

Annex 2

Report from the stakeholder meeting
Interim National Skills Board and beyond

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**Central Employment Office
Prishtina, 10 October 2003**

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1. Background

On October 10th 2003, in Prishtina, a meeting was held between the representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Independent Unions of Kosova and the Economic Chamber of Kosova (see Annexes 1 and 2). The meeting followed a number of proposals drawn up by a cross-stakeholder working group, amongst which was the recommendation for the establishment of an Interim National Skills Board in the short term to be followed by a more permanent institution for certifying vocational education and training in the medium-to-long term.

2. Opening remarks by the Chairman

Mr. Ramiz Fazliu (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare) opened the meeting and welcomed all fellow stakeholder institutions.

Setting the context, Mr. Fazliu emphasised Kosovo's shift from emergency to development phase. With an administration now in place, the need to develop new supporting institutions for public interest was now important. He emphasized that the issue for the meeting was certification of vocational skills as opposed to education, which was wider and separate issue.

Mr. Fazliu informed the meeting that his Ministry would provide technical support and resources to the Interim National Skills Board but emphasized that the Board was not a single-stakeholder issue but was equally a concern for different ministries and social partners. He stressed joint commitment. He called on the meeting to reach a full consensus for interim and eventual permanent arrangements for certification of vocational education and training, underlining the need for international support in developing new institutions.

3. Objectives

Mr. Fazliu stated the objectives of the meeting:

- a) to achieve a common understanding and an overall consensus of key stakeholders in Kosovo for the establishment of an Interim National Skills Board, and
- b) achieving a consensus for the creation of permanent National Skills Board in the medium term..

4. From CERT Group to stakeholder consensus

Ylber Shabani, Director of Department of Labor and Employment, outlined the background to the meeting, providing an overview of the dialogue and planning process for certification of vocational education and training. He congratulated the CERT Group for its achievements. What had started out a small-scale discussion on certification of adult training within his ministry's training centers had evolved to include the wider concern for quality skills assurance by other stakeholders, in particular BSPK, MEST, and OEK. He indicated that MTI had not been involved in the CERT Group development work. But given the importance of quality, skilled manpower to enterprise development in Kosovo he stressed the importance of inputs from MTI to the meeting and follow-up institutional developments.

Mr. Shabani underlined the need for quality vocational education and training as prerequisite to employability - a key concern within the EU employment strategy. He also emphasised the need for statutory institutions to ensure that standards be created for vocational education and training that are compatible with European and international norms. He argued that an interim skills board followed by a permanent certification structure would be essential in assuring quality and standards and he asked the meeting to support the proposal.

On behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Mr. Shabani thanked international partners (Danida, EAR (Kosvet), ETF, GTZ, Swisscontact), which had provided support to CERT Group's work.

5. Vocational certification systems: principles and components

Mr. David Handley (EAR, Kosvet) provided an overview of the key principles and elements of certification of vocational education and training set against wider qualifications frameworks.

A first issue was one of terminology. Referring to EU member states, he indicated that while there may not be a standard and agreed glossary for certification most countries had a structured framework for certifying skills. Secondly, he pointed a EU standards system for vocational skills did not exist. Rather, standards had evolved and approximated by sector over time. Kosovo would need to join this alignment process as well.

Mr. Handley emphasised the importance of what lies behind certification, referring particularly to public policy, labour market needs, consumer interests in quality training services, transparency, social inclusiveness, equity and international recognition.

He stressed that each vocational qualifications has three dimensions:

- a) *employment* – what people need to do on the job,
- b) *learning*, what people need to learn to meet requirements of the job and
- c) *assessment*, how achievements are evaluated against the requirements of the job.

6. Key issues for establishing a national certification body

The meeting considered a number of key issues identified by the CERT Group and which led to its recommendation for an Interim National Skills Board with perspective for a more permanent structure. The issues were: rationale, tasks, functioning, legal framework, stakeholders, timing and financing. The meeting considered each issue and consensus determined accordingly.

