

NATIONAL ROADMAP OF YOUTH TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO LABOUR MARKET

TIRANA, JUNE 2022

FOREWORD

Creating opportunities for decent employment of young people according to their aspirations and potential should be an essential priority for the social and economic development of Albania. The challenges related to youth unemployment or limited opportunities to provide a decent work or self-employment remain problematic. There is already awareness both at political level and among other social actors of the need to develop stronger policies that support young people in accessing the labour market, in order for them to fulfill their professional potential and personal aspirations and to consider their future in Albania in a positive perspective.

As in other European societies, in Albania it is essential to equip young people with the skills they need to be successful in the labour market. They should be supported with various training programmes to help them adapt to the green and digital transition, to the post-pandemic economy and to empower women's participation in the economy, as well as to help youth transition from the informal economy to formal employment and to benefit from adequate social protection. It is necessary to have coordination between actors to facilitate, among other things, the transition of young people from school to work.

This National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market (SWT) comes as a result of the cooperation between policy makers and civil society youth organizations in the framework of the Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBYL), a 3-year project implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) with the support of the European Union (EU). This Roadmap tries to respond to the priority agreed by policymakers and young people to align employment policies and educational policies and develop joint curricula and programmes to address youth unemployment through education.

This is the first strategic document at national level that addresses the issue of youth transition to work in a detailed manner based on a comprehensive consultation and engagement process with young people and actors of education, the labour market, civil society, policy makers and development partners in Albania. It is correlated with the Youth Strategy 2022-2029 and the Youth Guarantee that will be launched in September 2022.

This Roadmap is a living document that needs to be updated in order be consistent with the contextual changes in education, in the labour market and society as a whole, as well as to continuously adapt to the needs of the youth and the actors involved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of the "National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market" would not be possible without the cooperation, integration and coordination with a wide range of actors who have participated proactively during the conception and drafting of this document.

Special appreciation goes to the **Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Western Balkans Youth Lab** team who has supported the working group during all the implementation phases of the Youth Lab in Albania. A special appreciation goes to **Mr. Ognjen Markovic**, Leader of the Western Balkans Youth Lab, **Ms. Petra Balazic**, Political Advisor at Regional Cooperation Council, **Mr. Damir Muzurovic**, Administrative Assistant and **Ms. Emina Basic-Poljak**, Project Expert.

Special gratitude goes to the **members of the working team** (Annex 7.1) who have committed themselves since the beginning of this initiative and have contributed to the implementation of the initiative and the organization of events at local level, as well as to the consultation of this document. Divided into three committees (Institutions Representatives Committee; Youth and Students Representatives Committee and the External Experts Committee), they have shared their expertise and experiences regarding the issue of youth employment and education in Albania. In addition, their contribution has been particularly substantial in identifying and mapping the actors addressing youth education and employment issues (mainly related to the transition in the workplace), identifying and involving local actors during the two consultation tours in order to identify current issues, building capacities of local actors on the principles, mechanisms and links of a functional system for the transition of young people in the labour market, as well as drafting recommendations which are also included in the last section of this roadmap. Their involvement, expertise and professionalism are an added value not only of this report, but of the entire work and team set up at national level.

A special thanks goes to the **colleagues and experts** involved throughout the meetings and activities carried out in the framework of the "National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market", namely **Mr. Myftar Doçi**, expert and trainer for increasing the capacities of working group members and local actors; **Mrs. Lutjona Lula**, for the contribution given during the trainings and the drafting of recommendations; **Mr. Endri Nasufi**, responsible for the visibility and external communication and **Mr. Gentjan Hajdari**, external expert for the methodology. They have worked closely with the members of the working team, thus achieving the fulfillment of the purpose and objectives of the Western Balkans Lab in Albania and the drafting of this document.

And finally, a deep gratitude goes to the 600 actors at the local and national level, engaged during all the meetings held by the working group, whose participation and involvement was essential for the content of this document. The diversity of participating actors, ranging from public institutions (line ministries, municipalities, labour offices), civil society organisations, representatives of the leading universities and gymnasiums in Albania, representatives of the business community, representatives of student councils and student governments, representatives of local youth councils, experts and consultants working on youth educational and employment issues, and the community of main donors covering these topics, is an added value not only in generating information, work coordination and drafting the roadmap, but also in providing solutions and ideas that can turn this document into a practical and valuable work plan for young people.

©This document was drawn up by the experts **Ms. Blerjana Bino** and **Mr. Gentjan Hajdari** in cooperation with the members of the working group (Annex 7.1) and with the broad involvement of interest groups at local and national level (Annex 7.2).

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Also as part of the team of experts of Albania, the following have made their active contribution: **Mrs. Bora Muzhaqi**, Minister of Youth and Children, **Mr. Oltion Rrumbullaku**, Head of Bologna Follow Up Group Secretariat in Albania, **Ms. Kleina Kasanai**, General Director of the National Youth Agency, **Mrs. Enxhi Lipa**, Research Officer and Project Coordinator at National Youth Congress, **Mrs. Franceska Muço**, Executive Director of the Young Professionals Network and **Mrs. Marsela Delija**, President of Board of Directors of Albanian National Youth Network.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AYC-Albanian Youth Council
C4EE -Counselling for Employment and Entrepreneurship
CSO - Civil Society Organization
DCM- Decision of the Council of Ministers
DPA- Department of Public Administration
EC- European Commission
EU – European Union
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
ILO- World Labour Organization
INSTAT- Institute of Statistics
NAES – National Agency for Employment and Skills
NEET- Category of youth who are neither part of education nor employment
NGO- Non-Governmental Organization
NPO- Non-profit organization
NSDI- National Strategy for Development and Integration
NYA – National Youth Agency
NYC – National Youth Congress
NYRO - National Youth Representative Organization
OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PM- Prime Minister
RCC- Regional Cooperation Council
RYCO- Regional Youth Cooperation Office
SMEs- Small and medium enterprises
SWT –School to Work Transition
UJ – Unemployed Jobseeker
UN - United Nations
UNDP ALBANIA- United Nations Development Programme
VTA- Vocational Training Agency
WB-World Bank

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1. INTRODUCTION

The condition of youth in the labour market has major effects on our society, affecting not only the lives and well-being of young people, but also the macroeconomic prospect of societies. The transition from school to work plays a major role in this respect. The ease or difficulty with which young individuals are able to make this transition has a long-term impact on their professional life and prospects. By achieving sustainable forms of employment, young individuals can ensure a decent job and a productive future. On the other hand, the risk of vulnerability and poverty remains significant for those who struggle to find a decent job. Thus, in this context, this document aims to analyze and provide recommendations for the school to work transition. This chapter briefly presents the conceptualisation of the transition from school to work, measurement, monitoring and analysis methods, the purpose of the document and its structure.

1.1 What is school to work transition?

The concept of **"school to work transition" (SWT)** has been developed recently, closely related to the changes in economic status, the length of the unemployment period, and the uncertainty about finding a job offer. The route from school to work is often described as a long process with a high risk probability. Young individuals face many problems ranging from drugs and alcohol abuse, the increase of poverty, changes in family structure, a decline in academic performance, the abandonment of further studies as a result of economic needs or constraints, as well as a high level of unemployment. Some of these problems are specifically related to the school to work transition.

The World Bank (WB, 2010) provides a more comprehensive definition of the term SWT. The school to work transition, refers to that part in life when a socio-economic change occurs, between the ages of 15 and 24, a phase when young individuals develop and build skills, based on their initial education and training which helps them become productive members of society.

According to the International Labour Office (ILO, 2010), a young individual has not completed the transition when the work in which he/she is settled does not fulfil his/her potential in terms of productivity; does not constitute an added value for a desired career path; does not offer an opportunity for social integration, as well as does not provide income to support himself/ herself and the family to which he/she belongs. The moment the young individual attains a stable job, that gives him/her a sense of security, or a job that he/she feels satisfied with, then the transition is considered complete.

According to ILO (2019)¹, the school to work transition goes through three important stages:

I. Transited - A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is not in school and currently employed in:

- a. A stable job, or
- b. Satisfactory self-employment or a satisfactory temporary job

II. In Transition – A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is:

- a. In school and currently employed or unemployed (in the labour force)
- b. Not in school and unemployed
- c. Not in school and currently employed in a temporary and unsatisfactory job
- d. Not in school and not in employment but aiming to be employed later on

III. Transition not yet started – A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is:

- a. Still in school and outside the labour force
- b. Not in school, outside the labour force and with no intention of looking for a job.

When addressing the issue of school to work transition, it is important to consider two key concepts of ILO: (a) **“Productive employment”** which refers to employment that yields sufficient income to allow the worker and his/her household a consumption level above the poverty line; (b) **“Decent work”** is used to describe a job that is productive, it pays a fair income, and it guarantees a secure form of employment and safe working conditions for the workers and their families. So, a SWT can be considered completed or successful when a young individual is settled in a stable job, defined as a job with a written or verbal employment contract lasting 12 months or more or for those who do not have long-term employment, a job with a self-perception of continuity (ILO, 2019).

According to UNICEF (2019), employability is defined as an individual’s ability to secure and retain employment, to progress within the enterprise and between jobs and to cope with changing technology and labour market conditions. This definition has a capability and an opportunity dimension i.e. (i) whether the individual has the skills demanded by the labour market and (ii) whether the individual can access employment opportunities that make optimal use of his/her skills². So, the transition from school to labour market is closely related to employability. Employability is defined as the ability of the individual to secure and maintain employment, to progress within the framework of the enterprise and from a job place to another, and to cope with changes in technology and the labour market.

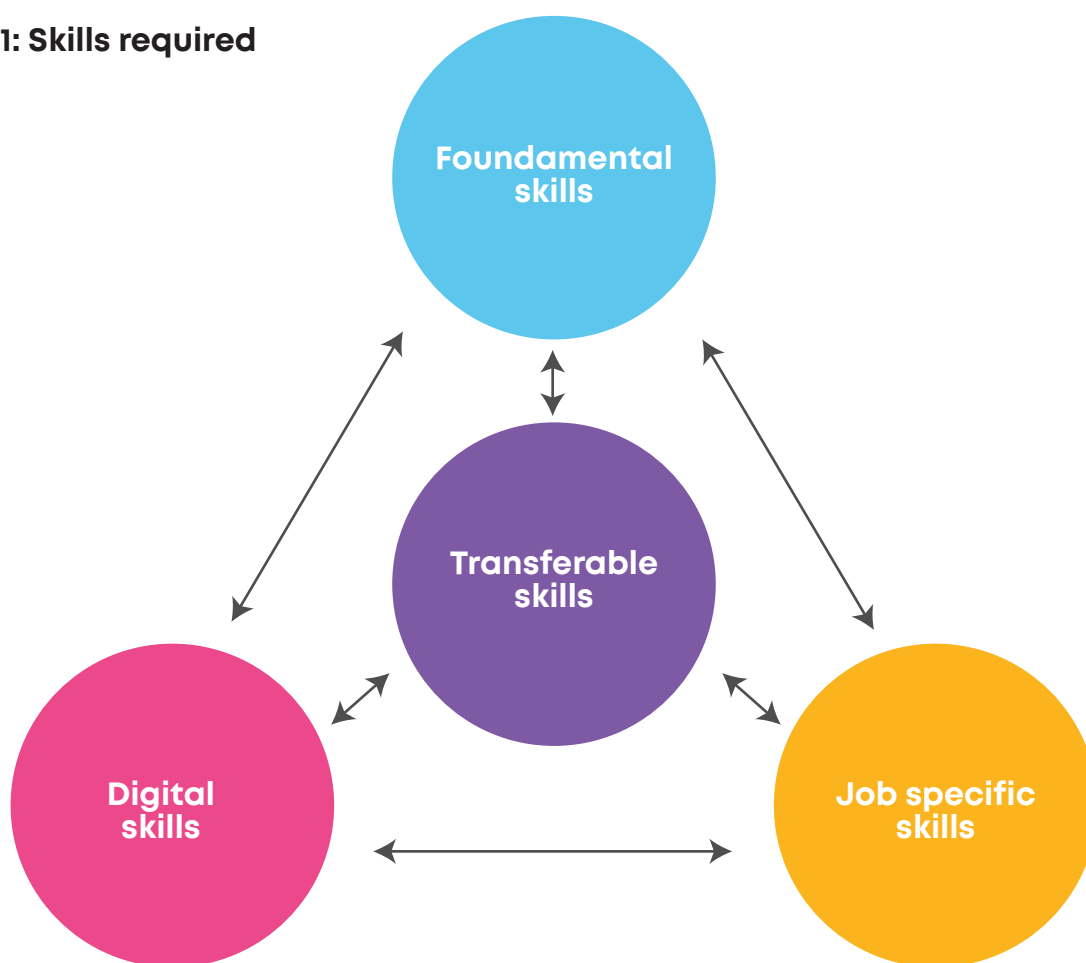
¹International Labour Office, 2019, Analysis of the transition from school to the work, available at: https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_732422.pdf

²UNICEF, 2019, Transition from School to Work: Technical Notes, available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/60366/file/Transitions-from-school-to-work-2019.pdf>

School to work transition is not linear, as young people may be studying while holding jobs, may go back to school after work, start off in irregular employment and then transition to regular employment etc. School to work transition should rather be seen as a process which enables young people to move from education to productive and decent work. The process of preparing young people for transition whereby young people have access to and can develop the skills (i.e. knowledge, competencies, attitudes and qualifications) required by the labour market to secure, retain and thrive in productive and decent employment and adapt to the evolving economy is not unchangeable.

For securing, retaining and thriving in work, young people need to develop a mix of fundamental, transferable, technical and vocational skills. Digital skills are increasingly being demanded by employers as well as soft skills and those of adaptability to new and changing situations. A successful SWT requires that a wide range of skills be developed systematically throughout life and through various methods such as formal, informal, workplace, and community and that these methods be recognised in the qualifications system and workplace progress.

Figure 1: Skills required



*Adapted from training experts

The school to work transition model is based on several key principles:

- **A full approach to education:** Quality education fosters empowered children and teenagers who can learn effectively and fulfil their community responsibilities while also being successful in the world of work. This requires that all stakeholders – teachers, parents and the community – are involved and committed to children’s and teenagers’ development. Transferable skills go together.

A rights-based approach: Quality education is not neutral. It needs to promote human rights-based values and to be inclusive and to foster human dignity

- **Lifelong learning:** Skills development is cumulative from early childhood through adolescence to adulthood. At every age, every individual is a learner who is offered multiple opportunities to learn and fulfil their potential.

- **Gender approach:** Skills development needs to consider gender norms, roles, and relations and promote measure to actively reduce the harmful effects of gender norms, roles, and relations including gender inequality.

- **Diverse approach:** To ensure equality and inclusiveness, there is a need to embed the development of transferable skills within all learning settings. Skills development occurs through multiple learning pathways, from formal education to non-formal and community settings to the world of work. It happens through different modalities (standalone, integrated, online, hybrid, etc.) and can include all children and teenagers. A cross-sectoral approach should be applied wherever it adds value or efficiencies in the area of skills.

- **Systems’ approach:** Quality learning focusing on transferable skills development can be sustained only if it is embedded in the education systems. Developing skills within systems – national policies and plans, curricula frameworks, coordination and partnership frameworks, budgeting and financing, human resources and capacity development, monitoring, assessment and certification frameworks - to achieve scale and sustainability.

- **Equity-based approach:** Prioritizing funding to the lower levels of the education system and targeting those that are most disadvantaged, while maintaining a commitment to improving learning for all children and teenagers.

- **Demand-based approach:** Job specific skills’ development should always be demand driven. This entails ensuring that training programmes anticipate and recognize those skills that will be required by the economy.

- **Engaging young people:** Skills are needed not only to find productive and fulfilling work but also to fully participate in society. Policy on skills’ development need to emphasize political participation and the voice of the youth and not only focus on the subject as a tool for economic development.

- **Partnerships:** Partnership and coordination between national governments, private sector, international organizations and other stakeholders to identify and develop labour-market relevant skills and to strengthen systems that result in improved school to work transition.

Supporting young people to develop skills and make the transition to labour market depends on: intervention related to the offer to enhance the employability of youth by ensuring they have the skills for work and connect them to employment/self-employment opportunities. Intervention related to the demand that stimulate creation of new and better jobs in the economy, such as interventions to improve productivity, competitiveness and growth (not youth specific).

1.2 Measuring the school to work transition

Supporting young people to develop skills and make the transition to labour market depends on: intervention related to the offer to enhance the employability of youth by ensuring they have the skills for work and connect them to employment/self-employment opportunities. Intervention related to the demand that stimulate creation of new and better jobs in the economy, such as interventions to improve productivity, competitiveness and growth (not youth specific).

There are a number of indicators that can be used to measure the results of the transition from school to work, even for those young people who have not found a stable job. These can be used to assess the outcomes of interventions that have the objective of preparing teenagers for work.

Some of the measurement indicators are:

- Increased probability of employment
- Better quality of employment
- Increased business performance
- Shorter time to find a job
- Increased ability to retain job or longer job duration
- Increased earnings and consumption.¹

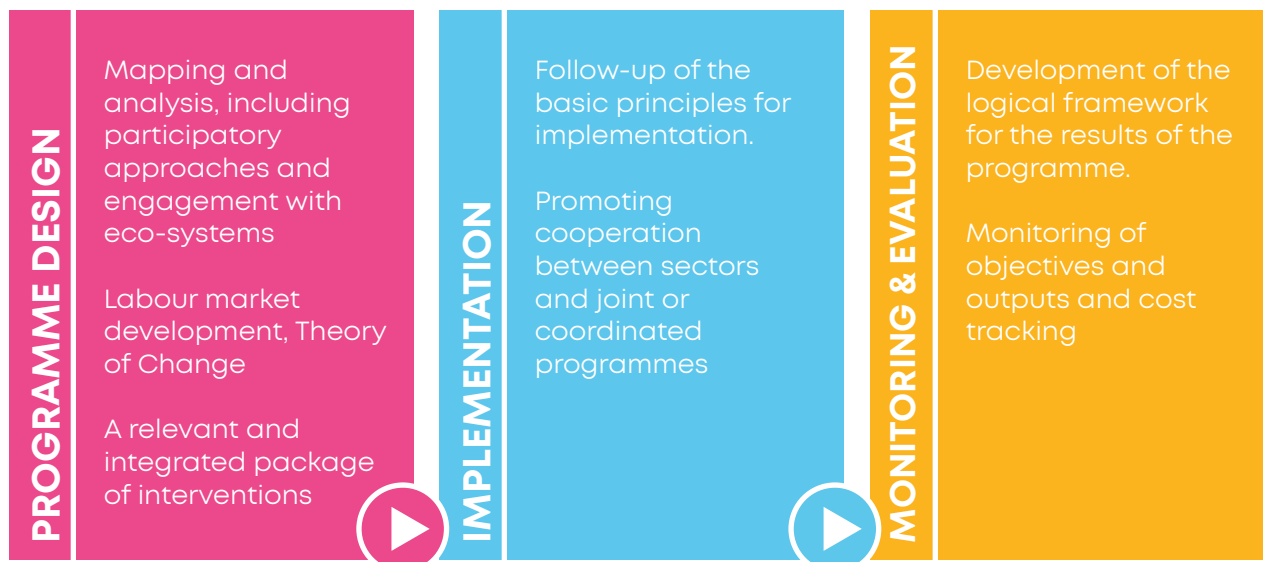
The ILO has updated the SWT indicators in 2019. The school-to-work transition indicators are designed to give a more detailed classification of young people's transition path in the labour market. In this framework the ILO includes young people aged 15-29 and this taking into account that some young people pursue education for longer, and captures more information on the post-graduation employment experiences of young people. The two indicators analysed in here are the school-to-work transition stages and the school-to-work transition form. The transition phase indicator includes three categories that were explained above: transitioned, in transition, and transition not yet started. As for the form, they are divided into young people who have made the transition into stable jobs and young people who have made the transition to self-employment or satisfactory permanent jobs.² ILO and EUROSTAT data show that there are variations for this indicator in different societies where they are measured.

