Serbia (Vojvodina) Local Employment Councils

Framework and setting

Geographic scale The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (with approx. two million inhabitants) is divided into seven administrative counties with three to twelve municipalities/towns. In the first half of 2009, there were 33 Local Employment Councils (LECs) established out of total 45 municipalities/towns in Vojvodina. The Provincial Employment Council was constituted in April 2009.

Policy framework In Republic of Serbia, the establishment of the employment councils is foreseen by the Law on Employment and Insurance. The employment council is established at national level (obligatory), and can also be established at province and municipal level, as well as by groups of municipalities (recommended).

Partnerships at work

Rationale The process of privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and transition to the market economy was accompanied by a high increase of unemployment rate being, for a long period, one of the biggest economic and social problems in Serbia. Through the establishment of LECs and setting up of partnership relations, the municipalities/towns have been given the opportunity to bring programmes and take measures to tackle unemployment and create new jobs in their territory, in accordance with local needs and possibilities.

Objectives The objectives of the Local Employment Councils (LECs) include:
- recognising and strengthening the capacities of social partners and establishing the social dialogue with the aim to improve the community development and provision of additional funds in order to increase competitiveness and added value;
- analysing local labour market, identifying problems and developing new ideas;
- elaborating programmes and measures to increase employment at the level of municipality/ town and their formalisation through the Local Employment Action Plans;
- contributing to the implementation of the National Employment Strategy and harmonising local employment policy with the other policies;
- establishing adequate business environment, stimulating entrepreneurship and small- and medium-sized enterprises development, as well as creating conditions for new jobs;
- human resource development and matching skills provision with the needs of employers;
- implementing measures to tackle unemployment, especially for disadvantaged groups.

Functions LECs have an advisory function and provide opinions and recommendations to the competent local self-government authority in relation to drafting an active employment policy programme, organising public works, additional qualification and trainings and employment fairs, allocation of subsidies for self-employment or creating new jobs. LECs are managing funds and allocation of funds from the budget of local self-government for the employment policy measures which are not being financed from other sources, including international projects or grants. The implementation of the active employment policy programme is carried out through the infrastructure of the National Employment Service (NES).

Policy areas Employment policy and local labour market, economic development, social responsibility and education

Policy tools/Instruments LECs define priorities and goals of the local employment policy, analyse weaknesses and define development possibilities, integrate isolated initiatives and employment programmes, and stimulate social dialogue.

Timeframe First LECs were created in 2005.

Partners LECs are composed of the representatives of local self-government, National Employment Service (NES), trade unions, employers’ associations, chamber of commerce, agency for SMEs development, employment agency and other employment and education associations and experts. In addition, associations dealing with protection of interests of certain categories of the unemployed can be also involved (e.g. persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, women, youth etc.).
Contracts
There is no formal contract between the partners, but in some cases, there are co-operation agreements signed between individual municipality/town and NES.

Legal status
None. LEC is an advisory working body with its own rules of procedure. LEC is established through the “Decision on the establishment of LEC” and “Decision on appointment of members”, and approved by the assembly or mayor of the respective municipality/town.

Sources of Financing
LECs do not have own financial resources. Funds for financing the employment programme are provided by the NES and/or local self-government and/or partners. Mutual relationships in the financing structure vary from one case to another.

Results
- Recognition of needs for joint partnership work;
- Establishment of trust and improvement of co-operation between the partners in LECs;
- Creation of more favourable economic environment;
- Improved stakeholders participation in solving unemployment problems in own territory;
- More efficient implementation of national active labour market policy measures and provision of funds for these purposes.

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