

MEDIA RELEASE

GETTING TO LISBON

ASSESSING VOCATIONAL TRAINING NEEDS AND JOB CREATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN

Launch of the study-Conference

27 February 2009

Grand Hotel
Prishtinë/Pristina

Prishtinë/Pristina, 27 February 2008 – UNICEF, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST), the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), the Agency for Gender Equality at the Prime Ministers Office and Women's NGOs launch the report 'Getting to Lisbon – Assessing vocational training needs and job creation opportunities for rural women'

Gender inequality and inequities in education and training in Kosovo, have huge hidden costs. The 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 MEST and the MLSW in ensuring equal access to education and vocational training.

Functional illiteracy in Kosovo is widespread; 62 per cent of the adult population has low levels of education and only 1 per cent has completed higher education.¹ 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.² Illiteracy is particularly high among rural women, with 14 per cent compared to 4 per cent of rural men.³ Including those who can barely read or write, nearly one in four rural women is functionally illiterate. The average labour force participation rate of women in Kosovo was 33 per cent compared to 62.6 in the EU in 2007.

¹ ETF, 'Kosovo Country Report 2007', p. 2.

² Employment and Skills Observatory of Kosova, 'Mainstreaming with Europe: an adult learning strategy for Kosovo (2005-2015)', April 2004, p. 18.

³ UNICEF, 'Early Childhood & Women's Literacy Programme, Midterm Evaluation', 2004, p. 5.

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The European Union launched the Lisbon Strategy in recognition of the fact that competitive advantage is increasingly dependent on investments in human capital. Hence, the aim of *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 is about more than rural 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.

Mr. Robert Fuderich, the head of UNICEF Kosovo said, *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 every level.*

Thanks to the funds available by the French National Committee to UNICEF, the World Bank and USAID, 3000 rural women in Kosovo were able to gain basic numeracy and literacy skills, a programme which was implemented by UNICEF, MEST and Women's NGOs. After four years of successful implementation, UNICEF calls for additional policy interventions which would open up new opportunities for rural women. Those policies should increase funding for adult vocational education and training and provide compensatory education free of charge for all those who dropped out compulsory school.

'*Getting to Lisbon*' is about bringing Kosovo closer to the European mainstream in terms of human capital development, expenditure on adult education and labour participation of women. For the investments to bear fruits in the not too distant future – Kosovo must start to invest in all its people now. To ensure that Kosovo's rural women are an asset and not a passive recipient of assistance, lifelong learning must become a priority.

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