

## OVERVIEW



### GETTING TO LISBON

#### ASSESSING VOCATIONAL TRAINING NEEDS AND JOB CREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN

*'Ever since I married at the age of 16, I cooked and worked for 50 members of my husband's family. Now, since the family has been separated into two homes, I do the same for 25 members. I think its enough now; I've had a life of cooking and cleaning', Shemsije Brahim* 36 year-old from Acaрева village.

### EDITORIAL

Robert Fuderich, Head of Office, UNICEF, Kosovo

*Kosovo is aiming to join the European community in the longer run, Kosovo is aiming to join the rest of the world and reach the Millennium Development Goals, but what do these processes mean for an ordinary Kosovan man or a woman or a child? These are not only political acts, they are processes that are expected to improve the quality of people's daily lives. With only 9 per cent of women employed,*

*Kosovo has a long way to go, both, in reaching the European standards and reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Real human development can never be achieved in any society without achieving equality between men and women at each level.*

### INTRODUCTION

In Lisbon, the European Union agreed to become *'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs'*.<sup>1</sup> The Lisbon Strategy was launched in recognition of the fact that competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on investments in human capital.

Given Kosovo's uncertain economic situation, investing in people becomes all the more important. Kosovo society pays a high price for failing to take education and vocational training seriously and for keeping women illiterate and without resources. Gender inequality and inequities in education and training have huge hidden costs.

The aim of the UNICEF commissioned study *Getting to Lisbon* is to provide new ideas and policy input for the design of a comprehensive strategy to empower women to take a more active part in Kosovo's society and economy. The report seeks to foster a national debate exploring the links between economic development, education and labour mobility. It also raises awareness by pointing to prevailing cultural barriers and prejudices limiting women's choices.

Hence, this report is about more than rural

<sup>1</sup> EU, Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon, paragraph 37.

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women, it is essentially about Kosovo's economic future. If Kosovo truly aspires to converge towards European living standards, the promotion of lifelong learning and human capital development must occupy a central place in economic and social development strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Education and training are the instruments to develop the sort of society Kosovo wants to be in the future. Education is the key to make Kosovo a competitive player in Europe, and to help Kosovo society to become 'European' in terms of gender, social and economic equality. Education also plays an important role in consolidating Kosovo's young democracy. Democracy depends on active citizenship and people's ability to make informed choices.

This present report takes a hard look at the causes for high drop-out rates and low educational attainments among rural women and tries to identify obstacles to female employment in rural Kosovo. It explores labour market trends and skills needs in three rural municipalities, Podujeve/Podujevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Skenderaj/Serbica and assesses the role of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) in ensuring equal access to education and vocational training.

'Getting to Lisbon' summarizes the challenge ahead of Kosovo but also implies that policymakers can look to Europe for inspiration and guidance.

### EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OF WOMEN IN KOSOVO – A REAL CHALLENGE

<sup>2</sup> European Training Foundation, Kosovo, ETF Country Plan, 2007.

*Shemsije Brahimi's husband Elez Brahimi works as a primary school teacher at the local school in Acareva. Their daughter, 16 year-old Lavdije finished only primary school, while her older brother went on to secondary school in Skenderaj/Srbica. The father's salary of 180 Euro is thus enough to pay for the son's, but not the daughter's education. Besides costs, the real reasons for Lavdije to stop school after primary school are the distance and unreliable transportation and the fact that she is a girl. Today, Lavdije spends her days at home waiting, as her mother explained, for a man to ask for her hand (in Albanian msiti me kerku doren).*

'Getting to Lisbon' is a real challenge. Across the European Union, 77.8 per cent of young people have at least upper secondary education compared to 44 per cent in Kosovo.<sup>3</sup> On average, 9.6 per cent of Europeans aged 25-64 were participating in education and training activities, compared to around 4 per cent in rural Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> The share of students enrolled in tertiary education in the EU-27 was 15 per cent in 2004<sup>5</sup>, compared to 13 per cent in Kosovo.<sup>6</sup> The average labour force participation rate of women in the EU-25 was 62.6 per cent, compared to 33 per cent in Kosovo.<sup>7</sup>

Functional illiteracy in Kosovo is widespread; 62 per cent of the adult population has low levels of

<sup>3</sup> Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training, Indicators and Benchmarks, October 2007, Commission Staff Working Paper.

<sup>4</sup> MEST, MAFRD, FAO "A strategy for Education for Rural People in Kosovo" p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> Key data on Higher Education in Europe, 2007 edition, Eurostat.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report, 2006, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> UNMIK, PISG, ILO 'Kosovo Youth Action Plan', 2007, p. 16.

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education and only 1 per cent has completed higher education.<sup>8</sup> Although illiteracy rates have fallen to under 5 per cent among the under 45-year-olds, female illiteracy is still three times higher than men's.<sup>9</sup> Illiteracy is particularly high among rural women, with 14 per cent compared to 4 per cent of rural men.<sup>10</sup> Including those who can barely read or write, nearly one in four rural women is functionally illiterate.

Five times more men than women participate in MLSW-funded training programmes; only 18 per cent of participants are women.<sup>11</sup> For lack of public funding, vocational training and non-formal education remain heavily donor-dependent, but barely 6 per cent of donor assistance is earmarked for sectoral support for education and employment.<sup>12</sup>

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*Besa was just a little baby when her mother died. She grew up without her care. A few years after Besa lost her father too. Besa was left without parents and caring for her befell on her elder brother.*

*Struggling to make ends meet, Besa never had a chance to go to school. She was illiterate.*

*When the literacy course was initiated and local Women's NGOs, supported by UNICEF, were doing an assessment to identify the girls and women that were illiterate and were interested in taking up the opportunity, Besa was one of the potential candidates. At the beginning it was very hard for her as she was very shy and embarrassed by the whole situation. But the literacy course teacher was very persistent: besides learning reading and writing she could also attend a sewing course that could help her in ensuring an income.*

*She started to enjoy the reading of the letters for the first time in her life, she started to feel more confident and even made decisions about her own personal life; "I even believe that my dream may come true: I'll become a famous dressmaker in my village" Besa says.*

'Getting to Lisbon' is about bringing Kosovo closer to the European mainstream in terms of human capital development, spending on adult education, labour participation of women and per capita income. For the investments to bear fruits in the not too distant future – Kosovo must start to invest in its people now. To ensure that Kosovo's youth is an asset and not a political and economic liability, inclusive education must be national priority.

Educational policies are key, but they cannot alone solve all of Kosovo's problems. A cross-sectoral approach involving many ministries and partners must link education and training policies with those related to employment, industrial development, rural diversification, youth and health and last, but not least, policies to enhance labour mobility in the region and within Europe.

<sup>8</sup> ETF, 'Kosovo Country Report 2007', p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Employment and Skills Observatory of Kosova, 'Mainstreaming with Europe: an adult learning strategy for Kosovo (2005-2015)', April 2004, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF, 'Early Childhood & Women's Literacy Programme, Midterm Evaluation', 2004, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> ILO IFP/SKILLS, Action Research – Gender Dimensions of Skills Development in Kosovo. Prishtinë/Priština 2003. p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, Table 32, Donors' Contributions to sectors in Kosovo.