Sector "Education, Employment and Social Policy"



### SECTOR "EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY"

### Minutes of Third Meeting of Sector Working Group (SWG)

Venue: Conference Hall, Government of the Republic of Macedonia (GoRM), Ilindenska bb

**Date:** 12 July 2018, Thursday

#### Opening session

- In the opening session, moderated by Ms. Carovska, Minister of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), it was highlighted the dynamics and coordination in joint work of SWG. She emphasised intensive work in three previous months and point out linkage of priorities proposed for IPA Action Document 2019, as well ongoing and forthcoming reforms (youth guarantee, strategy for support of de-institutionalisation, preparation and adoption of new Social Protection Law and new Anti-discrimination Law, preparation and adoption of Action Plan for Employment and Grey Economy, social mapping of Roma population and their living conditions through the country, especially due to housing). She also welcome the newly appointed Minister of Education and Science (MES), Mr. Arbr Ademi.
- Mr. Bertolini, Head of Cooperation in Delegation of the European Union (DEU), in the opening session pointed out the positive conclusion of the European Commission decision for recommendation for opening accession negotiations. He explained his expectations from the meeting and afterwards, in order to achieve an agreement on the priorities for IPA Action Document 2019 under the Sector Budget Support (SBS) modality. He said that the first draft of the documents contains a lot of ideas and variety of activities and precise agreement on areas/ components for SBS financial support have to be done currently. He pointed out on the needs for analytical work to start and the activities as interventions and indicators for monitoring. Mr. Bertolini requested a proposal for final set-up of areas/ components for SBS support and its commenting to be done and finalised by end of July 2018.
- Mr. Ademi, Minister of Education and Science (MES) expressed gratitude to the audience from the Donor Community and pointed out the importance of their contribution with a particular focus on the support of the Delegation of the European Union in meeting the Government strategic goals and commitments for integration of the country into the EU. He pointed out that it is important to continue and strengthen the participatory process and coordination in programming, implementation and monitoring of sector policies with a focus on achieving results, in order to ensure long-term effect and aligned sector reforms, with a particular focus on the introduction of the Sector Budget Support. In this regards, he continued, this new modality for implementation of IPA support in the country is in our attention, and thus commitment and awareness regarding the implementation of priorities through establishment of a common system for monitoring of interventions and their effect, is necessary.
- The the proposed Agenda for Third SWG meeting and the Minutes of previous SWG meeting (held on 11 April 2018) were adopted anonymously, considering the previously comments given. Ms. Carovska, Miniter, summarised that the work was done following conclusions from previous SWG meeting through participative process (technical level meetings with relevant stakeholders, as well involvement of civil society representatives). She also informed the attendees on prepared First Annual Report for 2017 due implementation of the Employment and Social Reforms Programme (ESRP) as a basis for programming process and interventions planned under IPA Action Programme 2017, although the country had faced a tumultuous period of political crisis, certain activities were implemented and results achieved or likely to be achieved in near future. It is expected in 2 weeks to be adopted by the GoRM and further on submitted to EC services. As well, the donor mapping of development assistance was done in order smoothly to programme the IPA II interventions.

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- Ms. Carovska, Minister, started the presentation on MLSP priorities by presenting a dynamic of thorough preparation and adoption of IPA Action Document 2019 (priorities identified in previous period, drafted first version of an Action Programme document and its quality review till end of Q3 2018, first review and commenting by relevant stakeholders by end of Q4 2018, second quality review by end of Q1 2019, and final version of an Action Programme document, its submission and EC interservice discussions and approval by end of Q2 2019).
- **Mr. Bertolini, DEU representative,** pointed out that this process should be considered to last longer having in mind the legal obligation for its formal adoption and signature of Financial Agreement which it could happen after IPA Committee in Brussels at end of Q3 2019.
- Ms. Carovska, Minister, presented the IPA II 2019 priorities.

First priority is youth guarantee and improvement of labour market integration of youth aged 15 till 29, who are unemployed and not involved in education, employment and training (NEET). It is considered if the funds are allocated in most under-developed regions (Polog, South-East and South-West regions) in the country, bigger effects shall be achieved. Youth guarantee encompasses three steps in its implementation (field work, activation and integration on labour market). Through this measure, it is expected that 2000 NEETs shall be involved in Active Labour Market Programmes and Measures (ALMPMs), 6000 NEETs shall be identified and engaged within the activities, and 30% of all persons involved shall be employed, involved in education and/ or intership activities 6 months after the end of youth guarantee. The budget proposed for this action is 6 million EUR.