¹UNICEF, 2019, Transition from School to Workplace: Technical Notes, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/60366/file/Transitions-from-school-to-work-2019.pdf>

²International Labour Office, 2019, Analysis of the transition from school to the workplace, available at: https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_732422.pdf

In addition, the cycle for supporting young people in the transition from school to work includes programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation as follows:

Figure 2: The SWT Cycle



*Adapted from training experts

Drafting a SWT Roadmap requires an analysis of the macro context as well as the education and labour market ecosystem. Studies and monitoring by key organisations such as the ILO, ETF and WB use instruments based on these two dimensions: the macro level of the context and the SWT ecosystem. This Roadmap attempts to fit these two dimensions as follows.

Table 1: Macro Context

| CATEGORY | INFORMATION NEEDS | DESCRIPTION |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| MACRO CONTEXT | Political context | Dynamics in the political framework that can affect priorities related to the school to work transition. Political (or public) leaders who advocate for youth skills development and employment. |
| | Social context | Social dynamics that can affect the demand for youth skills development programmes or represent an obstacle to the employment of certain groups, including demographic and gender developments, unstable environments, migration, changes between urban and rural areas, marginalized groups, etc. |
| | Economic context | Economic sectors performance, informality and economic dynamics that can affect the match between skills demand and supply. |
| | Educational context | Facts about the education system, including the transition from basic education to higher education and work. |

Table 2: SWT Ecosystem

| CATEGORY | INFORMATION NEEDS | DESCRIPTION |
|--|---|---|
| SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION ECOSYSTEM | Governance | Laws, policies and strategies (skills development, labour market mediation, youth employment) |
| | | Stakeholders and coordination mechanisms (government agencies, employers, NGOs, international partners). |
| | Access and Transition | Funding (public funds for skills development, financial incentives for students, employers, private funds). |
| | | Learning pathways (facilitating access to training and pathways for education and learning continuation). |
| | | Complementary services (career support, types of services, financing, quality, account-granting) |
| | Skills development terms and practices | Training conditions (number of service providers, enrolment, types of training programmes, employers' participation in training). |
| | | Providing training (mechanisms, curriculum development, skill types, recruitment, management and professional development of instructors. |
| | | Training outcomes (how many complete it and how many interrupt it, learning results, labour market outcomes) |
| | | Quality assurance (standards, testing and certification, accountability, accreditation). |
| | Data | On skills demand and supply. |
| | | On system performance (of training providers, employment of training participants) |
| | | Data collection practices (frequency, existence of data). |
| | Current programmes | Government programs, Programmes of the various development agencies, Private sector programmes Civil society programmes (target beneficiaries, location, interventions, cost, duration, evidence for impact, if any). |

However, the use of this analysis according to the macro context and the SWT eco-system depends on data availability.

1.3 Purpose of the Roadmap

In response to the current challenges of the youth transition from school to labour market in Albania and the above-mentioned conceptual framework of the SWT and the method of measurement and analysis, as well as in accordance with the priorities jointly-defined by representatives of youth and public institutions, this document aims to present a detailed overview on the issue of youth transition to the labour market in Albania, including the main strategies and policies that link education institutions to the private sector.

The aim is to draft a document that will serve as a roadmap for the youth transition from school to labour market taking into account the current context in Albania, the school to work transition ecosystem as well as the needs and requirements of youth and the labour market.

This document is intended

- To provide up-to-date data on the situation of youth transition to work
- To provide a detailed overview of the ecosystem and actors that facilitate the transition of youth to work
- To present a detailed analysis of the current problems related to the transition of young people from school to work
- To serve as a basis for further studies and deeper discussions on the transition of youth from school to work and to supply with information strategic documents related to the education and employment of youth at central and local level
- To provide recommendations to institutions and active actors in the labour market in order to improve the current situation of transition of youth at work
- To facilitate the coordination of education and employment policies as well as the coordination between the actors involved

The drafting of this Roadmap follows a rigorous methodology and comes as a product co-created with young individuals and policymaking actors as well as experts in the field. The selected approach is a combination between qualitative and quantitative to enable the shortcomings of each methodological approach to be compensated. The recommendations drafted are a product of a process of data collection and analysis that intertwines literature review, existing political and institutional framework, information interviews, document analysis, data from public institutions as well as donors, broad-based consultations with young people, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders.

This document is related to and in function of the Youth Guarantee which will start in September 2022 and the National Youth Strategy 2022 – 2029, two major projects of the Albanian Government to promote youth employment and participation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a summary of the Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBLY), the methodology of the initiative in Albania and the data collection and analysis instruments that contribute to the drafting of the Roadmap. However, it should be mentioned that the main basis for this document are the initiative meetings, the consultative meetings, the training on capacity development, as well as the review of documentation and data from the institutions.

2.1 Western Balkans Youth Lab

Western Balkans Youth Lab is a 3-year project that is implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) with the support of the European Union (EU). This project is the first of its kind in the Balkans and aims to bring together representatives of institutions, civil society and other relevant actors in joint public policy-making with a focus on youth, dialogue and institutional cooperation. The Western Balkans Youth Lab involves six economies of Western Balkans.

The Western Balkans Youth Lab is based on an inclusive and proactive youth centred approach to policy-making processes. It provides a safe space for youth to participate in equal terms with policy makers and to engage meaningfully in policy development, policy evaluation or policy revisions based on the principles of co-management and co-design. It is a new approach that offers decision-makers the opportunity to better understand the realities, challenges and needs of youth in order to work together with them and co-design new innovative solutions to the urgent issues youth face.

Most important aspects of Youth Policy Lab implementation at the level of each economy include:

- Creation of the Working Group at economy level
- Step-by-step implementation of the process
- Monitoring and ensuring the impact

Young individuals and policy makers have undergone training in each economy on the Youth Lab of the Western Balkans Methodology and Model, after which the Regional Expert Group was established and they had the opportunity to share their views during the online training sessions organised in each economy in November and December 2020. These meetings consisted of two full working days in order to set priorities and recommendations in each economy.

Each working group composed of youth representatives and policy makers coming from different economies worked together on three sub-themes:

- **Work practices and quality apprenticeships:** Easier transition from the school/education system to the labour market and decent working conditions, with a focus on NEETs (not in education, employment or training) and vulnerable or disadvantaged groups;
- **Education and training for quality employment:** Youth skills to meet labour market needs;
- **Entrepreneurship:** Incentives and Programmes

After the working group sessions, the participants met in a plenary session where they presented and discussed together the 11 regional policy recommendations that were adapted by each economy. Following the regional recommendations, each of the working groups has followed up with the drafting of Action Plans and concrete activities (campaign, research, legal amendments, etc.) in each economy, of which the "*National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market*" is part.

In addition to these plans, the participants have also engaged in joint regional meetings, not only to report on the progress of the applicability of each plan, but also to share experiences, reflect on challenges and opportunities and review the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology of the Western Balkan Youth Lab, so that it can be refined for future editions.

Regional meetings include the mid-term conference on the performance of the Action Plans in each economy; regional meetings between youth representatives and working group co-chairs; study visit to Slovenia and Croatia on the exchange of experiences and good practices among young people from the Western Balkans and European Union member states, as well as participation in various regional and international events such as the Prespa Regional Forum; Sarajevo Film Festival, the Bled Strategic Forum; the International Youth Conference and the opening of the Tirana European Youth Capital 2022 title.

June 2022 marks the closing of the first edition of the Western Balkans Youth Lab on the issue of youth employment.

2.2 Initiative methodology in Albania

The Western Balkans Youth Lab in Albania has begun implementation after the regional meeting in December 2021. The experts' group of Albania is composed of 6 members, who constitute the narrow working group selected by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

institutions and youth representatives. More specifically, they focused on the first topic “Work practices and quality apprenticeships: Easier transition from the school/education system to the labour market and decent working conditions, with a focus on NEETs (not in education, employment or training) and vulnerable groups;

The priority they decided to turn into a work plan is as follows:

Public Administration Institutions, relevant ministries, through structured dialogue with other stakeholders at all levels, including but not limited to civil society, the private sector, academia, student councils, citizens, trade unions, the chamber of commerce, organizations and others, should ensure the alignment of employment and education policies and develop joint curricula and programmes to address youth unemployment through education.

In this context, the working group has decided to work on the drafting of the **“National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market”**, as the first strategic document at national level addressing the issue of youth transition to labour market in a dedicated way.

This document aims to present a detailed overview on the issue of the transition of youth to the labour market, including the main strategies and policies that connect education institutions with the private sector. On the other hand, this document includes a detailed analysis of existing mechanisms, instruments, initiatives and key stakeholders working on the issue of education and transition of youth to labour market in Albania. This document aims to help not only public institutions and labour offices, but also universities, businesses and young people preparing for the labour market. The analytical approach of this report, in addition to informing stakeholders, aims to present a quantitative and qualitative database that serves as a basis for improving current policies and strategies, including the new Youth Strategy 2022-2029.

On the other hand, a macro programme that has started to be implemented by the Ministry of Finance and Economy, with the support of the European Union, is the Youth Guarantee. This initiative directly targets the NEET category (not in education, employment or training), in order to facilitate their transition into the labour market. For this reason, the National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market aims to serve as a reference document for all members of the national working group under the Youth Guarantee, as it contains detailed and up-to-date data on the current situation and integrates the views of many stakeholders regarding the problems and recommendations for improving the current system of youth transition into the labour market. The work plan for the drafting of the “National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market” has consisted of a series of activities involving a wide number of stakeholders at national and local level.

The main activities that served to collect and generate the information contained in this document are as follows:

1. Seven consultative meetings in 7 cities of Albania, including Durres, Shkoder, Lezha, Korca, Vlora, Berat and Dibra: during these meetings, the purpose and objectives of the initiative were presented and working groups were organized with the participants to map the local actors and identify the issues related to the youth transition in the labour market. Consultative meetings with the aim to include the local actors and make them directly and actively part in the drafting of this document, have brought together about 250 stakeholders across Albania including representatives from local institutions, civil society organisations, secondary schools and universities, as well as from businesses and private sector.

2. Advanced training for working group members: this meeting was held to increase the capacities of the group members on the principles and mechanisms of a functional transition system in the workplace and to analyse successful models from EU member states in order to replicate good practices and reflect them in the Albanian context.

3. Opening event: This event has brought together over 50 actors at national level who work daily with young individuals and undertake initiatives related to their education and employment. In addition to the opening panel, where experts have shared their concerns and recommendations in terms of the priorities to be reflected in this document, the participants have also engaged in working groups and direct dialogue with representatives of institutions and line ministries in order to co-create policies and initiatives that lead to the improvement of the current situation.

4. Meetings and Strategic Planning with the members of three committees: This meeting served as a joint discussion to reflect the realizations and methodology of the "National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market". In addition, each committee has developed its own project identifying existing problems, actors and initiatives to create a better synergy and to generate ideas for the progression of this initiative and the implementation of this document into practical level, to help young people and to facilitate their transition from school to labour market.

5. Seven trainings and consultations were held in 7 cities of Albania, including Durres, Shkoder, Lezha, Korca, Vlora, Berat and Dibra. These meetings were held in order to increase the capacities of local actors on the basis and principles of a functional transition system and to discuss the potential solutions to the problems identified during the first phase.

6. Three public consultation meetings for the consultation and discussion of the Roadmap were organized in Tirana, with the participation of young individuals and stakeholders from all over Albania. The draft Roadmap was presented at these meetings and suggestions and comments were noted which were reflected in the final draft especially in terms of recommendations.

7. Concluding event: This event, held in June 2022, brought together about 50 active actors in the labour market in order to present the main findings, to highlight the importance of the existence of the “National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market ”, as well as the contribution this document has made during the consultation and the drafting phase of national strategies such as the Youth Strategy 2022-2029 or the work plan in the framework of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Albania. At this meeting, a special panel was devoted not only to institutions but also to young people themselves, in order to promote positive models as well as to introduce alternative methods for the youth transition from school to labour market.

2.3 Methodology of the Roadmap

The conceptualization and drafting of the National Roadmap of Youth Transition from School to Labour Market in addition to the members of the working group at national level has been co-designed by two experts who are responsible for finalizing the methodology and work plan, analyzing the data and writing this document.

The information integrated in this document has been generated in three phases:

- **The first phase is the preliminary research and analysis** of existing documents and literature including reports, studies, analyses, strategic documents, laws and scientific articles that address the issue of youth education and employment.
- **The second phase involves development of consultation meetings** with a wide number of stakeholders in Tirana and other districts, making it possible to generate quality data that are reflected and included in this document. An average of 25-30 stakeholders including local government institutions, labour offices, representatives of the business community, representatives from gymnasiums and higher education institutions, representatives from local youth councils (in those cities where they are established and operational), representatives of local organisations, activities, young people and experts who shared their experiences and views regarding youth transition to the labour market have participated in each meeting.
- **The third phase involves the development of several complementary research instruments** for generating qualitative and quantitative data for those individuals who were not involved during the meeting tour. These methods included the design and development of two simple questionnaires dedicated to young people (300) and civil society organisations (60) to understand their perceptions regarding SWT challenges and the needs to improve SWT; the conduction of semi-structured interviews with representatives of the donor community in Albania working on youth education and employment issues and the submission of 20 inquiries to main local and central institutions. These data are integrated with qualitative data from the first and second phase. Quantitative data are not universally generalized, they must be understood in the context of this initiative and as supporting qualitative data collected from consultative meetings or trainings.

Figure 3: Research instruments

- 
- Documents Review
 - Consultative meetings
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Requests of Information
 - Questionnaire with young individuals
 - Questionnaire with civil society organizations

In the framework of the quantitative methodological approach, several data were collected through an online questionnaire for youth and civil society organisations working with young individuals. The questionnaires were developed to support with additional data the analysis of the best assessment of the current situation of youth transition from school to labour market based on the perceptions and needs of young people and social actors. The questionnaires also served to identify the achievements and challenges and to gather proposals, ideas and suggestions for the development of an appropriate guide to support youth in the transition from school to labour market.

2.4 Methodological constraints

Collection of data for a complete and comprehensive analysis of the transition from school to labour market is challenging due to the lack of systematic and unified data on SWT indicators in Albania. The SWT is set in a complex macro context with complex social, economic and political developments as well as in a very wide ecosystem ranging from vocational schools to universities and a variety of separated and often disconnected instruments and initiatives. Therefore, the report has utilized a set of instruments combining and integrating data from consultations, interviews, questionnaires, training and document analysis. However, the issue remains complex and the analysis cannot be exhaustive and universal, but requires constant updating as changes are frequent. In addition, the quantitative data collected are only complementary but not generic as a random representative national sampling is not possible, but the focus is on the districts involved in the initiative. Qualitative data from consultations and documentation review will need to be supplemented in the future with a representative national survey for youth in the 15-29 age group. Moreover, the questionnaire does not distinguish between rural and urban areas, which will have to be done in future national surveys. The analysis of the questionnaires is only descriptive and should be understood in the context of the purpose of this document, i.e. gathering as many perceptions and needs from youth and civil society organizations as possible.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION: MACRO CONTEXT

The situation of youth in the labour market has major effects on our society, affecting not only the lives and well-being of young people, but also the macroeconomic prospects of societies. The transition from school to labour market plays a major role in this respect. The ease or difficulty with which young individuals are able to make this transition has a long-term impact on their professional life and prospects. By achieving sustainable forms of employment, young individuals can ensure a decent job and a productive future. On the other hand, the risk of vulnerability and poverty remains significant for those who struggle to find a decent job. Therefore, it is important to analyze the macro and structural framework related to SWT.

This chapter analyzes the political, social, economic and educational context of SWT according to the defined methodology, measurement method and analysis of SWT.

3.1 Political Context

In this framework the political context implies the policy framework dynamics that can influence the priorities related to the transition from school to labour market. Youth employment has been a priority in national political agendas, but also as a response to the priority that has been set in the EU for youth employment. Commitments to achieve the internationally agreed goal for complete and productive employment and decent work for young people have been made and initiated in many international forums since the 2005 World Summit.¹ There is already an awareness among national and international political actors that productive employment and decent work for young people cannot be achieved through fragmented and isolated interventions. Making youth employment a priority requires consistent and co-ordinated actions and policies among the group of stakeholders from policymaking, the private sector, civil society, academia and development partners. From one perspective policies should be oriented towards economic growth and providing new jobs and on the other hand they should perform coordinated and sustainable interventions to support youth to enter and stay in the labour market.