A consensus assessment table is available at Annex 3. A summary of the discussion issues and points raised by stakeholders follows.

a) Rationale – why a National Skills Board is necessary for Kosovo

- many training providers in Kosova, public as well as private, while there is no institution that sets quality benchmarks;
- important that one institution could approve standards and would assure the quality of the training and ensure relevance and applicability of the training in the labor market;
- quality and standards for Kosovo training will eventually also have implications for employers/labour markets in S.E. Europe and European Union given perspectives for future integration;
- Mr. Zeqir Shkodra (BSPK) emphasized that there had been sufficient discussion on the need for a quality control institution for training. The need was evident;
- Mr. Hivzi Dragidella (OEK) emphasized the interest of employers in a national skills authority, underlining need for qualified employees, with training standards employers could trust;
- Mr. Shukri Maxhuni (MEST) reconfirmed that a National Skills Board was necessary to ensure quality and standards and would lead to the fulfillment of the market needs;
- Mr. Selatin Ratkoceri (MTI) supported the rationale for a skills' board initiative. He indicated that it was imperative that the MTI be involved.

Cross-stakeholder consensus and agreement was achieved on the rationale for establishing an Interim National Skills Board and a permanent skills' certification authority in the medium-term.

b) Tasks – what an Interim National Skills Board would do

- The core tasks of an Interim National Skills Board (INSB) would be to certify vocational curricula, vocational teachers/trainer and vocational training institutions;
- an Interim Skills Board should also provide advisory inputs and support to the planning and establishment of permanent skills certification structure;
- a permanent National Skills Board would certify all training providers interested in having accreditation;
- INSB would administer the Vocational Standards Committees (expert teams with technical knowledge and expertise for their economic sector) that would consider all applications for certification (curricula, teacher/training staff, vocational training institutions) for a given sector and make recommendations to the Board as the appropriateness for certification;
- Mr. Bajram Morina (OEK) emphasized the importance of monitoring quality of training providers by the Board;
- Mr. Shukri Maxhuni (MEST) proposed that the title Vocational Standards Committees be changed to Vocational Standards Commissions;
- Mr. Shabani (MLSW) advised that the tasks of the Board would become more defined once the Board had occasion to learn how similar successful structures operated in other countries in Europe. Study visits of the Board would be important to building up knowledge and capacity;
- Mr. Tony Gribben (ETF) who facilitated the CERT Group proposed that the INSB establish a specific duration for certification initially for each training institution. He emphasized that that capacities of the training organizations would be required to evolve and meet quality benchmarks and the INSB could be instrumental in ensuring that the training institutions have an incremental quality development schedule.

The meeting reached unanimous consensus and agreement on the core tasks of the Interim National Skills Board.

c) Stakeholders – composition of the INSB

- an Interim National Skills Board should comprise 5 members nominated by
 - Minister of Education, Science and Technology;
 - Minister of Labor and Social Welfare;
 - Minister of Trade and Industry;
 - President of the Economic Chamber of Kosova (OEK);
 - President of the Independent Unions of Kosova (BSPK).
- Questions arose as to whether the Board should also include representatives of other ministries e.g. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Public Services. Given the interim and pilot nature of the INSB, there was general consensus that the Board should comprise the 5 key stakeholders concerned with general labour market and manpower developments.

The meeting agreed the composition of the INSB.

d) Functions: how an interim skills board would work

- Chairmanship of the INSB would rotate every 24 months, with first chairing by MLSW;
- term of office of INSB would be two years or until permanent structures are created;
- INSB would work part time based on the requests and needs of vocational training community;
- in the interest of transparency, an independent appeals procedure should be established with an independent commission established for each appeal;
- INSB will have a permanent secretariat that would comprise of a General Manager and a Secretary.

The meeting reached consensus and agreement on the general functioning of the INSB.

e) Legal framework

- Mr. Selatin Retkoceri (MTI) proposed that a legal basis for the functioning of the Board be established. He referred particularly to the example of the Accountants Association of Kosova, where UNMIK had first asked that all accountants get certified with the Association but that the Ministry of Economy and Finance did not recognize these certificates. He recommended the introduction of a regulation for the INSB to avoid similar problems.
- Mr. Shukri Maxhuni (MEST) reiterated the need for a regulation.
- it was agreed that as an initial step a Memorandum of Understanding be established between all 5 key stakeholder organizations by 27 October;

- the MOU should be followed by an Interim Regulation establishing a Interim National Skills Board with the legislative process completed by 31 March 2004;
- an interim regulation should be drafted by the project secretariat supported by international technical assistance;
- MLSW should take responsibility for submitting the interim regulation for approval.

