

HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR FRAGILE STATES

Higher vocational education and training institutions are key components of a strong enabling environment for private sector development in fragile states. Moreover, vocational educational programmes can bring communities together that have been divided by recent conflict.

Through education, young and ambitious people from different backgrounds are given the chance to create their own opportunities. Especially through applied technical education and associated internships and traineeships with companies, they can gain knowledge and relevant experience.

All SPARK's educational activities are linked with economic development. In our view, fragile states long term stabilization and development depend on educated youth. Since the proportion of youth in all fragile states is large, as are their proportion of unemployed, getting them into work is essential.

IBCM graduate, Biljana Nikolic, completed her internship at the firm "Deconta". After three months, she was offered full time employment within the company.



With the Higher Vocational Institutions Solution, SPARK wants to contribute to improving the quality of education, alongside increasing young people's employability. SPARK believes that schools and universities should not only produce valuable employees, but produce job creators and entrepreneurs as well.

In SPARK we are aware that any successful intervention will not only support good quality educational services, but will ensure the international recognition of these qualifications and establishing required quality assurance mechanisms. Moreover, it will ensure that the relevant groups that will operate these facilities will be linked into international networks of higher education.

Spark Best Practices In Building Higher Vocational Institutions

In Kosovo in 2008 SPARK established and is operating the International Business College Mitrovica – IBCM as an internationally recognized centre of excellence for higher vocational education. IBCM offers three study programmes:

1. Marketing and Management (AP) with a top up Bachelor programme in International Sales and Marketing;
2. Environmental and Agricultural Management (AP) with a top up Bachelor programme in Environmental and Agricultural Management;
3. Public Administration (AP) or Bachelor's degree in Public Service Management

Curricula have been developed together with representatives from the business community and all students follow one or more internships in companies or public administration as part of their education. The institution and its programmes are accredited by German Evalag. Double diploma's and degrees are awarded by the Danish Lillebaelt Academy of Higher Professional Education and the University College Lillebaelt

Students undertake projects with local companies and are encouraged to start up their own firms during their studies or grow an existing (family) business.



IBCM student Ms. Miranda Rugovaj has recently started her own strawberry farm, which she developed drawing on the skills obtained at IBCM. She believes that: "IBCM courses were often challenging. But I succeeded. And I now feel optimally prepared for developing my new company." In 2012 she won a Kosovo wide business competition financed by USAID.

IBCM student Ms. Miranda Rugovaj, Bachelor of ISM from IBCM with strawberries from her own farm

IBCM is an International English Language Testing System, (IELTS) and English for Speakers of Other Languages, (ESOL) registration centre and testing venue of the British Council.

As of 1 January 2015 SPARK is setting up two higher vocational training institutes for Syrian young professional. The project will assist young professionals working in local self administration and crisis response inside Syria to improve their management and organizational skills. The institutes will be based in Turkey and Syria and will enroll young professionals, equally men and women, from various ethnic backgrounds.

Within this project SPARK will work on conducting a feasibility study, implementation of a pilot (physical reconstruction of the facilities, curriculum development, teachers training, student selection, teaching, student examination), improving the management capacity of the Union of free Syrian academics and Ministry of Education and preparation for further expansion.

The IBCM currently has 260 full time students, of which 135 Albanian, 78 Serbian and 47 from other communities (Bosniac, RAE, Gorani, Turkish etc). It is thus not only highly mixed, but have very high enrolment from the most vulnerable communities in Kosovo. To date it has awarded 152 AP degrees whilst 47 students have already successfully completed their internationally recognized Bachelor degrees. Of these graduates, 68% finds almost immediately employment.

For more detailed information on SPARK Higher Vocational Institutions contact Yannick du Pont at y.du.pont@spark-online.org

DONORS:

Throughout the years SPARK has been able to deliver results thanks to a number of donors. The following are just a few of our donors that greatly contributed to SPARK's achievements:

Chevron, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Commission, King Baudouin Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Denmark, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UK Department for International Development (DFID), World Bank Group.

OUR CERTIFICATES:

SPARK is committed to meet the highest standards of organisational practice and ethics. We are proud to hold the following certifications:

- International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001. is an international quality control standard-setting body composed of representatives from various national standards organisations.
- Algemeen Nut Beogende Instellingen (ANBI), are recognised charitable not-for-profit organisations by The Dutch Tax and Customs Administration. Donations to these are tax deductible.
- Centraal Bureau Fondsenwerving (CBF) is an independent foundation that monitors fundraising by charities and certifies them with the goal to promote trustworthy fundraising and expenditure.
- International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid in order to increase its effectiveness in tackling poverty. Certified organisations provide open data and information on how they spend their funds.

