

THE REGIONAL
YOUTH
EMPLOYABILITY
SKILLS
PORTFOLIO

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ABOUT THE REGIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PORTFOLIO

It has been recognized that high percentage of youth in the Western Balkans (WB) is unemployed and lacks necessary knowledge and skills needed in the labour market. Even though there is strong evidence that there are multiple positive effects of non-formal education on increasing skills which boost employability of young people, this issue has not received enough attention on the regional level. The *Regional Youth Employability Skills Portfolio* summarizes results of the analysis in WB countries on key skills needed for successful adaptation of young people to the labour market as well as methods for their development through programmes of youth organizations and organizations working with young people. This document is based on the comparative study which has been conducted in six WB countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The analysis comprised of desk research and gathering inputs from relevant stakeholders and youth workers in particular.

The portfolio is designed to serve as a guide for youth workers and organizations in creating and implementing youth employability programmes. In addition, it can provide starting point for formulating policy measures regarding youth employment and youth employability. The sections of the document are aimed to be used for design of youth employability programmes which are data-informed, in line with the actual public policies and based on the group of common employability skills in WB countries and existing practices of the youth sector.

The Regional Youth Employability Skills Portfolio consists of following parts:

WHAT ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS?

The definition of employability skills

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN WB COUNTRIES

Overview of the current situation regarding youth unemployment and youth employability

THE POLICY RESPONSE - THE PUBLIC POLICIES AIMED AT THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Overview of the youth and employment policies as well as active labour market policies in each of the WB countries

SUMMARY OF KEY EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE NEED IN THE WB REGION

The list of important skills and competencies created on the basis of the review of research studies and consultations with key stakeholders

THE DESCRIPTION OF ELEVEN MOST IMPORTANT EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Eleven skills recognized as important in all or almost all countries are identified and briefly described

REVIEW OF PRACTICE OF THE YOUTH SECTOR IN THE WB REGION

The overview of programmes, projects and activities that are being carried out in WB countries which can significantly contribute to the improvement of employability skills and competencies

■ WHAT ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS?

The recognition of the importance of skills is crucial given that they are closely related to youth employability. For the individual, employability depends on the „knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work“ (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). The International Labour Organization defines employability skills as: ...the skills, knowledge and competencies that **enhance a worker's ability to secure and retain a job, progress at work and cope with change**, secure another job if he/she so wishes or has been laid off and enter more easily into the labour market at different periods of the life cycle. Moreover, it could be said that employability skills are „**the skills that almost everyone needs to do almost any job**“ (UK Commission for employment and skills, 2009).

■ YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN WB COUNTRIES

Young people are a vulnerable group on the labour market.

Youth unemployment is a pervasive problem in the countries in Europe. In the WB countries the rates of youth unemployment¹ (15-24) span from 31% to 54% and in each country they are almost twice as high as unemployment rates of the age group 15-64 (Table 1).

1 **The unemployment rate** refers to the percentage of economically active people who are unemployed. The unemployed include all persons above a specified age who during the reference period were: 1) without work, that is, were not in paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; 2) currently available for work, that is, were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and 3) seeking work, that is, had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment. (OECD Statistics)

Total and youth unemployment rates 2016, in %

■ 15-64 ■ 15-24 ■ 15-29

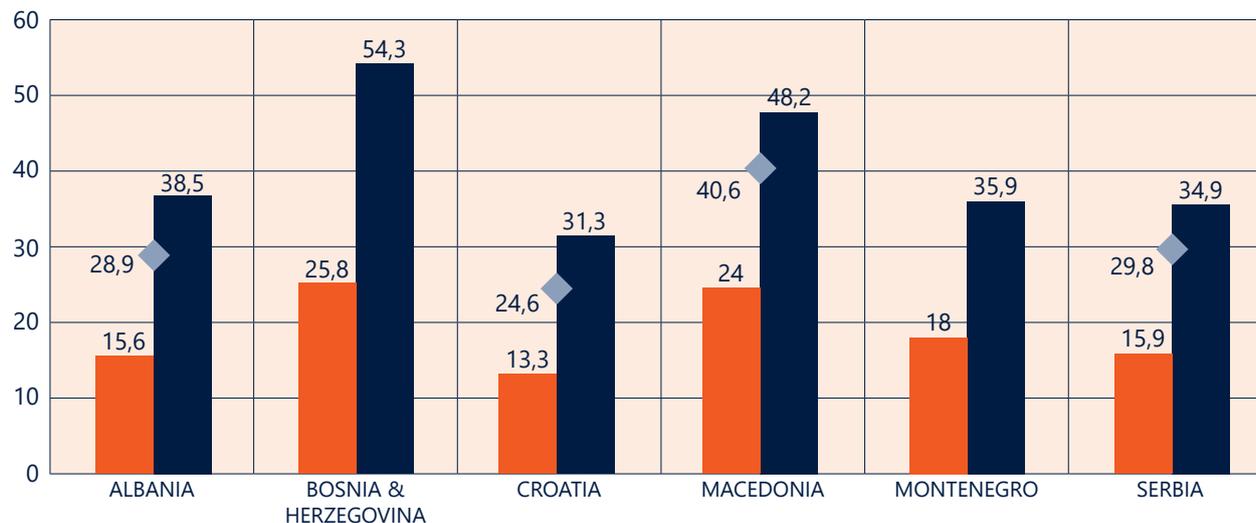


Figure 1: Unemployment rate of different age groups in WB countries in 2016

Source: Unemployment rates are calculated based on the data provided by national statistical offices.

Note: National statistical office of Albania does not calculate the unemployment rate for the age group 15-24 (the data refers to available average of unemployment rates in first two quarters of 2016) and the national statistical offices of Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro do not calculate data for the age group 15-29.

Compared to EU-28 averages, where the youth unemployment rate is 18.7 and the total unemployment rate 8.5, it can be noted that there is a general trend of much higher unemployment among young people. Nevertheless, **the absolute values of youth unemployment rates in WB countries are much higher and thus call for a special attention.**

Within the official statistics of the European Union, young people referred to are in an age from 15 to 24. However, as in Western Balkans countries young people are seen as the population aged 15 to 29, these rates should be considered as well. As the Figure 1 shows, the unemployment rates of the population 15-29 are significantly high as well.

Similarly, youth inactivity² rates are also considerably high, which is an important indicator of the status of young people on the labour market. The youth inactivity rate ranges from 63% to 70%, whereas the EU-28 average is 58.5. These rates are higher than corresponding numbers for the age group 15-64 in WB countries but also in the EU countries, since the EU-28 average is 27.1.

Some groups of young people are even more vulnerable on the labour market.

Especially worrisome is the high rate of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET – neither in employment nor in education or training). These young people do not have access to learning opportunities and are without a job and/or inactive, which further decreases their prospects of securing a job since they have no opportunity to develop relevant skills. The available data (Figure 3) indicates that the share of NEET youth is fairly high in WB countries.

2 **The inactivity rate** (by age group) is calculated as those considered inactive in the working age population (in other words those people neither in employment or defined as unemployed) divided by the working age population for that age group. (OECD Statistics)

Total and youth inactivity rates 2016, in %

■ 15-64 ■ 15-24 ■ 15-29

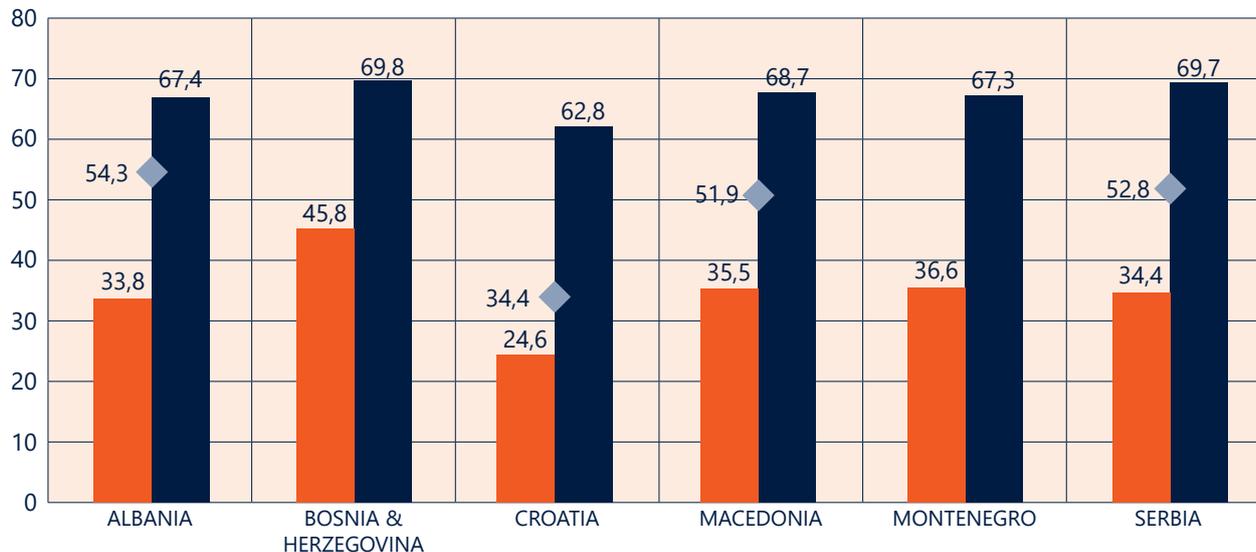


Figure 2: Inactivity rates of different age groups in WB countries in 2016

Source: Inactivity rates are calculated based on the data provided by national statistical offices.

