

## EVALUATION BRIEF #3, April 2018

### Mid-Term Review of the Austrian Development Cooperation Kosovo Country Strategy, 2013-2020

#### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Austria is a long-standing partner of Kosovo's development, with an on-site presence since 2003. The current Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) Kosovo Country Strategy (CS) covers the period 2013-2020.

In the 2017 Mid-Term Review of the Country Strategy, the progress vis-à-vis the Strategy's objectives and results over the last five years was assessed. The review aimed at fostering learning and informing further improvements and potential adjustments for the remaining CS implementation period 2018-2020 as well as Austria's future approach and engagement in Kosovo beyond 2020.

ADC focusses in its current CS on two priority sectors: (i) economic development, particularly in rural areas; and (ii) support to the education, with a focus on higher education. It also covers one cross cutting theme – governance – and two cross cutting issues: gender equality and environment.

#### METHODOLOGY

The review followed a theory-based approach starting with the reconstruction of a Theory of Change of ADC support to Kosovo. A set of evaluation questions and indicators was devised and mapped against the theory. 123 key informants in Austria and Kosovo were interviewed, of which 39 were participants in focus group discussions. Through an online and offline survey among final users of ADC support 237 people were consulted. This was complemented with on-site observations and a review of available secondary literature. Seven projects were selected for in-depth review and the collected data analysed along three different case studies.

#### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Key findings and conclusions vis-à-vis the evaluation criteria are summarised below.

**Relevance** – The CS is *relevant* to Kosovo's own reform processes, Austria's foreign policy goals and the EU integration agenda. ADC's support addressed important institutional capacity challenges to respond to the reform of Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Economic development projects respond to the identified needs for supporting the revitalisation of agriculture and enhancing business opportunities for farmers and SMEs, particularly in South Kosovo.

However, the CS design can be improved, as the review finds that it is rather general and the scope of the interventions and intended outcomes are hard to understand.

**Efficiency** – Implementation of the CS and related interventions are assessed as *relatively efficient*. The Coordination Office in Kosovo (ACO) is lean and committed but the budget appears to be too small for the number of tasks and the large set of reform processes it aspires to influence. At intervention level, ADA and its partners invest a relatively long time in designing their interventions without a more formalised inception phase. Also, the review found only few cases containing baseline data for indicators to be tracked or risk management plans. While instruments such as the Small Projects Fund can boost visibility, one of the limitations of ACO is the lack of contingency funds which could be used for better visibility and promotion of ADC's contribution.

**Effectiveness** – ADA's support to Kosovo has been *relatively effective*. Expert support in the education sector resulted in improved pieces of legislation, of which the most important piece,

the HE Law, was not adopted due to factors beyond control of ADA and its partners.

With ADA's support, new agricultural business opportunities have been created thanks to the introduction of new crops or plants (e.g. raspberry production), or modernised handling of livestock or arable land. However, ADA invests little in innovative approaches to supply chains and scaling up to next levels of farming businesses needs. ADA's aspiration to more environmental friendly rural development has not yet brought results of changed mind-sets or approaches of farmers managing their land or livestock.

Support to gender, youth and vulnerable groups brought these issues on the government agenda which was noted positively within the review.

**Impact Prospects** – Results achieved from ADC's support have *mixed impact prospects*, particularly in education. The outcomes of the improved institutional and human resources for quality assurance in HE, VET, and linking education with labour market needs are extremely vulnerable. Results in economic development already impact on improved livelihoods of farmers and their families. Concrete evidence through detailed official migration data were however not available at the time of the review. Regarding ADA's gender initiatives, the review estimates that positive impacts on the lives of women in Kosovo are possible.

**Sustainability Prospects** – The sustainability of results has *mixed prospects*. The at the individual and to some extent institutional level acquired knowledge and skills are sustainable and in use as confirmed in the scope of this review. However, current reforms, particularly in education are jeopardised by the political and socio-economic context.

**ADA value added** – ADC's value added is primarily in its long-term, undivided and unchanged commitment to Kosovo's reforms.

ADA has found its niche in which it is perceived as a credible partner, open for cooperation and synergies.

**Coordination and Coherence** – Coordination with government counterparts, the donor and other development partners on the ground has been one of the strong sides of ADA's presence

in Kosovo. On the contrary, the Whole of Governance Approach (WGA) is in an embryonic stage. Despite Austrian institutions sharing vision and jointly understanding of the value and need for WGA, its operationalisation is not taking place systematically.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic recommendations (for policy making):

- S 1.** Continue holding ADA's niche in Kosovo
- S 2.** Utilise Whole-Government-Approach for better results.
- S 3.** Scale up support to farmers
- S 4.** Continue supporting HE reforms, support the VET sector, in particular QA
- S 5.** Continue supporting HE reforms, and linking HE and VETR with the labour market
- S 6.** Choose elements within governance and focus on them.
- S 7.** Integrate environment protection more strongly as requirement in support measures.
- S 8.** Continue investing in youth of Kosovo

Operational recommendations (aimed to inform implementation):

- O 1.** Establish and continually update risk analysis and risk management strategy for overall CS as well as each intervention.
- O 2.** Ensure that the CS integrates fully elaborated results matrix and/or ToC
- O 3.** Define baselines and related monitoring, evaluation and learning plan as mandatory and budgeted elements for interventions.
- O 4.** Define inception phase as mandatory for complex interventions.
- O 5.** Establish a contingency fund to react to arising needs.
- O 6.** Conduct an impact assessment of long term interventions.
- O 7.** Explore partnership opportunities with other development partners.
- O 8.** Continue advocating for institutionalisation of learning centres.
- O 9.** Introduce longer duration of projects, particularly strategic partnerships.
- O 10.** Conduct an evaluation of ADC's regional portfolio, including also perspective of and prospect for country benefits

The full report can be accessed at:

<http://www.entwicklung.at/en/ada/evaluation>