



Economic Development ◀ Vocational Education ▶ Wealth for Albania

Outcomes and recommendations of the National Conference 22 October 2013

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Deutsche Industrie- und
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Tregtisë në Shqipëri



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“ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▶ VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ▶ WEALTH FOR ALBANIA”

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Conference Recommendations

1. Utilization of country resources

Albania is rich in natural resources, which need to first be utilized more effectively, supporting the establishment of a coordinated resources' network. Inter alia, these resources include:

- **Water, wind, and the sun:** these three resources can be utilized for establishing a wide variety of means for energy production. By making use of these resources, Albania can meet not only its own demand for electricity, but can also be transformed into a regional energy exporter.
- **Agriculture:** The Albanian agriculture has not yet utilized its potentials in full. A better and more competent organization of agriculture and use of the certified processing methods can lead to a higher and more export-oriented outcome.
- **Variety of nature and of its species:** Almost no second European country has such a rich nature into such small surface as Albania. This wealth, if developed into ecologic and sustainable tourism would lead to sustainable and ever growing benefits.
- **Light industry:** The country has a tradition, especially in the leather and textile processing industry sector. Targeted investments can lead to building of a successful and profitable sector.
- **Precious minerals:** existing reserves are exploited with outdated technologies and insufficiently. Targeted investments aimed at modernizing the sector and improving (and combining with it) the processing aspect would lead to higher profits.

2. The full concept for development of Albania

In order to effectively utilize the economic potentials, it is necessary for the mid-term and long-term public investments to be summarized in a full concept. This full concept might be formulated as "Albania 2020" Strategy. The fundamental aspects of this vision can be:

- **Client-centred services:** The world of modern economy roots its existence on functional services. The service sector is a lateral sector, affecting all the other sectors of the country's economy.
- **Efficient administration** – in all the levels – an efficient "rule of law": An economy can grow in a regulated way only if investments are made. But, investors need guarantees regarding competent administration and legal certainty.
- **Giving an end to the property issue:** the property issues remains still unresolved. This blocks the revitalization of the economy and hinders investments. Social (solid) sustainable solutions can be found from successful models from other countries in transition.
- **Profession-oriented education system:** As it is, the education system does not meet the requirements of the labor market. The state needs to guarantee a functional and modern educational system that is suited to the social and economic needs of the society.
- **Consolidation of infrastructure:** The consolidation of the country's infrastructure is an indispensable and multi-fold measure for the development of the economic system. Therefore, interventions are needed in the electricity sector, waste management, water supply and waste water management and in the road traffic.
- **Building of a proper social support system:** As a potential EU country, Albania should ensure the minimal standards of social care. These standards do as well include health care and care for the elderly, or a generally functional health system.

3. Strategy for a coordinated action

All the ministries and other key stakeholders of the private sector should describe the tasks of a public strategy for Albania's development, by putting in place a so-called "road map" with the ultimate goal of fulfilling and monitoring of the enforcement of this strategy.

- ☐ **Foreign partner experts:** in order to put this concept to light, there is a need for international development partners having relevant expertise in the countries in transition to be involved in the process at the very beginning.
- ☐ **Utilization of all the financial capacities:** In order to be able to utilize the financial resources effectively, there is a need to build the institutional capacities and individual expertise competencies as soon as possible, in order to fully utilize the funds allocated by the EU.

4. Close cooperation between state-run and private businesses

In a modern economy, an all-faceted cooperation of the state with all economic stakeholders is a must. The private sector carries a considerable part of responsibilities for the development of a country. For these reasons, this sector should be involved properly in any direction, as this cooperation can pave the way to development. This is in the interest of both parties.

- ☐ A key and indispensable field of **cooperation** is vocational education and training, starting from initial vocational training and other on-the-job and continuous training.
- ☐ For this to happen, the state needs to establish **the necessary conditions**, such as for instance, intervene in schools, while the **business should resume its own content-related and internship responsibilities in efforts to meet the requirements of the with the labor market**.
- ☐ **Active employment policies** that do effectively relate the business needs with the purposes of job-seekers through qualitative counseling and support measures (information about vocational education offers).

5. Description of professions and training

Human resources: the labor force in Albania is very young. But, in general, there is a lack of vocational education in all the levels of economy. A more qualitative and better-focused vocational education can help in the establishment and consolidation of economic sectors. This is the way to guarantee a regular employment. A potential direction for the indispensable cooperation between the state and the private sector for the development of a skilled working force in the academic and non-academic sector could be:

- ☐ **Key professions:** the identification and re-definition of the most important professions in the key and perspective sectors of the Albanian economy.
- ☐ **Practice-oriented curricula:** drafting (in cooperation) of the content of qualifications and curricula for an integrated vocational education in schools and in practice.
- ☐ **(Quality) control:** Joint monitoring – for instance, in the exam commission and observance of agreed standards and contents.
- ☐ **Certification:** in order to establish grounds for skilled experts with binding qualifications, there is a need for fully meeting the international standards as well.

6. Curricula based on the dual system in all professional levels

The purpose of vocational education in the future should be rooted on a close cooperation between vocational schools and companies. The young generation should be provided with the possibility of being acquainted with the labor market while they are at school, so as to be better trained for the market. In

general, it is important for the vocational education and training to be practice-oriented and to provide a better coordination between theory and practice. Close cooperation between schools (the education system) and businesses is indispensable when it comes to defining the requirements and directions of vocational training:

- **Internship criteria:** it is the business that needs to assess better than any other stakeholder which are the indispensable requirements for exercising each profession and which are the conditions these professions have to be performed with.
- **Integration,** related both to theoretical contents and practical aspects of education. This principle has to serve for the low and high levels of vocational education.
- **Level-based system:** the duration of the education levels should be foreseen in compliance with this approach (for instance, half a year for the basic qualification; one to one year and a half for medium-level training, etc.) and each level has to be concluded with a joint certification.
- **International level:** a co-decisive element of all levels of education should be the international standards for many vocational qualifications (for instance, the capacity to observe the recognized international norms).

7. Full coverage of the system through multi-functional centers (MFC)

The vocational education and training offer in Albania does not as of yet cover the entire country and is not provided in the same manner everywhere. Many areas, especially the rural ones, are very far in outreaching and providing opportunities to the young generation. In long-term aspects, vocational education should be a solution to the main current problems:

- **Multi-functional centers:** their development in different levels of vocational education is the best option for the development of a qualitative offer.
- **Chances for all:** All the young people wishing to get vocational education should be given the possibility to do so. In order to find the equilibrium between urban and rural areas, initial vocational education can be provided in the rural areas, which can, of course, be consolidated further. Vocational education should not be left an issue depending on the financial possibilities of the parents and students. Hence, the young people wishing to gain a vocational education should be provided with possibilities to live in a dormitory, especially in those cases when an education offer is not present in their dwellings.
- **Quick training:** In order to re-vitalize the economy and to ensure its sustainable consolidation in all the sectors having a perspective for the economic development of the country, there is a need for a skilled working force. For this reason, it is important to think of short-term training initiatives in the multi-functional centers of vocational education, in close cooperation with the companies, which are currently in search of staff.

8. Career counseling as an element of active policies in the labor market

Surveys show that the young people, as well as their parents, have almost no information on the potentials and vocational education that might be suitable to them and have a prospect in the labor market. Information on the business needs is almost entirely lacking and is almost never publically communicated. It is for this very reason that cooperation between the private sector and state institutions dealing with the labor market is of a two-sided interest. In order to meet with shortcoming, the following short-term measures might be taken into account:

- **A more complete and better updated exchange of information** between the private sector and state institutions on the current and future needs.
- **Information offices, or informative activities** by the National Employment Service and the regional

offices for the parents and students of nine-year and high schools as instruments assisting in the professional decision-making and career-planning of the young people.

- ☐ **Advisory system for new students** about studying in certain branches in consultation with the higher schools and the private business.
- ☐ Inclusion in the study programmes **integrated internships** so as to correct or better specify the direction of studies.
- ☐ **Counseling for the unemployed workers** about re-training and further training possibilities, so as to enable and increase their chance for employment.

9. Coordinated education for the economy of tomorrow

The education and training policies, including the entire spectrum from kindergarten to higher education has suffered of various problems. These problems are responsible for the incompleteness of education and training when it comes to vocational training. Some solutions to such situation might be:

- ☐ **Alleviating the gap between urban and rural areas:** the educational and training offer in the rural areas has been to a minimum level, leading to degradation of businesses in these areas. Many households have displaced in cities, because they want to provide their children with better education and vocational potentials. Such trend should be put to a halt because urban areas never provide the possibilities the new-comers (migrants) strive for. Second, the rural areas might rediscover the connection with the economic development of the country.
- ☐ **Quality versus quantity:** Favoring more a quick growth of possibilities for education and training, especially in the private education, Albanians have attached second-hand importance to claims for quality, or quality-related requirements are neglected because of an insufficient monitoring. Existing educational institutions should be monitored in order to observe the quality standards. In case they meet these standards, they can be accredited, but being always subject to a regular monitoring and standard maintenance process.
- ☐ **Symmetric development of** academic and non-academic programmes. By focusing more on the rapid growth of seats in the higher study programmes, the impression that graduation from higher schools is almost an inevitable condition for professional career has prevailed, leading the young generation and their parents to take wrong decisions, which often times cause depreciation and frustration even in the economy. It is high time to identify elements for integrating work-related aspects with the basic and high education, especially through direct experiences in all levels.
- ☐ **Strengthening of public offer** of vocational, not academic possibilities. Because of the clear focus on the higher education, there has been no sufficient non-academic vocational support to transform them into real opportunities for the young people. This has to be fixed as soon as possible. Awareness raising and explanatory measures can be planned to this end.
- ☐ **Entrepreneurial leaning:** taking into account the ever changing professions' world and the increase of information, focusing on the mere attaining of facts is no longer sufficient. The vocational programmes need to focus on the identification and building of processes and on facing the requirements of the future. This is the appropriate reply to the specific conditions of Albania, where entrepreneurial learning and culture, because of the considerable micro and small businesses, should be a corner stone in the school education and in the vocational training afterwards.