Note: National statistical office of Albania does not calculate the inactivity rate for the age group 15-24 (the data refers to available average of inactivity rates in first two quarters of 2016) and the national statistical offices of Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro do not calculate data for the age group 15-29.

Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)
(% of youth population) in 2015

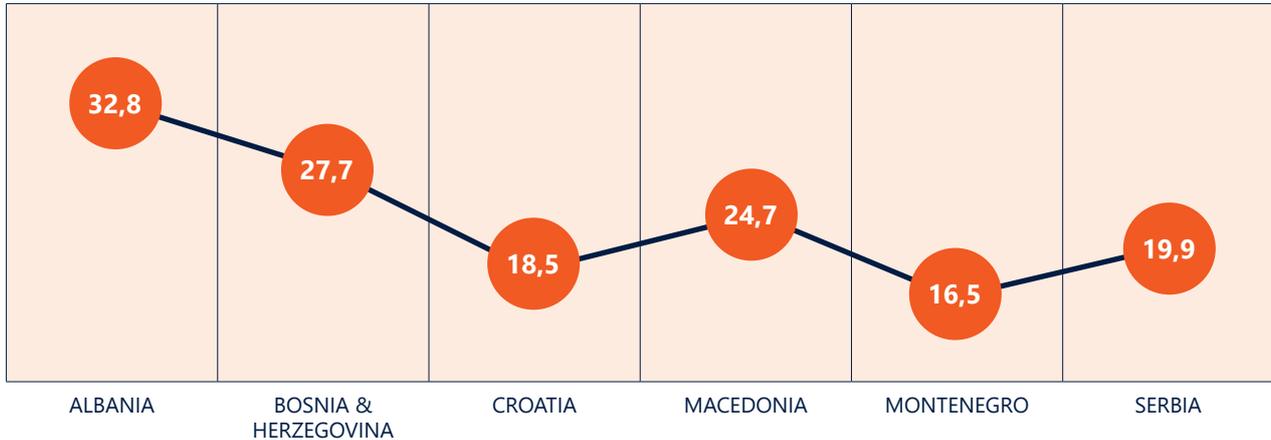


Figure 3: Share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (% of youth population) in 2015

Source: Data provided by the World Bank, World Development Indicators 2015

Moreover, in some countries there are gender differences regarding the participation in the labour market. For instance, according to the data from the national statistical office, comparing NEET youth by gender and their status in the labour market in Albania in 2016, it is noted that males are more active than females (50.6% of males are seeking for a job and are available to work, while for females this percentage is 28.4%).

It should also be noted that young people who belong to those groups that are more at risk of social exclusion than other population groups, such as persons with disabilities, the rural population and members of the Roma population, are more at risk of exclusion from the labour market as well.

The quality of the jobs young people hold is not satisfactory

Not only are many young people unemployed and inactive on the labour market, but also many of them find a job which is not stable and satisfactory. This is important since young people need not only to be employed, but to have access to decent work as well.

Publications on labour market transitions of young women and men (Mojsoska Blazevski, 2016, Djuric, 2016 and Marjanovic, 2016) show that informal employment among young people remains significant at 47.4% in Serbia, 59.5% in Montenegro and 48.1% in Macedonia. Particularly, youth living in rural areas are more likely to be engaged in informal employment than youth in urban areas and male workers are more often in informal employment compared to female workers. The study on the labour market transitions of young people in Serbia show that 17.3% of young people still work without the protection of a written contract and among those who do have a contract 39.1% of them are of limited duration. In Montenegro 13.4% of young people work without written contract, whereas 56.4% of young people have contracts of limited duration. Likewise, in Croatia 52% of young employees aged 15-29 in 2016 had temporary contracts, compared with an EU average of 32.4 % for the same age group (EUROSTAT, 2016).

The situation in Albania is comparable – the majority of young people in Albania are working as contributing family members (43.9% of total youth employment), with young women slightly more likely

than their male peers to be contributing family workers (49.2% and 40.1%, respectively) (INSTAT, 2015). This position of the youth brings them into an economically dependent position without proper legal protection which has significant implications for their social security status and entitlements, including coverage by health insurance and old-age pension, and it has negative impacts on their general social security and economic independence throughout their life. Moreover, it reduces their opportunity to develop relevant employability skills that they need for future professional development, thus significantly narrowing down their career prospects and the likelihood for them to obtain a quality job.

The formal education does not enable young people to acquire practical skills that are relevant in the labour market

One of the major problems is that the knowledge and skills of young people are not aligned with the labour market needs, which is the result of a slow educational reform in WB countries. It is widely recognized that the formal educational system does not enable young people to acquire practical skills that are relevant in the labour market. In fact, the notion that new labour market entrants are not equipped with the skills that employers need is one of the key evidence-based messages regarding youth unemployment in South East Europe (World Bank Group, 2016). This means that unemployed and inactive young people on the labour market are less likely to possess the practical knowledge and skills needed by the employers. Thus, the transition from school to the workplace, which is one of the most important periods in the life of every individual, is not easy and lasts long.

Unemployed youth by opinion about the main obstacle to finding work

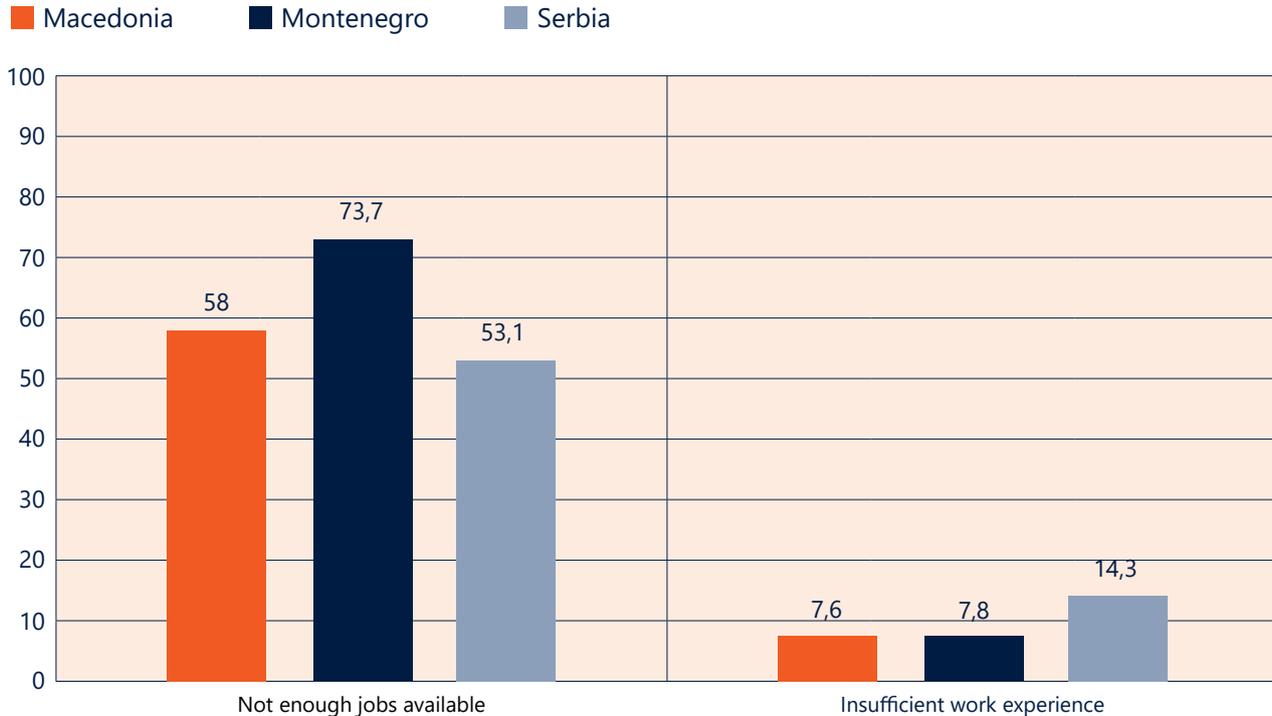


Figure 4: The opinion of young people on the main obstacle to finding work, by country

Source: Mojsoska Blazevski, 2016, Djuric, 2016 and Marjanovic, 2016

A certain number of young people does not see skills as a significant factor for finding a job

Since skills are undoubtedly the essential factor, the significant question is whether the young people perceive them as such. When asked about the main obstacle to finding work, the vast majority of unemployed young people in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia state that the main challenge is the lack of available jobs. Lack of work experience was seen as the main obstacle by a much lower number of young people (Figure 4).