Second priority is support of social services and de-institutionalisation aimed at qualitative life, support for joint community-based life and social integration of persons with disabilities, elderly persons and children in social risk. The action shall be implemented in three steps (transformation of social protection institutions, relocation of users in community and development of personalised services/ trainings). It is expected with this action 200 persons to start to use home-based care, 2 institutions to be transformed, 120 users to be relocated in community, and 2700 persons from vulnerable groups to have an access to non-institutional community services (with a focus for their creation in the community). It is hard to be focused on three regions identified because the institutions positioned are in other regions, but it shall be given an opportunities to be developed community based services in these regions. The budget proposed for this action is 3,9 million EUR.

Third priority is socio-economic integration of Roma. The housing issue is most important and basis for other actions, as well the support and services in other areas are important. The adequate social housing is more needed and other actions are hard to be done if there is not a such. Therefore, this priority encompasses creation of conditions for adequate social housing in order to improve socio-economic status of Roma. The action shall be implemented in two levels. First level is ensuring conditions for social housing and reconstructions of houses of Roma users of social security benefits, who's children are involved in educational system and who's houses are legalised. Second level is supported social housing and/ or inadequate social social housing for those Roma with coordinated health protection, education and employment, but these Roma live in improvised dwellings. These social housing units shall be temporary and adaptable in order to ensure their successful integration process. It is expected to be 100 houses reconstructed, 4 regional centres established for supported social housing, access to services for education, health and employment for 2500 Roma and their families for their full involvement in the society. The budget proposed for this action is 4 million EUR.

Ms. Carovska pointed out that the proposed funds are positioned for each action, but it shall of utmost importance if it is possible additional funds to be allocated than the previously planned in order to achieve greater and visible impact. Additionally, she highlighted that the Ministry has its internal analysis and it is estimated that with the action proposed in three regions for youth guarantee around 9% of unemployed youth shall be involved on country level.

- Mr. Ademi, Minister, presented the IPA II 2019 priorities for the education part:

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## First priority is improving the quality of the teaching process in primary and secondary education.

The Minister referred to reforms in this area that have been realised in the previous period and with a special contribution within the IPA 1. Also, he referred to the context of this priority - the economic and social trends that make high quality education more important than ever, teachers as the most important resource in schools and their quality, as decisive for students' achievements. Mr. Ademi explained that at the level of cooperation with the European Union, this issue takes an important place within the ministerial meetings of the Western Balkans Platform for Education and Training, where emphasis is placed on teacher education and training. As a result of the activities of this platform, a study was prepared on the current situation and recommendations for the future steps that need to be taken in this field.

Within the implementation of these recommendations and the determination to improve the quality of teacher education, the following laws were adopted:

- Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools;
- Law on Higher Educational Institutions for Teacher Education;
- ➤ Law on the Academy of Teachers;
- ➤ Law on Primary Education;
- ➤ Law on Secondary Education.

He stressed that in addition to the past work in IPA 1, the activities of the Action Programme 2017 within IPA II are continuing, and the activities of AD 2019 will also be upgraded. From the investments so far in the direction of reforms in the quality of education, it is becoming increasingly evident that the quality of teacher education is a key factor for the success of educational systems. It has also confirmed the important role of teacher selection and teacher admissions systems, along with the importance of initial and continuing education for teachers who are regularly adapted to help teachers cope with the requirements and the realities of changing societies. Accordingly, the priorities for AD 2019 will be realised through the following activities:

- Reform and alignment of the study programmes in accordance with the standard of qualification, which regulates the learning outcomes of the study programme and the conditions for its performance, and will enable equalisation of the quality of the offer for teacher education and adequate practical readiness of the new teachers for work in the school environment.
- Improving the support system, mentorship and monitoring of novice teachers and professional co-workers for educational services, in order to implement and improve the mentorship mechanisms for teachers, it is necessary not only to change the legislation and the bylaws acts, but also continuous training of mentors who are designated to support novice teachers.
- Enhanced Enrolment Policy at the Faculties of Pedagogy (Revision of the criteria for enrolment of students at the faculties), including scholarships for the students with the best scores from secondary education who will enrol first year at the teaching and pedagogical faculties.