At European level, the political priority has been concretized with the Youth Guarantee Scheme. The Youth Guarantee in EU member states was launched by the European Commission in 2013 and reinforced in 2020 as a political commitment of all EU member states to give all young people under the age of 30 a good quality offer: Employment; Continuing education; A teaching practice or a professional practice.²

¹International Labour Office, 2008, Guide for the preparation of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_140786.pdf

²Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Western Balkans Youth Guarantee, available at <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Youth-Employment-leaflet-15-6-b-AL.pdf/bd58b388896c2349d88cb7be2e30b1f6.pdf>

The Youth Guarantee in the EU was established through the Council Recommendation on 22 April 2013 and has since received strong political support. It is considered a success story where over 24 million young people in the EU who were once enrolled in Youth Guarantee schemes received an offer of employment, study, internship or training.³ In the last two years, as the unprecedented crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect young people disproportionately, the EU introduced the reinforced Youth Guarantee in 2020 by increasing the comprehensive labour support available to young people across the EU, now reaching a wider target group of 15 to 29 years old.⁴

In the frame of political attention, the EU has also declared **2022 as the Year of Youth**, as a sign of gratitude for the sacrifices that the young generation made during the pandemic. Within the framework of the Youth Year, activities, conferences and initiatives for young people in all EU member states are planned. A particular focus will be on young people with fewer opportunities. Efforts will also be stepped up to include young people's priorities in the EU decision-making process. The main initiative of the Year of Youth is the ALMA programme, which offers young people who do not have a job the opportunity of work experience in other member states.⁵

Moving from the European to the regional political level, various organizations in the Western Balkans have given specific attention to the issue of youth employment. The latest RCC study shows that young people in six Western Balkan economies (WB6) have an unfavourable position on the region's labour markets. Comparing the regional level with that of the EU, the youth labour force participation rate is lower in the regions than in the EU and there is a gender gap in labour force participation, partly reflecting the lack of childcare facilities for young mothers who wish to join the labour market. The gender gap is also reflected in female youth employment rates which are below the male youth employment rates everywhere in the region.⁶

Although youth employment has been set as a political priority, on the regional level of Western Balkans as well as on the European level, the challenges continue to exist firstly in terms of employment policies, coordination between actors, coordinated interventions between different policy areas, poor quality of education and linking teaching to skills required by the labour market, limited connection and transition from school to work, the proliferation of permanent and informal jobs as well as the challenges of youth entrepreneurship.⁷

To support the region overcoming these challenges, the European Union awarded in 2020 a 10million euro guarantee package under which businesses offering employment or training to youth in three Western Balkans economies, including Albania⁸, would receive 85million euros in loans.

³European Union, Reinforced Youth Guarantee, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

⁴European Union, Reinforced Youth Guarantee, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

⁵European Union, Youth Year 2022, available at https://europa.eu/youth/year-of-youth_en

⁶Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Study on youth employment in the Western Balkans, available at <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-the%20Western-Balkans-08072021.pdf/746a4c82ee558440dfbea2e23028483.pdf>

⁷Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Study on youth employment in the Western Balkans, available at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/LSEE-Research-on-South-Eastern-Europe/Assets/Documents/Staff-activities-docs/2020-21/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

⁸Regional Cooperation Council, 2021, Study on youth employment in the Western Balkans, available at <https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Youth-Employment-leaflet-15-6-b-AL.pdf/bd58b388896c2349d88cb7be2e30bf6.pdf>

Around 1200 businesses will be able to benefit from these loans, which will allow them to create 1300 vocational training courses, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people.⁹ Thus in Albania, the Youth Guarantee is part of the European Commission's initiative to implement schemes for the benefit of youth in the Western Balkans over the period 2021-2027 according to the package abovementioned.

Moving from regional to national level, skills development as well as improvement of school to labour market transition have been a priority for the Albanian government and political and public actors. As will be analysed in the following section 4.1 Governance, there are several strategies and laws that address the key challenges related to skills and employment in Albania, and also to the supporting instruments of the European Union.

3.2 Social Context

In the social context, demographic data on youth, age, gender, employment as well as migration are presented, serving as the basis of the social context to better understand the challenges of school to work transition.

3.2.1 Demographic data on youth

According to INSTAT (2022), the population of Albania on 1 January 2022 was 2,793,592 inhabitants, experiencing a decrease of 1,3 % compared to 1 January 2021. During 2021 the natural increase in population (birth-death) was -3.296 inhabitants, marking for the first time a negative natural increase. On January 1, 2022 Tirana occupied about 32.9% of the total population, continuing to be one of the most populated districts of Albania, followed by Durres and Fieri with 10,4% and 10,0 % respectively.

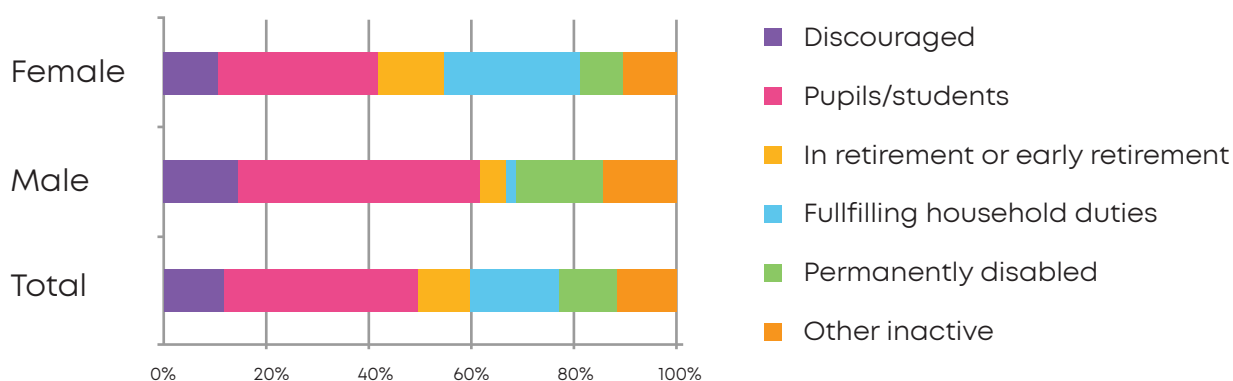
Table 3: Youth data

| | January 2021 | | | January 2022 | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| AGE GROUP | M | F | TOTAL | M | F | TOTAL |
| 15-19 | 96566 | 92509 | 189075 | 93320 | 89877 | 183197 |
| 20-24 | 109136 | 109651 | 218787 | 101815 | 101448 | 203363 |
| 25-29 | 117857 | 117340 | 235197 | 113768 | 115124 | 228892 |
| TOTAL | 323559 | 319500 | 643059 | 308903 | 306449 | 615452 |

According to INSTAT data, the 15-19 age group suffered a decline from 643059 young people on 1 January 2021 to 615452 on 1 January 2022.

INSTAT's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (March, 2022) shows that in the fourth quarter 2021, the employment rate for the population aged 15-64 is 62.1%. During this quarter, the total number of employees increased by 2.1%, compared to the fourth quarter of 2020, and by 0.1%, compared to the third quarter of 2021.¹ In the fourth quarter of 2021, the official unemployment rate in Albania, for the population aged 15 and over, is 11.4%. While, the official unemployment rate for 15-29 year olds is 20.6%.

Figure 4: Structure of the economically inactive population by gender and status



Young people aged 15-29 who declared that they are pupils/students or in training constitute 72,1 % of economically inactive young people. Among young people aged 15-29 economically inactive, 9.0% are classified as discouraged.

Table 4: Youth unemployment rate 2017-2021

| Age | Gender | Tr.4.2017 | Tr.1.2018 | Tr.2.2018 | Tr.3.2018 | Tr.4.2018 | Tr.1.2019 | Tr.2.2019 | Tr.3.2019 | Tr.4.2019 | Tr.1.2020 | Tr.2.2020 | Tr.3.2020 | Tr.4.2020 | Tr.1.2021 | Tr.2.2021 | Tr.3.2021 | Tr.4.2021 |
|-----------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 19-25 years old | Total | 24,6 | 24,5 | 22,6 | 23,2 | 22,3 | 22,2 | 20,9 | 21,4 | 21,4 | 20,0 | 21,4 | 20,7 | 21,7 | 23,3 | 19,9 | 19,9 | 20,6 |
| | Male | 25,6 | 24,2 | 23,4 | 22,8 | 22,4 | 22,4 | 21,0 | 20,6 | 21,2 | 19,9 | 21,9 | 20,3 | 21,3 | 22,5 | 20,1 | 19,3 | 20,3 |
| | Female | 23,1 | 24,9 | 21,5 | 23,8 | 22,2 | 21,9 | 20,8 | 22,4 | 21,4 | 20,2 | 20,8 | 21,4 | 22,2 | 24,4 | 19,6 | 20,7 | 20,9 |

The youth unemployment rate has decreased to 20.6% in 2021 compared to 24.6% in 2017, however there is a slight increase compared to the first quarter of 2020 or the second quarter of 2021. Also, the unemployment rate is higher in females (20.9%) than in males (20.3%) in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Table 5: Unemployed jobseekers by gender, educational level and age group, Annual 2020

| Item | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Registered unemployed jobseekers | 119,710 | 89,780 | 74,686 | 70,930 | 82,921 |
| Male | 59,790 | 42,386 | 35,535 | 33,702 | 39,274 |
| Female | 59,920 | 47,394 | 39,151 | 37,228 | 43,647 |
| With 8/9-year education | 63,900 | 50-250 | 42,676 | 39,582 | 46,420 |
| With secondary education | 47,187 | 34,260 | 27,102 | 26,062 | 29,803 |
| With higher education | 8,623 | 5,270 | 4,908 | 5,286 | 6,698 |
| 16-19 years old | 4,686 | 2,096 | 1,575 | 2,279 | 2,660 |
| 20-34 years old | 37,125 | 23,148 | 18,650 | 18,594 | 23,527 |
| 35 years and older | 77,899 | 64,536 | 54,459 | 50,057 | 56,733 |

As indicated in the table above, data of unemployed jobseekers by gender, educational level and age group are not grouped according to the legal categorization for youth. According to the 2011 Census, 82.58% are ethnic Albanians, and about 6% is composed of different ethnic minorities such as Greeks, Macedonians, Armenians, Roma and Egyptians.² During Census 2011, interviewees were allowed not to answer questions about their ethnicity, so many did not answer this question. There are no data available regarding the ethnic affiliation of the young population. The Ombudsman, civil society and ethnic minorities have rejected these statistics over the years.³ The Government of Albania planned to carry out a new Census on October 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has slowed down the process and postponed its organisation until 2022.⁴

3.2.2 Youth migration

Immigration is one of the reasons for Albania's declining population, and in addition, Albania loses about EUR 559 million annually due to immigration.⁵ According to the Trust in Governance Opinion Poll, a vast majority (65%) of respondents in the age group '18–25 years old' reported that they wanted to move abroad.⁶ Young, highly educated and skilled individuals are more likely to leave and this emigration is not necessarily circular in the case of Albania as in other Western Balkan economies. Statistics show that the number of young people leaving Albania is on the rise, while most of those who go to study abroad do not come back afterwards. Young people list the lack of meritocracy, the quality of service provision and low wages as the main reasons for emigrating.⁸ The study observes that in Albania there is a lack of youth migration data, while international reports show that the rates of young people leaving Albania are high. Potential migration remains high, meaning that a significant percentage of the Albanian population living within Albania would like, or intend, to emigrate in the future.⁹

²INSTAT, Census, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/censuses/census-of-population-and-housing/>

³"To realize an incontestable census", article available at

<https://top-channel.tv/2015/07/14/gjendje-e-minoritete-totazani-te-realiz-nje-census-i-uncontested>

⁴"2022 Census Postponed", article available at

<https://a2news.com/2020/11/12/censusi-shyhet-ne-2022-mazhoranca-be-na-kritikai-per-te-kaluarin/>

⁵Westminster for Democracy Foundation, 2019, Study for Albania: Youth migration.

⁶UNDP, Trust in Governance, Survey 2019, available at

https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/democratic_governance/-trust-in-governance--opinion-poll-2019-.html

⁷CRCA, 2021, Youth in Albania in 2020, National Report, available at

https://www.crca.al/sites/default/files/publications/RAPORTI%20TE%20RINJTE%20NE%20SHQIPERIE%202019-2020_0.pdf

⁸EFF, 2018, New immigration trends in Albania, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/15271.pdf>

3.2.3 Minority Groups

Studies by international organisations show that although many developments in the economy have been achieved and poverty levels have decreased significantly, the vulnerability of some groups still remains a concern. The overall reduction of poverty did not have the same impact on the entire population, and some groups have not been able to catch up. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an expansion of vulnerability of certain groups and combined with social and economic factors, limited access to public services such as education, health and employment, putting them under difficult conditions. As one of the most vulnerable groups, the Roma and Egyptian community in Albania, under Law no. 96/2017, Article 3, paragraph 2 "On the Protection of National Minorities", are classified as national minorities. Adapting Roma to labour market requirements has been difficult, however, as a result of their low educational and vocational level, low social capital, some forms of discrimination and social exclusion. As a result of poverty and social exclusion, the majority of Roma and Egyptians do low-skilled jobs in the informal sector. This job provides them with insufficient income for their families.¹

Albania numbers about 144,135 persons with disabilities, according to a report made in 2019² and to address their needs, the government has drafted the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020. Albania has regulated by Law "On Employment Promotion" the creation of new jobs for people with disabilities. The rules for employment of persons with disabilities are determined on Article 14 of this law. In this article, there are some clauses that oblige entrepreneurs and public institutions to provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who have the appropriate education, have been trained or have a certain preparation. Thus, Article 15 of this Law states: *"Every employer that employs more than 24 employees is obliged to employ a person with a disability for every 25 employees of its personnel. An employer may employ one person with a severe handicap instead of five persons with a slight handicap"*.³ Employment of people with disabilities remains challenging, but data on the current situation are lacking as INSTAT does not contain this data. People with disabilities have little information about employment programmes and are dissatisfied with the opportunities they are offered for employment.⁴

3.3 Economic Context

3.3.1 Economic Dimension

According to a study of Albania's economic development, it is argued that the greatest contribution to economic growth continues to be made by Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries; Trade; Transport; Hotels, Extractive and Processing Industry; Energy; Water Supplies, Public Administration; Education; Health; Construction; Real Estate Activities; Information and Communication; Financial and Insurance Activities.⁵ This study also shows that the main types of economic context in Albania are:

- Mainly economic growth has been based on consumption, remittances and imports and not on production, investments and exports; it has been more of an extensive quantitative nature, than a qualitative economic growth, originating from high-efficiency sectors and activities and modern technologies and innovations.
- Economic growth continues to be easily effected by public investment and bank sector loans – while more support from the private sector and funding from the financial market, is needed.⁶
- Albania, also, has pursued a policy of supporting economic development through increased public debts.⁷
- Most part of the Albanian economy is based on commercial enterprises and construction, with low added value and no productivity.⁸

These features of economic growth affect the SWT especially in the functionality of the labour market, primary or high-potential sectors.

Transition deficiencies remain serious in all six qualities of the transition towards a modern market economy, according to a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) assessment. Good governance and competitiveness would benefit from addressing the multi-spread informal economy, as well as strengthening institutions. Low labour costs underpin competitiveness, but economic development is hampered by a lack of skills and their mismatch with market needs, uncertainty over land and property rights, lack of knowledge and business sophistication, scarce investment in research and development, and weak capacity for innovation.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that Albania has informal employment nearly twice as high as the European average and one of the highest levels in the European range. According to the 2019 data, the ILO estimates that informal employment in Albania is 56.7 percent of the total employees.⁹ Informality is a factor that discourages young people towards employment in Albania and increases their insecurity regarding work, failing to fulfill a successful SWT.

3.3.2 Technological dimension

Another important aspect in the economy is also digitalization. The digitalization of jobs, otherwise widely known and named Industry 4.0, essentially refers to the use of digital technology in the production of goods and services in the economy.¹ This technology will enable not only the speed and accuracy of services to be increased, but is expected to radically change markets in the economy, especially the human resources market.² Based on the results of the Information Technology Use Survey (ICT) in 2020, out of the 16 - 74 age groups, 72.2% of the population use the Internet, of whom 88.2% use it on a daily basis.³ Of this age group, 98.8% of individuals have used mobile phones/smart phones to access the internet. Meanwhile, 24.4% of the population use the internet via their laptop and 7.2% via their tablet.⁴ As for enterprises, INSTAT data show that enterprises with 10 or more employees who used computers for work purposes during 2021, represent 98.5% of economic enterprises and 98.4% of them have access to the Internet.⁵ Whereas, the employees who have used a computer for work purposes with Internet access make up 26.2% of the total employees.⁶ In 2021, enterprises with 250+ employees use 100% computers with internet access. In these enterprises, 29.9% of employees use a computer with Internet access.⁷

The level of digitalization development in Albania is noted to be progressing rapidly in the private sector (especially banks) and in that of public services.⁸ According to INSTAT, during the period of 2018-2020, 36.6% of surveyed enterprises carried out an innovation activity and the latter was higher in the enterprises operating in the services sector.⁹ One of the main concerns of the digitalization of work processes is the impact it is expected to have on the level of unemployment in Albania. It is mainly expected that there will be job reduction and difficulties to remain in their work positions for personnel over 50 years old.¹⁰ A regional broadband strategy is currently also an objective. The extension of broadband networks will enable a number of benefits for Albania, thereby bringing economic and social development by increasing business opportunities in the public and private economic sectors. Broadband is expected to enable digital connectivity between Albania and other partners in the Region and in the EU.¹¹

3.4 Education Context

Youth education and employment in Albania remains a key issue. The Government of Albania acknowledges that young people face an increased challenge in their transition to the labor market

¹EFF, Digitization of the economy and its impact on the labour market. Challenges for Albania, available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/14504.pdf>

²EFF, Digitisation of the economy and its impact on the labour market. Challenges for Albania, available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/14504.pdf>

³INSTAT, 2021, Use of Information and Communication Technology in the Family, 2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8267/ict-2020_shqip.pdf

⁴INSTAT, 2021, Use of Information and Communication Technology in the Family, 2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8267/ict-2020_shqip.pdf

⁵INSTAT, 2021, Use of Information and Communication Technology in Enterprises, 2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9226/njoftimi_p%C3%ABr_shtyp_tik_2021.pdf

⁶INSTAT, 2021, Use of Information and Communication Technology in Enterprises, 2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9226/njoftimi_p%C3%ABr_shtyp_tik_2021.pdf

⁷INSTAT, 2021, Use of Information and Communication Technology in Enterprises, 2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9226/njoftimi_p%C3%ABr_shtyp_tik_2021.pdf

⁸Ibrahimaj at the OECD meeting: Digitisation of public services, minimized the negative effects of the pandemic", available at: <https://www.financa.gov.al/ibrahimaj-ne-takimin-e-oecd-digitalizimi-i-sherbimeve-publike-minimizoi-efektet-negative-te-pandemise/>

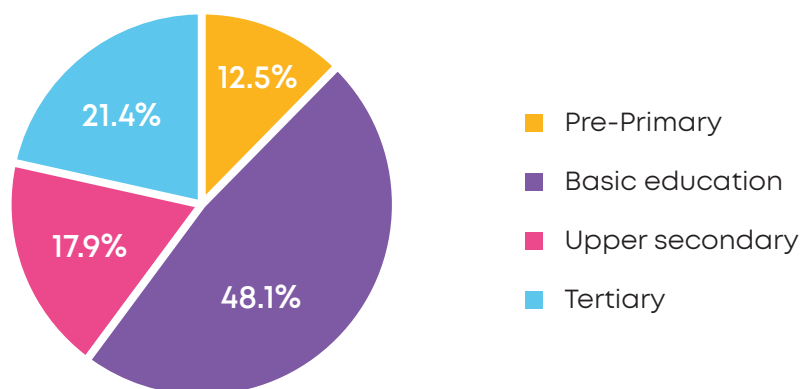
⁹INSTAT, Innovation activities in enterprises 2018-2020, available at: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8635/Inovacioni_2018-2020-final-shqip.pdf

¹⁰EFF, Digitisation of the economy and its impact on the labour market. Challenges for Albania, available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/14504.pdf>

and that youth unemployment, despite improvements, still remains high.¹ According to a recent study of youth perceptions², the level and quality of education, which is considered to be closely related to employment, remains a constant concern among young Albanians. Their education concerns are particularly related with the need to match education programmes with labour market requirements. Despite the increase in those attending vocational education and training (VET), the completion of university studies remains a fundamental objective in the belief that a university degree offers better employment opportunities.³ An important factor in the school to work transition is also the low investment in education where from 2011-2017 it remained at the level of 3.3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁴

As for education, in the academic year 2021-2022, 577,869 pupils and students were enrolled in formal education, with a decrease of 2,0 %, compared to the academic year 2020-21.⁵ The structure of participation in official education by level of education is almost similar during the last three school/academic years.

