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**USAID Kosovo EMPOWER Private Sector
Newsletter No. 11, February 2016**

EMPOWER THROUGH JOB CREATION!

FAST FACTS

Diverse Business Ideas Receive USAID Support

Daqa producer of outdoor playground equipment received a grant to increase production of capacities and be competitive in the export markets. Some 16 new jobs to be created.

Behari is to begin production of sandwich panels to be used in other products they make. The grant enables them to invest in a sandwich panel mill and create at least 43 new jobs.

Green Steam evaporates impurities while saving the environment. With the new grant the company shall acquire a mobile steam generator and create some 20 new jobs.

Shkodra manufactures wrought iron products and the demand is increasing. The grant enables them to expand and improve production while creating some 36 new jobs.

Labor Market Needs to Inform Workforce Training Strategies

The business community in Prizren is striving to better inform workforce training strategies. The Vocational Education and Training Local Council (VETLC) of Prizren, established on February 16, 2016, is the newest public-private dialogue group that will contribute to aligning skills development and vocational education programs with the real needs of private business.

The purpose of the VETLC, led by the business community, is to advise the public and educational sectors, prioritizing and proposing concrete programs for developing labor force skills that actually serve business needs.

The meeting participants selected from their group seventeen members for the first Prizren VETLC, representing local businesses, vocational education schools, and relevant municipal departments.

Participants nominated and approved first Chair of the VETLC of Prizren - Furkan Rada, owner of Fashion Network Industries, who said "I am glad that we succeeded in establishing this entity today, because it gives us a real opportunity to contribute to workforce skills development in the region that will benefit all parties and generate more employment."

"The VETLC is the address where businesses can raise issues. With a clear vision, it will proactively serve as a key link between schools and businesses, something that did not exist before"



The VETLC Prizren Members

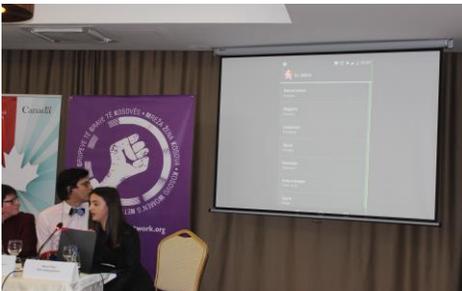
The meeting was attended by Ryvë Prekorogja, from the MEST Department of VET, and Fikrije Zymberi from of the Agency of Vocational Education & Training and Adult Education. Both voiced their full support for the initiative, and stated their hope that it would serve as a model for other municipalities in Kosovo.



Thirty-nine youth certified in ICT profiles

Supporting the Success of Kosovo Companies

On February 10, 2016, USAID's Director of Economic Growth Scott Cameron addressed the 39 young men and women who completed successfully the training program provided by Adaptivit at their certification ceremony. Thirty two already started full-time jobs with Adaptivit. The newly-employed youth offer programming and data management services for clients both in Kosovo and abroad. The training program and employment were part of a USAID grant.



#EcShlirë App can be Downloaded on Android Phones

Women Using Technology to Empower Other Women

Made in Kosovo App #EcShlirë helps users report sexual harassment instances as they occur. Reports are directly sent to the authorities, whereas data collected are visualized on interactive maps to mark areas where such instances occur. The app is developed by 30 young women trained in mobile app development by Girls Coding Kosovo, and is an example how young women can acquire skills in technology that will help them find jobs, and how digital technology can be used to address social issues such as reporting sexual harassment, thus help make streets safer for everyone. Speaking at the launching ceremony, Brian Fahey, USAID Kosovo Senior Economic Advisor said programs like this “tap into the resources of young women and help them realize their potential and talent”.



More young women have joined the ICT labor market

First Cohort of Females in IT Graduated

This February, the first cohort of Females in IT (FIT) program received the certificates of successful completion of the program. During a period of 18 months, these 48 participants went through extensive training in three distinct job profiles: Desktop Support Technician, System & Network Administration and Software & Application Developers. The objective of the project was the professional advancement of the participants in order to ease their transition into the ICT labor market. So far, 30 project participants have become part of the labor force, while 10 have successfully finished their internship. The second generation of FIT will be certified in May 2016.



Discussion on alternative energy sources

Mindful of Alternative Energy Sources

In February, USAID intensified efforts to inform the general public and raise awareness on the quality and use of wood pellets produced and traded in Kosovo, and the need to invest resources in preparing and adopting a national strategy for the development of the wood sector in Kosovo. Two expert reports commissioned by EMPOWER Private Sector were made available to everyone in Albanian, Serbian and English through our webpage. Whereas at the meeting with the solar, geothermal and wind energy cluster representatives, discussions focused on updates from the cluster workforce development needs on solar panel installation and maintenance, including a certification model.

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USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector, which started in July 2014, is a five-year project designed to stimulate large-scale job creation by elevating the competitiveness of Kosovo firms. The project is funded by USAID, and is implemented by Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd.