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**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

E+E | Economy and Education

Youth Employment Services

Take aways from the SDC's online Brown Bag Lunch on 5
July 2022



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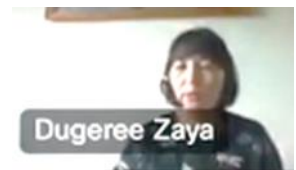
On July 5th 2022, the **SDC Youth Employment Promotion Project (YEPP) in Mongolia** and the **Youth Employment Project (YEP) in Bosnia-Herzegovina** shared implementation experiences, results and lessons learnt with more than 30 participants during an online Brown Bag Lunch.

The initiative of the **Swiss Cooperation Offices** in Mongolia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the **Inclusive Economic Development (IED) Expert Team** aimed at capitalising on implementation experiences of both projects, which recently ceased operations (YEPP Mongolia in December 2021; YEP Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 2022) with very good external evaluation results¹.

Dominique Crivelli, SDC Senior Advisor in the Vocational Skills Development Domain and Focal Point Employment & Income in Bern moderated the event with the support of **Roman Troxler**, Co-Managing Director of KEK-CDC Zürich and input on Career Guidance by **Michaela Henn**, Managing Director of INBAS GmbH in Offenbach am Main.

SDC Youth Employment Promotion Project (YEPP), Mongolia

Zayasaikhan ('Zaya') Dugeree, Senior Programme Officer E+I and **Benoît Meyer-Bisch**, Deputy Director of Cooperation, presented the Youth Employment Support Desks ("YES-Desks") developed by YEPP Mongolia and implemented by the GFA Consulting Group, Hamburg/Germany.



YEPP Mongolia initially started off as a classic sectoral VET project. It was re-designed, however, in 2015 following a request from Mongolia's Ministry of Labour and Social Projection. A persistently high youth unemployment rate made it a political priority to support unemployed youth by promoting new client-centred Public Employment Services (PES) and building their capacities to meet the needs of young people seeking wage or self-employment in a country the combined

¹ Link to [evaluation report](#).



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size of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom with vast rural areas and a densely populated capital centre.

SDC Youth Employment Promotion Project, Mongolia

Key Data

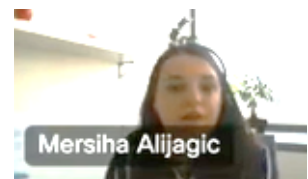
- > January 2016 – December 2021 (two phases)
- > CHF 5.28 million Swiss contribution
- > YES Desks are embedded within the regular Public Employment Services (PES), offering client-centred employment services to jobseekers and young start-up entrepreneurs in the form of profiling, modular trainings, and access to office and equipment.

Results

- > 30 YES-Desks in all 21 provinces and all 9 districts of the capital city of Ulaanbaatar established, plus one One-Stop-Shop centre
 - > More than 26,000 young jobseekers serviced with an increase of job placement rate by 30 percent in 2021 and a high user satisfaction rate (88 percent)
 - > 670 start-ups supported
 - > Annual start-up competition hosted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
 - > By end of project in December 2021, the YES Desks and their activities were fully funded by central government, local governments, and the Employment Promotion Fund
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SDC Youth Employment Project (YEP), Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mersiha Alijagić, Senior Programme Officer/ Economic Development Domain, presented implementation experiences and results of the Youth Employment Project (YEP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was implemented by GOPA Worldwide Consultants, Bad Homburg/ Germany.



YEP Bosnia-Herzegovina inception and first implementation phases were dedicated to develop relationships and build the trust necessary for PES to re-gain self-esteem by providing meaningful services to jobseekers (and employers) in a politically divided country with a weak private sector.



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SDC Youth Employment Project, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Key Data

- > August 2007 – May 2022, four phases
- > CHF 10.9 million Swiss contribution
- > Youth-friendly employment services were embedded within regular PES, providing individual and group counselling services (“**Job Clubs**”) for young jobseekers as well as youth entrepreneurship support for job creation. Start-up support was introduced in the later stages of the project as YES/ IMPAKT Business Ideas Incubator. Impakt offers training, mentoring, and funding through the Impact Investment Foundation (IFF), founded by the YEP project team during the final project phase.

Results

- > 11 (out of 12) Public Employment Service providers supported
 - > 39 (of 137) offices equipped
 - > Network of 39 Job Clubs established
 - > More than 18,000 job seekers reached.
 - > More than 300 businesses supported, generating more than 600 new jobs of which 95 percent still exist after one year of operation
-

Success factors

Although both projects developed independently from one another, they had surprisingly a lot in common and much more to share than what possibly could be handled in a single 90-minute session. The following – partly generic and partly subject-specific - aspects were discussed:

- > **Building on existing structures and tools** in combination with a **multi-layered approach** that supports people, institutions, and governments, and helps to embed reformed services into the structures of regular Public Employment Services (PES). Having client-friendly services physically, administratively, and financially integrated into regular PES is an economical use of scarce resources and provides the grounds for repeated and sustained employment impact generation.
- > **Ownership** in the form of explicit political will and contributions from the onset (Mongolia) or resulting from the project team’s patient and persistent **relation and trust building** efforts (Bosnia and Herzegovina) enhances mutual



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understanding and paves the way for coordination and collaboration between government, public employment offices, and clients (both, unemployed and employers).