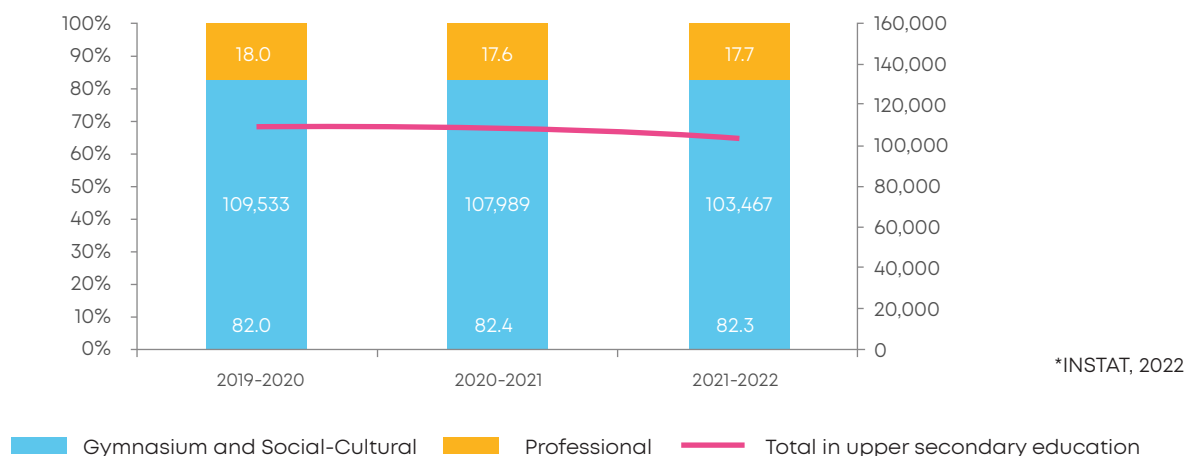
Figure 5: Education structure



In the school year 2021-22, 453,989 pupils and children were enrolled in pre-university education, marking a decrease of 2,5 %, compared to the school year 2020-21. In the school year 2021-22, 103,467 pupils were enrolled in secondary education, marking a decrease of 4.2% compared to the previous school year. In 2021-22, the majority of students enrolled in secondary education are high school and socio-cultural secondary students in 82,3 %. This proportion has remained almost at the same level over the past three years. The majority of students enrolled in secondary education attend public education institutions (86.6%).⁶

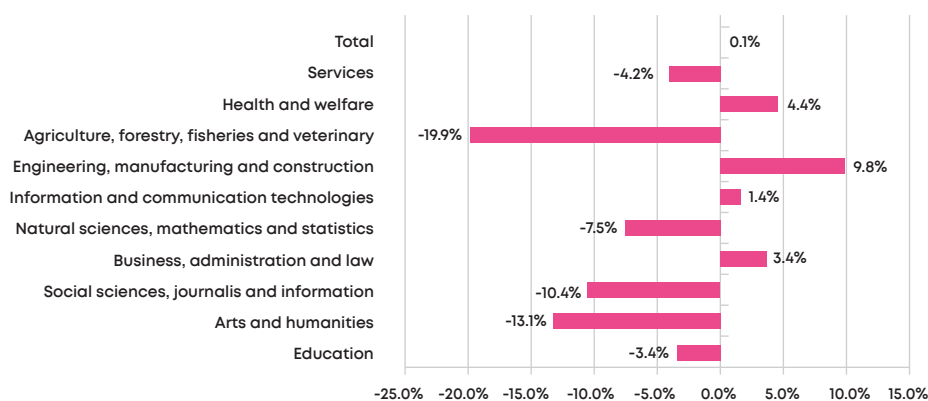
¹Digital infrastructure in focus and development priorities", available at <https://www.infrastruktura.gov.al/infrastruktura-digjitale-ne-fokusin-dhe-prioritetet-e-zhivillimit/>
²Ministry of Finance and Economy, Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022, available at <https://new.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Economic-Reform-Programme-2020-2022.pdf> p.115
³FES, 2020, Study for Youth 2018/2019, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15261.pdf>
⁴FES, 2020, Study for Youth 2018/2019, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15261.pdf>
⁵Mircea Badescu "Key indicators on education, skills and employment" (European Training Foundation:2018) p.21
⁶INSTAT, 2022, Statistics of enrolments in education, available at: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9773/statistika-t%C3%AB-regjistrimeve-n%C3%AB-arsim-2021-2022.pdf>
INSTAT, 2022, Statistics of enrolments in education, available at: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/9773/statistika-t%C3%AB-regjistrimeve-n%C3%AB-arsim-2021-2022.pdf>

Figure 6: Enrolled in upper secondary education 2021-2022



In the academic year 2021-22, are enrolled in all tertiary programs 123,880 students, marking an increase of 0.1 % compared to 2020-21. Students enrolled in tertiary public education account for 76.3 % of the total number of students. In the academic year 2021-22, 73,493 female students are enrolled in all tertiary programs, constituting 59.3 % of the total number of tertiary students.¹

Figure 7: Percentage change of students by field of study 2021 and 2022



*INSTAT, 2022

Analysed for each field of study, compared to the previous academic year, it is noted a decrease in the number of students enrolled in the fields of “Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary” with 19.9 % and “Arts and humanities” with 13.1 %. On the other side, fields “Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction” and “Health and Welfare” show an increase with respectively 9.8 % and 4.4 %.

Table 6: Students enrolled by fields of study 2019-2022

| FIELDS OF STUDY | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Education | 9,062 | 8,367 | 8,085 |
| Arts and humanities | 12,537 | 10,972 | 9,536 |
| Social sciences, journalism and information | 11,397 | 10,277 | 9,204 |
| Business, administration and law | 32,732 | 31,173 | 32,227 |
| Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics | 5,962 | 4,924 | 4,553 |
| Information and communication technologies | 8,883 | 8,341 | 8,458 |
| Engineering, manufacturing and construction | 20,775 | 20,537 | 22,555 |
| Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary | 4,158 | 3,458 | 2,770 |
| Health and welfare | 20,199 | 21,195 | 22,130 |
| Services | 4,559 | 4,553 | 4,362 |
| Total | 130,264 | 123,797 | 123,880 |

*INSTAT, 2022

INSTAT publishes for the first time the main results of the Adult Education Survey 2017, which refers to the population 25-64 years old. The main objective of this survey is studying main activities of lifelong learning (formal, non-formal and informal education and training). However, these data have not been updated since 2017. The results of the 2017 Adult Education Survey show that 9.2 % of the population aged 25-64 have participated in formal and no-formal education or trainings and 67.8 % of population aged 25-64 have participated in informal learning.²

Deficiencies in education and vocational training systems, together with the challenges of equipping young people with knowledge and skills relevant to the labour market, partly contribute in the high rate of youth unemployment.³ A geographical breakdown in youth labour market outcomes suggests that rural youth are more likely to be disadvantaged in terms of employment compared to urban youth. However, at present the breakdown of the urban/rural ratio into all statistics and work-related data is very limited.

In 2019, 28.9% of young people aged 15-29 are not employed and do not attend school or any vocational⁴ training, compared to 25.9% in 2018.⁵ Within the NEET group (neither in employment, nor in education or training) of youth (aged 15-29), 36.5% are classified as unemployed. Reporting on key indicators for skills, education and employment in 2020, it is noted that 1/3 of young Albanians are included in the NEET category, where females represent a high figure which in some cases it reaches 40% of the total youth NEET. This can be related to various factors such as the social and cultural context, the mentality and family duties that girls often perform⁶.

²INSTAT, 2018, Adult Education Survey, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/3991/rezultatet-e-anketes-se-arsimit-te-te-riturve-2017.pdf>
³<https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/youth-employment.html>
⁴http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6942/njoftim-per-media-ifs-vjetore-2019_shqip.pdf
⁵Mircea Badescu "Key indicators on education, skills and employment" (European Training Foundation:2018) p.28
⁶Mircea Badescu "Key indicators on education, skills and employment" (European Training Foundation:2018) p.28

As for dropping out of education at an early age, Albania has made significant improvements in terms of reducing the percentages. The gender which drops out education in the 18-24 age group remains the male gender where for 2017 there were 21.6% of dropouts, for 2018 18.3 dropouts and for 2019 17.5 dropouts while the female percentage remains 17.2 for 2017, 16.4 for 2018 and 15.1 for 2019.⁷

In terms of participation in vocational education, although the latter is very important in securing employment and thus eliminating the possibility of youth staying in the (NEET) category, Albania exhibits low participation with only 6% for the 15-24 age group.⁸ The number of young people aged 15-24 who are neither in employment, education and training (NEET) remains high (28.6% in 2018, compared to the EU average of 10.6%). This confirms the existence of skills imbalances and serious problems with new graduates finding jobs.⁹ That part of youth who is in the process of education or has completed studies tends to follow that type of training where the female gender is more likely to follow, however the participation remains at 1%.

This category is relevant to the youth transition from school to work and requires specific interventions for young people who are neither in education nor in employment or training to encourage and help them become an active part of the work force, the education system or lifelong learning.

⁷Mircea Badescu "Key indicators on education, skills and employment" (European Training Foundation:2018) p.22

⁸Mircea Badescu "Key indicators on education, skills and employment" (European Training Foundation:2018) p.9

⁹Cedefop, Guidance: supporting young people to manage their careers, available at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/et/toolkits/vet-toolkit-tackling-early-leaving/intervention-approaches/guidance-supporting-youth-manage-their-careers>

4. CURRENT ECOSYSTEM OF SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION

The ecosystem of school to work transition includes several key elements such as: governance, access and transition, conditions and practices for skills development, data and existing programmes.

4.1 Governance

Governance includes laws, policies and strategies for skills development, labour market mediation, youth employment, as well as stakeholders and coordination mechanisms such as government agencies, employers, NGOs, international partners. In terms of governance, the resolutions of youth in the Constitution, the Law on Youth and the institutions responsible for youth, as well as the strategy under way, are analyzed. Other laws related to youth and SWT are also mentioned.

4.1.1 Constitution

Article 54 of Constitution of Albania provides special protection for young people: "Children, young people, pregnant women and new mothers have the right to special protection by the state". This article falls within the framework of fundamental freedoms, social, economic and political rights. There is no specific definition of youth in the Constitution and no other specific reference to youth. The rights of young people are guaranteed under the human rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution.

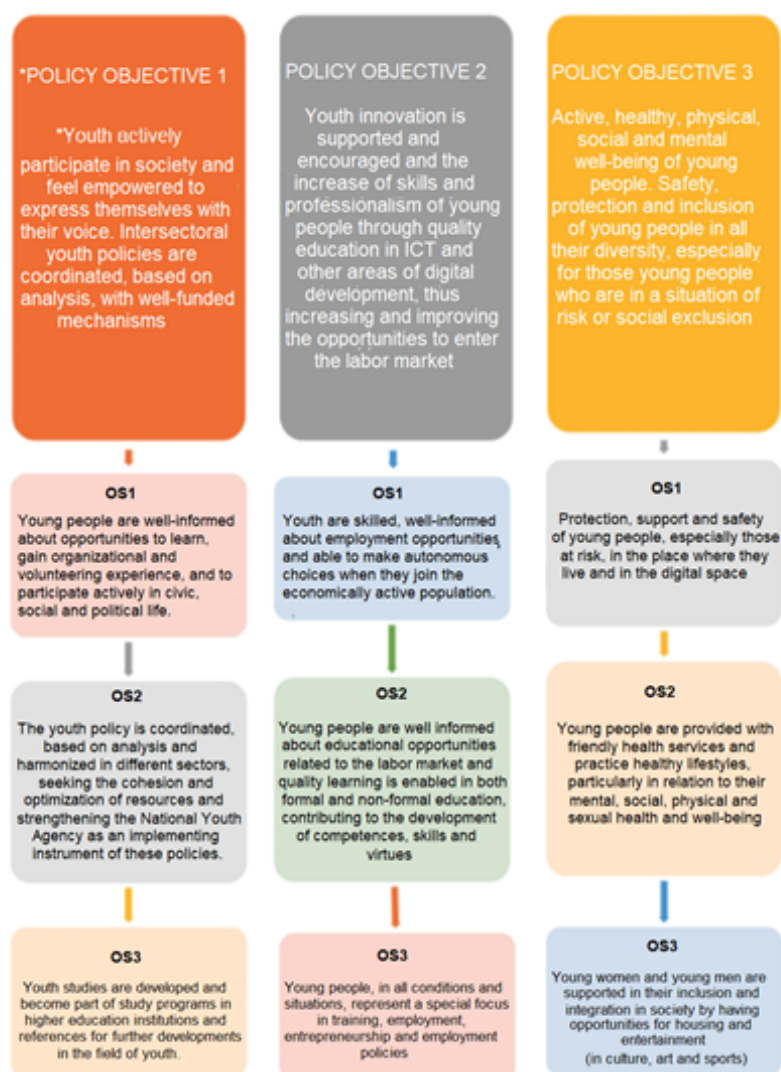
4.1.2 Law on Youth

In the last five years, civil society organizations (CSOs) in the field of youth, civil society actors, international organizations, donors and stakeholders have advocated and lobbied the Albanian Government for the drafting of a Youth Law. The drafting process included public consultations with stakeholders such as policy makers, experts and group of interest representatives, including youth and youth organisations. The Law on Youth was adopted at the last session of the Parliament in 2019.¹ According to Article 3 of the law the term young people refers to persons who have reached the age of 15 to 29 years old. This law defines the activities, mechanisms and authorities responsible for protecting and promoting the rights of young people and increases the participation of young people in policy-making and decision-making processes at both central and local levels. The law introduces the concept of youth networks, including institutions and organizations, and young individuals, emphasizing the cooperation based on active, systematic, transparent, continuous and long-term interaction.

4.1.3 National Youth Strategy

The Government of Albania is consulting on a new Youth Strategy for the period 2022-2029. The National Youth Strategy policy and programming efforts focus on ensuring equality of opportunity and rights, support and commitment for young people who are most vulnerable, marginalized and most impacted by multiple shortages, such as poverty, violence, ill-treatment, disability and social exclusion. This strategy aims to guide Albanian youth for further actions which will positively affect their future.¹ Taking into consideration the developments so far, the vision for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2022-2029 is: "The National Strategy 2022-2029 gives opportunities to young women and men and supports them to become active partners in the development of Albania." The mission of this strategy is: "To increase and improve opportunities, services, and to support and cooperate with young people in Albania."² The policy goals and the specific objectives of this Strategy are presented in the figure below.

Figure 8: Policy goal and specific objectives of National Youth Strategy



4.1.4 SWT legal framework

Law no. 15/2019 **"On Employment Promotion"** determines the rules and the way of functioning of the public system in regards to employment services, active and passive programs of the labour market, as well as the bodies in charge for their management, except for cases where they are regulated by special legislation.¹ This law aims to increase the employability of the workforce through the provision of public employment, self-employment and vocational qualification services and programs.

Law no. 15/2017, **"On Vocational Education and Training"** aims to regulate aspects of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in accordance with the general education system and the labour market. This law also establishes the obligation to provide career orientation and links with the labour market.²

Law no. 80/2015 on **"On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions"**, adopted after the in-depth reform of higher education, aims to create stable internal and external academic and financial control mechanisms, with the aim to unify and standardize the education system of Albania with the European one. The adoption and implementation of this reform has caused intense debates between the government and academic staff, major student reactions, including the December 2018 protest.³ Monitoring the implementation of this law indicates serious problems related to its practical realization.⁴

Law no. 25/2022 **"On the support and development of start-ups"**⁵ aims to design a favorable regulatory and institutional framework for the creation and development of startups and ecosystem support, to promote research, implementation and use of new ideas, models, products and processes, which bring innovation to each area for economic development. This law establishes the basic rules, procedures, as well as the competent public bodies for self-declaration, support, development and monitoring of startups and their supporting ecosystem in Albania.

National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019 - 2022 (Decision no. 659, dated 10.10.2019),⁶ is the main policy document guiding the implementation of employment and skills development actions in Albania. Within the strategic objective "strengthening the links between education and work and facilitating the transition to work", a career orientation system is envisaged. This strategy foresees the implementation of career counselling functions within the development units (DU) of NAVET; increasing the capacity of the development units for advise and career orientation; establishment of a career information and orientation system; to make the updated information available for the VET students and trainees.

¹<https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20190318131036ligj%20nr.%2015.%20dt.%2013.3.2019.pdf>

²<https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2017/02/16/15-2017>

³<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/16981.pdf>

⁴*ibid.*, p. 30

⁵<https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20220318103607legg%20nr.%2025.%20dt.%2010.3.2022.pdf>

⁶https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Publikim_AL_Strategjia-Komb%C3%ABtare-p%C3%ABr-Pun%C3%ABsim-and-Aft%C3%ABsi-2019-2022.pdf

The National Education Strategy 2021-2026 integrates the sub-sectors of pre-university education and higher education. MESY vision for the education sector aims to build an inclusive education system that successfully addresses the individual needs of all children, pupils and students, treating them equally and respecting diversity. The strategy is based on the paradigm of lifelong learning, which covers all phases of learning, from pre-school to the post-retirement period, and includes all forms of learning: formal and non-formal.¹

This strategy sets some fundamental objectives in terms of the SWT. Thus, the specific objective A3 of the Strategy is “Possession of Lifelong Learning Competencies” and also plans the expected results and the measures:

- A3.1. The equipment of schools with teaching aids for the implementation of the curriculum with competences.
- A3.2. Continuous support for teachers for the implementation of the new curriculum.
- A3.3. Improving students' skills in reading-writing, mathematics and science.
- A3.6. Learning of crafts and arts in upper secondary education in the framework of the elective curriculum.