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Foreword

Hellmut Hoffmann

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of
Germany in Albania



At its very title, the Conference on “Economic growth – Vocational Education – Wealth for Albania” highlights three key words for the development of Albania. Thanks to the many organizers and partners from the domain of vocational education, invited to take part to this Conference are the most important representatives of the economy, politics and education of the country, because only an intensive cooperation of all these stakeholders can create conditions for a qualitative and prosperous education, in service of a sustainable growth in the country.

The Albanian economy is growing, but not in the expected pace. Albania is home to a great potential, but not only thanks to its natural resources.

Albania is an ambitious country, with a young population, striving its way towards the European Union, a way it can come to end to successfully, but only through mobilizing and coordinating all its forces. Germany supports the economic development of Albania through a 25-year partnership and will keep doing so even in the future. At the end of the day, the aim for all of us is a united Europe, where Albania gains the place it deserves.

The German economy can look back and identify decades of success. A key factor to success has always been training of people on all the fields of economy. Qualitative products and effective services can be provided only if the employees perform their job with a high quality. It is with this purpose in mind that in Germany we have established a proper vocational education system that is maintained and improved by all the stakeholders in the economy, politics and education. The essence of this education is the dual principle. In other words, in all its levels, education is interwoven with practice, so as the young generation gets all the preparation needed to offer qualitative work from the beginning of their career and to prepare for new approaches together with the policy-makers tomorrow. This form of vocational education is successfully applied since a long time ago now in Austria and Switzerland too, therefore it is a special pleasure to transmit this multi-year experience to Albania as well.

In our annual consultations on economic cooperation between Albania and Germany, we talk a lot about the necessary training for the administration, the service sector, craftsmanship and production. Albania has still a lot to do in these sectors. This is a finding of the investors and of the Albanian politics as well. Therefore, I appraise the dedication of the new government to energetically be committed in handling this issue. This dedication was clearly highlighted in the address of Mr. Erion Veliu, Minister of Social Welfare and Youth and Mr. Arben Ahmetaj, Minister of Economic Development, both present at the Conference.

It is a question of important issues, such as observance of laws and administrative regulations, a competent and effective public administration and a clear political line of economic and political development for Albania and this is why all the forces have to be reawakened and united.

The outcomes of this Conference shall be the first important step towards economic development. By way of concluding, I would like to encourage all the partners to take further steps for the future.

Notes by organizers



The huge interest for a sustainable social development of the Albanian economy brings the participants together with the efforts of the German Trade and Industry Chamber (DIHA) and of the German Friedrich Ebert (FES) Foundation. Such interest has driven both these organizations to organize a joint Conference, which, on the one hand undertook to cover the huge lack of skilled staff in the labor market, and, on the other hand, to highlight the high figures of unemployment amongst youth. Both these topics were treated in the Conference in the context of a wide professional character reform in education.

Over 250 participants from politics, business community and education institutions got together to discuss about tasks, aims and possibilities for improving vocational education. In the outset of the Conference, the newly-elected Government representatives expressed its openness and its dedication on working on this field, while senior ranking officials attended the Conference. Both Ministers, Mr. Erion Veliaj (Minister of Social Welfare and Youth) and Mr. Arben Ahmetaj (Minister of Economy) introduced their first ideas for a substantial reform.

The Conference was conceived in the form of a workshop, so that experts from various fields had the possibility to exchange experiences and to discuss more thoroughly on matters of interest. These discussions highlighted once again that a big reform can be enabled only through participation from all the parties. Especially the representatives present from the private business stressed their interest to be part of the vocational education structuring, because their experience is an indispensable element of the reform.

Cooperation might take life in the field of drafting of the reforms, but also in the modern infrastructure in the vocational schools or in the multi-functional centers. Dual professional qualification, which does specifically intertwine theory with practice calls for cooperation of business practitioners, teachers and education policy-makers.

Vocational training projects from Germany, Austria and Switzerland introduced their projects in the proceedings of the Conference and in the “market of possibilities”, where teachers and students presented ideas on how to put projects in life.

All the young people present at the Conference showed sincere interest, because, at the end of the day the discussion was about their future. The youngsters ask for a promising future, beyond the just-initiated careers, which, often times are not always successful. They know quite well what they lack, because employers stress endlessness in the job interviews that their diplomas are not suitable for the companies’ vocational skills needs. In addition, most

of them do not want or cannot start their studies without having any perspective in the market. Young people do instead ask for a decent work in safe relationships.

Economic development in all the successful countries shows it clearly that development is based on the potential of expert staff from all the fields of life. This is where the focus should go to, based on the recommendations of this Conference.

Anette Kasten

DIHA

Frank Hantke

FES

Program

Welcome

09.00 h	Welcome Addresses <i>Anette Kasten</i> , Managing Director, DIHA <i>Frank Hantke</i> , Director, FES Tirana Office Moderation: <i>Jonida Smaja</i> , FES-Tirana Office	09.40 h	Addressing priorities <i>Arben Ahmetaj</i> , Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship
09.10 h	Welcoming Speech <i>Hellmut Hoffmann</i> , Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany	10.00 h	"I had a dream – My vision for a better Albania" <i>Diana Çuli</i> , Writer
09.25 h	Addressing priorities <i>Erion Veliaj</i> , Minister of Social Welfare and Youth		

Economic Challenges - What we have, Where we want to go, Whom we need

10.40 h	Panel 1: Services / Trade Presentation: <i>Zak Topuzi</i> , Hotel Mondial, <i>Arian Gjorga</i> , Megatec Comment: <i>Flutura Vaqarri</i> , School "Hoteri – Tourism" Host: <i>Sonila Limaj</i> , KulturKontakt	Panel 3: Production / Manufacturing Presentation: <i>Ermal Rula</i> , Europa Metal Construction Comment: <i>Bashkim Shkembj</i> , <i>Beqir Cela</i> School, Durres and <i>Prof. Enkeleda Sotja</i> , Polytechnic University, Tirana Host: <i>Winfried Heusinger</i> , GIZ
11.40 h	Panel 2: Agro-Business/Food Processing Presentation: <i>Aida Nani</i> , Agro processing / <i>Piro Rapushaj</i> , Albanian Agriculture Competitiveness Association. Comment: <i>Ilir Mehmeti</i> , Albanian Olive Oil Association Host: <i>Roland Çela</i> , GIZ	Panel 4: Infrastructure / Construction / Logistics Presentations: <i>Carsten Conrad</i> , Tirana Business Park, <i>Sonila Rada</i> (Tirana International Airport) Comment: <i>Jens Ströber</i> , Ems APO Host: <i>Anette Kasten</i> , Managing Director, DIHA

Offensive Of Education And Training - What is offered, how it works

14.00 h	Main Results of the Panel Discussions <i>Jonida Smaja</i> , FES	15.00 h	Presentation "PASO in the school – first bridge to business / community" <i>Elsa Denaj</i> , Kulturkontakt
14.15 h	„Becoming competitive with skills, aptitudes and productivity“ <i>Gentiana Sula</i> , Vice-Minister of Social Welfare and Youth	15.20 h	Presentation "Thinkers" and "Doers" engaged by the Dual System <i>Arnold Geiger</i> , Managing Director, Nehemiah Gateway
14.40 h	Presentation "The Multifunctional Center Kamza – Partner of industry for vocational training, technology transfer and services" <i>Rainer Reidenbach</i> , GIZ	15.40 h	Panel talk "Project Based Learning" <i>Eriola Shingjergji</i> , <i>Maksim Konini</i> , <i>Stephan Leiser</i> , Swisscontact

How To Continue? - Our future Priorities and Objectives

16.20 h	"The Dual System and what we can learn from it" <i>Sabine Hartig</i> , Programme Director, Vocational Education and Training Programme, GIZ	16.45h	First Results of the Conference – Cooperation and Strategy <i>Frank Hantke</i> , Director, FES Tirana Office
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Addressing Priorities: Vocational Training

Erion Veliaj

Minister for Social Welfare and Youth



I would like to start my address by thanking you for taking your time to attend this Conference, because when someone gives his or her time to something, it means that he or she has dedicated a part of his or her life to a cause. Some of you have dedicated their time today to a cause, which, in our opinion, is very important.

In fact, some of you have dedicated your professional life to this cause. This is the reason why I would greatly like to thank the representatives of vocational schools, teachers and school masters, who, thanks to their motivation and passion have kept this cause alive in very difficult conditions, when the attention to vocational schools has been almost nonexistent. On behalf of the Albanian Government, I would like to tell you that we do greatly appreciate your contribution and motivation!