# Second priority is improving the learning environment in VET and AE with focus on the establishment of Regional VET centres.

The Minister stressed that during the preparations for determining the priorities in the vocational education and adult education, the Ministry of Education and Science reviewed all realised and ongoing activities and that achieved results through EU-funded projects, the current World Bank project, as well as the projects that will be implemented with the support of Switzerland and Germany and AP 2017 were taken into account.

The idea for establishment of Regional VET Centres (in Polog, South-west and North-east region) is to have all participants (students in the regular - formal secondary education, adults and persons with special educational needs) at one place and with an equal opportunity to acquire the appropriate vocational education at all levels (vocational training, three-year vocational education for occupation, technical education, post-secondary education, trainings) in order to find an adequate job in the labour market or to pursue higher education. It is also envisaged that pilot activities for validation of non-formal and informal education (VNIFL) will be implemented in these centres.

Minister explained that the three regional centres will be selected on the basis of pre-determined criteria and analyses prepared in cooperation with the local self-government and the needs of the

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business community in each of the three regions. The role of the local self-government in all areas, especially in the field of education, is legally regulated, but in reality it is reduced to more common demands by the employers for their needs of professional staff. That is why, Mr. Ademi pointed out that in the next period the local self-government will play equal role as a partner of the MoES in the realisation of all anticipated activities of the Regional VET centres. For this purpose, trainings will be organised for the municipality employees and their direct involvement, in order to succeed on a long-term plan. Also, participation of the business community will be increased through establishing public private partnership for the sector for which the region has the greatest interest and demands by the employers. That is how, the Regional VET centres will enable the students and participants to get closer to the requirements of the labour market. Also, within the anticipated activities of these centres, adults with incomplete secondary education will have the opportunity to complete compulsory secondary education, and thus become more competitive on the labour market. On the other hand, long-term unemployed persons and vulnerable categories as well as beneficiaries of social assistance will be given easier access to vocational education and training.

On the basis of the above mentioned the priorities for AD 2019 will be realised through the following activities:

- Renovation/adaptation of the existing buildings of selected vocational schools that will be transformed into Regional VET Centres in the selected regions;
- **Upgrade and provision of equipment for the regional VET Centres** according to the needs of the local community in the region;
- **Training of teachers,** especially those responsible for the functioning of the VET Centres in accordance with good practices and EU quality standards;
- Review and development of adult education programmes.

## Third priority is infrastructure investments in higher education for improving the quality and conditions for inclusion of students with physical disability.

Regarding this priority, Mr. Ademi emphasised that the Government supports this priority from a moral and ethical point of view. He explained that this priority is in accordance with the MES mission, with an aim to develop an integrated education system and increase the chances of young people for quality jobs in order the education system to provide greater social integration in ethnic, regional, social and cultural terms. From this aspect, the MES wishes to ensure continuation of education and access to higher education for students with physical disabilities and students with impaired hearing and vision, especially considering that so far, larger investments of this type have not been realised.

Accordingly, AD 2019 in the education identified the following activities:

- **Mapping of existing buildings at the universities (faculties)** that need to be adapted within the three regions;
- Market research and preparation of technical specification;
- **Procurement of materials and equipment** for adaptation and reconstruction of faculty buildings in the three regions;
- Adaptation / reconstruction of the selected building.

At the end, Mr. Ademi, pointed out that for greater effect of the reforms that will be realised with sector budget support, more financial support for the sector is needed, in order to improve quality, relevance and inclusiveness in education for better labour market outcomes, improved social protection, social inclusion and equal access to the labour market. Also, expert support for better assessment of needs and costs for implementation of the interventions would be of assitance.

- **Ms. Carovska, Minister,** explained that the priorities presented were based on thorough work in order to be precise and smart for achievement of goals set with the reforms, as well the indicators to be defined realistically. Afterwards, she opened a floor for discussion and comments.
- Mr. Perks, UNICEF representative, asked on clarification how the presented priorities complement with the priorities identified with the support of World Bank and other donors. He stressed the importance with other donors in order to have a view on whole picture of donor assistance in the country.