The priority B "Providing quality education and vocational training for young people and adults", includes also the B4 objective: "Strengthening the links between learning and work and to facilitate the transition to work and defines as a key measure the improvement of the model of professional practices in business in the system of public VET providers (school-based).

4.1.5 Institutions

In September 2021, by Decision of the Council of Ministers, the entity responsible for the drafting and implementation of policies aimed at protecting the rights of young people, guaranteeing the participation of young people in social life and coordinating issues related to the protection, care, health, upbringing and well-being of children is the **Minister for Youth and Children (MSYC)**.²

In addition to the **Minister for Youth and Children** as the main policy-making body for youth policies, a key institution for the employment is the **Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE)**. This Ministry designs and implements integrated economic policies in the primary sectors of the economy, economic-social convergence of Albania's regions, improving the climate and services for business and entrepreneurship. Its mission consists, also, in guaranteeing the rights to education and vocational training, safe and decent employment, social security.³ The employment field and the education and vocational training field are two of MFE's areas of competence. **The Ministry of Education and Sport** is responsible for educational policies at all levels except the VET. Coordination between these three ministries is a primary instrument to enable a policy framework and functional ecosystem for the SWT.

The mission of the **Minister for the Protection of Entrepreneurship** is to support and protect the private enterprise operating in Albania, as well as to promote inter-institutional cooperation in order to improve public services towards the enterprise.⁴

The National Youth Agency (NYA) was established on 2 September 2020 by Decision of the Council of Ministers replacing the National Youth Service as the central structure responsible for youth.⁵ The mission of the National Youth Agency is to guarantee the protection and promotion of youth rights through the support for a non-formal education, the interaction and activation of youth and funding of youth activities, in implementation of government policies in the field of youth. The NYA for the first time brings the instrument of funding youth organizations and youth as its exclusive competence. In the First Call for Applications in 2021, the NYA awarded 12 grants to civil society and youth organizations (a total amount of 25,902,880 ALL) and 4 grants to local government units (a total amount of 19,136,851 ALL).⁶ The second call will open in the summer of 2022.

The National Youth Council (NYC) is an advisory body, functioning within the minister responsible for youth. The NYC proposes to the Minister the policies, programmes and budget for youth. The National Youth Council is chaired by the minister responsible for youth and consists of 14 to 16 members, and at least half of the members are representatives of youth and/or youth organizations. Members of the National Youth Council are appointed by order of the minister responsible for youth.⁷ Elections of NYC members were held in 2021 and 8 members were selected from the votes of youth organizations, 4 as representatives of Student Councils.

According to the law, the **National Youth Representative Organization (NYRO)** is an organization that is established, organized and functions pursuant to the Civil Code of Albania and the legislation into force for non-profit organizations and operates in accordance with its statute. On 12 May 2021, the Council of Ministers issued CMD no. 274 'On the definition of the criteria to be met by the national representative youth organisation'.⁸ Although the call from the NYC for this organization was opened in May 2021, it is not yet established, as there is ambiguity about the way the other institutions function and liaise under the Youth Law.

As for the **local government**, the Law "On Youth" determines that, the municipalities must formulate and implement local policies in the field of youth, and also it provides the establishment of Local Youth Councils. The National Youth Congress has carried out in 2021 an assessment of the implementation of the Youth Law and according to the monitoring it results that by the end of 2021 46.5% of the municipalities have not started yet the establishment of this structure while 53.5% of them are currently carrying out this process.⁹ In addition, the monitoring data shows that 74.4% of municipalities do not have a dedicated budget for youth and therefore do not have a budget to meet the legal obligations imposed by the law

⁴<https://siper.marrja.gov.al/misioni/>

⁵https://www.rcc.int/youth_db/files/user/docs/11_Albania_Report.pdf

⁶<http://rinia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Projektet-winner.pdf>

⁷<https://www.parlamental.org/Files/ProjektLigje/20191107152923legal%20nr.%2075,%20dt.%204.11.2019.pdf>

⁸<https://qbz.gov.al/eli/vendim/2021/05/12/274>

⁹Report "Challenges of implementation of the Youth Law", 2022, National Youth Congress. 15

to carry out youth activities or support initiatives by young people or youth organizations.¹ 69.7% of the municipalities that answered the questionnaire do not have a strategic document for youth policies at local level, while only 30.3% of them believe that this document exists in their municipalities.²

The National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) is the totality of the administrative institutions and providers of employment, self-employment and education and professional training services, an integral part of the system of the Ministry responsible for employment and skills development. It functions through Regional and Local Employment Offices, Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training, as well as Public Vocational Education Schools. (NAES) is established and regulates its activity, based on the provisions of Law no. 15/ 2019 "On promoting employment", as well as Law no. 15/2017 "On Vocational Education ", as well as with the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 554, dated 31.07.2019 "On the creation, method of organization and operation of the National Employment and Skills Agency".³

The Employment Advisory Council is an advisory body that is set up within the NAES and has representatives from all the employers' organizations, trade union organizations, as well as public institutions. Regional Directorates and Local Employment Offices are institutions subordinated to the General Directorate of NAES that carry out activities in: Region of the person's permanent residence who is seeking a job, employment services, vocational training or income support, as well as the area where the employer carries out his activity. At the national level, **12 Regional Directorates and 24 Local Employment Offices** operate.⁴

In addition to employment services, **public employment offices** provide career orientation services. Employment offices provide information and orientation on all career choice and career development issues, types of training or course of study, change in occupation and mobility, further training and retraining, employment and self-employment, as well as on all labour market related issues, including labour market schemes and financial assistance. The service is mainly provided by employment specialists, who rely on the analysis of strengths and weaknesses (profiling), they check the skills, competences and abilities required for vacancies. The individual action plan outlines the next steps and responsibilities of officially registered unemployed jobseekers and the employment specialist.⁵

The Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training Provision (RDPVTP) are institutions where short-term (up to 2 years) qualifications (training) in professions required by the labour market are offered. **Vocational Training Centres** are divided into Public and Private. In total, there are 10 Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training Provision at national level.⁶

¹ibid., pp. 16

²ibid., pp. 17

³<https://akpa.gov.al/mision/>

⁴<https://akpa.gov.al/direktorite-regional-zyrat-vendore-te-punesimit/>

⁵ETF, 2022, p. 13.

⁶<https://akpa.gov.al/direktorite-regional-te-formimit-profesional/>

Public Vocational Training Centres offer: Vocational courses at National Level; Vocational courses at Centre Level. If the National Level vocational courses are unique to all Vocational Training Centres in Albania, the Centre Level vocational courses are specific courses offered by the vocational centres in function of the requirements of local businesses.

General secondary education institutions other than core curriculum, general secondary education institutions offer elective modules, especially professional elective modules. Career education is one of the modules of choice (36 teaching hours) that aims to provide students in the final grade with the ability to identify career goals, develop career research skills, plan further education/training or employment and conduct career research procedures.¹

Higher education institutions - All 43 universities (16 public and 27 non-public) have appointed full-time staff to manage Career Centres and alumni, have made available an office within the institutions and are providing career orientation due to the obligation they have for the institutional accreditation process, but also due to an increased awareness of the importance of career orientation services for the orientation of students in the labour market and in their academic and professional development.²

"VET System" is the system that includes all VET components and institutions that support it, including VET providers. "VET Provider" is a public or non-public institution (natural or legal person) licensed and/or accredited to provide VET programs/services in Albania.³

4.2 Access and Transition

Access and transition as part of the SWT ecosystem includes funding, facilitating access to training and pathways for continuing education and learning and services.

The impact of the COVID19 pandemic on young people has already been confirmed in several key directions, and especially in terms of mental health, well-being, education, training, employment, access to digitisation and mobility opportunities.

In this new context, young people need to adapt to the way they are educated and to the skills they need for the constantly changing labour market. Thus the transition from school to the labour market exhibits new features closely related to the impact of COVID-19 as well as to the digital root transformation. Young people's digital skills are already a necessity for the education, but especially for employment.

However, access to digital infrastructure is not always guaranteed for everyone and everywhere, and there is a need to mitigate the gap between young people in rural areas and those in urban areas. Hybrid learning is now a reality as well as remote work, all of which require new skills that need to be developed in young people but also in those who work on this trajectory from education to the labour market.

Another dimension of the Albanian context is also related to the European integration process, where the delays in the integration process may have caused a decline in confidence in the European perspective for young people and an increase in emigration tendencies. At the same time, this process also requires preparation in order to access the European labour market as well as increased competitiveness. The reinforcement of the common regional market also requires the preparation of young people with new skills in accordance with the market requirements.

Career is the path that the individual takes along the school and work. A career is not just a path that the individual chooses, such as which program to enroll in or which institution to work in. Career is increasingly seen as a “building block” by the individual through a range of choices he / she makes in terms of lifelong learning, work and professional development. By career orientation we refer to the support we give students to be more prepared to make decisions about education, vocational training or career, based on knowing themselves, their interests, skills and abilities, as well as the resources and opportunities associated with them. In the conditions of a dynamic labour market and knowledge-based economy, the approach to career orientation is becoming increasingly complex, and orientation targeting extends beyond recognition of occupations and the development of related skills.⁴

The OECD's definition of career guidance is: *“services that aim to support and help citizens of all ages and at any moment in their lives to make choices regarding education, training, professional development and employment as well as to manage their careers”*.⁵

These three constituent elements translate into the three career orientation services at VTA, closely linked between them:

Career Information

Career information, which consists in the systematic provision of information to those concerned about the supply of VET, qualifications related to the various professions, the supply and demand of the market for these professions, career paths that the student can follow following professional guidance in VET, etc.

Career education

Career education aims to develop in students the competencies for career development through gaining knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to manage their lives, learning and working. Career education is generally part of the curriculum, but also part of activities outside the curriculum.

Career counselling

Career counselling is conducted on an individual or small group basis, focusing attention on specific career-related problems or choices faced by students. In contrast to the first two elements, which may be provided by non-specialist teachers or staff, counselling requires the intervention of a specialised person (e.g. school psychologist), especially in cases where psychosocial counselling is needed.

The other contextual dimension that needs to be addressed is the training for new labour market requirements that are also related to the global trends of contemporary society and economy such as: Interlinking education and training with labour market requirements; Transition from education to employment; Re-qualification and advancement in qualification, lifelong learning to adapt to the labour market; Entrepreneurship and new ways of generating income; Increasing youth employment quality; and Improving knowledge, competences, behaviours and qualifications.

4.3 Existing Programs

4.3.1 Higher Education Institutions and the labour market

One of the institutions that has developed its activity in recent years is the European Union Erasmus+ programme office, whose projects have to some extent supported the capacities of higher education Institutions as important actors to prepare young people towards the labour market. In this context, the projects supported by this office have mainly focused on reviewing the study programmes, adapting the academic offer to the needs of the labour market and modernizing the teaching instruments. Over the period 2015-2020, 21 projects have been funded by this office, involving 55 higher education institutions and 16 non-educational institutions in Albania.⁶ The main interventions of these projects have been:

- Curricula modernisation of the 17 existing programmes of Bachelor cycle
- Curricula modernization of the 42 existing programmes of Master's cycle
- Creation and implementation of 8 new programmes in second and third cycle of Master
- Construction or renovation with contemporary equipment of 25 technical or IT laboratories
- The creation of the “Gradua” platform, which will be available to students, businesses and HEIs to share information on open job positions, on professional practices and will enable students to submit their resumes which can be consulted by interested employers.

4.3.2 Employment services

As regards employment promotion, NAES has mainly taken legal framework initiatives by implementing the specific Law on Employment Promotion and by implementing the Decisions of the Council of Ministers. NAES conducts its activity on the basis of: Employment Promotion Law

- Decision of the Council of Ministers No.17 dated 15.01.2020 "On Procedures, Criteria and Rules for Implementation of Employment Promotion Programs through Employment, Occupational Training and Vocational Practices"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 348, dated 29.4.2020 "On procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of the incentive program through self-employment"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 535 dated 08.07.2020 "On the procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of the public works program in the Community"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No.608, dated 29.07.2020 "On the procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of the incentive program through the employment of unemployed persons as a result of COVID-19"

NAES carries out its programs also within the framework of the two strategies foreseen in its activity, and according to the National Migration Strategy and the Action Plan 2019 – 2022, the two categories of population, young people and women, find the situation in Albania's labor market quite difficult. NAES also carries out activities in support of the Strategy for Higher Skills and Better Jobs for All Females and Men- National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020, where according to this strategy is provided the formulation and implementation of an active employment policy which constitutes a fundamental element for tackling and solving employment problems. Policies aimed at improving employment prospects should have a greater scope of action, while programmes should target those persons who are most disadvantaged in the labour market, particularly individuals with low levels of education and qualification, females, young people, other vulnerable groups and individuals living in rural areas.⁶ In pursuance of these strategies and legal framework, NCAA during 2020 has implemented the programs under DCM no.17 and DCM No.608. Two years ago, after drafting and approval, the DCM No.348 on Self-employment, was implemented in four regions: Tirana, Shkodra, Kukes and Dibra. NAES develops the employment promotion program that includes:⁷

- **Employment Programme** (1-year employment programme in which the needs of the jobseeker are adapted to the skill requirements of the job provided by the employer. The salary is determined by the employment contract in accordance with the respective position and salary level in the labour market where young people under the age of 29 are in the target group and occupy a leading place.)

- **The Vocational Training Programme** (this programme targets the on-the-job training of unemployed jobseekers in which their needs are adapted to the skill requirements of the job vacancy offered by the employer. The subsidy duration of this program is 4 months for all types of professions. The program subsidizes another 8 months if the employer enters into an employment contract with the Unemployed Jobseeker. The individual training plan is drawn up by the employer as part of the application form according to an approved format. Unskilled Jobseekers, a category in which mainly young people belong to, also benefit in this programme.

- **Professional Practice Programme** (This programme is among the most facilitated for newly graduated as it aims to guarantee a rapid transition to the labour market in the same or a similar field to the one the newly graduated has studied. The duration of this program is typically 6 months. This Programme benefits young people (who have 1-24 months of their graduation)

- **Self-Employment Programme** (This is a 1year programme and promotes employment and entrepreneurship in unemployed jobseekers who have a business idea through entrepreneurship training and the development of business plans for applicants and grant beneficiaries. This program is implemented based on a fair and competitive application process. Being unemployed jobseekers, young people can also benefit from this program, and put their ideas to life) Alongside these programs, NAES has also developed employment programs for unemployed people as a result of Covid-19 by offering 4/8/12 month employment to people who have become unemployed due to the pandemic. The beneficiaries of this program will obtain the minimum wage and contributions for a period foreseen by the employer, as well as being registered at the employment office before.¹

Table 7: Services that the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) provides

| Information Card | Employment and Migration Services | Labour market Programs (Employment Promotion) | Qualifications | Unified courses | Special courses | Job vacancy |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Provides ready-made Templates of documents required for various categories such as job seekers, employers, annual permits, work permits, certifications, etc. | IN THE FIELD OF IMMIGRATION services offer the possibility of equipping foreigners with: a) <i>Verification of the Declaration for Employment, for citizens of the EU and the Schengen area, or of the USA.</i> | Employment services include the following activities: a) <i>Information on job vacancies;</i> b) <i>Mediation for employment;</i> c) <i>Counseling and guidance for work and profession</i> The services offered to job seekers are: | PROFESSIONAL COURSES Professional courses at the national level and professional courses at the central level. Usually the National Courses are professional qualifications of no more than 2 years, while those at the | Unified Professional Courses Unified Courses for implementation by the Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training Provision, which aim to provide a wider range of employment. | Professional courses of special professions for implementation by the Regional Public Vocational Training Provision Directorates, which aim to provide a wider range of employment. | Vacancies for public administration Vacancies for local units. Vacancies in independent institutions. Winner announcement section |

¹Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth -Higher skills and better work for all women and males" NATIONAL STRATEGY for EMPLOYMENT and SKILLS 2014-2020 pp.86

²National Agency for Employment and Skills available at: <https://akpa.gov.al/> (Accessed on 24.01.2022)

³Ibidem

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| <p>b) <i>Type "A" work permit for Employees, Type "B" for independent economic activity, Type "C" for special cases, Type "D" permanent work permit.</i></p> <p>IN THE FIELD OF IMMIGRATION</p> <p>Law No. 9668, dated 18.12.2006 "On the emigration of Albanian citizens for employment reasons", amended by Law 10 389, dated 03.03.2011, as well as the Strategy for the Reintegration of Returned Albanian Citizens 2010-2015 and its Plan, are applied and its Action Plan as part of national policies on migration.</p> | <p>Information and advice; Employment guidelines, needs assessment, career/professional development/Empl oyment Action Plan; Participation in a training and other interventions in the labor market; Mediation services etc.</p> <p>Online system for job seekers: Gives the opportunity to independently create an account in the system;</p> <p>Gives the opportunity to search for vacancies; It gives the possibility of completing a CV in the system according to the online format (model similar to the EU).</p> <p>Services offered to employers are: Information on the labor market; Registration and publication of job vacancies; Provision of potential candidates for recruitment; Providing information on various labour market programs, such as for example, for employment promotion programs, vocational training and education, etc.</p> <p>Online system for employers: Gives the opportunity to independently create an account in the system; Publish a job vacancy; Search for suitable job seekers and send an invitation to a job seeker.</p> | <p>Center Level are courses for short qualifications.</p> <p>For some categories, unemployed (registered in employment offices) and people from groups in need, Vocational training courses at DROFPP are offered free of charge.</p> <p>Groups in need include: Members of the Roman community; Trafficked girls and women; Persons who have served prison sentences; Orphans (according to status); Persons with limited abilities; Returned immigrants with economic problems.</p> | | | <p>Self-Employment Program</p> <p>Job seekers with a clear business idea are trained and supported by qualified experts. Jointly, they develop a consolidated business plan. Then, the best plans are financed up to the value of 500,000 lek.</p> |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|

Source: National Agency for Employment and Skills

This agency has carried out a series of collaborations and programs to promote employment, among which it is worth mentioning the C4EE⁹¹ Project, which had the approach of counseling for employment and entrepreneurship that started in 2010 and continued until 2020. This project has assisted young people from vulnerable groups on their way to employment.