Similarly, when asked specifically what the main factor for finding a job is, young people see expertise as important, but other factors are seen equally or more relevant such as acquaintances and friends and political connections (Figure 5).

These results suggest that a significant number of young people in WB countries is characterised by low level of trust in skills and work experience as major factors in securing employment. Even though young people rightfully recognize that there is a lack of available jobs in the labour market for various reasons, it is still essential for them to recognize the opportunities that are present and to acknowledge the importance of continuous improvement of skills. Consequently, some of the activities of the youth organizations and organizations working with young people should be directed at informing young people on employability skills and competencies and their relative significance compared to other factors in the process of obtaining and keeping a job.

Which of the following factors matters the most in finding a job (first choice)

■ Expertise
 ■ Education level
 ■ Luck
 ■ Acquaintances/Friends
 ■ Political connections
 ■ Other

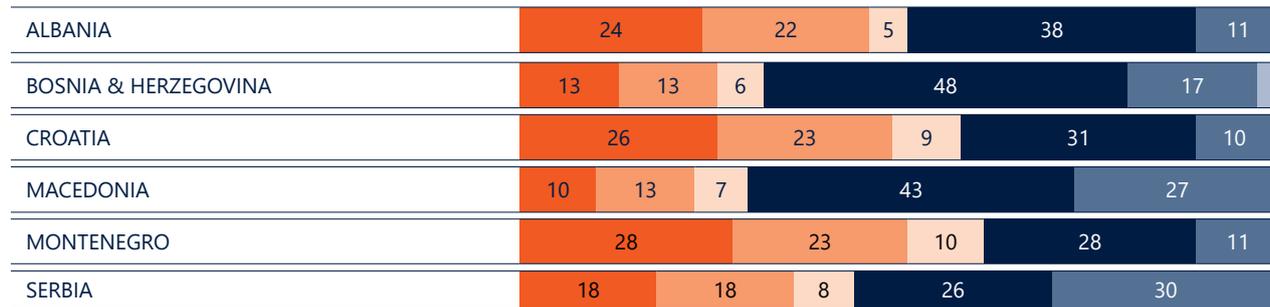


Figure 5: Which factors matters the most in finding a job, by country

Source: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Youth Survey Data (Çela, Kamberi, & Pici, 2013; Žiga et al., 2015; Ilišin et al., 2013; Latkovic et al., 2013; Knežević & Đukanović, 2016; Tomanović & Stanojević, 2015)

Given that the youth unemployment is widespread and since it is a serious problem in the Western Balkans countries, it has been given a special attention in public policies and programmes of youth organizations and organizations working with young people designed to alleviate it. Governmental measures can provide an enabling environment and systematic support to the young people, while youth organizations, due to their flexibility, can adapt more easily programmes and activities to the various needs of young people, reach out to young people from vulnerable groups and contribute to raising public awareness.

■ POLICY RESPONSE - PUBLIC POLICIES AIMED AT THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The issue of youth unemployment and a low level of skills have been mainly tackled through two groups of policies: employment policies and youth policies. Apart from these two groups of policies, sometimes this issue is also a part of education strategies, career guidance and counselling strategies or general documents regarding the development. For instance, in Montenegro ***the Strategy for Lifelong Career Orientation (2016-2020)*** foresees measures for development of skills, particularly career management and lifelong learning skills.

In the next section, the overview of actual policy measures is provided as guidance for the development of youth employability programmes which could contribute to the issues set on the policy agenda and thus foster cooperation of all relevant stakeholders.

YOUTH STRATEGIES

Albania: The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, within the framework of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (2014-2020) and taking into consideration public consultations findings developed the ***National Youth Action Plan (2015-2020)***. The aim of this plan is to develop and coordinate cross-sectorial youth policies in education, employment, health, culture and youth participation enhancement in social life and decision-making processes. The goal of the strategic objective “Youth employment through effective labour market policy” is to increase youth employment through effective labour market policy, to improve the regulatory framework, to support start-up programmes focused on youth entrepreneurship, to extend courses provided

in vocational education schools, and to establish competitions that promote innovative ideas. A novelty of the plan is the recognition of professional practices and internships and certifications and the recognition of diplomas and professional skills gained in the countries where young people may have emigrated or have been employed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a national youth strategy. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is developing the Youth Strategy for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017-2020. The National Assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted the Proposal of the third Youth Policy of the Republika Srpska for 2016-2020. The Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a Youth Strategy. ***The Draft Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth Strategy 2017-2020*** focuses on seven priorities. The first one is work, employment and youth entrepreneurship. ***The Youth Policy of the Republika Srpska 2016-2020*** focuses on five strategic priorities. The most important one is employability. Some of the measures in the Youth Policy RS and possible measures in the Youth Strategy FBiH are the following: 1) to upgrade skills of youth in seeking jobs and to provide counselling and orientation via public employment services, 2) to pay special attention to improving skills and qualifications of unqualified or under-qualified young people, 3) responsible educational authorities at all levels need to ensure systematic development of a new, live service market for additional and non-formal education, in order to meet basic demands for adopting the concept of lifelong learning, 4) to develop and promote lifelong learning and education of adults and socially excluded youth aged up to 30 years.

Croatia: According to ***the National Youth Programme 2014-2017*** the key issues faced by young people when entering the labour market in Croatia are a lack of previous work experience and a mismatch between their qualifications and the demand in skills. The aim of the National Programme is to improve the activities of government bodies and public institutions, their scope and responsibilities, to contribute to meeting the needs of young people and raising the quality of life for the purpose of their optimal social integration in accordance with European standards and guidelines "European

Strategy for Youth - Investing and Empowering” for the period from 2010 to 2018. The programme has eight thematic sub-groups including education, professional training and development in the context of lifelong learning and employment and entrepreneurship. It should be noted that youth organizations and organizations for young people are seen as partners regarding measures for youth employment and that this program recognizes volunteering as a way to gain knowledge and develop skills which might be useful for the labour market.

Macedonia: National Youth Strategy (2016-2025) – This strategy includes the topic “Employment and Pre-employment Support” in which it is stated that overcoming the high youth unemployment rate requires a systematic, complementary and coordinated approach in different fields and policies (education, labour and social protection) due to the complexity of the factors that contribute to high rates of unemployment. One of the objectives within this strategy is “Creation of accessible opportunities for all young people to acquire competences (knowledge, opinions, and skills) that are in demand on the labour market”. Measures under this objective do include those who are related to non-formal education, specifically supporting non-formal education providers to offer a minimum of basic training in soft skills in every municipality and recognizing competencies acquired through the non-formal education system.

Montenegro: Youth strategy 2017-2021 - Vision of young people in scope of the Strategy is the state of Montenegro is that young people are independent, involved in decision-making and implementation of public policies and have the opportunities for work and financial independence. In line with the vision of the Strategy young people in Montenegro are embellished by the following values, characteristics, skills and knowledge: *leadership, motivation, productivity, accuracy, self-control, independence, innovation, critical thinking, IT literacy, creativity, communication, responsibility, persistence, belief in themselves and others and foreign languages*. The part related to one of the 6 key outcomes i.e. the priorities of the strategy titled *Young People Have Access to Quality Education*, refers to measures which should be taken in order to improve the knowledge, skills and

competencies of young people that contribute to their employability. The strategy recognizes the importance of non-formal education in the development of skills and specifically lists actions for the improvement of social and emotional skills as well as entrepreneurial and ICT skills. It also states that it is necessary to inform young people of the life-long learning concept and the opportunities available to verify the knowledge and skills acquired outside of the formal education system.

Serbia: *The National Youth Strategy 2015-2025* defines nine strategic goals as desired changes to be achieved with respect to young people. One of these goals is the *Improvement of Employability and Employment of Young Women and Men*. This is planned to be achieved through the development of services and mechanisms that foster employability and employment of young people through cross-sectoral cooperation and better harmonisation of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in the process of lifelong learning with the needs of the labour market. It should be highlighted that one of the key results to be achieved is that there are developed support programmes that allow young people to acquire practical knowledge, skills and competencies through 1) the development of a model for evaluation of young people's transversal skills, as well as mechanisms for monitoring the created models 2) the support to associations that perform youth activities related to the development and implementation of programmes for transferring transversal skills in cooperation with other youth policy actors and 3) ensuring support for the programmes that allow young people to acquire practical knowledge, skills and competencies.

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

Albania: *The Employment and Skills Strategy 2014-2020* has the overarching vision to have a competitive economy and an inclusive society which are built on "higher skills and better jobs for all women and men" by 2020. The strategy has at its centre the growth of decent work opportunities

through effective labour market policies, providing quality education and vocational training for youth and adults, promoting inclusion and social cohesion, and strengthening the labour market and the qualifications system. Great importance is attached to the linkage between employment and the VET system. **The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI)** presents the national vision for the social and economic development of Albania over the period 2014 to 2020. The NSDI's priorities and objectives are aimed to increase to 20% the share of young people who perform professional practices in the public and private sector versus 2011; to conduct training programmes "to guide young people towards labour market demands and develop their skills" and to encourage initiatives and partnerships between public and private institutions in order to involve the private sector in the development of active employment programmes.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: The State level **Employment Strategy (2017-2020)** recognizes that the lifelong learning system is crucial for continuous adjustment of the human resources base to the market needs, given that the modern market economy requires a very different set of professional skills and competencies across all sectors. The strategy represents the implementation of the legal and institutional framework for establishing a system for adult education and training. It defines the overall and specific objectives: promotion of inclusive and job-rich growth and reduction of the productive employment and dignified work deficit, improvement of employability of women and men, particularly among vulnerable groups, improvement of efficiency, effectiveness and management of policies and labour market institutions.