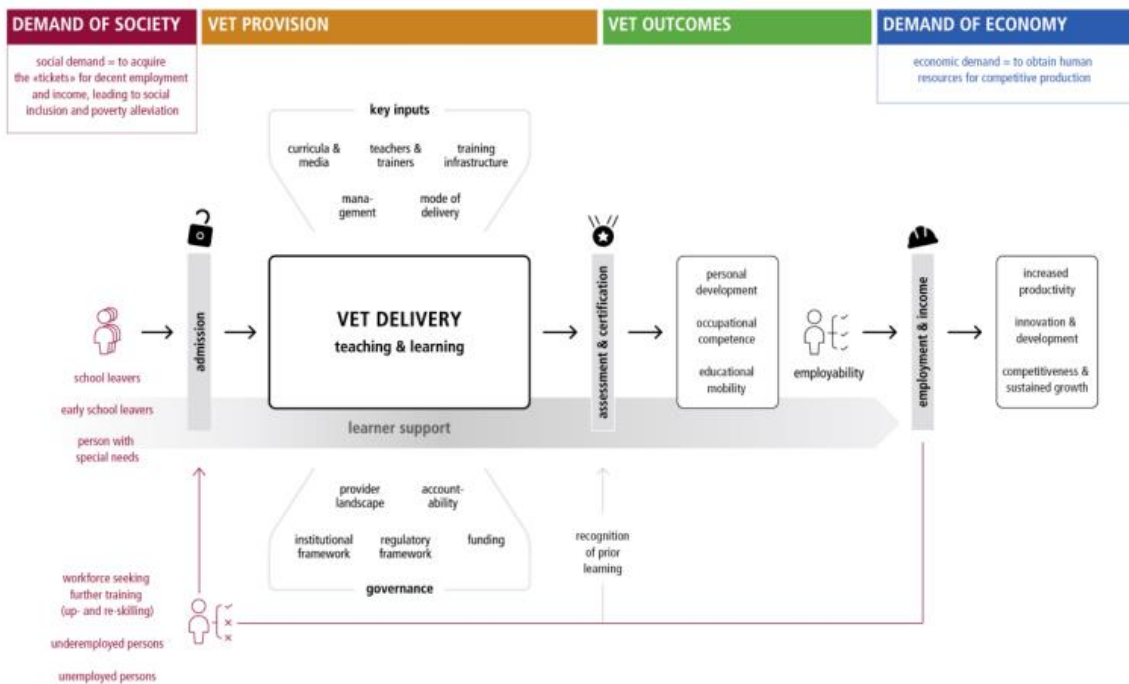
- > **Donor coordination** spurs coherence that unleashes synergies leading to the creation of broader and stronger impact during and after the intervention, when, for example, project indicators and monitoring tools become EU budget support indicators (Mongolia) or through additional funds as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the World Bank financed renovation of physical PES infrastructure.
- > Implementation experiences of both projects indicate **that group counselling and peer-to-peer-support** may have an even greater effect than expert counselling of individuals as the Youth Collaboration Support in Mongolia and Job Clubs in Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to suggest.
- > **Re-structuring processes** were another key to success in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where administrative processes were separated from operative services. The effects of this approach are first tangible for PES staff and then also for clients in terms of satisfaction rate and effectiveness, which reinforce each other. Structuring and focussing service delivery processes were also undertaken in Mongolia and lead to measurable capacity building and, ultimately, to country wide coverage.
- > Open door, easy access, and **client-friendly atmosphere** invite the unemployed to make use of PES' labour market information and employment services. In combination with resourced programmes, defined processes and simple tools, trained PES staff are competent to use these resources to the benefit of the unemployed and employers.
- > A further interesting observation is that – at odds with similar services in Switzerland or Germany - both projects supported **entrepreneurship** / job creation as an alternative pathway to placement into wage employment.
- > **Engaging the local community** was important for the success of entrepreneurial learning and **start-up support** (Mongolia)
- > Zaya Dugeree emphasized that vocational placement services need to go hand in hand with skills development. One of the main take-aways of the lively presentations is the insight expressed by Benoit Meyer-Bisch: Employment Counselling is the missing link in the impact chain that bridges the gap from employability to employment by helping graduates and jobseekers translate individual employability into actual self-/employment after education or training.



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Food for thought

Employment prospects of VET-graduates tend to be good due to the correlation of their education and training to labour market demands, and because of the comparatively high demand for skilled labour in the private sector. However, finding employment or creating self-employment is not automatic. Where education fails to impart work related soft and career management skills, transition from TVET to employment remains a challenge graduates find difficult to cope with. The Mongolian government saw that even significant investments into VET by several donors and agencies did not solve the youth unemployment problem despite good donor coordination (which is another success story of SDC-funded VET projects in Mongolia). Matching and placement services and entrepreneurship schemes helped build bridges into self-/employment, thus translating ‘employability’ into actual employment outcomes, as depicted in the graph below, taken from the SDC guidance [“Understanding and analysing vocational education and training systems”](#):





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Similarly, Career Orientation in earlier stages of (lower secondary) education can be a means to place learners within the education and training system and to draw the attention of learners and their families to opportunities in VET-related careers. Career Guidance, delivered, for example, by schools or youth centres *before VET*, as well as Employment Counselling (matching and placement and further Active Labour Market Measures) delivered during and *after VET*, help clients link individual resources (skills, values, motivation) with accessible opportunities (education, training, internships, work, start-up support, etc.).



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Document details

Date

14.10.2022

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[www.shareweb.ch/site/EI > VSD > VET System
Development Webinar Series](http://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI > VSD > VET System Development Webinar Series)