⁹¹Annual analysis of the National Employment and Skills Agency on the progress of activities for 2020 p.54, available at: <https://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Analiza-AKPA-2020.pdf> Accessed on 26.01.2022

The training cycles with the new participants were implemented in partnership with civil society NGOs, the National Employment Service and SMEs, including group and individual trainings as well as different stages of development such as: group building, exploring the world of labour market, short and long internships, community activities, vocational courses or work-based learning, life skills training, business and/or start-up planning. Also, National Agency for Employment and Skills NAES with the support of UNDP Albania has carried out the campaign entitled "Generation R"⁹², which contains promotional video testimonials of students attending vocational education about their experiences received from providers. Other projects that facilitate the transition of young people in the workplace that are carried out by National Agency for Employment and Skills NAES in cooperation with other partners are:

- The "Skills for Jobs" project, where the goal of the project is to benefit from reinforced education and training oriented towards the labour market in sectors with growing potential, enabling young people in Albania to find an attractive and dignified job where the vocational high schools are the focus.
- The "Support for Public Vocational Training Centers" project, where the institutions supported by this project are 5 Public Vocational Training Centers in the Regions: Shkodra, Durrësi, Korça, Gjirokastra & Elbasani.
- The project "Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Employment Fund - MFC Kamza" where the German Government is committed to supporting the Government of Albania for the further improvement of education and professional training in Albania, especially by supporting the creation of the Multifunctional Training Center (MTC) in Kamëz as a pilot for further expansion of MTC⁹³.

4.3.3 Other initiatives that promote the employment of young people in Albania.

One of the main initiatives to promote the employment of young people in recent years is the National Work Practice Program. The sixth call of this program is managed by the Ministry of Education and Sports, while the seventh call is under the competence of the Minister for Youth and Children. The purpose of this National Work Internship Program is the benefit of a qualifying experience, which affects the development of professional, academic and personal competencies. The program enables familiarization with government administration institutions and other public or private⁹⁴ institutions. This experience also serves as 1-year work experience and facilitates the application of young people to other public instances or authorities. To participate in these internships, young people must have completed at least the Bachelor system. Local and central government institutions, but also independent institutions and private commercial companies participate in this program. Since 2015, when the program was launched, about 3,700 work practices have been developed and 800 young people have been employed within this initiative⁹⁵. The 200 most successful students for 2021 have benefited from a one-year employment contract⁹⁶.

⁹² Annual analysis of the National Employment and Skills Agency on the progress of activities for 2020 p.51, available at: <https://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Analiza-AKPA-2020.pdf> Accessed on 26.01.2022

⁹³ Annual analysis of the National Employment and Skills Agency on the progress of activities for 2020 p.55, available at: <https://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Analiza-AKPA-2020.pdf> Accessed on 26.01.2022

⁹⁴ The National Work Internship Program available at: <https://praktika.arsimi.gov.al/> (Accessed on 26.02.2022)

⁹⁵ The National Work Internship Program available at: <https://arsimi.gov.al/programi-kombetar-i-praktikave-te-punes-rreth-3700-praktika-dhe-800-te-rinj-te-punesuar-nga-viti-2015/> (Accessed on 26.01.2022)

⁹⁶ At the abovementioned link

A platform similar to that of the Work Practice Program was the one organized by the General Directorate of Taxes, where in 2019 200 young people were selected to be part of the work program for business awareness towards formalization and the issuance of receipt⁹⁷. The application was open to all graduates at the Bachelor's or Master's level, through the professional internship program.

Municipalities engaged in providing work practices within these institutions within the framework of calls announced by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the "National Program of Work Practices" have included a number of young people, specifically: ⁹⁸

In the municipality of Lezhë, during the year 2021, 29 students have developed internships.

- In the municipality of Berat, in the year 2019, 6 interns were involved, in the year 2020, 1 intern benefited from this program and in the year 2021 - 6 interns.
- In the municipality of Durrës during 2021, 14 interns have been included in this program.
- The municipalities of Korçë and Dibër have not provided results regarding the number of young people who have benefited from the work internship program.

4.3.4 Regional and Local Programs

Programs for supporting young people in employment are also those between municipalities and Regional Employment offices. The municipalities that have concluded agreements with local labor offices are: Berat, Gjirokastër, Korçë municipalities. From these programs in the years 2019-2021 in the municipality of Berat, a total of 14 people have developed paid internships, of which: 7 people in the year 2019; 1 person in the year 2020 and 6 people in the year 2021. While the municipalities of Gjirokastër and Korçë have not provided detailed information, they have confirmed that they have implemented a cooperation agreement with the Regional Directorate of Employment⁹⁹.

The Municipality of Tirana has presented two main programs aimed at promoting employment with a focus on promoting entrepreneurship among young people and self-employment "Program for promoting employment in support of the creation of Youth Social Business" (2016 onwards) and the project "Young men and women towards a profession" with a focus on increasing the professional skills of young people and their employment through agreements between municipalities and businesses. In the framework of the project "Young men and women towards a profession" during the year 2017 and the years 2019-2020, 37 young people have completed work practice at 9 businesses and 13 jobs have been generated. Meanwhile, from the program to increase employment through the promotion of entrepreneurship among young people, 57 new jobs have been created from the creation of 27 new businesses and 10 existing businesses have been expanded.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Call for Youth Employment Promotion Programs available at: [Thirrje për Programet e Nxitjes së Punësimit për të rinjtë \(tatime.gov.al\)](#) (Accessed on 26.02.2022)

⁹⁸ Responses from official Requests for Information about the National Work Internship Program in the respective Municipalities.

⁹⁹ Responses from official Requests for Information about the National Work Internship Program in the respective Municipalities

¹⁰⁰ At the same resource

In the year 2021, the municipality of Tirana has started the implementation of the project "Empowerment of young men and women" with a focus on facilitating the employment of young people due to the difficulties created due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This program supports young people in building their capacities for the drafting of successful business plans and the creation of enterprises by the young people themselves. ¹⁰¹

Some of the municipalities have carried out other initiatives in cooperation with civil society organizations that aim at forming the skills of young people and increasing employment opportunities in areas of interest for local relations where, for example:

- In Berat municipality, a restoration camp was held where young people assisted the restoration of churches in Berat Castle; training for tourist guides; establishment of the "Multifunctional Center for young people";
- In the municipality of Dibër, trainings were organized with young people for career orientation.
- In the municipality of Korçë has been created "Korça Innovation Technology Hub", where courses and trainings are held in the field of programming, technology and management of social networks in order to train, qualify and employ young people.
- In the municipality of Lezhë, the "Tourist Guide" has been implemented, which aims to prepare young people to enter the labour market in the tourism sector.
- In the municipality of Dibër is being established an Information and Career Counseling Office with the aim of helping young people to prepare for the phase of transition from school to the labor market.

In this context, the municipality of Tirana has set part of the priorities in the program of "Employment Promotion to help the creation of Youth Social Business" the support of young people with disabilities, young people in rural areas. Meanwhile, in the program entitled "Young men and women towards a profession", priority has been given to supporting young people whose families are part of the economic assistance scheme. ¹⁰²

4.3.5 National initiative to promote youth employment.

In Albania, one of the initiatives that has offered programs with a focus on young people and groups in need in the last decade has been the National Employment Service. ¹⁰³ This service has implemented the Employment Promotion Program with on-the-job training in accordance with Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 47 (DCM). This Program provided financial support to employers who offered training to job seekers registered in the program where the duration of this training was 6 months. Unemployed jobseekers were selected by the National Employment Service and companies were provided with a brief profile of potential program participants. ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ At the same resource

¹⁰² Responses from official Requests for Information about the National Work Internship Program in the respective Municipalities.

¹⁰³ Ana Gorencia "Transition of young people in the workplace: "The case of Albania" p.81

¹⁰⁴ At the same resource

Platform Ready For Albania

This platform is ready for all young people, who have completed their first and second level studies, bachelor and master, with high results, abroad or in Albania. For all those who wish to contribute to the public administration, as: Clerk, Digital Clerk or as an external Expert for existing projects or new ideas. This platform was launched in May 2021 for graduates of all fields of study.¹⁰⁵ The launch of this platform aims to create the necessary conditions for students of excellence, to create suitable work experiences, in order to develop their subsequent career in the Albanian public administration. Ready for Albania continues to absorb excellent graduate students from home and abroad.

Platform "Good Job"

Through this platform, excellent graduate students at home and abroad, who are looking for an experience in public administration, have an employment opportunity in the latter. This initiative is part of the Pact for the University that supports young people who have completed at least the first cycle of bachelor's and/or professional/scientific master's studies with an average of 9.00-10.00 (or equivalent) of each of the study cycles.¹⁰⁶ The purpose of this initiative is to gain a qualifying experience, which will help in the development of professional skills and knowledge of public administration. After being informed about the new initiative and after consulting the required vacancies, the candidates continue with completing the account and uploading the main documents that must be completed, on the website of the Department of Public Administration. Regarding the number of graduates who have been employed in the public administration for the year 2020, Department of Public Administration confirmed that 374 excellent students have been appointed to civil service institutions.¹⁰⁷ In total, after this initiative and data reconciliation, 845 excellent students were employed in the public administration during the period 2019-2021, so in the year 2021 there were 471 employees.¹⁰⁸

Innovation Project Albania

This program is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Economy and is implemented by Helvetas and Partners in Albania, which aims to provide as many employment opportunities as possible for young men and women in Albania aged 15-29 in a sustainable and comprehensive manner, through interventions in 4 main pillars through:¹⁰⁹

- **Job Demand** (With increasing demands for new jobs in the private sector; in tourism, agribusiness and information and communication technology.)
- **Offer for Skills** (By promoting the offer of private providers, innovative programs and methodologies that are required by business in the three sectors where the project stimulates the demand for work.)

¹⁰⁵ Ready for Albania Platform Available at: <https://gatipershqjperine.al/> (accessed on 26.01.2022)

¹⁰⁶ Good job platform available at: <https://punetembare.gov.al/> (accessed on 26.01.2022)

¹⁰⁷ Department of Public Administration <http://dap.gov.al/>

¹⁰⁸ Program "100 days 100 achievements" available at:

<https://top-channel.tv/2021/03/10/100-arritje-ne-4-vite-rama-845-studente-jane-punesuar-ne-administraten-publike/> (accessed at 26.01.2022)

¹⁰⁹ Innovation albania - available at: <https://www.risialbania.al/?lang=en> (accessed on 26.01.2022)

- **Career Counseling & Mediation** (By improving labour market services through career counseling and mediation)

Gender issues and social inclusion are principles that apply to all three pillars above. The initiative focuses on 9 cities where 28 local organizations organized in 9 coalitions, one in each city, have been mobilized.

4.3.6 The budget for young people, for the year 2021.

Albania's municipalities have had different approaches to the budgeting of youth activities, where specifically:

- The Municipality of Lezhë for the year 2021 has allocated a budget of 500,000 ALL, of which 150,000 ALL for "Support of youth activities" and 350,000 ALL for "Encouragement of creative activities" for the promotion of talented young people.
- The Municipality of Berat for 2021 has allocated a budget of 480,000 ALL for young people.
- The Municipality of Dibër for the year 2021 did not have a specific budget for young people, but it supported various activities for young people, such as: Evenings for the best students, etc.
- The Municipality of Durrës for the year 2021 has allocated a fund of 2,000,000 lek for rewarding students with excellent results and winners of the National Olympics, from which 32 students have benefited.
- The Municipality of Kukes has not provided information on the budget for young people in the year 2021.
- The Municipality of Gjirokastër has not provided information about the budget for young people in the year 2021, while for the year 2022 it is in the planning phase of the budget in which activities for young people will be reflected.
- Korçë municipality has not provided information on the budget for young people.
- The Municipality of Tirana through the programs "For the promotion of Employment in support of the creation of Youth Social Business" and "Young men and women towards a profession" and has financially supported the young winners of these programs with the following funds:
 - In the year 2016, the program "For the promotion of Employment in support of the creation of Youth Social Business" has allocated 10,000,000 ALL (financing for each individual in the amount of 500,000 ALL).
 - In the year 2017, the program "Young men and women towards a profession" granted financial support of 2,100,000 ALL in the form of salary reimbursement to the employers of 20 young beneficiaries.
 - In the year 2019-2020, the program "For the promotion of employment in support of the creation of Youth Social Business" has allocated 10,000,000 ALL (financing for each individual in the amount of 500,000 ALL).
 - In the year 2021, the "Empowerment of young men and women" program supported 20 beneficiaries of this program with 800,000 ALL each. ¹¹⁰

4.4. Conditions and practices for skill development

The National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022 and its action plan aims to integrate economic, educational, training and entrepreneurial policies, producing an action plan, which aims to increase the level of employment, making possible a gradual transition from passive unemployment policies to active ones stimulating employment, as well as putting due emphasis on the development of the labor force in Albania. This strategy is based on the implementation of the guidelines of the government program, National strategy for development and integration and the mid-term evaluation report of the National Strategy for Employment and Skills implemented in the period 2014-2018.

"National Strategy for Skills and Employment 2019-2022" and Law 15/2019 "On promoting employment" are key political and legal documents in promoting employment for young people. The action plan of the "National Strategy for Skills and Employment 2019-2022" focuses on increasing opportunities for decent work through efficient labour market policies by providing quality education and treatment for young people and to increase the promotion of inclusion and social cohesion and strengthening the labor system and qualifications in the market.¹¹¹

The institutions and bodies charged with the implementation of this strategy are the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the National Agency for Employment and Skills, the National Agency for Education, Vocational Training and Qualifications and the State Inspectorate of Labor and Social Services. While the Government Program for the years 2017-2021 has focused on employment and the qualitative development of the workforce, in accordance with the vision and directives of the European Union, the European Employment Strategy 2020 as well as the requirements for the European integration of Albania in the EU.

Regarding counseling, it is noted that enrollments in secondary-level VET (Vocational education and training) programs increased from 17% in 2014 to 20.6% in 2018. The number of VET (Vocational education and training) students is small compared to other Western Balkan partners. VET (Vocational education and training) used to be the least attractive option at upper secondary level compared to academic education, but this image has changed in recent years. Reforms are ongoing, but further system-wide efforts are needed to complement improvements in donor-supported pilot institutions.¹¹²

Regarding to specific programs to encourage entrepreneurship among young people for employment and income generation, the Council of Ministers in December 2021 approved the draft law "On the support and development of innovative startups", which, according to the Ministry for Entrepreneurship Protection solves one of the main obstacles of entrepreneurs (including young entrepreneurs) in relation to the lack of information on fiscal and legal aspects for the creation of new enterprises, especially by young people.

Furthermore based on this draft law and subsequent by-laws, programs and support services are provided for Startups, including but not limited to; incubators, providers of work facilities and equipment, mentors, advisors, trainers, assistance providers during business development, technology and innovation centers, event organizers, higher education institutions, research organizations, providers of legal, financial or business consulting services.

5. DATA ANALYSIS: BARRIERS TO THE TRANSITION OF YOUTH IN THE WORKPLACE

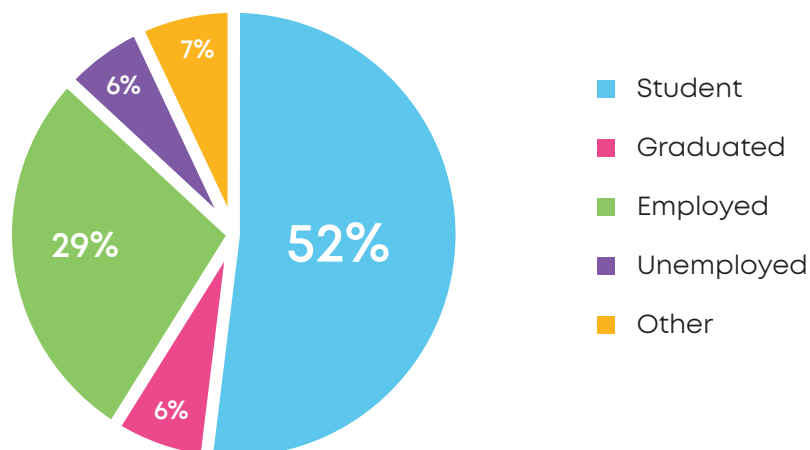
This chapter presents the data analysis as an interweaving of data collected from the literature, requests for information, interviews, questionnaires with young people and NGOs as well as consultation processes and other local meetings. The analysis is presented in four main dimensions grouped according to the conceptual framework of the SWT, the analysis of the macro system and the ecosystem in Albania. The four dimensions are as following:

- Barriers to access to skills development opportunities.
- Barriers to matching and developing the skills required by the labor market.
- Barriers to easily connect with productive work opportunities.
- Barriers to the development of an ecosystem suitable for the transition to labour market.

As for the quantitative data, the relevant sample is presented below. In the quantitative analysis for the purpose of this guide, 300 questionnaires were distributed among young people from different cities of the economy related to the cities of the said initiative of the Youth Lab (WBYL): Tirana, Këlcyra, Berati, Delvina, Durrësi, Elbasani, Fushë-Kruja, Korça, Laçi, Lezha, Shkodra, Pogradeci, Vlora, Puka, Vora, Shijaku, Dimal, Peshkopia, Lushnja, Kamza, Erseka.

The young people questioned are 65% female and 32% male and belong to different age groups, where the highest percentage is in the 18-21 age group (31.7%). Regarding their status at the time of the survey, 52% of respondents are students, 6% newly graduated, 29% employed and 6% unemployed. Mainly, the fields of study of the student respondents are: business administration, marketing, teaching, law, economy-finance, journalism.

Figure 9: Status of the sample



In the questionnaire addressed to civil society organizations were engaged 60 organization, from different cities of the economy such as: Berati, Burreli, Cërriku, Delvinë, Durrës, Elbasan, Korçë, Kukës, Lezhë, Librazhd, Përmet, Peshkopi, Pogradec, Shkodër, Tirana, Vlora, Vora. The surveyed CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) focus their work on different areas such as: youth employment; education; democracy; sustainable economic development; promoting active citizenship; environmental protection; social inclusion; the participation of young people and women in local decision-making; professional education and research; psycho-social and cultural development of young people, advocacy and lobbying.

5.1 Barriers to access to skills development opportunities.

Young people in Albania face many challenges to find quality jobs that match their skills and aspirations. 80% of the young people who completed the questionnaire think that young people encounter great difficulties in the transition to the workplace in the cities where they live. Based on the review of documents, the integration of quantitative data from questionnaires and especially qualitative data from meetings, consultations, trainings and interviews, the main challenge is that the education system (secondary professional, secondary general, higher) in general, despite the progress, still fails to provide many young people with adequate access to opportunities to develop the right skills for the labor market.