Thank you very much indeed for your contribution, at a time when the Albanian Government has not always considered vocational education a priority, probably rightfully so as it might have had other more priority urges. I am happy to tell you today that vocational education is a priority of the current Government and on behalf of the Prime Minister I would like to wish the best of success to this Conference and forum, hoping for a day full of ideas for concrete solutions and of findings on how we can better and more efficiently run the project for the modernization of vocational schools.

Today we are on the eve of a great and unprecedented event for Albania – to receiving the candidate status country! This is of course a good reason to celebrate the achievements of the administration of different governments and to all the ones who have contributed to this process, but this might as well be a good moment to reflect and to ask some questions to ourselves.

It is very good we are closer to Europe, but what are we experts at? One of the questions people ask when I introduce myself as an Albanian is: What do you produce? What is the trademark you are most famous for? I am very happy that the German October is a way of not reflecting only on Germany, but on the logo of the German people and on the logo of the German government, and also on a variety of logos and brands making Germany what it is today in the field of pharmaceuticals, technology, sportswear, gastronomy, etc.. I believe today is a moment to reflect upon what makes Germany successful; what renders the German history successful and how can we copy and manage to have a miniature of what has rendered Germany a successful country here?

I believe the solution is here. This was also mentioned by the previous speakers as well: the solution is vocational education! – teaching people to do something, not only teaching them how to read and think of things. This is the reason why we are dedicated to allocate more funds to vocational education from the next year's budget. It is true we cannot increase the portion of "the pie" of finances of the Albanian state, but we can, of course, decide on spending it differently, thinking especially about vocational education. In addition to the greeting and the best wish for success, I would like to also raise some provocative questions that can promote ideas and trigger discussions.

We are experiencing a crisis in remittances. The labor force bringing remittance to Albania during the transitional years, mainly from Greece, Italy and Germany, is shrinking. This is understandable as many of the countries Albanians live into are living a crisis themselves, while the remittances coming to Albania are growingly less. In countries not suffering a crisis, like Germany or other countries, the Albanians migrating 23 years ago are now in their 40s, have their own children to raise, and, consequently remit less money to Albania. It is for these reasons that we have a deficit in our country and in our household budgets, a deficit that has to be compensated by "Made in Albania" produce, or by teaching the new labor force how to produce, invent, and be entrepreneurs.

Another idea is on how to resolve the dilemma of the Albanian National Employment Service. We cannot afford 800 people that work for the National Employment Service who in a year find jobs for 700 people. In the free market economy this would be a bankrupt company. We need to identify ways to modernize our national labor service, so that the skilled and gifted people, able for the labor market, get connected to companies that need this type of labor force. This is the reason why we have entered into a partnership with the German employment agency, so as to be innovative on how to relate the demand and the offer in the labor market.

The third provocative question I would like to address to this forum is related to how can we modernize and depoliticize our schools? How can we give a greater role to parents and to the school board for having them decide on the school leadership, on bonuses for motivated teachers, on how to establish practices for the dual system. If you are members of the business community, we would not ask for this as a favor, but shall instead suggest to you to be part of admission boards for internships in your businesses. Global experience today, not only in Germany, but in all the Germanic countries like Austria and Switzerland, which are countries of economic success stories, shows that the open-minded businesses, having a vision to accept such schemes, to introduce new human resources as practitioners or interns, are business success stories.

I understand that Albania is a difficult country for becoming or being a successful entrepreneur, but the newly-established government shall ease your headache and shall facilitate doing business in Albania. I would like to guarantee you that if there is a success story in business, that is closely related with openness to innovative ideas. For your good, and for the good of this cause I would kindly ask you to consider opening your businesses to ideas for interns and practitioners from the vocational schools.

Once again, allow me to wish the best of luck to you and to thank you for your time, for that part of your life you have dedicated to this forum and to this cause.

Addressing Priorities: Economic Development

Arben Ahmetaj

Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship



I would first like to start by thanking you for the possibility given to exchange ideas, opinions and initiatives related to the main focus of this Conference. The terms used in the title of this Conference are well-chosen – economic development, vocational education, welfare. Taken together, the three groups of words in the title of the Conference have one joint theme – namely the one of economic development, but economic development risks of remaining in only a rhetoric in Albania because we have not yet been able to have an integrated effort to pass from the natural economic development to integrated economic development, to a wise economic development, to a long-term economic development.

A country like Albania, having a small market, home to only three million consumers, who unfortunately are middle or high class consumers, with a considerable number of people in need, is surely not an attractive country to foreign investments. Here I would like to highlight a very important element, which I am sure all of you feel, share with one-another and believe;

Albania has realistically consumed the possibility of development through debt. You are already aware of the debt level. You feel the pressure of debt and understand how alarming its levels. Albania has not lost the “flow” of money coming from migrants, because most of the migrants, our brothers, sisters, friends have not been settled in other countries and remittances are constantly decreasing. Remittances are forty percent lower than in the initial years. Also, in our economy the labor force is very weak and natural resources, according to international standards, are low.

Under such conditions, the question that naturally rises is: How can Albania be developed?

I would like to share with you a moment from one of the best books (in my opinion) “Why Nations Fail?” The conclusion of this book is rather simple. After bringing examples of how nations, states endless in wealth fail and on how other nations and state not having anything flourish, it shows that the only reason for development is the human capacity. And, in fact, if we consider economic development, we would find that vocational education is in the very heart of it. Personally, I do very much believe in vocational education.

I first intended to prepare a traditional speech for a minister in charge of economic development. In this context it would be normal to speak about what has happened in Albania what is happening today and what are the government aims, but I decided to go beyond this approach and share with you one of my recent experiences with the Harvard University. Together with Erjon, in the debate we had there to see what were the most interesting sectors for foreign investments, we were introduced with an interesting overview of the circle of development/production, with what happens today with different sectors of economy starting with the garments, machineries, the industry and going as high up as to high technology. Translated in our reality, their experience tells us that the missing link between all the sectors was human capacity. Today, it is high time to

leave behind all that natural and casual development for the human capacity, to think in-depth and to be structured on what we need to do with it. Why am I saying this?

Over 50 percent of the young people are jobless. What is the reason for that? Somebody says economic development, somebody says the undeveloped sectors, somebody says bankrupt sectors, while some others blame the “rule of law”. Of course, all these elements together are responsible for the current level of unemployment, but there is as well another important missing link – we cannot provide foreign investors with people having proper professional capacities.

This is a fact we have to accept. Not everybody shall become a lawyer, or a scientist. Vocational education shall be Archimedes’ screw to Albania’s economy. This is the way to becoming attractive for foreign investments and to having Albania become part of the regional market.

That is having us grow from three million to 20 million. Albania has to realistically transfer its boundaries into non-existent in the capital, movement of goods and in the labor market aspects, as it is only than that it can utilize its geographical position. But, how can we transform what we are talking about into reality? The answer to this question is human capacity. And we need to start from accepting this problem.

I would like to highlight that the economic policy of Ramaled Government is clear in this regard. As Minister Veliaj highlighted, the focus of education is not only to meet the Bologna-set standards. The main question we should ask is: what product do our schools provide. And, if the answer is that the school educates people to see the state as the rescuer of economy, not the private sector as the rescuer of economy and of the state, I think we have failed.

Can we be proud today for having 80 or 40 universities and for having all the Albanians write and speak in Albanian? Can we be proud of having an active working force that is confident of not being able to find a job after finishing school and ends up into knocking at the doors of the state, of the ministries of both the previous government and of the current government? Our government policies on vocational education are deep, real and are the first detachment from the rhetoric for an economic development based on human capacities.

I would like to conclude by getting back to my starting point. A state, a nation cannot become wealthy if it is rich in oil, chromium or has seas. It can only become rich if its people are educated and provide a multitude of solutions. Human capacity rescues and develops its country. I fully believe that vocational education can be a good example for Albania’s vocational education.

“Becoming competitive with skills, aptitudes and productivity”

Gentjana Sula

Vice - Minister for Social Welfare and Youth



The Albanian society is living through great challenges. Our transition, different from the similar processes in other countries, has been and continues to be more extended over time, more difficult, with considerable complications and with high costs. Talking about the costs, I would like to highlight that many financial, human and institutional resources have not produced sufficient contributions for the people and have not ensured a higher quality of their lives.

However, I would like to highlight the insufficient development of one of the greatest resources of Albania: the human capital. In this context, I would like to halt the attention to the unsuitable level of education, and its direct impact on low employability in Albania as well as on the low labor productivity.

This is the reason why participation in this forum is a pleasure, and at the same time a great obligation and responsibility. Our cooperation needs to push us towards serious professional, institutional, political and national reflections and analyses. Employability and skills are not simply an economic or social issue. I would consider them as being crucial to the national development, and probably amongst the greatest major challenges of the country and of the Government.

The Albanian society is faced with serious challenges. Unemployment of young people is in critical levels. Thirty percent of registered jobseekers are young people. This figure is even greater in reality, as the culture of registration with the employment offices in Albania is low. Women and girls are mostly employed in family businesses or household contexts. As a consequence, their low productivity and the less than modest incomes lead to discouragement, while often times their work is not paid at all. Even the ones employed full-time have unfair salaries for the jobs they do. Salary differences are very problematic in the Albanian labor market. All these groups of contributors are not recipients of vocational training and education. Relevant incapacity, poverty and dependency are long-term in nature and are at risk of cyclic reproduction.

The vision of the new Government, particularly of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, is to build a new development model, where economic growth is put in service of the citizen. Therefore, the Government promise is having a Programme in place for the creation of 300 thousand new jobs.