Croatia: As an EU Member State, Croatia has committed to the Europe 2020 strategy and yearly translates the overall EU objectives into national targets in its **National Reform Programme**. A set of strategies and implementation plans referred to in the 2015 National Reform Programme (part of the European Semester) has been adopted in this context, including the **Active Labour Market Policy 2015-17**. On the European level, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, following the general package of measures for employment on the EU level, in 2012 Youth Employment Package was

adopted, focused on improving the transition of young people from the education system to work. This package includes a proposed **Recommendation to Member States on introducing the Youth Guarantee** to ensure that all young people up to age 25 receive a quality offer of a job, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The package also includes other key measures – European Alliance for Apprenticeship and Quality Framework for Traineeships, which are aimed at promoting internship programmes and initiatives across Europe and ensuring that all apprentices/trainees gain quality work experience in secure and fair conditions. The key actions also include the European Solidarity Corps aimed at creating opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in solidarity related-projects and Investing in Europe's Youth. Croatia presented a **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan** in 2013, updated in 2014 and in 2015.

Macedonia: In the **National Strategy for Employment of the Republic of Macedonia** (2016-2020), the following reasons are recognized as factors that contributed to youth unemployment: 1) low probability of finding jobs in the country and transition from university to the job; 2) the unwillingness of the employers in Macedonia to cover the cost of training on the job to inexperienced young people; 3) the mismatch of skills needed by the employers and skills obtained within the education system, 4) the trend among young people to commit to higher education and the fact that among them there is no interest in jobs for candidates with secondary education.

Montenegro: National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources Development 2016-2020 - Labour Market on the European Path. This strategy recognizes the problem of youth unemployment as one of the main problems of overall unemployment in Montenegro and one of the aims refers to improvement of efficacy of active labour market measures which include young people. Moreover, as part of the strategy, one priority states: "Improvement of qualifications and competencies harmonised with the needs of the labour market". Implementation of strategic goal should contribute to the reduction of qualification gap (between the current demand on the labour

market and knowledge and skills on the supply side of labour). Need for the improvement of the quality of education on all levels and harmonisation with the needs of labour market has been highlighted as special strategic goal. Dynamical changes on labour market are still not adequately followed with the development of so called soft-skills, whether in the case of formal or informal education. There is also the lack of research for the purposes of better anticipation of needs for skills on the labour market and accordingly the development of qualifications based on the outcome of learning and stimulus for lifelong learning through the additional training.

Serbia: Young people are recognized as a vulnerable group on the labour market by **the National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2011-2020)**. There are policy measures specifically aimed at improving the situation regarding their position, formulated in the yearly National Employment Action Plans. Moreover, within the **Employment and Social Reform Programme in the Process of Accession to the European Union (ESRP)**, which was adopted in June 2016, a special focus is given on the youth employment, given that the key identified challenges are high youth inactivity and unemployment on the one hand and poor quality and low relevance of all levels of education, resulting in insufficiently developed key competencies of youth on the other hand. One of the goals set out in the ESRP is the improvement of the status of youth in the labour market, including the measure for improvement of the internship and apprenticeship programme.

ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES

All countries have active labour market measures which among other groups target youth. They are important to be taken into account when designing youth employability programmes implemented by youth organisations in order to ensure that they are compatible and that they respond to the needs of young people who are not included by the existing measures. The overview of the active labour

market policies in WB countries has shown that they include a wide range of programmes: from direct support for employment and self-employment and organization of traineeships to trainings and career guidance and counselling services. In the text that follows the examples of these measures from the WB countries are listed.

Policies that represent the direct support for employment and self-employment include programmes such as:

- programmes of encouraging employment of unemployed youth aged 16-30 entering the labour market for the first time, unemployed female jobseekers from special groups and people with disability (Albania)
- the programmes "*With half - half of the first work*" - support for the employment of young people without work experience and support for self-employment "*Your initiative - your job*" (Croatia)
- programme of continued stimulation of employment and entrepreneurship in the function of development of small family business and support to unemployed persons in order to realise their business ideas (Montenegro)

Many active labour market measures include **organization of various trainings in job specific and transversal skills**. The examples of the trainings for transversal skills are:

- trainings and other activities for the development of career management skills needed to increase employability and to improve professional development (Croatia)
- the trainings in basic skills for foreign languages and computers for employment of young persons under 29 years and unemployed and training for youth entrepreneurship (Macedonia)

Specifically, many active labour market measures include **organizing traineeship programmes for young people** in order to provide them the opportunity to gain work experience, such as the traineeship programmes which offer the young unemployed people with the opportunity to gain practical skills and experience in the private sector organized in Macedonia and Serbia. Moreover, in Montenegro there is a new *Programme of Professional Training of Persons with Acquired Higher Education*, which is unique in the area of the Western Balkans. The main reason for the initiation of the Government's programme is the provision of support to young people with higher education and without work experience, through the nine-month training process, based on which they acquire knowledge, skills and competencies for independent performance of job, by connecting with the employers so they could find a job more easily.

Career guidance and counselling services (for many target groups, including young people) comprise of different set of activities, for instance:

- vocational guidance which includes a collection of various technical procedures to identify opportunities, interests and competence of users
- professional orientation, with the aim to help during the selection regarding the creation of one's professional career
- job search assistance (information about the labour market, counselling and employment guidelines, making a plan for job search)

In some countries, there is a **group of measures which are aimed directly at young people**. In Serbia, there is a set of measures undertaken by the National Employment Service with an aim to ensure that the young people possess relevant knowledge and skills for employment, named the Youth Package. It encompasses the following activities: 1) the assessment of employability of young person, 2) the creation of the individual plan of employment and measures needed for activation and improvement of

employability and 3) job broking or active employment measures (professional orientation and career counselling, the traineeship program, subsidies for youth employment and support program for the youth entrepreneurship including subsidies for young entrepreneurs...).

In addition to the existing services, in some countries it is being worked on the **development and implementation of pilot programmes for youth**. For instance, in Macedonia, these programmes are organized based on the local needs. In Montenegro, the Employment Agency has launched a pilot programme for unemployed young graduates titled *Young people are our potential, give them a chance*. This is a project aimed to develop entrepreneurial competencies and specific business skills related to the creation, management, and project implementation, as well as to enable cluster networking of subjects in the economy. It is designed to be realized in two parts. The first part includes theoretical work for the duration of three months, while the second part includes practical work and a work engagement in the programme for the duration of nine months.

Based on the review of policies in WB countries, it can be concluded that all countries have strategies which recognize the problem of youth unemployment. Moreover, they also **recognize the prevailing problem of an existing mismatch between the skills of young people and the skills needed on the labour market** and they foresee measures for the improvement of the situation. Some countries also specifically recognize the importance of non-formal education in the process of the development of skills. In addition, all countries have **active labour market policies which more or less directly target young people** and which foresee the development of their skills through various programmes.

The question of evaluation of existing measures targeting young people is still open. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina it is noted that the lack of data on the effects of the existing program of

active labour market policies hinders the adoption of specific proposals for the improvement of their design. Moreover, the type of measures is questioned: measures of employment and self-employment subsidies dominate among the existing active labour market policies while insufficient attention is being paid to measures of training and counselling for unemployed persons as well as to measures that aim to increase the competitiveness and prospect of the unemployed in the labour market.

■ SUMMARY OF KEY EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES NEEDED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WB REGION

In each of the WB countries a **review of research studies** has been conducted, including the studies conducted by employment services, employers' unions, chambers of commerce and youth organizations. The main research question in these studies was **which skills and competencies do young people need in order to secure employment and to retain a job**. In some studies, this question was asked to employers and in others, the young employed or unemployed people were asked for their opinion.

These studies employed various research methods: from surveys and content analysis to interviews and focus groups. Nevertheless, the most frequent type of research study in this review was the survey of employers on what they expect from their future employees.

Based on the review of research studies and consultations with key stakeholders, the list of the skills and competencies which are seen as the most important in each of the WB countries was made. These skills and competencies are presented in Table 4. There is a large number of skills identified as important, under a variety of names, however there is a significant overlap between them. Namely, based on this summary it can be noted that some of the skills are mentioned as important in all or majority

of the countries, which indicates that these are common employability skills which youth in the WB region need. All skills were categorized in 5 groups of transversal skills/competences according to a classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.

