

EVALUATION SERBIA

Promotion of self-help organizations in Southeast Europe



Coordination of the evaluation: Dr. Ursula Esser

National Evaluator: Drazen Lovric

April 2016



Authors:

Dr. Ursula Esser is an independent expert, specialized in monitoring and evaluation within the global development and education sector. She carries out empirical research and strategy development for numerous national and international institutions.

Drazen Lovric is an external consultant for project development at UNDP Mission Serbia and experienced in evaluations and international consultancy missions.

Table of Abbreviations

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCS	Organic Control System
SEK	Social and Development Aid of the Kolping Society
SL	Service Learning
SDG	Sustainability Development Goals
ToT	Training of the Trainer

Executive Summary

Background of the evaluation

Serbia is currently facing huge reforms before being accessing the EU as a full member. Unemployment, demographic problems and an insufficient purchasing power raise discontent among the population. Overall BMZ policy therefore aims at approaching Serbia to EU standards and procedures. Kolping association Serbia is clearly in line with this policy. Kolping Serbia has been existing since 2000 and is monitored by Social and Development Aid of the Kolping Society (SEK) and funded by BMZ since 2002 under the project title "Promotion of self-help organizations in South-East Europe". Since then it has implemented mainly four action lines which focus on improving living conditions, social engagement and economic growth. BMZ funding ended by December 2015. The decision whether new funding should be applied for, is still pending. The evaluation should give a clearer picture concerning outcomes and impact gained so far in order to find out which specific measures and interventions could be considered for a future funding application (BMZ and additional funding organizations/donors).

Goals and activities

The Kolping activities aim at empowering the civil society with regard to sensitivity for social engagement and responsibility-taking. The overall aim is to reduce poverty, improve economic performance and general living conditions which might strengthen the positive development of the country. In this regard, the Kolping activities not only intend to give support in a humanitarian sense, but also to build-up a systemic framework of capacity, actors and implementation strategies within several fields of engagement.

The four main action lines are:

1. Service Learning: Background of this activity is the fact that young people are suffering from huge unemployment rates (app. 50%) and insufficient perspectives for their future. These young people have to experience democratic patterns of participation and decision-making. They shall be empowered to take social responsibility and practice compassion and solidarity. These measures intend to prepare them for an active involvement in civil society and democratic commitment. Main activities are the acquisition of interested schools, identification of meaningful projects, special training courses regarding soft skills provided by (trained) teachers, conceptualization of specific projects and their implementation in various fields. For the Service Learning, high relevance is given regarding the needs of the target groups. These are answered by highly meaningful activities. The projects which were developed and implemented by the schools are totally in line with the settled goals of the action as they contribute to the empowerment of students and achieve anchoring on the community level. The active participation of 250 students, 37 teachers and 8 schools in 10 local communities can be regarded high effective and cost-efficient at the same time. Impact of the service learning is drawing on the positive changes produced by projects and interventions with regard to the single pupil, the school and the community. Sustainability is weak so far and could be boosted by stronger networking activities and additional fundraising.

2. Home Care: Approximately 1,6 million elderly people are living in Serbia – many of them suffering from an insufficient standard of life and health care. The governmental system fails at taking care of these people. This is why Kolping Serbia aims at supporting these people improving their quality of life by creating a ‘home-care’ system, which gives training to family members who want to take care of elderly people within the family. The home-care service activities answer a concrete demand of the target group. Training regarding home care is an important input and valid service enabling the families to look after their relatives and additionally it can be seen an important awareness raising measure. On a more professional and profit-gaining level, Vitaplan is operating as a care service for elderly people. High quality standards could be achieved as it is actually operating as a highly acknowledged agency with an outstanding management and care service. Nevertheless, the income is limited by several context factors which is the scarce economic ability of potential clients, the lacking support by governmental funds and the law regulation. Vitaplan is not self-sustaining economically but on a good way, as the number of patients is constantly increasing and the monthly income/benefit rate could smoothly be heightened. Home care and Vitaplan show a high impact on individuals and society as a whole. The Vitaplan service provider shows a meaningful contribution to the improvement of the living conditions and health sector and is therefore totally in line with BMZ policy as well as with the MDGs. Several features of Vitaplan respect gender related issues. The “do-no-harm approach” is respected as the measures support governmental strategy to establish a public health-care system.