But, where are these jobs going to be generated from?

First, these jobs are to be found in the production economy. Not only for the pride of having “Made in Albania” products, but also because of the fact that a higher production and more products for the country are translated in more jobs, thus yielding better living standards for the citizens. In this way, the aim is to create about 40 thousand new jobs. About 15 thousand other jobs are related to the extraction, transportation or agro-processing industry. Agriculture, animal farming and the agro-processing industry follow, having a potential of about 155 thousand new jobs. As already known, there is some inequality in the provision of vocational education and training services between rural and urban areas. The rural area population is considered as being fully self-employed. Vocational education in rural areas is almost inexistent. Employment services are not at all provided in the

rural areas, while such areas, although underutilized, are one of the greatest economic generators of the country’s economy. In addition to the urgent needs, the so-called Albanian farmers are in immediate need of vocational education and training and of new technological knowledge in the field of cultivation of products, processing and trade of such products.

The newly-established Government has decided to closely relate the vocational training and education with employment services. The ultimate purpose is to give possibilities to the jobseekers to get vocational training and education and find jobs. Vocational training and education has to be considered as the most efficient way to reduce unemployment and to raise the effectiveness of the labor force. World markets do not currently compete with low-cost jobs, but with high professional skills. They show interest in better quality and quantity of products, in reduced overall costs and in the transformation of the economy and the labor force into more competitive in the local, national and international markets. We are very far from this reality, and this is the reality the Government Programme aims at achieving.

Youth employment remains a national priority. The World Bank publishes a World Index Report every year. The 2013 Report was focused on employment. The study shows that employability of young people could be improved only if employment services were to be accompanied by greater access in vocational training and education. This effect was even more positive mainly in employment of girls and women. One of the other findings of the study was the indispensable connection of the vocational services with the employment services. The employment services start with counseling, market orientation, support for a certain time for internships, but even support with small grants, like capital, for the ones that are entrepreneurs. For these reasons, we aim at developing the dual system as one of the most successful forms of vocational education and training, as well as at integrating employment and training services. In this direction, one of the programmes the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is preparing “apprenticeship” youth programmes. Such programmes include an integrated approach of academic training with internships or practical training.

In order to face these challenges, we have launched a wide consultation process and we have established joint working groups with participants of the Ministry of Education, Finance, Economy, National Employment Service, Vocational Training Agency and foreign donors. Everybody is working to establish a proper legal, administrative, educational funding, and vocational training reform and to re-conceptualize the public provider of skills’ development.

I would like to also express my highest appreciation for the contribution provided by the participants in this forum for the improvement of vocational education and training in our country. A special thank-you goes to all the donors, especially to the German people for the continuous support for creating more job opportunities and improving the quality of life of the Albanians, while building a sounder vocational training and education system in Albania, based on their model, which is one of the most successful models in the whole world.

“I had a dream – My vision for a better Albania”

Diana Çuli

Writer



Today, 22 years from collapse of communism, we have managed to attain gender equality, having introduced a modern European legislation. We have met some challenges that could not have been thought of some years ago. So, for instance, half of the Albanian government is led by women; women are in senior decision-taking positions of a special importance and this is a reality that has never happened before in the Albanian state. This is a powerful sign of social emancipation, but shows of a visionary attitude as well. The presence of a high number of women shall affect a less conflicting and less violent parliamentary and executive behavior. Opinions, thoughts, stances of women, which are different from those of men, shall establish a more contributive atmosphere for the society in the law-making process.

We are aware of the fact that democracy is extended and functions when citizens play a participatory role. In a political order where the major interest is related to only with the direct stakeholders, to only the ones linked with the party and with its leadership cannot be considered an effective political order. But, on the other hand, there is always a personal interest, which is connected to the general interest. What is my personal interest? My personal interest is to live in a country where we are all equal before law, that this law is enforced, where the young generation of today and their generations of tomorrow can build a European future. Which means being free in your mind, in your activities and also being a responsible citizen, enforcing the rules and laws you have voted yourself. This is my personal interest which shall never be fulfilled if we are not attentive to what happens with the Albanian politics, if we do not vote for your believes and if we do not share civility even in our micro-world.

Democratic politics is not built on axioms, but on debates. It is like moving sand. In this new stage of of building our democracy, it is clear to us that this system is much complicated and sophisticated than the one we were used to in all our totalitarian history, where everything was black and white. Democracy shows us that there is nothing perfect from beginning to end, especially in the political relationships, but, instead, there are always difficult roads to be taken. There is a need for resoluteness and tolerance, strict stances and compromise, rejection and negotiation. In order to achieve the final stance – that is a renaissance programme, there is a need for involvement of many factors, although we fully disagree with some of them. The history of the European Union where we would like to be a party into, is a history of compromise and negotiation, not a history of conflicts and barricades.

The question as to why Albanians are very positive for being part of Europe is asked frequently. The Albanians want to be part of the united Europe, of this project which when first appeared seemed unbelievable and utopian, but many decades later is a strong reality of peace, development and stability. As Schuman, one of the founding fathers of European Union, used to say in 1950, “nothing can be reached in a day, and everything that

lasts cannot be done quickly.” And, as thought back then, this huge revolution, this great vision, both sophisticated and civic, could not be reached from an only will, but only step-by-step, following the evolution of the spirit, of solidarity, the idea that the union of Europe would be achieved by combining the economic success with the intellectual evolution.

I am of the opinion that Albania can safely follow the European project. The Albanian society has left aside everything hampering it to take this road of freedom and European solidarity. The Albanian society has just entered into a new mental and revitalization area, which will enable sustainable development. It will enable re-dimensioning of natural, cultural and economic wealth of all kinds, generation of positive energy and abandonment of our feeling of fatality that nothing can be changed.

I believe that dreams are nothing else, but better realities than one expects. So, dreams might as well not be called dreams.

My dream, my wish, my vision is to feel wholeheartedly that Albania is walking towards sustainable and irreversible development. And, in fact this feeling does no longer feel as a dream or vision. It now seems attainable!

Panel: Services / Trade

Presentation



The first presentation by Mr. Arian Gjorga, Executive Director of “Megatek” outlined the profile of this Company and spoke of the services it provides in the market. “Megatek” hires mainly young people, who have finished high vocational education. About 37,5% of all the staff come from high technical schools. In addition, the Company enforces special projects in support of high education in Albania, as is the training of teachers, organization of informative activities for students, in order to familiarize them with the latest technology developments. “Megatek” does also organize the skills competition, attended by students of vocational schools from all over the country.

“Megatek” supports and organizes such activities not only because it considers itself as a socially responsible economic actor, but even due to the fact that the students of vocational education shall be its staff in the future. For this company, the qualified staff is key to success in the market.

However, Mr. Gjorga highlights that the education system does not offer much in terms of practical formation. Latest technology developments are only partially covered by the curricula. He proposed that the education system has to stay in constant touch with the labor market, so as the expectation of young people, who shall afterwards be employed, be the closest possible to the labor world reality. While the business companies should de facto become part of the boards of vocational schools.

Comment

With the understanding of the participants in the room, and given that the representatives of business companies would present two complementary perspectives, a second presentation was held instead of the comment on the situation and challenges tourism industry faces, being one of the major factors of country’s economic growth.

The contribution of this sector in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is currently calculated at 22%. Covering this portion of the GDP, Albanian is ranked the third country in Europe regarding the specific weight of the tourism sector.

In addition, this is a sector which development depends heavily on the public administration, and has a weak infrastructure, according to Mr. Zak Topuzi, owner of a known hotel in Tirana and also member of the Albanian Tourism Association (ATA), established in 2008.

In the meantime, touristic companies lack a proper management culture. In most of the cases the management task is exercised by the owner himself. These companies limit their activity on the national and regional market and are not able to reply to the international market and its requirements.

Another negative aspect is the lack of coordination of the offer for education, especially in tertiary education.

The micro and small businesses find it impossible to invest in staff training, while the system does not guarantee quality in education and vocational training of staff.

But, even the clients themselves do not expect service quality, which, on its end, does not help in establishing incentives for improving the quality. But, if these businesses want to become attractive in the international market, huge efforts have to be made, especially in this regard. This is why tourism considers service standardization and establishment of a certification system a must.

Discussion

The comment of Flutura Vaqarri, from the Hotel Management and Tourism School of Tirana and other comments from the participants reconfirmed the introduced challenges and focused on the indispensability of the quality of qualifications and diplomas. Improvement of the vocational education and training can be achieved through targeted initiatives for teacher training and qualification on vocational education, through more attractive schemes of salaries for them and through a more active cooperation between state and private stakeholders. Both, the business representatives and school masters were of the opinion that economic development and vocational education in general and the service sector in particular, have a causal relationship.

All the participants in the panel highlighted that companies in the trade and service sector are an important growing sector. Therefore, the companies expressed their heart-felt thanks for the invitation to take part in the Conference and show the current situation of these two important sectors of the economy.

Key findings

- ☐ Tourism, covering 22% of the GDP, is one of the most important sectors in Albania's economy.
- ☐ The business representatives should be committed in the management of providers of vocational training.
- ☐ Responsible state institutions should invest for training of the vocational education teachers.
- ☐ Teachers in the vocational education system should receive attractive salaries. In addition, they have to be supported by continuous education.
- ☐ There should be a rationalized distribution of vocational training and education providers all over the country.
- ☐ The business companies should provide better possibilities for internships.
- ☐ The long-term development of vocational training cannot depend on foreign donors only, but should be based on a properly planned strategy by the Government.
- ☐ Vocational education should provide training and diploma that are internationally recognized.
- ☐ The curricula has to be drafted in close cooperation between experts from the business and education sector.

