



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR MATCHING LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

ტექნიკური მხარდაჭერა შრომის ბაზრის საჭიროებებსა და დასაქმებაზე
მორგებული ცოდნა-უნარების განვითარებისთვის

Minutes of the First Project Steering Committee Meeting

Date	29th May 2020, 16.30 to 17.30	
Location	Held online via Microsoft Teams, hosted by the International Relations Department of MoESCS	
Present	Name	Position
Members of SC	Ms. T. Kitiashvili	MoESCS: Deputy Minister
	Ms. I. Tserodze	MoESCS: Head of VET Department
	Mr. K. Khandolishvili	MoESCS: Head of International Relations Dept.
	Ms. T. Barkalaia	MoIDPLHSA: Deputy Minister
	Ms. L. Klimiashvili	MoIDPLHSA
	Ms. N. Veltauri	SESA: Deputy Director
	Ms. K. Kapanadze	Youth Agency: Deputy Head
	Mr. K. Karumidze	Youth Agency
	Ms. E. Mikabadze	MoESD First Deputy Minister
	Ms. T. Sabadze	MoESD: Head of Economic Policy Dept.
	Mr. G. Gamkrelidze	MoESD: Head of Labour Market Analysis Division
	Ms. Elene Makharashvili	Georgian Employers' Association
	Mr. J. Wisniewski	EU PAR TA Expert
Mr. C. Gherman	EU Delegation: Deputy Head of Cooperation Department	
Ms. N. Kochishvili	EU Delegation: Programme Officer - Task Manager	
Ms. N. Samvelidze	EU Delegation: Programme Officer	
Observers	Mr. T. Kuusela	ETF
	Ms. U. Bardak	ETF
	Ms. O. Bekh	ETF
	Ms. T. Siphraashvili	ETF
	Ms. A. Baramia	MoESCS: International Relations Dept.
	Ms. A. Lukava	MoESCS: International Relations Dept.
	Mr. C. Etzold	Resident Twinning Advisor (RTA)
TA Team	Mr. N. Sapundzhiev	Project Director, GOPA
	Mr. D. Handley	Team Leader
	Mr. H. Duffner	Key Expert
	Mr. C. Møller	Key Expert
	Ms. A. Kitiashvili	Long-term Non-Key Expert
	Ms. A. Diakonidze	Long-term Non-Key Expert
Agenda of Meeting		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcoming Remarks by The EU Delegation 2. Report on revisions to the Log Frame and the Inception Report: Verbal report by the Team Leader 		

3. Brief presentation of activities since the First SC Meeting: PowerPoint by the Team Leader and Project Team
4. Report on changes to project implementation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and next steps: PowerPoint by the Team Leader
5. Discussion
6. Closing remarks

Summary of Discussion

1. **Welcoming Remarks:** Mr. Gherman opened the meeting on behalf of the EU Delegation, welcoming those present and expressing hope that connection problems would not prevent everyone from participating. He said that the EU Delegation recognized that Covid-19 was causing many problems and that he hoped that the relevant issues would be discussed during the meeting, while reminding those present that the meeting would only last one hour.
2. **Report on revisions to the Log Frame and the Inception Report:** The Team Leader briefly explained that, after Steering Committee had commented on the draft Inception Report in the week after the previous SC meeting on 14th February 2020, a slightly amended version had been presented to the EUD, and had subsequently been shared with EU EaP QA team who had commented extensively on the log frame. Their comments had mainly led to modifications to the indicators for Objectives and Outputs, but two of the Outputs of Component 3 (Youth) had been combined into one on the advice of the ROM experts. Members of the committee were asked to submit any further comments within one week, so that the revised report and log frame could be presented for approval as quickly as possible.
3. **Introduction to the Project and the implementing consortium:** Without delay, Mr. Handley then made a short PowerPoint presentation (Slides 1-6 in the attached presentation). He mentioned that the first reporting period had actually been completed at the end of February (rather than March which had been assumed at the previous meeting) following a clarification on contractual requirements, and the Second Steering Committee meeting was therefore being held exactly half way through the second reporting period. He briefly mentioned the activities apart from Inception activities that had taken place before the end of February, and spoke in more detail about project activities during March, April and May 2020. It was agreed that he should continue without a pause for discussion with the remainder of his presentation.
4. **Report on changes to project implementation resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and next steps:** As agreed, Mr. Handley immediately presented the remaining slides (7-12), which included information provided by the three beneficiary ministries (MoESCS, MoIDPLHSA and the MoESD) and the Youth Agency about Covid-19 issues during consultations by the project, together with the detailed adjustments to the implementation plans for each project component which were necessitated by the pandemic. The general conclusions were that, at this early stage of the project, it was possible to make adjustments that would not negatively impact project implementation, and that most activities in the coming period could be done through remote tele-working. He warned, however, that if the pandemic continued into the following year, there could be a greater risk of disruption to the efficient implementation of the project.
5. **Discussion:** Mr. Gherman then invited members of the Committee to comment.