Table 4: Summary of the key employability skills and competencies

ALBANIA	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	CROATIA	MACEDONIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA
communication skills	communication skills	communication skills	communication skills	communication skills	communication skills
teamwork skills	teamwork skills	teamwork skills	teamwork skills	teamwork skills	teamwork skills/ cooperation
foreign language skills	foreign language skills	foreign language skills	foreign language skills	foreign language skills	foreign language skills
enthusiasm at work, motivation	positive attitudes toward work in general	personal development	desire for learning and self-improvement, ambition, energy, dynamism	motivation, personal dedication	readiness to learn, active learning
IT and computer skills	IT and computer skills		IT and computer skills	computer and technical skills	computer skills

- Attitudes and values at work
- Application of knowledge
- Thinking skills and competences
- Language and communication
- Social skills and competences

ALBANIA	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	CROATIA	MACEDONIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA
ability to learn	flexibility	ability to adapt	flexibility		adaptability
skills on solving problems		problem-solving skills	solving complex tasks	problem-solving skills	problem-solving skills
honesty	strong work ethic	work ethics	confidentiality	work ethics	
working under pressure			ability to perform well under pressure	ability to perform well under pressure	ability to perform well under pressure
organizational/ planning skills, management skills, meeting deadlines	time management		the art of management		time management, organizational skills
	entrepreneurial skills		entrepreneurial skills	entrepreneurial skills, the awareness of the business environment	entrepreneurial skills
		decision-making		decision-making	decision-making
creativity		creativity and innovation	creativity		

- Attitudes and values at work
- Application of knowledge
- Thinking skills and competences
- Language and communication
- Social skills and competences

ALBANIA	BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	CROATIA	MACEDONIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA
			responsibility	responsibility and independence	readiness to accept responsibilities/independence
correctness			accuracy	attention to detail	
	critical thinking	critical thinking			critical thinking
managing difficult situation				conflict management	conflict management
skills in reading, writing and doing basic calculations			skills for data entry and reading of data	processing and interpretation of numerical data, functional literacy	
lead effectively			leadership skills		
	analytical, quantitative skills				analytical skills
			negotiation skills		
		initiative and proactivity			

Attitudes and values at work
 Application of knowledge
 Thinking skills and competences

Language and communication
 Social skills and competences

■ THE DESCRIPTION OF ELEVEN MOST IMPORTANT EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Based on the summary of the key skills and competencies which are mentioned as important in each country, the eleven skills which are recognized as important in all or almost all countries are identified and briefly described:

- 1. Communication skills** – “Clearly conveying information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the audience and helps them understand and retain the message”. (Harvard University Competency Dictionary) “Communication skills include the ability to: listen and observe to gain understanding; clearly and effectively relate ideas; use strategies and skills to work effectively with others; and analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of formal and informal communications”. (Enhancing Youth Employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to core work skills)
- 2. Teamwork skills** – “Actively participating as a member of a team to move the team toward the completion of goals”. (Harvard University Competency Dictionary) “Teamwork is all about being able to operate smoothly and efficiently within a group. Teamwork skills include the ability to make decisions, including specifying goals and constraints; consider risks; and generate and evaluate alternatives. It requires cooperation and leadership and following orders.” (Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to Core Work skills)
- 3. Foreign language skills** -“It is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts (in education and training, work,

home and leisure) according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding". (Key Competences for Lifelong Learning — a European Reference Framework)

4. **Desire for learning and self-improvement** - "Actively identifying new areas for learning; regularly creating and taking advantage of learning opportunities; using newly gained knowledge and skill on the job and learning through their application". (Harvard University Competency Dictionary)
5. **IT and computer skills** - "Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in information and communication technologies: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet". (Key Competences for Lifelong Learning — a European Reference Framework)
6. **Ability to adapt and flexibility** - "Maintaining effectiveness when experiencing major changes in work tasks or the work environment; adjusting effectively to work within new work structures, processes, requirements, or cultures". (Harvard University Competency Dictionary)
7. **Problem-solving skills** - "Problem-solving skills include recognizing long-term consequences of solutions to problems and probing, devising, implementing, and evaluating a plan of action for problem resolution. Individuals need to be able to evaluate information or situations; break them down into their key components; consider various ways of approaching and resolving them; and decide which is the most appropriate". (Enhancing Youth Employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to Core Work skills)

8. **Work ethics** - "The work ethic is a cultural norm that advocates being personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does and is based on a belief that work has intrinsic value. Research has shown that the many characteristics of work ethic can be summarized using three terms - interpersonal skills, initiative, and being dependable". (Work ethics website)
9. **Ability to work under pressure** - "Maintaining stable performance under pressure or opposition (such as time pressure or job ambiguity); handling stress in a manner that is acceptable to others and to the organization". (Harvard University Competency Dictionary)
10. **Planning and organisational skills** - "Establishing courses of action for self and others and effectively managing one's time and resources to ensure that work is completed efficiently". (Harvard University Competency Dictionary)
11. **Entrepreneurial skills** - "Skills relate to proactive project management, effective representation and negotiation, the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams, the ability to judge and identify one's strengths and weaknesses, and to assess and take risks as and when warranted. An entrepreneurial attitude is characterised by initiative, pro-activity, independence, motivation and determination to meet objectives". (Key competences for lifelong learning — a European reference framework)

■ REVIEW OF PRACTICES OF THE YOUTH SECTOR IN THE WB REGION

Since the problem of youth unemployment is acute, it needs to be dealt with urgently and requires mutual cooperation of all stakeholders. Youth organizations and organizations working with youth have a long track record in conducting non-formal learning programmes which contribute to the improvement of young people's employability skills, even though these programmes are not always designed with this purpose. Given that the evaluation of these activities has shown that they can be very effective, youth organizations have become more involved in the process of designing and implementing programmes which are directly related to youth employability.

A special contribution of youth organizations is that comparing to the government institution they can more easily reach the NEET youth and include them in different programmes. Furthermore, due to their flexibility, youth organisation can design programmes and activities according to the characteristics and needs of specific subgroups of young people, such as Roma, young people with disabilities and youth from rural areas.

The employability skills can be developed through the programmes of non-formal education!

Results of the Study on the Impact of Non-formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability have shown that there are employability skills that can be developed through non-formal education. The study gathered information through a literature review; the analysis of large-scale secondary data sets and various surveys of employers; a survey of youth organisations based in over 40 European countries; a survey of young people; a stakeholder workshop and in-depth telephone

interviews with employers. According to survey of young people, communication skills, team-working skills, adaptability and flexibility, self-confidence and intercultural skills are amongst those skills developed to a greater extent in youth organisations. Moreover, out of the top skills and competences most often mentioned as demanded by employers, five are also amongst those developed to a high extent through involvement in youth organisations (communication skills, decision-making skills, team-working skills, self-confidence and organisational/ planning skills).

As yet, a similar survey in WB countries has only been conducted in Serbia (National Association of Practitioners in Youth Work, 2014). Most of the competencies that were identified in the previous study as competencies that can be developed through non-formal education have been recognized in this study as well (team work, communication skills, intercultural sensitivity, and flexibility). Moreover, some new competencies were identified as well (readiness to learn, innovativeness, knowledge about internet resources). Young people and employers agreed in both studies that the experience of non-formal education is valued in the process of job selection.

There are various effective youth employability programmes in WB countries.

Given these results, there is need to identify how youth organizations and organizations working with young people can strive to increase the youth employability skills. There are multiple programmes, projects and activities that are being carried out in WB countries which can significantly contribute to the improvement of employability skills and competencies.

Examples of practise of the youth sector in WB countries that have been identified can be categorized in the following groups:

- NEEDS ANALYSIS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
- PROVISION OF TRAININGS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
- ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
- ORGANIZATION OF QUALITY INTERNSHIP AND TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMMES
- ORGANIZATION OF VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMMES
- CAREER INFORMING ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND CAREER COUNSELLING
- ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

It should be noted that some of these examples include more than one activity, e.g. the internship programmes are combined with the provision of trainings for development of employability skills or needs analysis is combined with career informing. This can make them even more effective and can be recommended as an example of good practice.

The list of good practice examples is endless; there are plentiful of valuable and effective youth employability programmes in WB countries conducted by the youth sector. The examples are rather meant to be illustrative of some of the existing initiatives in this area as a guideline to future analysis of these types of programmes and design of other youth employability skills initiatives.

NEEDS ANALYSIS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

In order to design youth employability programmes that correspond to the needs of young people it is advisable to carry out needs analysis or alternatively to use existing research studies. Needs analysis can show which youth employability programmes and how should be organized to be most effective.

#1 Need for new services that foster youth employability and the role of youth work

THE AIMS: The main aim of the research was to determine whether there was a need for new services that foster youth employability.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The three research tasks were carried out: 1) exploring the needs of employers and the needs of young people; 2) exploring the existing services that contribute to the employability of young people and analysing their effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of employers and young people; 3) exploring the potential of youth work for new services for youth employability and identifying its place in the network of service providers that encourage employability of young people.