Panel: Agro-business/ Food processing

Presentation



During the presentation, *Aida Nani*, expert of food technology and *PiroRapushaj*, from the Albanian Agriculture Competitiveness Association, drew the attention to the fact that agriculture makes up for 17% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Albania. This fact implies the key importance of this sector in the country's economy. However, this sector probably more than the other sectors, is characterized by a strong fragmentation. The overwhelming part of businesses in agriculture are family businesses.

Knowledge on the government strategies or EU agrarian policies strategies is clearly insufficient. The panel discussed about the issue of reducing this gap of lack of information, while challenges still remain numerous. The offer of vocational training and education, as the lacking knowledge on the agrarian policies, is very limited. Interest on agricultural education is very low as well. The EU works for the directives of agro-business development, and this is why Albania's efforts for development of agrarian economy should be based on these directives. Thus, Albania can be transformed into an important regional exporter of some products and product lines.

Comment

In his comment on the presentation, Mr. Ilir Mehmeti highlighted the need, or more specifically, the importance of entrepreneurs of agricultural businesses to keep several functions simultaneously. Thus, in micro and small businesses they have to be managers, sales experts and accountants. In addition, the entrepreneurs in the food processing sector complained of lower qualifications, skills and competencies in the last years. Plus, the field lacks sustainability, as the new generation avoids the agricultural sector – that is it migrates towards the urban areas and abandons villages. Thus, there is no sufficient offer or demand for specialized training in these two sectors. Also, there is a need for thinking for suitable forms, on how to organize an effective cooperation of stakeholders. It is a question of cooperation of the producers, and of an improved infrastructure between production and processing.

Discussion

In a vivid discussion, the participants got involved on the question “how” to develop training in the field of agriculture and food processing. Establishment of a sufficient offer is difficult, especially because given that this sector is highly fragmented and businesses are much scattered. Under such situation, it is important to think on how to establish new training opportunities. Also, appropriate measures need to be taken for increasing the interest of young people in this sector.

Therefore, on this matter, an issue that might be tackled is on whether there will be quality certificates and standards for special enterprises in the future. This might as well serve for the products. On this issue, the discussion was on whether a state registration of all family businesses shall be performed. All measures for improving and rendering the sector effective ask for different processes, starting from production and going as high up as processing. There is also a need for improving the appropriate infrastructure, such as for instance, water supply, electricity supply, or improvement of the transport network. The agro-business sector has generally been left aside with its own development problems, because, as it seems, there has been no strong lobbying thus far. This sector is kept by small, isolated family businesses, which, in the best of cases produce sufficiently only for their needs, while there are much bigger possibilities to benefit from this sector.

Key findings

- ☐ Knowledge on modern agricultural production is widely lacking. It is for this reason that specific and clear models have to be developed for improving the profit rate and quality of products and of the processing stages.
- ☐ Targeted short-term trainings have to be provided, in forms and manners that provide more possibilities for the agro-business sector operators, taking into account their timetables and workload.
- ☐ The hitherto quality of production undergoes an insufficient control. For this reason, it is important to define as a purpose certification and qualification of operators, and of the quality of processing.
- ☐ The quality of agricultural products shall play an even greater importance in the future. An independent commission has to be established for developing the requirements of certification and their implementation, to be composed of experts from different fields. This approach can help in establishing quality standards all over the country.
- ☐ So far, there is only an insufficient list of production businesses and small entrepreneurs. This is the reason why the state has to register all agricultural businesses. This is true for small household businesses as well – that is for those businesses that produce only for household consumption.
- ☐ The current legal framework needs further details for resolving and structuring the intertwining problems and for orienting them towards the modernization requirements.
- ☐ Most of the individual businesses do not see the possibility for paying for training and education of their staff. A special fund has to be established for paying for vocational training. This is also true for training and internships.
- ☐ The education institutions do not support development of the agricultural sector with offers of a modern education. Interested students can be provided with scholarships to bring new experiences and knowledge in the country. Such investments are long-term and valuable, because this is the way for this sector to increase competitiveness.
- ☐ So far, the agro-business sector runs across a lacking interest by the young people. Reasons for this are the old production technologies and low interests deriving from it. So, for these reasons, in addition to the above-mentioned improvements, there is a need to establish a public programme which advertises the sector and creates possibilities for development based on proper qualifications.

Panel: Production / Manufacturing

Presentation



In the panel, Mr. *Ermal Luka* spoke about the need of the sector for skilled staff, stemming from his experience with the Europa MetalConstruction Company. This innovative company for producing iron used in the construction industry, having a market for its products in many EU countries, bases its success in the motivation and qualification of its staff. The average age of the staff of this company is over 50 years and, as in other companies in this sector, it is difficult to recruit new people who are not educated during the period of communism. In addition to the certified welders, there is an urgent need for metal workers, CNC experts and design engineers.

It is especially for the European market, having its standards in place, that there is a need for properly educated staff, especially in fields that ask for special safety measures, such as for welders where respecting the standards and international certification is a must. Application of international standards is guaranteed through non-notified controls in companies by the clients. Such courses in Albania are offered by Wi-Fi Albania (the Austrian Institute for Economic Promotion). Education in vocational schools is described as insufficient by the companies, while the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Labor do not provide the appropriate programmes either.

Further development of many businesses in Albania shall very much depend on whether they will recruit properly educated and motivated staff, who, as it seems, can be found in the vocational schools. Training in some technologies, such as for instance the CNC technique, without which companies cannot be competitive in the European market. are not yet provided in the country. Concrete cooperation between vocational schools and companies is not yet established, although the will to do so came out crystal clear at the Conference. Nonetheless, it seems like there are no functional mechanisms.

Comments

Mr. *Bashkim Shkëmbi* from the vocational school Beqir Çelaj n Durrës, explained in his comment that the appropriate infrastructure for a suitable vocational education depending on the profile, is very expensive and that it is very difficult to keep a vocational school in the current level of technological developments. According to him, it is important for the companies to search for the connection with the schools, so that the later become familiar with the necessary competencies required for the future. This might as well be reflected further in the educational offer. Given that the vocational schools cannot keep up with the pace of technological developments, cooperation with the companies is translated in a prerequisite to provide qualitative education educating good professionals for the labor market. Mr. Shkëmbi said that he was convinced that a number of issues in the vocational education can be resolved only if cooperation between companies and schools is improved.

In a second comment Ms. *Enkelelda Sotja*, from the Polytechnic University of Tirana, highlighted that the young generation usually have theoretical knowledge, but no practical training, or the other way around. Therefore, it might happen that many persons have the practical skills, mainly in Greece and Italy, but have no theoretical background to work professionally. Several efforts have over the last years been carried out in universities to introduce students with practical experiences in the form of internships. But, vocational education lacks certified and reliable standards, making it difficult for the companies and the young generation to properly understand the value of vocational education.

Discussion

In the verge of discussions with the auditorium, the issue of standards covered an important place. It was brought to the attention of the participants that information contained in school diplomas do not comply with the real level of information and knowledge required by the industry, rendering it difficult for the companies that

would like to hire somebody to decide in favor of an applicant graduated from a vocational school.

It was also mentioned that in a dual system, as applied in Germany, costs can be minimized in case companies cover the main tasks related to internships, they can guarantee transmission of latest technology. It was through an example that the participants provided that showed that there is a huge difference between a practicing person, having a contract with a company and feeling himself part of the company, and an intern in a public institution. A better consideration of direct impacts in the motivation and development of personalities of young people is required.

The audience spoke of the experience of companies addressing the institutions in change of vocational training and complaining about the lack of specialists in Albania. However, there is still a high flow of young people to Universities, although the chances for employment after graduation are not good. In the vocational schools, school programmes contain many courses, necessary for taking the final maturity exam, narrowing down the space for development of work-related attitudes and competencies. The objective of employability of young people finishing vocational education cannot be realized even because of the fact that the curricula is not business-oriented. Therefore, an appeal was addressed to the Albanian Government and the business community to find a solution to help not only progression of the country's economy, but also creation of more jobs in the market. A way for reaching this objective as mentioned several times in the panel, is the establishment of accredited standards in hopes that binding standards shall lead to improving the vocational education and training quality and to reaching the European standards. In some important sectors asking for high safety measures, there are processes that in the future need to be carried out only by some persons, who have the required knowledge and skills to perform these professions, complaint to the practice of EU countries.

Key findings

- ☐ Properly qualified workers in Albania are usually at the age of above 50. These people are educated during the communist regime. The younger people have not received in-depth training.
- ☐ Skilled people are indispensable for maintaining the level of competition of Albanian products in the country and for creating possibilities to export them abroad.
- ☐ The capacity to provide products having internationally recognized certificates (complaint to the international norms) is a must for a successful business strategy.
- ☐ "On the job" training by companies cannot replace vocational and qualitative education in the long run, but can simply alleviate the current human capacity deficits in companies.
- ☐ Vocational education and training should meet national standards and be certified by independent institutions, so as all the companies might recruit qualified people, and have safeguards that the required qualifications are met by the applicants.
- ☐ A qualitative vocational education can be organized only through a close cooperation between vocational schools and businesses.
- ☐ Vocational education should be attractive for the young people. It should be made clear that a good qualification can ensure a safe future for them.
- ☐ Prejudice against non-academic education and vocational career should be toppled through wide-awareness raising campaigns and an active advisory work.
- ☐ Incentives need to be provided by companies for properly qualified staff, such as for instance, salaries and remunerations proportionate to the qualification, but even career possibilities within the company.