DM Barkalaia said the MoIDPHLSA was fully engaged in both health and economic responses to the pandemic. SESA had been hindered in carrying out its initial plan of operations but was in full response mode, focused on benefits and support for the employed, though not yet for the self-employed. It would be important to develop the capacity of SESA. Post-Covid-19, PES would be a higher priority even than before, and would need the full support of the TA team, especially for post-Covid-19 planning and support to implementation of the new service

model through extensive training. They are continuing with recruitment of staff with aim of completing in July/August, and will need online training, handbooks etc. They had received a lot of support so far, which was highly appreciated.

DM Kitiashvili said that MoESCS was experiencing some difficulties because VET could not easily switch to a distance learning basis, but they were still actively working on curricula, programs and networks of teachers. She warned that it was important to be prepared when the next wave returned, and they were working with donors on the technology side to support distance learning. During the pandemic, it was convenient for the project to work on concepts and development of papers. Thus, the regulatory package should be developed for approval by October and had been brought forward from the summer to provide time for public discussion. On VET enrolments in 2020, they had had to roll two into one (with a consequent reduction in student places), and it had already started on 20 May with registration already open. There was an amended by-law on testing and admissions, with a web portal to increase the chances of youth, vulnerable groups etc., providing a more efficient way of filling places. But it was necessary to keep fingers crossed, and new guidelines on social distancing in colleges could make it more difficult to return to normality in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Gherman commented that the EU Delegation recognized that there would be some implications for BS indicators.

FDM Mikabadze said that it was really appropriate for the TA project to be still on track in spite of coronavirus. Post-Covid-19 planning must be in line with economic developments. LMIS surveys should depend on the country's situation. However, the pandemic placed challenges and, although surveys could be conducted online, the quality might not be very good. She suggested that, during the lockdown, the TA could start preparation of guidelines to be followed in surveys when they could be implemented. Referring to the 2 surveys specified in BS indicators, she said that the sectors were still under consideration and that a choice from transport, energy and manufacturing was being considered, with a decision expected the following week.

DM Barkalaia commented that there were also some relevant general and sectoral recommendations on the MoIDPLHSA website.

DM Kitiashvili commented that all recommendations would be relevant for the planning of WBL, and went on to say that there was growing interest in the provision of retraining courses. The MoESCS was planning a campaign for private sector companies to cooperate with colleges on short training courses which seemed more important at the current time than long VET programs.

Mr. Karumidze said he wanted to thank the project team on behalf of the Youth Agency for great support provided to the Agency's youth survey.

Ms. Kochishvili said that the discussion underlined the importance of employment issues at the current time, and thanked the TA team for continuing to work intensively with all beneficiaries throughout the pandemic. They remained available to support the ministries in relation to BS indicator issues.

Mr. Handley undertook to circulate electronic copies of the PowerPoint presentation and the revised implementation schedule referred to in the presentation after the meeting.

6. Closing remarks:

Mr. Gherman undertook to get back to the three ministries as soon as possible to provide feedback on issues related to BS indicators affected by the corona virus pandemic. He thanked everyone for participating and closed the meeting.

Action points

- The TA team to circulate the presentation and revised implementation timetable after the meeting. (Attached as annexes to these Minutes)
- Any remaining comments on the revised Inception Report and Log frame to be sent to the project within one week.
- EU Delegation to consult MoESCS, MoESD and MoIDPLHSA on issues relating to the BS indicators affected by COVID-19.
- The 2nd six-monthly progress report to be prepared by the TA team at the end of August 2020, followed by the 3rd meeting of the Steering Committee.