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- **Ms. Carovska, Minister,** clarified that at the beginning of this process in order to identify these priorities, the donor mapping matrix was sent and filled in with information of donor assistance provided in relevant sectors. It is clearly evident where WB support shall be provided, but there is certain gaps in services that are not supported. She proposed once again this donor mapping matrix to be disseminated with the draft minutes of meeting.
- Mr. Bertolini. DEU representative, acknowledged the good presentation of IPA II 2019 priorities identified by MLSP and MES as a good overview of needs. He stressed out few comments. First comment was related to funds that the Government requests bigger SBS amount and explained that the EU works on this issue, understands the necessities and some modifications might be possible. He explained that if the actions are programmed in this amount of funds (20 million EUR) for the whole sector, the technical assistance of additional amount of around 3 million EUR, shall be necessary for implementation of the Sector Reform Contract, besides the operating structures, to support these actions, considered as a major operation and reforms to be undertaken. As well, it should be forgoten the visibility and communication of this EU assistance. As second comment, it was stressed that if the youth guarantee is focused on three regions, the social services shall not target these regions because of their locations. He pointed out that an important indicator for this action for EU should be that no more beneficiaries shall be placed in these institutions. Just for clarification, he stressed that these institutions should be transformed in daily care centres for this vulnerable population. Regardless, if new Government is elected this is strong priority for EU to be achieved. On social integration of Roma, the focus is on housing needs, and he stressed against personally on the dimension of temporary housing. He explained the example in Monte Negro whereas the temporary housing of reconstructed apartments/ houses of few years lasted for 10-15 years, even longer. It has to be clear what it shall be done with this action. He agreed for interventions in social housing and stressed the opinion of concentration in three regions, whereas an important part of Roma community live. He pointed out that their bigger problems are providing and having a legal documents. Therefore, these issues should be solved before the problems occur and before the implementation. It is identified by Council of Europe, Roma Coordinative Body, Roma Council and other stakeholders. But, it should be created and available conditions for basic and housing infrastructure. He acknowledged the importance of involvement of Roma beneficiaries who's children are in education.
- Regarding the Regional VET Centres, he explained that at this moment there are not enough graduates from the VET schools that could be absorbed by the small and medium enterprises and that there is mismatch of skills in this important area. In this regard he referred to the Youth Guarantee which will also touch the problem of skills and help the young people find the skills needed on the labour market. Mr. Bertolini pointed out that the huge amount of funds for this area are in line with the importance of this issue, but that there are alternative ways for providing training for skills and decreasing the amount for baying equipment. He suggested that good assessment before doing this intervention would help and building consultations with the entrepreneurs is needed in order to see what the missing parts are.
- Regarding the interventions for infrastructure for removing the barriers, Br. Bertolini said that EU is very happy to work in this area internal discussions within EUD refer to what should be done in this area, because there is small amount of funds in the ocean of needs for this intervention. Since physical barriers are everywhere, starting from kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and not just on universities, better analysis is needed. In order to have clear picture of the needs for this intervention, apart from working on legislation and obliging educational institutions not to create barriers, he suggested to introduce this intervention by piloting activities for one building (primary, secondary, higher education) in Skopje that will serve as a good example that will be followed.
- Ms.Vinton, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative, pointed out that based on daily work with the MLSP and coming from overarching priorities identified, there is a lot more funding available and implemented in these sectors. She asked for clarification on what point the decision was made the interventions are concentrated in these three regions, having in mind that there are necessities in other regions, vulnerability of different target groups, etc. She agreed that these three regions are of most need as lower striking regions. She suggested an idea of instead of geographical approach to intervene in accordance with the labour market needs throughout the country. She pointed out that there is a need for support of VET services and there are ongoing discussion with British Embassy and SDC for further funding in closing the skills gap between labour market needs and

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education system supply. She agreed on the need to be prioritised due to future funding, but other necessities and situation throughout the country should be taken in consideration. It is good to have a discussion on these issues and donor assistance coverage in these sectors.