Panel: Infrastructure/Construction/Logistics

Presentation



One of the most important and biggest investments in Albania has been the construction of the international airport of Tirana, an investment amounting to Euro 80 million. The construction and administration of the airport was entrusted to TIA consortium (Tirana International Airport sh.p.k.), as it was the bid winning company in 2005. Part of TIA consortium was the German HOCHTIEF Airport GmbH (47%), the German Company for Investments and Development sh.a. (DEG) (31.7%) and the Albanian-American Development Fund (21.3%). Later, the German HOCHTIEF Airport GmbH sold its shares to the Canadian PSP Pension Investments Fund. *Sonila Rada*, Director of Human Resources of the Company, described the situation TIA was faced with at the beginning of its activities in Albania. These activities are related with the specificities of the aviation sector in Albania, mainly to respect since the very beginning the national and the international regulatory framework, and to feel the gap caused by the lack of qualified staff in the Albanian labor market, especially in this sector. Furthermore, the qualification possibilities in Albania for this sector are existent only partially.

The first challenge for TIA-s was the internal staff qualification based on the concrete needs. It was provided either within its administration, or abroad. A consequence of such measures were the high costs, interruption of the labor-related processes, lack of flexibility of training deadlines, need for further training, etc. In order to face these challenges, TIA has applied an internal ToT programme, which means that it has recruited trainers in the Albanian market and within the Company. Skills were tested on a case-by-case basis.

This approach has led to reduction of costs and flexibility of time-tables of the training. The shortcomings of this approach are related with the risk that trainers might leave the company and that some of them do not meet the international standards.

Carsten Conrad, Executive Director of Tirana Business Park (TBP) saw his Company come across similar challenges in 2013.

Works for the implementation of the project and construction of offices and real estate started in the middle of 2012. Such investment over Euro 100 million will be the biggest German investment in Albania. It is an investment of **the Lindner Group**, a very successful family business headquartered in Arnstorf (Bavaria), implementing projects all over the world in inert constructions, isolation techniques, industrial services and façade constructions and administrating many production centers in Germany and abroad.

Tirana-Business Park is realized by Lindner Projektentwicklungs GmbH and its motto is: "We'll change the way business is done".

This is an action for quality in Albania. The Park will be established in an area of 220.00 m², is conceived in the shape of a city within the city and shall be built in vicinity of Rinas international airport. The construction of 15 buildings for office space, and of two buildings for parking space for a ten-year term is planned. Maximum standards in construction, safety, especially safety against earthquakes and a "green" environment shall make the difference with the current buildings used for offices, or other facilities built in Albania.

All this work asks for high quality standards by the staff. For this aim, TBP has established an initiative with the YUNUS social network, to provide possibilities to young people wanting to attain a skill in construction, and be trained through a practical-based approach. TBP puts special importance to achieving this objective.

Carsten Conrad stresses that the common goal has to be "employment". He clarifies that "facility management" is not developed in Albania, therefore, even after the construction of Tirana Business Park there shall still be need to train people in current and new professions. In order to attract foreign investors in Albania, TBP needs a qualified marketing staff.

Comment

Jens Ströber, Executive Director of Ems APO (Albanian Port Operator) working for four years in the Port of Durrës, initially with the Stauerei ASC Company (Albanian Stevedoring Company), said he agreed with both presentations when it comes to the need for qualified staff. But, his business depends on the level of lay workers and of the experts even more than the business of TIA and TBP. In his opinion, it is exactly the lack of such qualified workers in Albania that make up for the biggest shortcoming in Albania. He highlighted as well the complete lack of information of the Albanian young people on the value of some education (pseudo) academic nature offers on career development.

Discussion

The following discussion focused on infrastructure, construction and logistics as the three main sectors attracting the greatest number of foreign investors in Albania and the fact that this position shall also be maintained in medium-term aspects as well. Businesses come from the road construction sector, public works (port, airport), bridge construction, facility management, safety technicians and transport logistics.

These sectors need specialists from all levels: starting from the low-level staff, technicians, qualified staff, up to technical safety engineers office assistants, administration experts (information technology, logistic planning). The staff spectrum needed is very broad, and even comparable with production businesses.

The business representatives present at the Conference drew the attention that in most of the cases there is no offer in the labor market replying to the above-mentioned requirements. This is the reason why, often times, businesses are obligated to recruit foreign experts, or train expert staff themselves.

Key findings

- ☐ The current vocational schools, often times very small in size, are both in quantity and quality insufficient for the requirements of a modern economy in Albania. It is high time to build a modern vocational education system all over the country.
- ☐ The students in vocational schools and centers spend most of their time with theoretical considerations, not leaving much space to attaining of practical skills.
- ☐ There is a need for a good cooperation between companies and vocational schools; thus the expensive pieces of equipment needed by vocational schools could be co-funded by the companies, in the benefit of both parties.
- ☐ Given that the Albanian Government has limited funds for this purpose, priority should be given to a close cooperation with the private sector, so as this problem comes to an end.
- ☐ The young people do not recognize the need for skills in a free economy. They often times take wrong decisions about their education and career-development. Best advisors in such cases are the parents. This is the reason why information and awareness raising campaigns have to be undertaken with youngsters and their parents.
- ☐ Typical examples of improper oriented aspirations are the overfull universities in all the cities, be them private or public. Only a small number of students graduated from these universities find job opportunities that meet their qualifications.
- ☐ Foreign companies explain that for recruiting new staff they utilize online services and newspapers. Management positions are recruited through special companies. Thus far there have been no active employment policies that can include all the jobseekers and the employers.
- ☐ The education system should undergo an in-depth reformation. Integration of theory with practice, based on on-the-job learning is indispensable.
- ☐ Establishment of an adequate vocational education system requires time in order to yield visible successes.

Presentation:

The Multifunctional Center Kamza – Partner of industry for vocational training, technology transfer and services

One of the major contributors for the economic development of Albania is the vocational education and training of the population. The Albanian vocational education and training system does not sufficiently follow the labor market needs and does not meet the requirements for a skilled working force. This is true for the initial vocational education, as well as for the life-long vocational education and learning. Initiatives have been taken in the recent years to undertake reforms, focusing on traditional problems such as: drafting of the curricula, teacher and instructor qualification and training as well as supply of vocational schools with relevant infrastructure. Foundations for a further reformation of the vocational education have as well been settled.

It is since years that the GIZ provides consultancy for the reform on the Albanian vocational education (for drafting the Law on Vocational Education and Training, drafting of the Vocational Education and Training Strategy, school development, etc.). It is in this context that the support for concept development and for building the so-called Multi-Functional Center is planned for the future. It is thought of being an important pylon in the Albanian system of vocational training. At the institutional level, the GIZ offers consultancy for the responsible institutions about development of the organization, drafting of the curricula, development of exams/verification, application of the EU standards, qualification and training of the teaching staff in vocational education, cooperation with businesses, new management concepts and fostering of the previously-attained processes.

At the implementation level, the GIZ is focused on sharing knowledge and attitudes in different pilot zones (the Multi-Functional Center of Kamza as well as in six vocational high schools in north-eastern Albania), which are necessary for the conceptualization and development of an employment-oriented vocational education and training system in the growing sectors of country's economy. Consultancy is provided for drafting the curricula, in cooperation with the private sector, for the initial vocational education and vocational training courses in information technology, mechatronics, health care professions, as well as automatization techniques and technology.

Simultaneously, the heads of educational institutions are trained on issues related to school management, quality management, human resources needs' planning, cooperation with the business and marketing/PR. The teachers in the selected areas are trained in the technical-content aspect and in the methodological/didactic aspect. Support is as well provided for drafting the teaching materials, exam instructions, informative materials, for career advising in order to organize marketing and school imaging campaigns.

Kamza Multi-Functional Centre

The main purpose of the establishment of the Multi-Functional Centre is the effort for reaching the requirements and needs of the important economic sectors in Albania, by educating skilled staff. A success factor is answering the questions "knowledge why?" and "knowledge how?" in the relevant fields.

Kamza Multifunctional Centre will put at the disposal a wide vocational education and training offer and services, such as:

- ☐ Multi-year vocational education in the levels I – III (duration of 2 to 4 years)
- ☐ Request-based short-term training
- ☐ Post-high school vocational training
- ☐ ToT programmes
- ☐ Support for the small and medium-sized industry through consultancy and technical services

Kamza MFC has intensified its activity this year. It has been transferred to a new building, has increased the number of students from 650 to 1200 and is supplying the labs and workshops with infrastructure according to the required standards.

This institution does currently offer nine directions of vocational education, of which German cooperation is mainly concentrated in the following directions:

- ☐ Mechatronics mechanical and engineering services
- ☐ Social and health care care for the children and the elderly
- ☐ Information technology network technicians, implementing technicians, design technician
- ☐ Hotel management and tourism bar and restaurant

Companies and enterprises are growingly involved in the practical training aspect, so as to gradually build a cooperative education system. This is the only way to go about reducing the costs of vocational education and to guarantee the requirement and needs-based qualification of the economy.