3. Capacity Building

Context of this activity is the fact that civil society and its participation in policy-making activities are still quite weak. Many NGOs lack competences concerning management and administration. Capacity building of NGO staff therefore is needed as a strategy to improve their overall performance and long-lasting impact. Activities are soft skills trainings, vocational training, digital marketing, topics around democracy and special seminars for Kolping members in the rural area. The capacity development reacts to several demands among Serbia’s population. Due to strong partnerships with specialized organizations, universities, one highly professional performing NGO and a marketing agency, workshops of high professional standard could be realized. The huge number of applicants for the various trainings shows that the choice of topics is answering the interest and needs of the civil society. The trainings are both, effective and efficient as they cover many highly relevant topics, support participants from rural and urban area, consider gender aspects and offer trainings to a high number of participants with very low costs. It has a strong impact on the participants who can also be regarded multipliers of newly gained competences among larger society. These outcomes tackle the labour market as well as society in its development up to a EU member state.

The strong partnership contribution and the huge number of participants who are still linked to Kolping association give the capacity building a sustainable character. The number of Kolping members raised nearly 50% in the last three years, many of them young people.

Nevertheless, while there has not been more funding since January 2016, which enables Kolping management to go on with capacity building activities, both participants and network partners will lose their interest in the contact to Kolping.

4. Bio farming

Serbia's economy depends very much on agriculture. Approximately 25% of the population is working in this sector but a huge number beyond subsistence as the profit gained is too low. Consequently, 33% of the farmers have to be supported by family members or official bodies.¹ Modern and biologically harmonized methods might strengthen the competitiveness of Serbian farmers. Activities are the selection of farmers to participate in the bio-farming project, workshops with interested farmers, the so called 'Bioschools', support for merchandizing and marketing activities, exchange of experiences, know-how and strategies and participation in the huge international event called Biofest.

The Bio-farming tries to react on the challenging situation of farmers in the region. Nevertheless, there is no detailed analysis of concrete needs which leads to clear objectives and strategies. The activities undertaken rely mainly on training concerning bio-farming procedures. Networking activities, which bring farmers together and empower them to show up as a potential producer, have been initiated but mainly failed. The overall impact indicator of the bio-farming project is the improvement of the agrarian sector in Serbia. This must be considered as a complex dimension demanding very specific forms of intervention which could not be realized to a satisfying extent.

Main findings and recommendations

It became evident that the **service learning** activities impact on the individual, organisational and even on the systemic level. In order to strengthen this activity line

- A project leader, minimum one job position, budget for material and travel expenses and events are required.
- There should be fundraising initiatives to wider and strengthen the activities, school nets and curriculum-related topics.

There is a proven need for **home care** and the **Vitaplan** service. It turned out that Vitaplan, even if it is performing on a very high standard, needs some adjustment in order to make the service more reliable and more cost-efficient. At the same time, it became evident, that the humanitarian aspect within Vitaplan must not get lost – a fact that reduces efficiency in an economic sense. In order to strengthen the home care service

- Vitaplan and home care should be better interlinked
- home care, especially in rural areas, might be integrated in service learning activities
- Vitaplan as a service provider should expand. A second certified and health care examined person is required as it is risky to rely on only one person.
- a licensing procedure for Vitaplan should be envisioned for the next time in order to establish the agency in the health sector and secure the sustainability
- activities, which are not the concrete health service should be outsourced, e.g. the advocacy work, awareness raising, advertisement
- the foundation of a "home for the aged" should be considered under a long-term perspective
- tangible fundraising activities among economically stronger parts of the population

¹ ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external.../serbia_en.pdf (p. 13)

Within **capacity building** the linkage to the labour market is meaningful and worth to be expanded. In order to strengthen the activities, there should be

- a year-by-year planning procedure which identifies relevant topics for the different target groups
- different measures, like seminars, vocational trainings, internships, mentoring programme and mobility activities should be considered
- networking should be maintained in the same effective and impact-oriented way

Bio-farming project is more problematic concerning outcomes and sustainability. There are two different strategies recommended:

- The first is to close the bio-farming action line and to integrate training for farmers in the capacity building pillar. These activities might prepare the field for such kind of intervention in two or three years.
- The second choice would be to go for a highly specialized and well-structured bio-farming project which would need an expert to manage the project and funds to implement awareness raising activities, merchandizing support and advocacy work.

Management

Management of the Kolping association in Serbia is operating on a very high professional level. The different action lines are well organized and administrated. Huge potential in raising ideas and measures is evident. The cooperation with Kolping International is perfectly structured. The exchange with Kolping association in Kosovo and Ukraine turned out being very useful. Gender issues are considered within decision-making and planning processes.

Some few suggestions are:

- To develop an overall project strategy which builds on the interlinkage of the different action lines and makes use of synergies. There are topics that can be prepared within the service learning and be deepened by capacity building activities.
- This strategy should also be approved with the overall philosophy of Kolping and the development goals (BMZ; MDG; SDG)
- To strengthen networking among participants of the three action lines.
- To strengthen fundraising activities – a strategy which is already very successful.