- Ms. Tanevska, UNFPA representative, made a point on previous discussion by UNDP Representative, and elaborated that UNFPA is coordinated perfectly in area of de-institutionalisation. UNFPA with a support of UN Disability Trust Fund shall support advancement for providing services for gender-based violence and sexually reproductive health in forthcoming 24 months. This project shall encompass strengthening the knowledge and skills capacities of service providers in communities in order to ensure social inclusion of victims as persons with disabilities. This model foreseen to be developed could be applied in other regions. This kind of donor coordination meetings are good point to have information on EU priorities and priorities of other donor support. UNFPA is completely opened in the area of gender-based violence and implementation of Istanbul Convention.
- Mr. Simeonova, IOM, elaborated the IOM activities related to assisted repatriation of refugees with long-run implementation. In previous period, 2160 Macedonian citizens are supported as returnees in the country. From this number, 73% are Roma and 90% of them are returnees with families. IOM activities encompass providing health and medical services, support in finding suitable housing, VET services, access to vacants at labour market and legal aid services. These IOM activities are provided in continuity. In relation to social housing, IOM has implemented activities for improvement of labour market access of Roma young women through vocational education trainings and trainings at working place. It was highlighted that the difficulty was to activate the employers. There were active several projects that provided similar activities of vocational education trainings and few-month internships. Greater success have had those project beneficiaries who were involved in trainings at work, as well they were followed-up after the project end and their employability was evident in finding even a job in other employer. Although, the employers were informed on possible subsidies to employ someone, they were not willing to realise an employment. The IOM proposal, as a lesson learnt, was that the business sector must be involved.
- Ms. Carovska, Minister, agreed that the trainings at work are necessary and there is separate measure 3.2 envisaged in the Operational Plan for Active Labour Market Programmes and Measures. She expressed her opinion that there is not enough coordination and communication, which it could be tackled as an obstacle for the GoRM and business community. As well, she pointed out that clear instructions/ guidelines are not provided. Moreover, the business sector has its own interests and priorities to survive at the market, but not to be training support centres. It is evident that the Employers Organisation and Chambers have to consider other opportunities that might increase their productivity. She mentioned the USAID supported project, although there are notes by her side on how the whole process is done due to the project implementation. But, she has a clear picture and there is a room for their inputs and these inputs, as joint work of oppotunities, to be used for improvement of overall situation in forthcoming period.
- **Ms. Barberi, OSCE SMMS Senior Representative,** gratitude on good presentation of IPA II priorities and elaborated the OSCE support of Istanbul Convention and provision of legal documents for those persons not registered in these three regions. In relation to MES priorities, she elaborated their support in secondary education within their mission in the country.
- Ms. Carovska, Minister, asked for additional comments and she tries to summarise by making a first conclusion of this meeting that the IPA 2019 Action Document shall be completed in coordination with SEA/ NIPAC at latest by 30.8.2018.
- **Mr. Bertolini, DEU representative,** elaborated additionally on an issue of regionalisation and concentration in selected three regions. In previous six years of IPA I support, there were implemented around 300 projects in whole country and it is not visible the expected impact. There were and are tackled different sector aspects. But, if the municipalities are asked, they would say there were projects, but the municipalities and their citizens would not say that their life improved because of EU

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funding. These were the reasons for selection. Secondly, all the available documents related to indicators show the low living standards in these three regions If it is considered the beginning of this process, 3-4 months ago, there is foreseen a part of programme to cover national needs in these three regions. These regions shall be covered in two important EU-IPA programmes which are programming at same time, i.e. the Agricultural Document and Competitiveness Programme. The answer of these regions is derived from Competitiveness Programme. For instance, in this programme, there shall be programmed 9 million EUR to support businesses in these three regions, as well to support to employ young unemployed persons and use services of VET centres. Additionally, it is link with the agricultural farmers, as well. The efforts to achieve are with a structured focus it could be really overall conditions. It could not be said it shall be satisfying of all the needs. This SWG have shown that there is a room to discuss all the priorities, not just those covered by IPA, as well by other donors. There are available sector policies and sector reforms to be done, and jointly, it is agreeable with UNDP that these sectors are much larger that this that shall be supported. With this amount of funds, it could be tackled six relevant components and it is expected that these components are accepted and agreed. This support of EU and donors does not mean the job shall be finalised, but on contrary, this means that there is a coordination mechanism that could provide some assurance that this work is important and it is not covered by other donors, which means it is complementary to EU support. The EU shall try to maintain this process and this should not be just IPA programming exercise, but this Sector Working Group on Social Policy, Labour, Education and it is quite wide.