Presentation:



PASO in School – First bridge to business / community

AlbizProject– “The Economic High Education Reform in Albania 2009 - 2013”, funded by the Austrian Cooperation for Development and implemented by KulturKontakt Austria, with a budget of Euro 828.565 supports the economic and business high vocational schools in the cities of Tiranë, Durrës, Elbasan, Vlorë, Lushnjë, Korçë, Berat, Shkodër, Lezhë, Peshkopi, Sarandë and Pogradec. The project aims at contributing in reforming vocational education, at approximating it with the labor market, at rendering it more attractive and at suiting the teaching profiles with the needs of the Albanian economy through an intervention in six components:

1. development and school quality guaranteeing
2. modern school management
3. compatibility of school curricula with the regional labor market
4. teacher training on modern teaching methods
5. establishment of a cooperative network with the business
6. gender integration

For realizing Component 5 in each of the project schools, a coordinating teacher was selected in order to deal with the relations with the social partners. The following criteria were applied for the selection process:

- very good communication skills, team work spirit and capable of inspiring cooperation
- good understanding of the economic situation in general and of the regional situation in particular
- good understanding of business dynamics
- teacher in the school, possibly teacher of professional courses

Through a special order of the Minister of Education, these (Paso) teachers have a work load of minus four classes per week, in order to have the proper time:

- to establish connections with the businesses and local partner and to keep contacts with existing businesses and local partners;
- to coordinate meetings, visits for students in business venues;
- to establish connections/contracts for internships of students in the school;
- to organize meetings and discussions with the regional businesses for the development and improvement of the curricula in schools.

During this time, 44 open school days have been organized (promotional activities), 12 meetings with training purposes, exchange of experiences and 5 regional conferences with the business in: Tirana, Saranda, Vlora, LezhadheKorça.

Meetings

The Paso teachers are trained by a Business Coach for: a) school marketing, improvement of communicative and presentation skills, organization of activities, recognition of business principles, etc.

School-business cooperation projects

The competition for the best business plan was organized inLezha and was coached by a jury composed of 5 business representatives. Ten business plans were submitted in this competition, of which the jury chose the 3 best plans and shared some valuable conclusions and suggestions for the students.

The Economic Technical School of Tirana organized the one-week activity of “Raiffeisen Days”. Visits were organized in different venues of the Bank for all the students of the 3rd and 4th year. The bank management staff evaluated the answers provided by the participants in the competition and announced one out of the 4 groups attending the competition as its winner. The winner was entitled to have a two-week internship in the headquarter oftheRaiffeisen Bank. In the context of this Project, the Bank donated to the school computer sets for a workshop.

InKorça, SigalCompany run a project with the students of the vocational school to promote awareness on life safety. This activity was organized in the form of a competition as well, where the winner was offered a two-week internship in the Company offices.

Conclusions

- The work done for selected some teachers to deal with coordination issues has improved the possibilities for **practical learning through the intensification of business commitments in schools.**
- These(Paso)teachers have shown of a **visible improvement in the organizational, management and communicative skills.**
- **The commitment and support of the relevant ministry** for these teachers’ role shall be a fundamental step in consolidating the success of their role.
- **Formalization** and presentation of this role in all the high vocational schools will pave the way to a more empowered network and a more fruitful cooperation between schools and businesses.

Presentation:



“Thinkers” And “Doers” engaged in The Dual System

Nehemiah Gateway University is one of the first educational institutions in Albania, which implemented a combination of theory, and practice in its curriculum: the dual study. After three years there are lots of best practices to share and still challenges to face as a result of a life experience in merging countries and in search of an honest attempt to sustainably support a vital nation like Albania on its way of progress in the educational and economic field.

Arnold Geiger describes the challenging situation as a gap between two groups of people:- On one side the intelligent and highly educated who he calls the “thinkers”, or also known as “academics” who develop the ideas but are of a little help for small and medium sized companies in their day-to-day work, and on the other side there are the people with know-how out of their experience, learning by doing, who he calls the “doers”, but in many times lack a higher standard of proper theoretical knowledge and training.



In both sides, there are admirable successes and there are failures to be examined and learned from.

In order to bring the two actors (“thinkers” and “doers”) in the same picture, Nehemiah Gateway University implemented a proven education model: the dual studies. Because of the reputation that the “doers” lack, the University has tried to attract young people with dual studies at the University level with a B.A. degree. The dual studies are a combination of the theory and the practical time during the 3-year study time. These studies bring together the University and companies, where the regular practical times take place. In 2008, the Nehemiah Gateway University was founded, and in 2010, the first pilot group of Business and Economy students started with “modified” dual studies.



By this, the university brought together two usually different actors into one (as such naturally are in the job market). After the implementation of dual studies, the university faced some challenges to learn from. The local companies are not ready yet for young students to be trained. On the other hand educational institutions need to better understand the companies’ needs and try to involve them even more in the development of the dual studies. After all, the students need to find a job place potentially in the company they did their practical training with.

Another challenge is the absence of the legal status of a “trainee”. This official status will help the students during their practical time in a company to get paid in order to finance their studies and also will help companies to employ students under a status that would facilitate them financially.

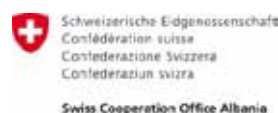


According to the experiences Nehemiah Gateway University collected, Arnold Geiger defined four steps to strengthen such a combination of theory and practice in the Albanian educational system:

- excite and involve the local companies,
- gather them around functional chambers,
- create a legal status for trainees,
- strengthen the image and the status of the “doer” in the society and in the eyes of the young people.

Finally, thinking strategically and sustainably, the thought of combining theory and practice should not only start at universities, but already in the early education at Albanian schools. This will not only challenge the known formula $1+1=2$ but will prove that $1+1>2$ for the benefit of the society. The combination of practical training with a theoretical academic basis will help to better educate already the young people in Albania, and therefore improve the economic development of Albania.

Presentation:



Project Based Learning

Albania is undergoing fundamental changes and reforms in many areas. The country aims at moving towards European integration, but it has a long way to go politically, economically and socially. Albania is still one of the poorest countries in Europe and the opportunities of the youth to find a gainful employment are limited. Vocational Education and Training (VET) is one of the areas that require most efforts and support. At the same time, professional training has considerable potential to boost the economy and to make a significant contribution to insert people into the labour market.

The AlbVET Project 2007-2014

Albania has a young population and a high level of youth unemployment, but at the same time it is critically short of qualified labour. In terms of labour market orientation, quality and practical relevance, the mainly school-based education system is inadequate. This is the point of departure for the AlbVET project, which Swisscontact has been running since 2007 on behalf of the SDC.

In the context of the overall reform of the vocational education and training system, the project puts particular emphasis on selected key sectors. The focus is on strengthening local structures and getting the teaching staff and management appropriately qualified. In addition, the project contributes actively to the further development of vocational education and training policy and the supporting legislation. Unlike the education system, which survived the transition from the planned to the market economy, the vocational training sector lost its legitimacy overnight with the disappearance of the state corporations and the corresponding labour market. It therefore had to be rebuilt from scratch.

This new development, with focus on new employment markets, is even now, twenty years from the start of the transition, still in its initial phase. In implementing this change, Swisscontact works country-wide with more than twenty state and private training providers, vocational training authorities and non-governmental organizations. The project sets great store by innovation, professionalism and training with practical relevance, as well as institutionalization and sustainability.

Interventions Phase 3

- Country-wide reform of an entire trade sector (heating, air conditioning and plumbing, including solar technology). The learning strategy is based on project-based learning.
- Initial vocational training at post-secondary level for IT Practitioners with dual learning venues under an inter-institutional cooperation between a university and a vocational school.
- Stimulating and supporting local initiatives for apprentice training in traditional skills.

The 'Coaching for Employment' intervention helps minorities, in particular young Roma, integrate into the employment market. For sustainability the project promotes new cooperation models between private and public institutions.

Target group

Upper secondary learners, young adults, minorities

“The Dual System and what we can learn from it”

Sabine Hartig

Programme Director, Vocational Education and Training Programme, GIZ



Context

Dual vocational education and training according to the German good practice model is experiencing an increasing popularity in Albania. This can be seen from the Government Programme 2013-2017, which was recently published by the new Socialist Party-led government, which has taken office in September 2013. With an unemployment rate of less than 8% of people under 25, Germany compares exceptionally well with other European countries. On the one hand this phenomenon is due to a strong economy and to economic sectors that require well trained and skilled labor. On the other side the high percentage of young people in employment is also a direct consequence of the German dual training system.

Characteristics of the dual system

As in other countries, VET in Germany is not exclusively based on the dual system (i.e. both school and workplace-based training). However, the dual system remains the core of the German vocational education (VE) and training system. More than 50% of young people of an age group are trained under this scheme. Its main characteristic is that enterprises and schools jointly share the training responsibility. Training is implemented at two different training sites whereby the enterprise-based training plays the most central role. The dual training system has a high reputation not only in general society as such but also, and in particular among young people. 20% of graduates from secondary schools holding a matura, who would qualify to continue their education at university, opt for entering the dual VET system. The aim of the dual VET system is to provide the qualifications, skills and competences required to practice an occupation as a skilled worker or specialized employee. Only through workplace-based training the trainee can learn to cope with the constantly changing demands of his or her job. Workplace-based training promotes independence and responsibility, which are indispensable qualities in a developed industrial or service-based country.