THE MAIN RESULTS: According to the research results young people in Serbia have expressed the need for **more internship programmes** as a service for improvement of employability. In the process of organizing these programmes, youth organizations are seen as a mediator between young people and employers. Moreover, young people expressed the **need for services which target employed young people who need support for keeping a job**. Furthermore, it is recognized that the role of

youth organizations could be **gathering information on the existing services for improvement of employability**. In addition, it is assessed that there is an absence of services for improvement of employability of **young people from vulnerable groups**. Generally, it is noted that the services for improvement of employability are rarely based on the previously assessed needs of the young people which should be changed.

MORE INFORMATION: The research study was conducted by the National Association of Youth Workers – NAPOR in Serbia, and the research report can be found at: www.youseefor.me

#2 Youth development service

THE AIMS: To develop an innovative model for the improvement of employability skills of students from poor backgrounds who come from underdeveloped municipalities in Serbia. The ground research and analysis have been conducted in order to develop an innovative traineeship model which would correspond to the needs of all key stakeholders. The model is based on bringing together students of the local university and the business sector, combining diagnostic and practical traineeship elements including the elements of co-working and co-living space for young people.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The key activities that have been conducted include 1) the analysis of needs and possibilities for realization of traineeships through consultations with students, representatives of business sector, entrepreneurs, representatives of local self-government and civil society organizations and 2) meetings with national and transnational companies, potential sponsors and institutions regarding the possibilities for their involvement in the traineeship organization.

THE MAIN RESULTS: 1) Created database of local actors (representatives of faculties, small and medium enterprises, municipalities) interested to take part in traineeship organization and improvement. The database consists of information on occupations and skills that are in demand on the territory of underdeveloped municipalities. 2) The research study on the attitudes of local actors on improvement of students' employability has been conducted. It involved 46 students and 36 business representatives. 3) Created pilot project "Practical Academy" based on the conclusions and recommendations of the research study.

MORE INFORMATION: The activities were implemented by the Association for Local Development Kamenica in partnership with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit. More information can be found at: www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs

PROVISION OF TRAINING FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Since employability skills are still not sufficiently represented in the curriculum in formal education, the provision of trainings for their development by youth organizations can be crucial. Moreover, youth organizations can involve in this programmes participants with fewer opportunities.

#1 Training in key competencies - "Coaching for Employment"

THE AIMS: Labour market insertion of vulnerable groups, especially young people from Roma/Egyptian community.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: During the 18-month coaching cycle in Albania within the initiative "Coaching for Employment" young people learn core skills in the classroom and during hands-on training courses, extended internships, business start-up trainings, individual business counselling sessions, and small group activities and sharing. The cycle combines various training components with individual career guidance for trainees under close guidance provided by a coach. The personal guidance has been shown to be crucial for the young trainees.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: personal, social, methodological, and technical competencies or skills

THE MAIN RESULTS: Already more than 1,000 young people seeking employment have completed the coaching cycle and **60% found a job or started their own businesses.**

MORE INFORMATION: www.swisscontact.org

#2 Establishment of Business Inclusion Project in Multi-Ethnic Communities

THE AIMS: To enable young people from municipalities other than Skopje to receive opportunities for development of employability skills, which they rarely have, due to the problems of uneven development in Macedonia and the concentration of development only in Skopje.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: Providing support to new businesses and companies, support for opening a new company, self-employment, social business, microbusinesses, inclusive businesses, start-up businesses etc. owned by youth and women in two rural multi-ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia. The support is focused at the process of establishing and developing the appropriate products and services, marketing as well as establishing market linkages, product promotion and sale.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: entrepreneurial skills

THE MAIN RESULTS: As a result of these activities **50 companies have been started.**

MORE INFORMATION: The company "Strategic development consulting" - implemented the program. More information can be found at: www.blogs.fco.gov.uk/ukinmacedonia

#3 Start your own business

THE AIMS: To provide the opportunity for young unemployed people to improve their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge and develop their business ideas through adequate training and mentoring program.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The initiative was realised in partnership with the two companies from the local community. The activities that have been carried out are as follows: 1) informing young people on the activities and selection of participants, 2) realization of training in duration of 20 working days for 30 young people, 3) organization of competition and selection of 12 participants for the next phase, 4) organization of the advanced training for 12 participants, 5) providing mentorship support for the participants and 6) awarding the best business ideas.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: entrepreneurial skills

THE MAIN RESULTS: Within the piloted initiative 30 young people had an opportunity to participate in the basic training on entrepreneurship; 20 of them passed the advanced level of business plan development, 10 specific business ideas were developed and 6 companies founded. Through this process, the local community became informed on the importance of non-formal education, lifelong learning and mentorship program for development of entrepreneurship of young people.

MORE INFORMATION: The initiative was implemented by the Regional Education Centre Banat in Serbia in partnership with the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit. More information can be found at: www.socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs

#4 More Experience for More Opportunities!

THE AIM: To improve social inclusion and employability of Roma people through active inclusion initiatives in Ruma.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The programmes consisted of: training of the local stakeholders about the importance of social inclusion and employability of Roma people, testing and piloting the introduction of Roma Labour mediator in Ruma territory, training of young Roma people (18-30 years) on employment orientated topics, implementing traineeships in local public utility companies and implementing awareness raising campaigns.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: skills for job interviews, how to write CVs, legal rights, work ethics, job-specific knowledge and skills, the communication skills, teamwork, career management skills.

THE MAIN RESULTS: 90 young Roma people trained on employment orientated topics (job interviews, how to write CVs, the communication skills, team work); 30 young Roma people in local public utility companies had the opportunity to gain practical experience and at the same time to improve their skills and knowledge through trainings; informative Handbook "Good Practices in Social Inclusion through Employment of Roma" was developed.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- We experienced that it is sometimes challenging to understand various aspects of cooperation between all relevant local stakeholders that contribute to improvement of the Roma situation. It is necessary to make additional efforts in order to improve networking and cooperation between key institutions at local level, but as well as on the national level.

- To motivate young Roma to be actively involved in the internship program, we would recommend putting special focus on motivation of young Roma women. Moreover, it is immensely important through all activities to include young Roma activists.
- It is crucial to provide support to the companies and create conditions for implementation of the quality internship program (develop plan and program of the internship programmes, monitoring and evaluation plan and awarding certificates to participants which should list key competences which have been developed)

MORE INFORMATION: The programmes have been conducted by the National Youth Council of Serbia in cooperation with Municipality of Ruma and the Association of Roma persons from Ruma.

ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGNS ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The analysis has shown that young people in WB countries do not always perceive the value of skills for employment. Since it is necessary for them to take into account all the factors that are relevant for (self) employment, public campaigns can be an effective method for raising awareness on the importance of employability skills thus increasing the motivation of young people for their development.

#1 RisiAlbania

THE AIMS: Enhancing youth employment i.e. to create better employment and income opportunities for young people. Apart from promoting job creation, the intervention is promoting the integration of young people into the labour market focusing on the effective job intermediation between young people and employers, by facilitating the access of young women and men to labour market information, career counselling, quality job matching services and public debates on labour market issues.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: There was the intervention on mainstream media channels (pilot radio programmes, TV programmes, print media and online media) to develop programmes that provide accurate and updated information about the labour market using formats that appeal and attract young job seekers. It was envisaged that the improvement in information would influence the choices that young people make about employment and tertiary and vocational education and therefore impact on the ability of young people to find employment.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROMOTED: Desire for learning and self-improvement

THE MAIN RESULTS: The evaluation has shown that media products are having a significant impact on the perceptions and behaviour of audiences as **71% of the audience stated that the media products have changed their perception around employment** – this means more than 78 000 people. Not only were the young people influenced, but also their parents and family members and employers and training service providers. One of the areas where these changes have been shown as particularly strong is the perceptions regarding desirability of careers and skills that are in demand from employers. There were changes regarding the employment of young people as well - **almost one third (32%) of all the young people who watched, listened or read the programmes reported that they had directly influenced their behaviour.** Investigations into this showed that the audience had changed decisions around education and training, changed the way they looked for a job or had embarked on establishing their own business.

MORE INFORMATION: More information can be found at: www.risialbania.al

#2 I WORK, I LEARN! campaign

THE AIMS: This campaign aims to promote any type of job or profession that is accessible and practiced by young people in Albania, while promoting the value of learning and developing skills in every job. The negative phenomenon of young people being apathetic and being ready to only work in professions directly deriving from their educational fields, sometimes leaves them out of the labour market for years. Some types of jobs, such as a waiter/waitress, a bartender, a call centre operator etc., are at times being judged as “inappropriate” or “second class jobs” for those who have graduated from universities

or those aiming to work in their profession immediately after their education. On the other side, we face nowadays the situation where there are a lot of other youngsters that need to have a job and when they find one in the service sector, they are faced with prejudices in the society and sometimes even in their own families and among their friends.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The campaign has started with the creation of the working group composed of young volunteers and EVS working with the Beyond Barriers Association (BBA). After training the core group and drafting various steps of action, BBA launched an online Poster Campaign through the social media, while it was also promoted on national TV, on Top Channel through an evening program, in order to maximize its results on increasing awareness. Through this campaign young people were promoted, who are working in these professions and who are proud about the work they are doing. After contacting them in their job placement and explaining the idea of the campaign, we talked to those who were willing to share their example with other people in order to promote the learning and development of skills in the job and in order to minimize the prejudices related to their profession.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROMOTED: Desire for learning and self-improvement, work ethics.