A full consensus and agreement was established for an MOU followed by an interim regulation for an INSB, including timeframes.

f) Timing

- it was agreed that an interim skills board be established by 15 December 2003;
- a future permanent skills board would be considered along side wider institutional considerations being discussed within the cross-stakeholder VET Policy Group being facilitated by the EAR Kosvet programme;
- nominations by the ministries and social partners for the Interim National Skills Board should be made at latest by 15 November 2003;
- Minister of Labour and Social Welfare would request nominations from
 - Ministers (MEST, MTI), with copies to Permanent Secretaries and
 - Presidents of OEK, BSPK
- written requests should also be copied to participants of the meeting of 10 October for follow-up;
- deadline for submission of nominations: 15 days after date of letter from MLSW.
- Board should be established by 15 December 2003.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should call first meeting of INSB and assume the chair.
- first decisions/results of INSB should be available in February 2004.
- the meeting agreed that the deadlines be respected. Each participant to the consensus building meeting of 10 October should follow up dossier within his organisation to ensure deadlines were adhered to.

Meeting participants agreed the procedure and timeframe for nominations to the INSB.

g) Financing

- a draft budget for establishment, infrastructure, staffing and capacity building for the INSB was discussed by the meeting (€200,000) for a period of 24 months after which a more permanent structure should be in place.
- donor support should be sought to cover international expertise costs and wider capacity building, including local staffing (maximum of 24 months). Stakeholders would be required to contribute financially or in kind.

- a permanent skills board to be established within 24 months would be financed by the stakeholders ensuring sustainability and commitment to the institution with national allocation from the Consolidated Budget of Kosovo, where each of the ministries involved on the Board would split the costs;
- the funds should be managed by the secretariat of the Board, which would prepare the necessary budget for the Board on an annual basis;
- the Board would forward a draft budget to the respective Ministries so that they could include it the budget plan for following year;
- OEK and BSPK indicated that for the time being they do not have the possibility to contribute financially to the INSB or permanent board but they would contribute with their engagement and expertise.
- Both social partners agreed to contribute to INSB and permanent skills board funding subject to each organization being able to generate sufficient income.

In this discussion there was an agreement between all the participants, with the exception of the representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, who did not have authority to decide on financial issues. It was agreed that the Permanent Secretary of MLSW write to the Permanent Secretary of MEST to get a final consensus on financing of the Interim Skills Board and financial arrangements for a more permanent institution.

7. Conclusions and follow-up

The meeting achieved overall consensus and agreement on the rationale, core tasks, functioning, composition and time-table for introduction of an Interim National Skills Board in Kosovo, with 15 December set at the date for establishment. The meeting also agreed that the Interim National Skills Board to followed by a more permanent certification authority by January 2006.

Regarding financial arrangements, a request to Ministry of Education, Science and Technology was required to achieve full stakeholder consensus on financial commitment to a more permanent institution.

To conclude their deliberations, stakeholders agreed and signed a declaration of consensus and agreement to the establishment of an Interim National Skills Board with commitment to a permanent certification structure (Annex 4).

Annex 1

Interim National Skills Board and Beyond

10 October 2003, Central Employment Office, Pristina.

Chairperson **R. Fazliu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare**

10.00-10.15 Welcome, objective and introductions
R. Fazliu, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

10.15-10.30 CERT Group – work to date
Ylber Shabani, Director, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

10.30-10.50 Vocational certification systems – principles and components
R. Likaj, D. Handley, KOSVET

Questions

Discussions – Facilitator Bersant Disha

11.00-13.30 Outcomes and proposals of the CERT Group

Rationale: why a national skills board is necessary for Kosovo

Tasks: what the national skills board would do

Functions: how the interim skills board would work

Stakeholders: organizations that have a stake in a national skills authority

Timing: when an interim national skills board should be established and possible timing for a more permanent structure