Organization of dual training

Dual training to qualify in a profession takes between 2 and 3,5 years. In-company training thereby constitutes 60-80% of the overall training time. To be trained in industry requires that the learner signs a training contract with an enterprise. The contract includes the rights and responsibilities of both parties as well as the training allowance to be paid by the employing company. The enterprise trains according to a defined training plan which is based on a training regulation approved by the state. Due to constantly changing technological developments training content has become more and more complex over the years, particularly in the field of industrial training. Where specific training contents cannot be imparted in the production process, medium and large companies generally offer specific training courses. For this purpose they have established special training workshops. Smaller companies cannot necessarily afford to operate separate facilities so chambers and professional associations have installed training workshops which can be used by their member companies. Only staff that has proven their technical and personal aptitude to train is entitled to act as a VE trainer. The Ordinance on Trainer Aptitude regulates the recognition as VE trainer. Education at a part-time vocational school complements the practical qualification. The task of the vocational school is to extend previously acquired general education (approx. one third of the training) and to provide basic and specialized vocational knowledge (approx. two thirds of the training).

Steering, stakeholders and shared responsibilities in the dual system

The dual VET system is based on the cooperation between state and private economy as equal partners. Through the so-called Vocational Education and Training Act, which regulates the role of each stakeholder in VET, the state creates the legal framework for the implementation of vocational education and training. The framework curricula, the basis for education and training in vocational schools, are jointly developed and approved by the ministers of education of the 16 federal states. Framework curricula are harmonized with the respective training regulations for in-company training. The fact that training regulations as well as framework curricula are approved at national level guarantees that the same standards are applied nation-wide. Chambers, employers' associations and trade unions or employee representations play a key role in the dual system. Employers' associations and trade unions contribute at national level to the design and development of training occupations and training regulations whereas Chambers as the “competent bodies” at local level supervise training in companies, organize final examinations and issue the final certificates. They are financed through compulsory contributions by their members and allocations by the state.

Costs and financing of the dual system

In 2010, gross costs of dual training in Germany were estimated at approx. EUR 31.6 billion, 75% of them being funded by the training companies (training allowances, trainers, equipment, consumables, and additional training facilities) and only 25% (schools, allocations) by the state. However, studies have demonstrated that a large part of these costs are recovered by returns on investment realized through the training (productive contribution of the trainee, reduced recruitment costs, etc.). On average, net costs of in-company training amount to only 25% of overall gross costs created. The actual net costs vary according to the respective training fields.

The following factors are considered as being essential for a functioning dual VE system:

- ☐ A wide consensus in society to provide all school leavers with the option for vocational education and training
- ☐ The willingness of enterprises to invest in education and training for the next generation
- ☐ A Vocational Education and Training Act regulating the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders
- ☐ The willingness of the public sector (government, schools) to accept the private sector as equal partner in VET
- ☐ The willingness of the private sector to accept quality control of its training activities
- ☐ A strategic top-down decision by government and employers to implement the dual system

Benefits of the dual system

Training companies consider as one of the crucial advantages of dual training that they are in a position to train their employees according to the company's specific requirements, and thus create those competencies needed to remain competitive on the market in the long run. Dual training also reduces recruitment and „on-boarding“ costs. In addition to this, the trainee is already productive during training and his or her contribution covers at least part of the costs of training. Last but not least, to contribute actively to skills development for future generations is seen as corporate responsibility towards society and positively influences the image of the training company. From the perspective of state and society dual training is *the* key mechanism to safeguard national trainings standards, and thus to ensure the overall mobility of the workforce. Well qualified and employable workers and employees are a strong competitive factor.

Steps towards a dual training system

The example of Germany shows that different conditions have to be put in place in order to ensure the success of a dual training system. Albania can also refer to a vocational system in its past, which strongly combined practical in-company training with complementary vocational education at VE schools. The current reform of the VET system can build on these experiences. What could be the first steps towards a VET system in Albania, which is based on the dual system approach?

- ☐ Firstly, VE schools should campaign in their local context to get access to as many companies as possible where young trainees can be placed for internships.
- ☐ Secondly, internships need to be organized over the entire training period in a structured and modularized form. One internship should build upon the previous one. As a minimum, two practical work internships of two months each should be foreseen. Whereas the first internship(s) will familiarize the trainee with the occupational context and the basic requirements of the occupation, the more advanced internship(s) will provide the trainees increasingly with occupation-specific skills and competences. At the same time, the workplace practice also gives owners or managers of the company the opportunity to know what kind of occupational knowledge, skills and competences the graduates from VE schools acquire and to assess the trainees first hand.
- ☐ A third step could then be to implement a „real“ dual training system with the training company being in the lead and the vocational school providing complementary general and specific theoretical knowledge.
- ☐ In order to make the VET system attractive for young people it is required to create career opportunities within the system, e.g., *advanced* VET leading to a recognized qualification like „master craftsman“, to be positioned at a level that corresponds with a bachelor degree in the National Qualification Framework. Advanced VET can also be organized in a dual form.

Success factors for dual training

Based on the experiences of the German dual system, the factors that characterize a dual-based training system and contribute to its success can be defined as follows:

- ☐ Learning within the work process: In-company training fosters knowledge, skills and competences that are needed to successfully comply with occupational requirements under changing conditions.
- ☐ Qualified vocational education and training staff: Motivated and highly qualified teachers (VE schools) and instructors (companies) can significantly improve learning outcomes for trainees.
- ☐ Cooperation between government and enterprises: Vested interests are integrated into the further development of the VET system. State and economic sector both participate in the definition of standards and learning contents. Companies contribute financially to the costs of vocational education and training.
- ☐ Acceptance of national standards: Recognition and application of nationally agreed standards are instrumental for the high quality of qualifications. Uniform standards and comparable qualifications foster equal opportunities and facilitate access to the labor market.

Appeal of Good Will

“The Albanian economy needs well skilled employees!”

We appeal for a cooperation between public authorities and entrepreneurs

➤ **Raise the economic potentials of Albania!**

The Albanian economy offers a lot of own untapped potentials. To fully use these potentials well skilled and qualified employees are needed on all levels of production, services and administration.

➤ **Better skills for all professions!**

Practice orientated studies and vocational training for non-academic sector are both necessary. Theoretical knowledge must be combined with practical experience in a way that will develop skilled employees to be active and creative co-operators in a modern Albanian economy.

➤ **Give youth a perspective!**

Young people in Albania with their skills, competencies and creativity are a great potential for the country's future. Companies only can be competitive in the international markets, if their employees are able to produce high quality products and services.

➤ **Build a nationwide structure!**

The supporters of this initiative agree to develop a strategy on a nation-wide scale of a cooperative Vocational Training Sector in Albania based on high quality and practice orientation

➤ **Cooperation of all stakeholders of the labor market!**

The private sector, public institutions, companies, associations, federations and chambers should cooperate trustfully and as equal partners with the institutions for a cooperative Albanian Vocational Training sector.

➤ **Using the existing knowledge and experience of donors!**

The knowledge and the experience of international donors in Albania offering different vocational training systems should be integrated in the VET strategy. Their advice and best practices should be used.

➤ **Provide practical training!**

The supporters of a VET strategy should provide practical training or long term practical internships. They also should participate in developing curricula for different levels, thus using their professional knowledge for vocational training.

➤ **Private sector is an important partner!**

The supporters will help to develop innovative cooperation models and will integrate the private sector as an equal partner.

➤ **Decent work and economic growth!**

All partners agree that the common goal is to create decent employment for more and more young people. A successfully growing economy can only jointly be achieved by the integration of vocational training on all levels.

➤ **EU-member as a strong economic partner!**

The supporters of this appeal are convinced that the Albanian economy will grow with a better skilled workforce and will be able to compete in different sectors in the region and finally become a respected member of the European Union.

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“Friedrich Ebert“ Foundation in Albania (FES)

FES office in Tirana was established in 1991. Our main fields of activities are:

- ☐ **Active Civil Society:** We work with organizations and associations that are actively engaged in social and democratic development of the country .
- ☐ **Socio - Economic Development :** We work together with different actors of the economy. We create platforms of dialogue that are contributing to balance the interests of fair and sustainable development.
- ☐ **Democratization of Institutions:** We help institutions to be competent and work independently for the benefit of the Albanians. Laws and regulations should be respected by all.
- ☐ **Dialogue and participation in labour world:** We provide a platform for discussion and dialogue. Trade Unions need to be competent and employers can find the best solution to economic problems.
- ☐ **The future of youth :** Most of the Albanian population is under age 30. Young people need to be heard, to have good education and real perspective. They want and can build the future of Albania.
- ☐ **EU Integration:** We help Albania to be a worthy member of the European Union as soon as possible. For this we offer regional and international exchange of experiences .

www.fes-tirana.org

German Association of Industry and Trade in Albania (DIHA)

In late 2008, it was founded in Albania the German Association of Industry and Trade, which has been operational since mid-2009. DIHA represents the network of German and Albanian companies in the country and mediates all German companies wishing to enter the Albanian market. With more than 60 members, DIHA is one of the most important bilateral economic association in Albania. DIHA members are being offered the following services:

- ☐ **Contacts:** advantages to enter our network with other business, economic organizations, state institutions and companies in Albania and Germany.
- ☐ **Register of membership:** Your company will be listed in our regional online membership database, which is used by many companies to establish contacts. Members have access to these contacts.
- ☐ **Networking:** through our activities you can create an active network.
- ☐ **Representation of interests:** The Association represents the interests of German companies with business interests in Germany.

www.albanien.ahk.de