MORE INFORMATION: The campaigns have been implemented by the Beyond Barriers Association (BBA) in Albania. More information can be found on the website.

LESSONS LEARNED: "After the campaign was launched we received very positive feedback regarding the social media impact. Several youngsters contacted us to either congratulate or to even express their willingness to be promoted. We had cases of youngsters contacting us and saying that they had felt ashamed of being waiters for years and through this campaign they have realized that they can feel proud and that they are able to tell others that their profession enables them to learn and to grow on

the personal level. We contacted again some of them who were in the posters and they expressed that they were happy after the publication of the posters because they have received encouragement and admiration for promoting their job in the social media. Three of them also stated they had received positive messages telling them that it was inspiring to see that they are not ashamed of what they are doing, but that they are actually proud of it.

It was for this reason, for all the positive feedback that we prolonged the campaign and used it as best practice with other youth in order to promote and raise more awareness about skills, attitudes and competencies development in the workplace, regardless of what the job actually is.

ORGANIZATION OF QUALITY INTERNSHIP AND TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMMES

Internship and traineeship programmes can significantly contribute to the improvement of employability skills of young people. However, it should be noted that they need to be organized in line with quality standards in order to provide young people with valuable working experience.

#1 "Knowledge and skills for jobs!" and "Active students for sustainable progress"

THE AIMS: To contribute in the improvement of youth employment through the programme of targeted training sessions and internships for students and graduates.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The target group of the initiative "Knowledge and skills for jobs!" are graduates who are registered by Employment agency. Specific activities are training modules for 60 participants and the organization of paid internship in institutions of state administration, civil society organisations, media and private companies with the provided mentor support.

The target group of the initiative "Active students for sustainable progress" are students from the Faculty of Political Sciences of University of Montenegro. Activities that are organized are study visits to organisations and companies, workshops on skills as well as professional mentorship and practice in civil society organisation or media organisation for a duration of one month. Results of internship of these students will be in the form of articles, reports and studies related to key topics within current affairs in Montenegro, which will come as good basis for later adjustment to labour market conditions.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: Writing of projects financed from EU funds, policy paper writing, public performance, media reporting, communication skills, and teamwork skills.

MORE INFORMATION: The programmes have been conducted by the Centre for Civic Education.

#2 Group of programmes “Better Public Administration through Internship Placement” and the “PRAKSAM – Introducing young people to the world of work”

THE AIM: Providing support to development of youth employability by creating opportunities for young people to gain working experience and develop their skills.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: The programmes consisted of organization of internship programmes in public institutions and in the private sector. The internship programmes complied with the quality standards established on the EU level i.e. they were characterised with setting of the learning goals, establishment of the mentorship system, the written contract, limited duration and monitoring and evaluation.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: Job-specific knowledge and skills, the communication skills, teamwork, career management skills and work ethics.

THE MAIN RESULTS: **25 young people** in public institutions and **57 young people** in companies have had the opportunity to gain practical experience and at the same time to improve their skills and knowledge through training sessions; **30 mentors** in the companies had the opportunity to develop their skills through the training; all participants reported that they had **developed their soft skills** (communication skills and team work) **and the job-specific knowledge and skills.**

MORE INFORMATION: The programmes have been conducted by the Belgrade Open School.

#1 and #2 LESSONS LEARNED:

- There should be a **careful selection of the institutions and the companies** which will provide internships for young people.
- The number of applications of young people will highly depend on **the provision of financial compensation, the place where organization/company is situated and the size of the organization/company**, so this should be taken into account when the internship program is being planned.
- The organization of internship programmes should be accompanied by the **organization of trainings for both mentors in organization and companies and interns**. The aims of the trainings should be both improving the skills that interns and mentors need for successful completion of internships, but also the adjustment of their expectations from the program.
- The **monitoring and evaluation of the internship programmes** is crucial so that there could be timely reaction if the internship is not being conducted in line with the quality standards.

#3 "First Work Experience for Lifelong Success" and "EU work experience to increase employability"

THE AIMS: Increasing employability of young people and building their competitiveness on the labour market by supporting them to acquire practical experience and learn how to apply skills that have been previously acquired in education schemes.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: Within initiative "*First Work Experience for Lifelong Success*" seven students from secondary vocational schools were placed in organizations from five countries (Belgium, Slovenia, Turkey,

Greece and Portugal) for a two-month hands on working experience improving their employability. The organizations were from non-governmental sector involved in the provision of educational and practical work experiences for people on the labour market. A specific accent was put on the follow-up stage of the project in putting this experience in the context of a real benefit, especially through acknowledgment of the learning outcomes.

The initiative *"EU work experience to increase employability"* supported six young women in the process of gaining practical knowledge in various areas of their work in four EU partner organizations from Belgium, Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. The selection process focused on candidates with fewer opportunities who had little work experience and who encountered obstacles on the job market, especially participants with an educational background in social sciences such as law, marketing, economy or technological engineering. The participants went through a preparation stage in which they had language classes and cultural preparation. The follow-up activities involved meetings with the participants in order to check their learning outcomes.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: job-specific knowledge and skills, the communication skills, teamwork, work ethics, managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, and self-confidence

THE MAIN RESULTS: These two programmes had positive outcomes for all the parties involved. Through the program *"First Work Experience for Lifelong Success"* the interns developed new skills and learned about the youth sector while meeting a different culture and exploring new opportunities. Moreover, the working experience within *"EU Work Experience to Increase Employability"* for the participants meant gaining self-confidence, increasing their independence and even take into consideration the re-qualification. They gained managerial and communicational skills, they learned to

adapt to a multicultural environment and deal with unexpected situations related to accommodation, transportation, communication and daily routine.

MORE INFORMATION: The programmes were implemented by the Center for Intercultural Dialogue. For more information please visit the web page: www.cid.mk

#3 LESSONS LEARNED: The key point in these programmes, for those who design the project, is to carefully think about the target group and to really match the needs of the market with the possibility of the development of competences of the target group. Do your research well and have in mind to include young people from secluded communities, with fewer opportunities, young people who are living a lack of social and economic advantage, and especially those who really are in need of that sort of experience. These young people may have never travelled alone before, they may have never had the opportunity to leave their country or get on a plane, for instance. Therefore it takes a lot of patience and precaution on the organization's side to maintain a contact with the participants throughout the whole process of their skill and competence development, and possibly, wherever applied, help the participants match their newly acquired skills with a new internship in their countries, a training to prolong their experience and/or a new working position that matches their qualifications.

ORGANIZATION OF VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMMES

Even though the volunteering programmes are undertaken for the benefit of others or for the society, they can significantly contribute to the improvement of skills of young people.

#1 Participation in the European Voluntary Service

THE AIMS: European voluntary service (EVS) is a programme within Erasmus+ which enables young people to do short or long term volunteering abroad.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: Within the European voluntary service, Youth Association Alfa Albona has the role of sending, hosting and coordinating EVS projects. Till now we have hosted through EVS programme 40 young people and young people with fewer possibilities from all over the Europe on short and long term EVS projects and send more than 30 young Croatians to different organizations in Europe.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED: In the projects, we are using different methods and approaches in order to provide the skills that can be most useful for young people employability but at the same time, we give them the freedom to choose the area of expertise they want to be involved in the most. Therefore, after finishing the EVS service in our organization, young people benefit the most from the learning experience as they are all the time active contributors and not just „helping“ the staff within the organization.

THE MAIN RESULTS: We are really proud of the opportunities that we are providing to young people, as well as that we always work in an international environment with people from all over the world. This helps us understand young people better and gain new knowledge, but also bring multiculturalism and different approaches and ways of living to our rural place. Around 90% of young people we have hosted said that within 3 months after returning to their countries of origin they have found a job, started a new business, start-up, opened their own non-profit organizations or started working in the organization that had sent them abroad or continued to work in the youth field or/for the benefit of the local community. We tend to be in contact with our EVS volunteers also after the end of the project, not just as a follow up on our project but mainly in order to support them and offer them help if they need it.

MORE INFORMATION:

- www.alfa-albona.hr/projekti
- www.europa.eu/youth/EU/voluntary-activities

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The EVS programme needs to be very well organized in the hosting organization when it comes to the team and provided support for the volunteers, as well as to the activities and working hours.
Tip: make a timetable for each day in which the working hours and activities will be updated by the volunteers, if working during the weekend – 2 days off during the week. This way it's much better than to collect days and then to use all the collected days at once (in this way your project and activities will not be in danger)
- Volunteers need to be acquainted with all the responsibilities, obligations, rules and their rights.
Tip: short term volunteers don't have on arrival training and often the sending organizations are not doing pre-departure trainings with them so it's really necessary for the hosting organization to

go over all of that with them. Make your own EVS quiz or try some interactive method to show them all aspects of the EVS.

- Volunteers are coming because of different reasons, and it often happens that their reason is not just volunteering but that they are having some personal reasons or running away from certain circumstances.