- Ms. Carovska, Minister, explained that there were SWG meetings on which the priorities of both ministries were presented and the conclusions were derived that these priorities are not supported, as well that these are priorities of GoRM and with IPA funds it shall be achieved. As of the MLSP portfolio, it is of vast dimension, as well of the one of MES Minister. Moreover, the reforms are more needed and happen in other areas then these SWG areas of coverage. Additionally, she notified that the representatives of civil society are not present at this meeting.
- Ms. Aneta Damjanovska, Swiss Development Coordination (SDC), elaborated on current support in areas of education and employment. She pointed out that that cooperation with the business sector is crucial part in vocational education reform and in meeting the skills of the young people. She explained that in the area of employment the focus of SDC is support of employment of persons with disabilities. In relation to three selected regions, it would be very beneficial to have additional information, but as well as there would be with additional work and their transcript in national policies in sectors mentioned in order to see visible results. From the SDC previous experience, when it comes to business sector (for an example), it is really difficult to work with them.
- Mr. Ademi, Minister, gave explanation about the role of business community in improving the VET. He pointed out that MoES showed interest not only about improving the VET curricula and their modernisation in accordance with the needs of the business community, but MoES will start cooperation in two schools with companies from Germany in the frame of dual vocational education. Actually, the VET Regional Centres priority is in line with the dual VET. Also, the three regional VET centres will offer not just completion of formal VET, but also education for adults. The centres through permanent contact with the business community will provide support in the area of formal regular VET, completion of formal VET for adults, trainings, non-formal and in-formal learning. In this regard, he said that business community is encouraged to be MoES partner in implementation of the concept of dual education.
- Ms. Barberi, OSCE SMMS Senior Representative, elaborates additionally that in relation to socioeconomic integration of Roma, especially due to support of Roma children on street, it could be good to have a coordination of all the stakeholders. As well, it could be tackled the coordination mechanism and involvement of local self-government units. She noted that this shall be supported this year and year to come, and complementarity with social housing, it could be beneficial.
- Ms. Carovska, Minister, noted that the 'street children' is complex problem and there was organised a separate meeting with the OSCE SMMS Ambassador before her mission leave. It was noted that if

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the poverty is not decreased and social transfers to be increased, which it shall happen in 2019, it is unlikely that everything done additionally, it might be a stress of each child identified on street and transferred to current old-fashioned social institutions. These institutions are transformed in parallel and social reform foresees that each family using social benefit transfer, by encompassing of around 30 thousand households, majority of them are Roma ethnic recipients. This package includes that these recipients receiving social benefit, shall receive a remuneration of minimum adequate wage, as well it shall receive a remuneration for compulsory education and child benefit. She pointed out that this was not done previously. These recipients must be involved in educational processes, even if it necessary for inclusion in primary education. At the moment, everything to be done, it could be just a 'make-up'. She also notified that she has great pressure and many municipal mayors request in written by her, as minister, to 'clean the streets from these children' which it is tragically. She explained to asked them to work together and to find a way to solve this problem. She agrees that this problem is visible and hopefully, when the social benefit transfer shall be increased, there groups shall be involved in all measures. As well, she pointed out that there is ongoing recruitment of social services, which do not have appropriate capacities to follow cases of social beneficiaries, to take care of their families. This is expected to be accelerated during 2019 and in order to solve the overall issue, it evident as necessity to be done as a through process of five years and additional five years as a support, for each child and family in social risk.

- Lastly, **Ms. Carovska, Minister,** concluded firstly, the first draft of SRC package to be submitted to EUD until 30.8.2018, on which DEU agreed, and secondly, it was agreed the forthcoming SWG meeting, to be tentatively held in October 2018. She noted that the civil society representatives were not present at this meeting, they were invited to provide comments and maybe, it could be late, but the maximum efforts are doing for their involvement in these processes. She noted that they were involved at technical level as bigger groups of organisations, but not as an individual representative. Additionally, she noted that all the relevant documents and minutes of this SWG meeting shall be disseminated for review by the SWG.

#### **Annexes:**

- Annex 1 Presentation on Education, Employment and Social Policy priorities
- Annex 2 List of participants
- Annex 3 Mapping donor assistance and other interventions

Minutes taken by: Gordana Trenkoska, Advisor, MLSP

Rosica Tosevska, Advisor, MES

Minutes checked by: Aleksandra Slavkoska, Head of Unit, MLSP Minutes agreed by: Sanela Shkrijelj, Chef of Cabinet, MLSP

Marinela Marichiki Tusheva, Chef of Cabinet, MES