So, regarding to the access to skills development opportunities, one of the barriers is the lack of consolidation of an infrastructural system (schools, transport, heating, technological laboratory, digitalization) for the access of marginalized and more vulnerable groups such as young people in rural areas in education. During consultations and trainings, insufficiently developed technological and digital infrastructure is identified as a main problem for equal opportunities for the development of skills for different groups of young people, especially those marginalized, vulnerable, from rural areas or with other skills.

Regarding to the access, another barrier is the low level of interest and enrollment of young people in vocational secondary education that prepares young people directly for the labor market. Albania has the lowest level of enrollment in vocational secondary education in the entire Western Balkans region.¹ Eventhough in recent years there has been an increase in the attraction to the offer of education and professional training, the system must be consolidated and offer quality access to young people to choose VET. According to data from interviews and consultations, some of the main challenges of VET providers are lack of infrastructure, updated curricula, continuous training and qualification of staff, and unstable links with businesses.

CSOs especially appreciate the increased attention of donors and the government to the VET system and bring positive examples of some schools how they have overcome these shortcomings and provide access and quality opportunities for young people.² On the other hand, during the consultations representatives of public institutions, civil society organizations and businesses argue that the market has a high demand for young people with abilities and specific technical professions but these human resources (professions) are missing as young people choose general and higher education rather than AFP.³ Moreover, in cities with high activity or potential for tourism, the participants in the consultations argue that there is a lack of vocational training centers that offer specific qualifications with a priority of the labour market in the respective city or region.

Special emphasis in these meetings was also on higher education, which presents some specific challenges for access to opportunities for the development of skills for young people, such as the participants focus on the issue of diversification of study programs, as well as a situation where many programs due to lack of registrations risk being closed, thus depleting the market for special study programs. Some of the other problems related to the curriculum and the program is the missing connection of higher education institutions with the labour market or other actors in society in a sustainable way, despite the fact that there are some cases of success and achievements in this direction. Furthermore, not all young people attending higher education have the same opportunities in developing skills, such as participation in Erasmus+ mobility schemes, doing internships or trainings, cooperation in research projects and not only with lecturers/professors in rural areas, is an important factor and as a result girls are not educated or employed. These differences are related not only to the approach of educational institutions, but also to the proactivity and personal approach of students to be engaged and to develop skills.

Access to opportunities for skills development also has a social and cultural dimension related to social norms towards girls and their role in the family or society. The young people involved in this initiative notice differentiation in facing the transition in the labour market between girls/women and boys/men. In this context, they say that girls and women find the transition period from school to labour market more difficult for social and cultural reasons. They often face prejudice and discrimination and engage more in non-management work positions.

While a specific category with difficulties in accessing opportunities for skills development are young people neither in education, employment or training (NEET). Regarding the inclusion of NEET youth (not in education, employment, training) the participants in this initiative argue that the challenges of the inclusion of young people in the NEET category are related to the lack of effective systems of mentoring, combined education between school and the workplace and paid internships.

²Examples from supporting projects such as Skills for Job.³The problems that are repeated most often by experts, psychologists, business representatives during meetings in Durrës, Lezhë, Shkodër, Dibër, Korçë.

A significant problem noted by both the questionnaires and the consultations is the lack of information about access to skills development opportunities, so young people often do not lack opportunities, but access to information about opportunities related to skills development. 81% of the young people who completed the questionnaire do not have information on the initiatives that facilitate the transition of young people to the workplace in their city and 82% of them are not aware of the actors/peoples who realize the transition to the workplace in the respective cities of residence.

When young people were asked what they mean by "workplace transition", the majority of them defined it as the stage from schooling to employment, emphasizing the acquisition of the right skills for employment as well as the adaptation of acquired knowledge, during education, at the workplace. When they were asked about the reasons why they do not have information about these initiatives, the young people list some of them as: Lack of information distribution and not using the appropriate information distribution tools; The presence of nepotism, employment for political interests and lack of meritocracy; Lack of cooperation between businesses and schools; Absence or dysfunction of career counseling offices.

Table 8: Data from consultations (grouped)

| The main problems related to employment | The main problems related to education |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study of the labour market has oversaturation of the market for certain branches and little demand. • Bureaucracy and low quality of recruitment. • Low coordination between local institutions for promoting employment. • Lack of good implementation of existing laws and programs. • Lack of internships in the private sector. (Even if they are, they are unpaid internships, which makes it difficult for young people to absorb them). • Lack of internships for young graduates from professional schools. • Choosing study programs that offer young people employment abroad (mainly nursing). • Lack of infrastructure for professional training, laboratories and for persons with disabilities. • Lack of infrastructure (the lack of transportation for people living in rural areas prevents them from having employment opportunities in cities.) • Lack of training for young people for services during the summer season in tourist areas. • The social-cultural context that pushes young people to have a mindset towards emigration, seeing it as the only option. • Low wages and failure to treat employees with dignity. • Lack of digitization in rural areas. • Lack of centers and public training for specific professions needed by areas with certain areas of development. • Wrong mentality regarding education in vocational schools. • Lack of positive models displayed and proclaimed for young people. • Lack of soft loans for young people. • High requirements to be employed in the public sector and not in the private sector. • The impact of the pandemic on mental health making youth more anxious and less proactive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improper curricula. • Teachers who currently develop career education do not have the appropriate qualification. • Lack of familiarity with the professions and skills of the XXI century. • Lack of diversification of branches in universities. • Lack of tracking of graduates from the school to the labor market. • Lack of soft skills to adapt. • Lack of training for it • Written documents necessary for work such as CV, Letter of Motivation, Expression of Interest, etc. • Lack of career orientation. • Lack of digital infrastructure in schools. • Presence of corruption mainly in universities. • Lack of registrations in certain study programs that is leading to their closure. |

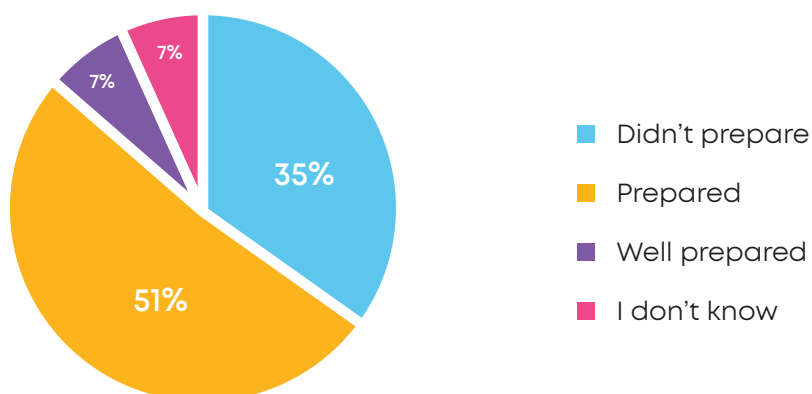
5.2 Barriers to matching and developing the skills required by the labor market.

The biggest barrier to the development of the skills required by the labour market remains the mismatch or limited matching between the educational programs and curricula with the skills and knowledge required by the labor market, which is constantly and rapidly changing. 80% of young people who completed the questionnaire for this initiative claim that they notice a difference between the skills learned at school/university compared to the skills needed in the labor market, while only 7% of respondents think that the academic curriculum prepares them very well young people for the labor market, compared to 41% of respondents who affirm that the academic curriculum does not prepare young people for the labour market at all and 53% of respondents who affirm that this preparation is to some extent.

The inconsistency of the skills acquired in educational institutions with those required by the labour market is also confirmed by civil society organizations and other actors involved in this initiative, despite the fact that there have been improvements in the design and development of competency-oriented curricula. Regarding the question to what extent CSO representatives think that the academic curriculum prepares young people for the labor market, 35% of them think that young people have no preparation for the labour market at all, 51% of them think that the preparation is to some extent, against 7% who think that the academic curriculum prepares young people very well for the labor market. While 90% of them perceive a difference between the skills obtained at school/university, compared to the skills needed for the labor market. On the other hand, young people are increasingly preferring study programs that are in high demand in European markets, such as nursing.

Figure 10: CSO – Curriculum matching with labour market requirements.

In your opinion, to what extent the academic curriculum prepares young people for the labour market?

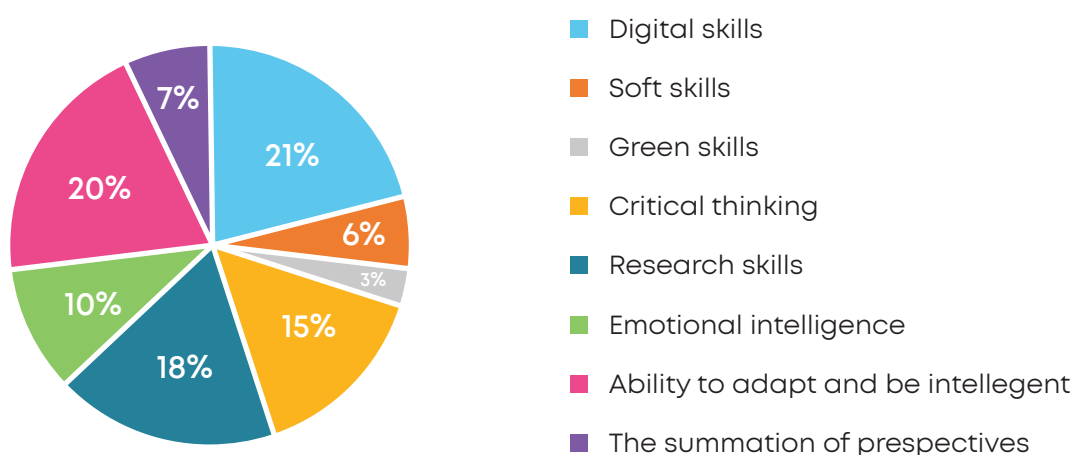


Employment promotion instruments do not always specifically target those groups of young people who leave school early, sometimes even without completing basic education, for various reasons. This then makes their transition into the labour market difficult. Due to the low percentage of students attending VET schools, the Albanian government has put a special effort in its educational policies to increase the profile of professional studies by collaborating with international partners to implement the dual model of work and schooling according to the German or Swiss model, **encouraging VET providers and businesses to work more closely together to ensure the training of young people according to the professions demanded by the labor market.** The reform of vocational education and training in Albania has started, but the consolidation of its results and the improvement of the supply and demand for VET are still required.

Another challenge mentioned in almost all meetings and interviews is the limited opportunity for students to have practice-oriented learning and work in higher education. Few students gain work experience while at university that would be useful for employability after graduation. Even though the Albanian government has started the implementation of subsidized internship programs, still few students who participated in this initiative were aware of or benefited from them. This challenge refers to barriers to easily connect to the labour market through instruments such as career counseling service, internships, learning combined with work, fairs, etc. which are analyzed below.

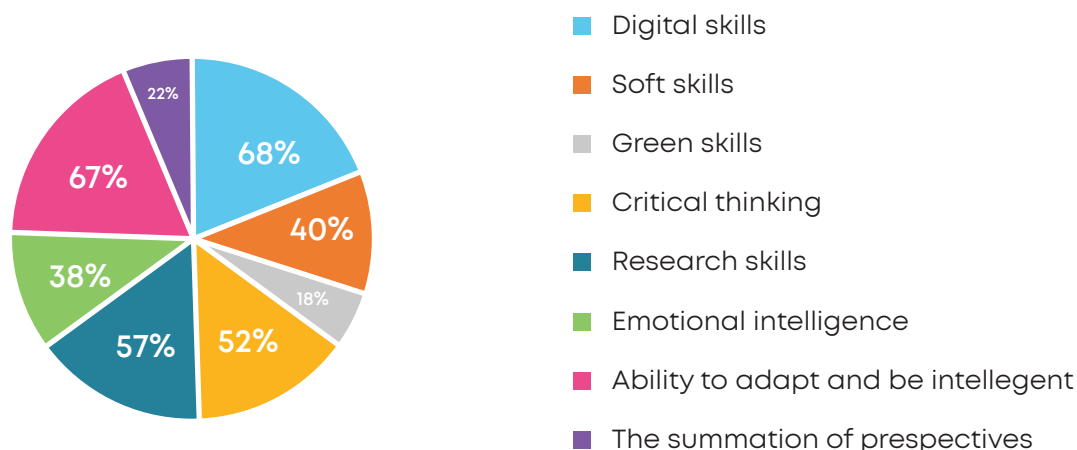
Regarding the question what are the most important skills that young people need to enter the labor market, three skills are listed in the highest percentage: "digital skills" (68.3%), then "skills to easily adapted and to be flexible" (64.3%) and "Research and cognitive skills" (60.7%).

Figure 11: Skills needed by young people according to young people.



In this framework, based on their experiences with young people, CSOs value among the most important: digital skills (68.3%), the ability to easily adapt and be flexible (66.7%), research and cognitive skills (56.7%), critical thinking (53.3%) and so on according to the chart.

Figure 12: Skills needed by young people according to CSOs



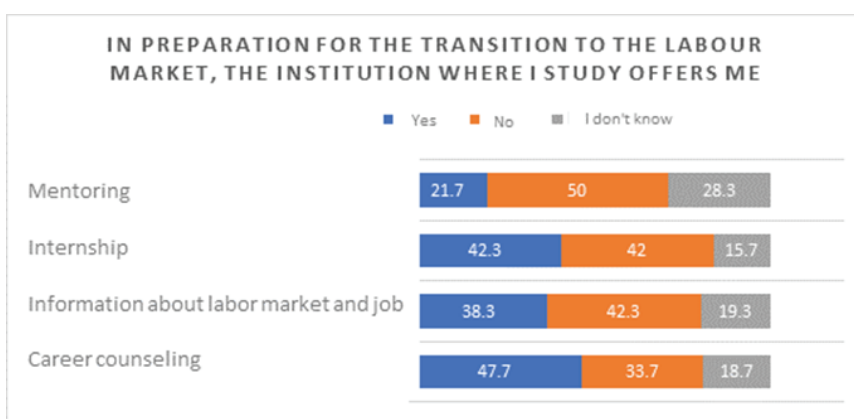
5.3 Barriers to easily connect with productive work opportunities.

The job search process is also challenging. In addition to the lack of access to information and the distribution of information in unattractive environment for young people, the first job process is also challenged by what the authors describe as the "experience trap": that is, businesses are looking for experienced employees, but young people are no experience to start work.¹ Thus, taking into account the lack of career guidance and mentoring, the first professional job becomes very challenging. This challenge is similar in both vocational and higher education. While in higher education, the job search process is conditioned by the existence of an oversupply in the humanities and social sciences and a lack of resources in other sciences. The perception that "a job is not found with merit, but with a friend" is rooted in the young people who participated in this initiative and this affects the process of searching and finding the first job. Also, young people seem to have an expectation and preference for what is perceived as secure work in the public administration rather than work in the private market that is perceived as more demanding and difficult or self-employment and entrepreneurship. Moreover, it is emphasized that young people do not approach the Employment Service Offices at the local level and do not register as jobseekers, which makes it difficult for these institutions to connect and mediate.

The main barrier to easily connecting with productive work opportunities highlighted by the participants in this initiative is unconsolidated career counseling services at all three levels of education. First, in terms of education, it is noted that there is a need to improve the curricula regarding career counseling from an early age by teachers with the appropriate background. Career counseling starts in secondary schools mainly, but it is suggested to start earlier and consolidate it in the whole educational sector, adapting to the specifics of VET, general and higher education. Educational institutions are important actors in the training of young people and in their transition to employment.

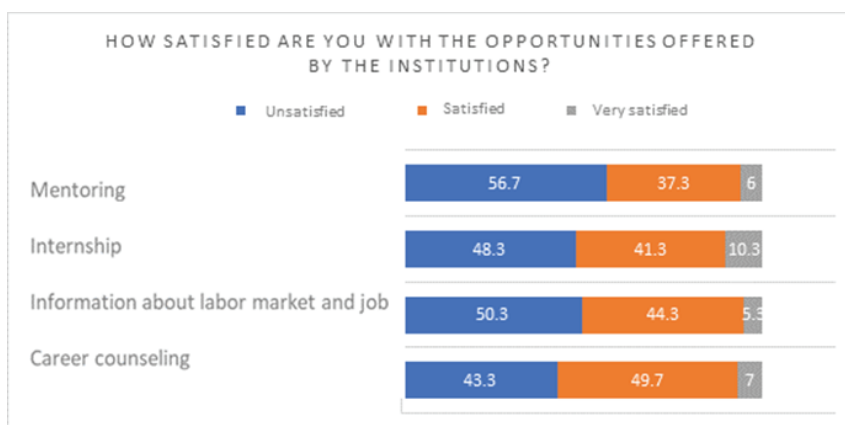
Regarding the question about the level of provision of career counseling, work practices, mentoring and information about the labour market and employment requirements, we note that educational institutions have deficiencies in mentoring students (50% of respondents indicate that in the institution where they study, no mentoring is offered/provided), continuing with the low level of providing information about the labour market and employment requirements (42.3% of respondents affirm that they do not receive this type of information). At the same time, respectively 42% and 33.7% of respondents indicate that the institutions where they study do not offer work practice and career counseling. Significant is the percentage of young people (over 15%), who have no information at all on any of the issues asked.

Figure 13: Support with services for SWT according to youth



Regarding the same services listed above, most of young people are not satisfied with the opportunities provided by the educational institution. Accordingly, 56.7% of young people are not satisfied with the mentoring service provided, 50.3% of them are not at all satisfied with the information provided to them on the labour market and employment requirements, 48.3% are not at all satisfied with the practices of work and 43.3% on career counseling.

Figure 14: Level of satisfaction with services in educational institutions for SWT



As well as, the respondents were asked if in the institution where they study they had the opportunity to engage in joint university-business organizations such as job fairs, conferences, seminars, in acquaintance and study visits to businesses, in study exchanges abroad or in university projects with businesses. 53% of respondents affirm that they have been engaged in joint university-business organizations (job fairs, conferences and seminars), while at a lower level the engagement of young people appears in: acquaintance and study visits to businesses (63.7% of respondents were not engaged and 12.3% of them have no information); in study exchanges abroad (68% of respondents have not been engaged and 10.7% of them have no information; in university projects with businesses (64.3% of respondents have not been engaged and 16.7% of them have no information).