Tip: It's important to talk to the volunteers about their expectations and about what you as an organization can offer them, as it often happens that hosting organizations promise a lot of things just to find volunteers to help them and when the volunteers arrive, they find out that the truth is different. Be honest and insist on having an effective communication. If the volunteer needs additional support to deal with personal issues, arrange that, besides the help of a mentor.

- The respect between the volunteers and people in the hosting organization working directly with volunteers has to be mutual.

Tip: Be concrete while working with the volunteers, maybe a little bit bossy, but also show them that you are a human being as well and provide help if needed. Be fair!

- Explain how the project cycle is going and especially the EVS programme and funding of Erasmus + projects in general.

Tip: Often volunteers don't know how the EVS is financed, how the whole project cycle is developing (accreditation, partnerships, writing project, approval for funding, funding and percentage of the funding on the beginning and after the project finish, logistics...). It is really important that they are aware of it and that they see what needs to be done and taken care of for them to be a part of this opportunity.

- Don't take volunteers for granted.

Tip: Volunteers who come to your hosting organization are people who came to help you, they are not paid workers. Respect their working hours and all the rules and what you apply within the programme. Give them the chance to develop, grow and learn new things and new skills. If they need something more challenging, try to make it possible, and if they make a mistake – talk to them about it and try to make them understand why things went wrong, but do make sure to give them a second chance.

CAREER COUNSELLING AND INFORMING ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Programmes of career informing and career counselling encompass the areas of informing on skills that are needed for certain occupations and skills that are in demand on the labour market, as well as activities related to the identification of skills that young people possess and skills that they need to develop.

#1 The Development of Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship in Bosnia and Herzegovina

THE AIMS: To contribute to the reduction of youth unemployment in B&H by providing the support to further development of career counselling in three B&H communities (Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Zenica) and empowering youth entrepreneurship in one B&H community (Banja Luka).

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: There are several activities related to career guidance and counselling: development and distribution of "Guide for high school occupations to pupils of final grades of elementary schools", implementing Fairs of high school deficient occupation, carrying out training on career counselling for 14 school counsellors and training for trainers on Career Counselling for 16 local experts from B&H, creating and maintaining web resource portal on Career Counselling and implement lobbying activities in order to initiate drafting of Strategy for Career Counselling of Republic Srpska.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS: Through the activities of training career counsellors special attention is given to the topic of identifying skills that young people possess.

MORE INFORMATION: These activities are carried out by the Youth Communication Centre.

#2 Online web portal for career guidance and counselling

THE AIMS: BOS karijera (karijera.bos.rs) is an interactive online service for career planning.

THE KEY ACTIVITIES: After the registration, the young person can complete tests for self-assessment, search the database of occupations and the database of educational institutions which correspond to occupations and create their personal career plan. Moreover, young people can write an email to a career counsellor and they can search answers to questions previously posed to a career counsellor. There is a special section on the web portal where young people can inform themselves about the new occupations and they can follow the advertisements on jobs and internships which are regularly posted. The online portal is aimed primarily at secondary school students, however, it is also used by other young people.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS: Each description of the occupation contains information on the skills needed for that occupation. This is also the case with the section about new occupations. Moreover, in the process of career counselling there is always a discussion about the skills that the young person has and that are needed to be further developed.

MORE INFORMATION: The web portal is created and maintained by the Belgrade Open School.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Through advocacy activities youth organizations can strive for policies in the area of youth employability that are based on data and in line with other programmes and activities.

#1 Advocacy for Employment of the Youth from Vulnerable Groups

KEY ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES: The Association for Democratic Prosperity – Zid (ADP Zid), Podgorica has participated in the process of public consultations within the preparation of the *Draft Law on Employment and Rights of Unemployment Insurance*, advocating for the better position of young people from vulnerable groups in the context of employment. Among the recommendations listed in the report on the consultation, the first one is that young people should be mentioned in the principles of the law, especially in the context of affirmative actions, as they represent the vulnerable group at the risk of social exclusion. It is also proposed to redefine active labour market policies as plans, programmes and measures which have the purpose to improve employability and to gain competencies for a better labour market position. Moreover, they suggest recognizing less employable people who cannot obtain a job easily due to the social stigmatization and marginalization, regardless of their competitiveness in the labour market. This is the case with persons who were previously addicted to chemical and non-chemical substances, former prisoners, people marginalized on the basis of their sexual orientation and other marginalized groups that have been defined by the European Strategy for Youth. In particular, there is a proposition to include social innovations in the law as a way to alleviate the problem of youth unemployment, particularly concerning groups which are at risk of social exclusion.

MORE INFORMATION: The report on the public consultation process regarding the Draft Law on Employment and Rights of Unemployment Insurance (in Montenegrin) – can be found at: www.gov.me

#2 Advocacy for the Evidence – Based Active Labour Market Policy for Young People

KEY ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES: Croatian Youth Network in collaboration and with the support of the MATICA – Association of Croatian Trade Unions and the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia prepared the document **“(Never) mind the evidence: how well does Croatia implement recommendations on active labour market policy based on external evaluations?”** This document was a response to the adoption of integrated measures of active employment policy under the slogan *“Od mjere do karijere”* (From measure to career). The newly adopted measures were assessed taking into account the recommendations from two evaluations commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Pension System and funded by the European Union: 1) *the External Evaluation of Active Labour-Market Policy Measures 2010-2013* and 2) *the Realisation of the Measures of the Active Employment Policy - Evaluation of Participant, Mentor and Employer Experiences with Workplace Training without Employment*. They concluded that out of 67 recommendations, only 3 were fully integrated, 8 were partially integrated and 56 recommendations were not integrated. Some of these recommendations are directly related to employability skills – such as the recommendation regarding the measure *“Workplace Training without Employment”*, that it is necessary to promote guidelines for the creation of training programmes: general job description, list of professional skills and knowledge, monitoring and evaluation of progress, defined schedule of activities and predicted period of time. However, the authors of the Croatian Youth Network have concluded that this recommendation has not been accepted.

MORE INFORMATION: The report on the analysis can be found on the website of the Croatian Youth Network www.mmh.hr

#3 Advocacy in the Area of Incentivizing Youth Employment

KEY ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES: Through the initiative **BH Business Site** the Institute for Youth Development supported the *Directive on incentivizing employment of the Government of FB&H* and the *Public call for submitting requests for incentivizing first employment and self-employment*. Pursuant to the Directive, incentives are provided for the first year of work experience for the unemployed person, on the provision that the employer keeps the employee for an additional year without the incentive, i.e. with the obligation of paying for the employee's salary and contributions. The incentive is paid to the employer as a reimbursement for contributions for the lowest salary in FB&H, and the income tax of the newly employed or self-employed persons. The Institute publically advocated for this active employment measure through the meetings held with representatives of the Federal Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Crafts and the Office of the Prime Minister of FB&H. The Institute participated in developing the **Public call for selecting users of grant funds** of the Ministry of Development, Entrepreneurship and Craft of FB&H, especially the section dealing with improving the criteria concerning projects for youth, women and newly launched businesses. In accordance with the results of the **Analysis of budget incentives for the economy in B&H** with proposed measures to improve the award process, conducted by the Institute, the call gave priority to entrepreneurs in high demand professions and promising branches of the economy. Moreover, the Institute started a dialogue with the Office of the Prime Minister on developing and adopting **the Law on incentivizing youth employment in FB&H**, which would set the groundwork for long-term employment of all youth, since the Decision on incentivizing employment, adopted by the Government of FB&H in the end of 2015 mostly concerned ways of providing a limited number of young people with their first work experience.

MORE INFORMATION: More information can be found on the Facebook page of the Institute for Youth Development, Business site.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

In December 2015 the Belgrade Open School and its project Consortium received a grant from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) to implement the project **WEstern Balkan youth WORK(s) for youth Employability! (WEBWORK) - Regional initiative for a common approach to youth employability.**

<http://www.bos.rs/uz/projekti/27/2017/01/13/webwork-western-balkan-youth-works-for-youth-employability.html>

The aim of the project was to contribute the adaptation of youth in the WB region to the rapidly evolving changes in the labour market, and its implementation started on the 15th July 2016 and ended on the 14th July 2017.

The Objectives of the project are in line with the general aims of the Erasmus+ component Capacity Building in the Field of Youth and were designed to respond to the aforementioned aim:

- to improve the quality of youth work in the field of youth employment in the WB region;
- to foster development of programmes of non-formal learning for youth employability;
- to promote strategic cooperation between state institutions, business sector and youth organizations for youth employability.

Accordingly, the project generated the following results:

- 1) raised capacities of 36 youth workers for enhancing young people's employability;
- 2) developed five trainings for developing young people's skills and competences for more effective employment;
- 3) created network of WB region youth workers in the field of youth employment;
- 4) developed regional youth employability skills portfolio;
- 5) created recommendations for joint work between key stakeholders (business sector, state institutions and youth organizations) in the field of youth employability; and
- 6) defined key measures for enhancement of youth employability in the WB region.

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