors identified in the project's contribution to gender equality, non-discrimination and promoting International labour standards.	See above	See above	- Identified limiting factors	
LESSONS LEARNED	1. What are the major lessons learned through the project implementation, both from a substantive perspective (with reference to the policy areas and objectives covered by the project) and operationally (with respect to the application of EU/ILO procedures to the management of the funds)?	- Major lessons were identified both from a substantive and an operational perspective	See above	See above	- Identified lessons learned	See above

	- Are there good practices to be replicated?	- Identified good practices worth being replicated	See above	See above	- Identified good practices	See above
	- What were the key factors of success?	- Identified key factors of success	See above	See above	- Key success factors identified	See above
	- How should these lessons be implemented in the formulation and implementation of a new phase?	- Identified priorities for a new ESAP phase - Compared lessons learned to identified priorities	See above	See above	- Lessons learned relevant to new phase objectives identified	See above
	- Have local partnerships been set up to maximize the impact of the outcomes?	- Identified strengths and weakness of partnership set-up in relation to maximizing the impact of outcomes	See above	See above	- Identified strengths and weakness of partnership set-up in relation to maximizing the impact of outcomes	See above