Finance: funds required for the interim board and financing implications for a national structure

13.30-14.00 **Conclusions and follow-up**

Annex 2**Participant List - INTERIM SKILLS BOARD AND BEYOND 10.10.03**

Name	Organisation	Position	Email	Telephone
STAKEHOLDERS				
Ramiz Fazliu	MLSW	Permanent Secretary	ramozfazliu@hotmail.com	038 244 233/210
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Hivzi Dragidella	OEK	Head of Cabinet	hivzd@hotmail.com	044 169 417
Shukri Maxhuni	MEST	Official	Shumabx4@hotmail.com	044 148 434
Selatin Retkoceri	MTI	Assistant to Permanent Secretary	selatin.retkoceri@eumik.org	044 136 798
Ylber Shabani	MLSW	Director	shabaniy@un.org	044 503 657
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MEETING FACILITATORS				
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Annex 3.

Interim National Skills Board: Consensus Assessment Table

	MEST	MLSW	MTI	BSPK	OEK
Rationale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tasks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Functioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stakeholders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Timing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financing	?	✓	✓	✓!	✓!
Legal framework	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Consensus



Subject to social partners acquiring external funds



Unable to take decision; issue to be clarified by MEST.

Annex 4

Meeting on the Interim National Skills Board and beyond

DECLARATION

In the meeting between the authorized representatives of the stakeholders including the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Ministry of Technology and Industry; Economic Chamber of Kosova and the Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Kosova, held on October 10th, 2003, with the objective of reaching a consensus on the creation of an Interim National Skills Board, and after the discussions in connection to this objective the following joint declaration was reached:

All the above mentioned stakeholders have achieved a consensus to fully support the creation of an Interim National Skills Board and have offered their engagement in establishing and maintaining this Board. They have also offered their support for the process of creation of permanent structures in the future. The representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology requested that in particular for the financing issue for this structure by the Ministry, a written request be sent to the Permanent Secretary in order to get the approval from this Ministry. Furthermore, the social partners agreed to contribute financially to the Skills Board, on the condition that they are able to secure permanent funding for their institutions.

This declaration is the first step towards achieving a Memorandum of Understanding between all the stakeholders that will be signed by October 27th, 2003. The Memorandum of Understanding will be followed by an interim regulation that would ensure the legal base for the Interim National Skills Board.

The Permanent National Skills Board would be covered by legislation that would be adopted in the future and which will deal with wider developments in the field of vocational education and training.

This Declaration is signed by:

Ramiz Fazliu, chair of the meeting

Selatin Retkoceri, representative of MTI

Shukri Maxhuni, representative of MEST

Ylber Shabani, representative of MLSW

Zeqir Shkodra, representative of BSPK Bajram Morina, representative of OEK

Hivzi Dragidella, representative of OEK

Annex 5

Key deadlines established at the Consensus Building Meeting

Action	Deadline
MOU signed by all stakeholders	27 October 2003
Nominations to INSB	15 November 2003
INSB established	15 December 2003
First decisions/results from INSB	28 February 2004
Interim Regulation for INSB	31 March 2004
Establishment of permanent skills board	1 January 2006

Annex 6.

Materials used by Berant Disha (Facilitator)

Why a national skills board is necessary in Kosovo

- many training providers (public, private) – who sets the benchmarks?
- one single authority to approve standards and assure quality of training
- relevance and applicability of training to labour market
- confidence of employers in the contents and standards of training and training institutions
- confidence of public and particularly the ‘consumers’ of training in what who is training them and what they are being trained
- future links with regional and European labour market – mobility of labour (inward and outward)

better skilled employees, more effective businesses, improved economic growth, more jobs, better quality of life for Kosovars

STEP 1

An Interim National Skills Board

STEP 2

Permanent structure with legal basis to wider institutional developments

TASK OF VET POLICY GROUP (EAR, KOSVET)

What the interim national skills board would do

- Appoint and administer Vocational Standards Committees
- Certify vocational education and training courses delivered by vocational schools, vocational training centers (modular)
- Certify vocational teachers and vocational trainers
- Ensure consistency and transparency in standards for vocational education and training
- Provide advisory inputs and support the planning and establishment of permanent skills certification structure

How an interim skills board would work

- 5 Members appointed by the following stakeholders:
 - ▷ Minister of Education, Science and Technology
 - ▷ Minister of Labour and Social Welfare
 - ▷ Minister of Trade and Industry
 - ▷ President, OEK
 - ▷ Secretary General, BSPK
- Chairmanship – rotating, bi-annual
- Term of office: 2 years and until permanent institution in place
- Board will work on part-time basis and according to demand from vocational education and training community
- Board will establish an appeals procedure, including independent appeals committee for each appeal
- Board supported by a secretariat: General Manager and Secretary

Stakeholders

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Ministry, vocational schools
- Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
Ministry, vocational training centers, employment offices, Tri-partite Committee (chair)
- Ministry of Trade and Industry
Ministry, regional enterprise agencies
- OEK
OEK, enterprises, tri-partite committee
- BSPK
BSPK, employees, tri-partite committee

Timing

- November 2003 nominations
- December 2003 establishment
- January 2004 certification decisions on first deliverables from Vocational Standards Committees

Finance

- €200,000 approximately (24 months), donor
- Permanent Institution, local funds (statutory authorities)

Proposed Budget

Measure	Budget
International Expertise: 110 man-days @ €500	€55,000
Expert Travel 3 x €600	€5,400
Experts per diem 5 x 30 x €150	€22,500
Coordinator 24 x €500	€12,000
Administrative Assistant 24 x €300	€7,200
2 Study Visits INSB Travel (5 x 2 x €600)	€6,000
INSB study visits per diem	€10,500
Working Group Expenses	€3,000
Office materials	€4,000
Information and publicity	€3,400
Running Costs	15,000
TOTAL	€203,000

Do we have a consensus for an interim national skills board?

Consensus to agreement

Memorandum of Understanding

all parties

27 October 2003?

Annex 6

Materials used by expert

Some principles and components of certification systems

Presentation by David Handley

Cert Project Stakeholder Workshop

10 October 2003

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It's not the issuing of certificates themselves that's most important.....

It's what lies behind them.....

Need to develop a clear understanding of key terms:

- Certificate, qualification, diploma
- Skills, competences, achievements
- Certification
- Qualifications (or certification) system
- Approval, accreditation
- Qualifications framework
- Formal, non-formal, informal learning



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- Qualifications belong to individuals (internal), whilst also fulfilling wider social needs (external)
- Qualifications are designed to meet specific purposes but are also used as instruments of public policy
- Qualifications must be designed to meet the varying needs of different stakeholders
- System should be sufficiently flexible to meet different needs, whilst avoiding fragmentation



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Qualification systems encompass the whole process of recognising learning achievements:

- Standards
- Assessment and recording systems
- Certification arrangements
- Quality assurance
- Approval and recognition arrangements



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However a qualifications system is more than the sum of its parts. For example, it can also be:

- A policy driver for VET reform
- A regulatory instrument
- A way of making learning and learning pathways more transparent
- An integrating mechanism linking different users and value systems in education and training
- A space in which to develop lifelong learning



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Developing a certification system is not just a technical exercise but should reflect policy priorities, such as:

- Relevance to labour market needs
- Improving quality
- Social inclusiveness and equity
- Transparency and coherence
- Openness and flexibility
- International recognition

Above all, a need for:

- Learning and assessment underpinned by standards
- Uniformity/standardisation in assessment



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Despite the differing needs of users, there are 3 main dimensions to the design of vocational qualifications:

- Employment – what people need to be able to do
- Learning – what they need to learn to meet these requirements
- Assessment – how their achievements will be evaluated against these requirements

Qualifications system design requires:

Internal transparency

- Defined objectives and principles
- Clear methodology and guidance
- Making learners' achievements visible

External transparency:

- Fitness for a defined purpose
- Matched to users' needs

Organisational transparency

- Clearly defined responsibilities/ accountabilities
- Fair and comprehensible criteria and procedures



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So, now for the Certification Working Group's proposals for development of short-term ("interim") and longer-term ("permanent") certification arrangements.....

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