A recent study on cooperation between universities and other actors shows that in Albania, universities face major challenges in terms of research quality, knowledge transfer, collaboration with external “actors: and creating impactful innovation. Eventhough they are part of important EU schemes, universities in Albania still struggle to realize genuine collaborations with other actors in society and to create added value in the development process.² This study shows that most of the collaborations remain dependent on funding from donors or only with projects and do not constitute an important part of the vision and strategy of the actors involved. The level and regularity of collaboration is also affected by the limited motives and incentives for researchers to engage in collaborations with other actors.³

Another challenge is that of work practices in different forms not only for students but for young people who need training and qualifications to access the labor market. Regarding internships, since they are often unpaid, experts say that it is difficult to attract young people to participate. The same thing is noticed by the participants for the lack of paid internships even for young people with professional education in addition to those with higher education. CSO representatives consider that for the young people should be offered more hands-on learning and problem-solving skills (80% of respondents), ongoing career counseling (62% of respondents) and the provision of connections to potential employers. (52%).

Regarding the universities, it was underlined that there is a lack of tracking of their graduates from HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) and that there is a need to create a database of HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) Alumni for tracking the employed and unemployed as well as an incentive for research scientific and innovative projects involving young people in order to help graduates as much as possible in putting into practice the knowledge gained during studies.⁴

²SCIDEV, 2021, Connections between university and society, available at https://scidevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SCIDEV_Lidhjet_Universitet_Shoqeri_Shqip_-_USIA.pdf

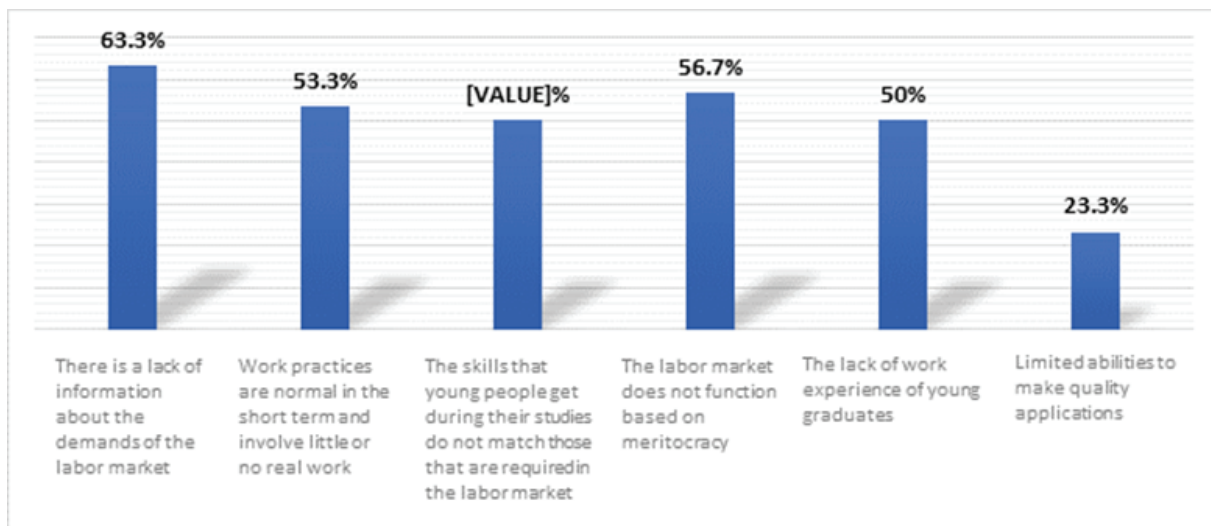
³SCIDEV, 2021, Connections between university and society, available at

https://scidevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SCIDEV_Lidhjet_Universitet_Shoqeri_Shqip_-_USIA.pdf

⁴The problems that are repeated most often by experts, psychologists, business representatives during meetings in Durrës, Lezhë, Shkodër, Dibër, Korçë.

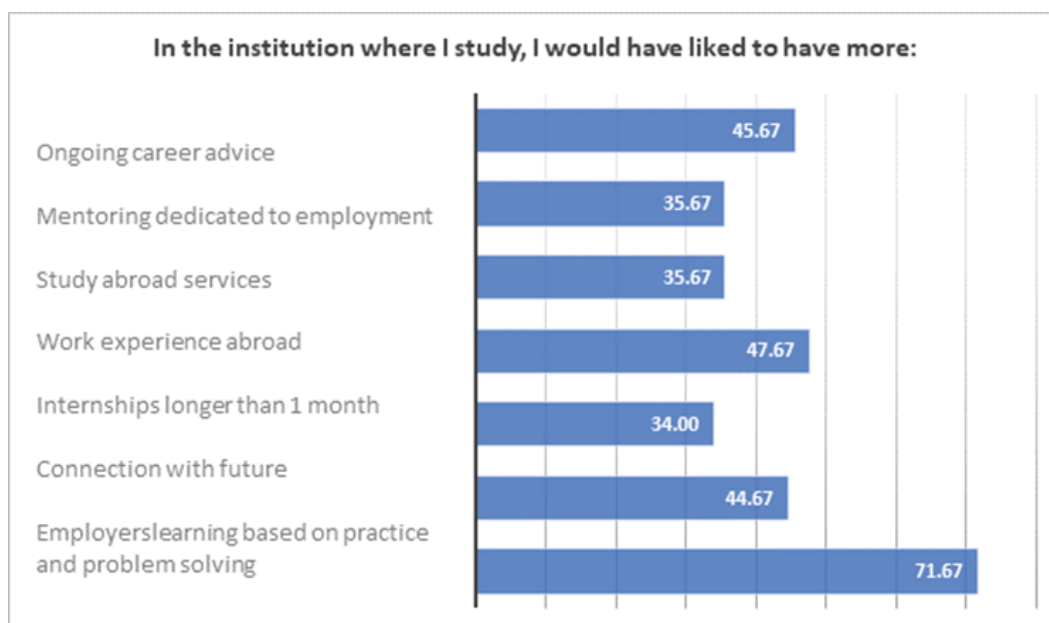
Regarding the question what the main challenges students are face after graduation to find work in accordance with their field of study, CSOs list among the top three challenges: lack of information on labour market requirements (63.3%); the lack of functioning of meritocracy in the labour market(56.7%) and the formality and short duration of work practices (53.3%).

Figure 15: Challenges after graduation according to CSO



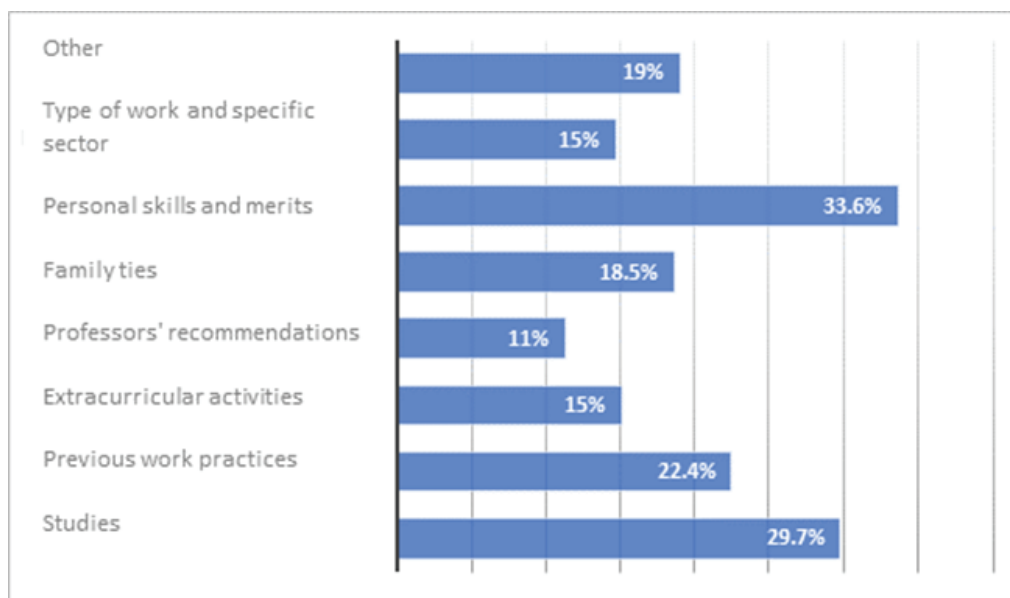
In this framework, the young respondents state that they would have liked the educational institution to provide them more learning based on practice and problem solving (71.67% of the respondents), followed by opportunities for internships abroad (47.67% of respondents) and ongoing career counseling (45.67% of respondents).

Figure 16: Young people's demands for educational institutions.



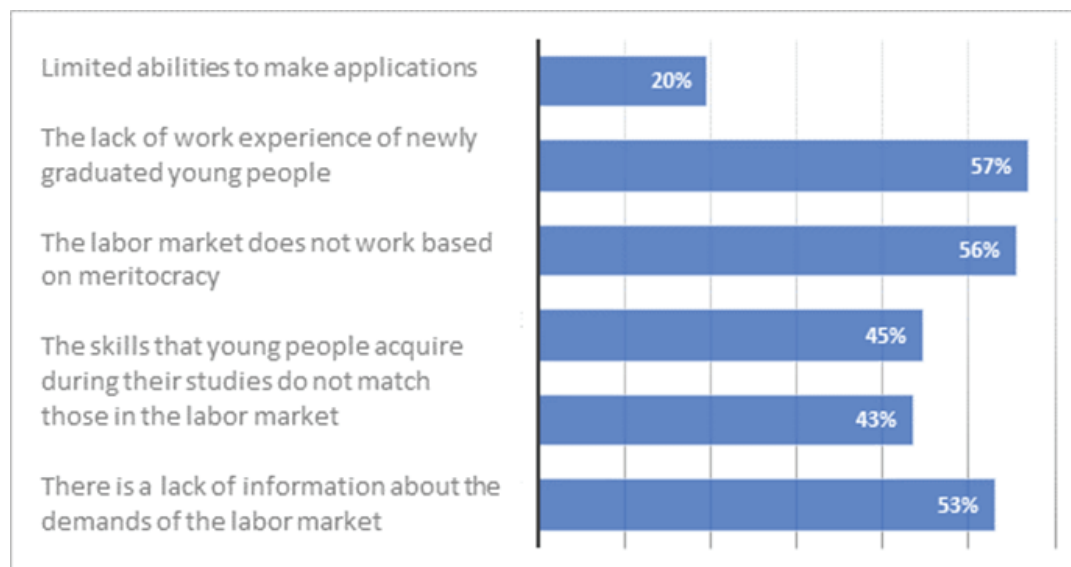
Public employment services are ineffective in assisting young people into work and therefore most of them rely on family or political connections to find a job or work in the informal sector. Among the factors that have facilitated finding a job for employed respondents, 33.6% of them affirm that they found a job thanks to their personal skills and merits, 29.7% affirm that it was their studies, 22.4% evaluate previous work practices, 18.5% affirm connections family.

Figure 17: Facilitating factors to find work according to young people



Regarding the question what are the challenges that graduate students face to find work in accordance with their field of study, the young people surveyed highlight: Lack of work experience of newly graduated young people (57%); lack of meritocracy in the labour market(56%); lack of information on labour market requirements (53%). Meanwhile, respectively 45% and 44% of the respondents state that they face challenges related to the mismatch of the skills they receive during studies with those required in the labour market and the low level of preparation of young people during work practices.

Figure 18: Challenges to finding work by field of graduation according to youth.



According to a study related to the cooperation of universities with business, respondents from the business community but also those who work in universities emphasize that the curriculum in Albanian universities is outdated: this curriculum does not respond to market needs for expertise, where graduates need on-the-job training once employment begins. Also, both sides emphasize the lack of mutual trust and the lack of awareness and information about opportunities for cooperation.⁵ However, it should be noted that the greatest number and frequency of cooperation between universities and business occurs for student work practices, job fairs and employment opportunities for young people, but they are non-sustainable collaborations.⁶

5.4 Barriers to the development of an ecosystem suitable for the transition to labour market

Regarding the barriers to the development of the suitable ecosystem for the transition to labour market, one of the main contextual factors is the social and economic crisis from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has narrowed the creation of new jobs affecting the job prospects of young people who do not feel that they already have a secure job. The pandemic has caused a triple shock to young people. First, through job losses or reduced working hours and salary reduction; second, through the interruption of education and vocational educational, and third, through the creation of additional barriers to enter the job market or movement from one job to another.⁷

Another problem in the ecosystem raised by the participants is the prevalence of temporary work contracts among young people and the high degree of informality serving as a further source of insecurity. Young people work in family businesses, or are self-employed, or work from home as 'freelance', especially in the last two years, or in part-time jobs and thus without social and health insurance.

During February-March 2022, trainings were held with 150 local actors from all the municipalities of Berat, Durrës, Korçë, Vlorë, Dibër, Shkodër, Lezhë. The main guiding questions throughout the discussions were: During February-March 2022, trainings were held with 150 local actors from all the municipalities of Berat, Durrës, Korçë, Vlorë, Dibër, Shkodër, Lezhë. The main guiding questions throughout the discussions were:

Table 9: Challenges with SWT from local actors during trainings

| Main Problems/Needs | Direct actor(s). |
|--|---|
| Migration of young people abroad or to larger cities | All actors/influencers |
| Regions as a whole should be more attractive to young people and should revitalize niche professional offers, according to the advantage that each region has. | Young people, local businesses, the general community |
| The local demand for work is often perceived as not life-fulfilling by young people | Young people, local businesses, the general community |
| Local demand is seasonal | Young people, local businesses |
| Higher wages abroad serve as attractive factors for migration | All actors/influencers |
| Some information on the regional labour market is not accurate and young people are disappointed | Young people, schools, local businesses |
| There is a need for more interaction between Labor Offices and Municipalities | Labor Offices, Municipality |
| The mindset of young people who want 'quick money and careers' is a problem, but it has gradually improved | All actors |
| Career counseling is offered at the high school level, but should begin earlier | Schools, young people |

| | |
|--|---|
| Unions should be more active | Local Businesses |
| Links between schools, training providers and employees are missing | All actors/influencers |
| Some professions are missing in the area (such as doctors, plumbers, etc.) | All actors/influencers |
| There is a prejudice on the part of parents and society towards vocational education. Most prefer higher education | Youth, community |
| The demographic trend of population aging is observed in each of the consulted districts | All actors/influencers |
| More local labour market studies are needed and should be made publicly available | Labor Offices, Municipality |
| Curricula should be adapted from similar contexts like Italy and not from distant realities like Scandinavia | Schools, Local Education Directorate |
| Practical classes are more preferred by young people and therefore should be intensified | Schools, young people |
| Some incentive programs are needed that promote employment in the region, from all interested parties | All actors/influencers |
| Growth incentives and career development programs are lacking | Young people, local businesses, the general community |
| Local employment actions are often not perceived as efficient | Labor Offices, Municipalities |

Based on their work, civil society representatives asked about positive developments in youth employment in relation to career counseling, positively assess the increase in the number of online platforms that provide information on opportunities for internships, employment and engagement (stated by 58.3% of respondents) and the highest focus by donors on youth employment (68.3% of respondents).

While for the other issues offered, the respondents claim that there have been no positive changes/developments, such as: the strengthening of connections between educational institutions and businesses or a greater focus by policy makers on the employment of young people, where 55% of the respondents think that there was no improvement.

The respondents in this analysis affirm that the most effective methods to realize the transition of young people in the workplace can be: Encouraging meetings with businesses (67% of respondents); Cooperation with labor offices and use of digital employment platforms (60% of respondents); Trainings/workshops (58% of respondents) and organization of job fairs (55%). Furthermore, they underline that educational institutions should be connected in a more systematic, stable and concrete way with businesses and other employers for updating the educational curriculum (68% of respondents), joint programs should be organized between educational institutions and the labour market (business, public institutions, civil society organizations, etc.) for work practices for young people for a period of 3-6 months (63% of respondents). While according to the counties, the specifics for the need of SWT are presented below:

Table 10: Specific needs by city

| City | Needs/problems |
|---------|---|
| Berat | The tourism sector in Berat faces problems in filling vacancies. The largest employer in the region remains the public administration. |
| Dibër | Several branches of the Vocational School should be revitalized and diversified in proportion to the new touristic development that the county is taking. |
| Durrës | Professional branches related to maritime tourism should be added, as well as local policies should be created to combat seasonality by extending it through innovative tourist packages and offers. |
| Korçë | There is a need for more coordination between local actors, as well as the follow-up and continuity of policy. Therefore, institutions must be strengthened in order not to remain hostage to changes in human resources. In Korça, young people do not see school as a friendly space. |
| Vlorë | The reopening of the navy school and positive policy to extend the seasonality of tourism are needed. Stimulating policies are needed for local businesses to recruit local young people and not from Tirana (the latter happens every summer). |
| Lezhë | It is necessary to promote the culture of respecting the contract, formalizing relations and intensifying controls for businesses that do not respect the basic conditions. |
| Shkodër | Better information of young people on government apprenticeship and employment programs and more fieldwork of Labor Offices is needed. |

Other mediation that can be carried out to ease the transition from school to labour market are: strengthening career orientation in educational institutions (43%); providing financial support or other forms of incentives to employers to hire recent graduates (48%); offering paid work placements (33%) and training young people with new requirements such as digital skills and soft skills (32%). The highest percentage regarding the actors who should be involved and be responsible during the transition from school to the u market, is observed in universities (73% of respondents). Furthermore, representatives of CSOs give importance to the role of labor offices (68%), secondary vocational schools (63%), local government units (62%).

While, regarding the question which are the priority groups that should be supported during the transition to the labor market, respondents give the same priority to young people (62% of respondents) who complete the system of education and professional training, recent graduates in priority fields for the development of Albania and young people from rural areas. While 40% of them give priority to young people who complete 2-year higher professional studies and young people from marginalized groups.

Studies on the employment of young people in Albania, as well as the participants in this initiative, think that in Albania the policies do not reach in a systematic and sustainable way in the deep rural areas, even though the highest level of unemployment youth is in the northern and northeastern regions and southern. Specifically, returnees from migration constitute a vulnerable group in terms of transition and access to the labor market. Those employment policies aimed at young people are often underfunded and short-lived. They are often implemented on a pilot basis and fundings are not available to scale them up into long-term policies that cover all young people in need.¹

Also, when it comes to youth entrepreneurship, there are several responsible institutions and this division of areas of responsibility often makes coordination unproductive.² The weakness of the labor market, the lack of jobs in the private sector and challenges with entrepreneurship also challenge policy makers and influence migration and large-scale obstacles to the development of youth entrepreneurship. The new law on startups and the funds that will be allocated have increased the expectation for encouraging the entrepreneurship of residents.

¹LSE, 2021, The study on youth employment in the Western Balkans, available at <https://www.lse.ac.uk/LSEE-Research-on-South-Eastern-Europe/Assets/Documents/Staff-activities-docs/2020-21/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

²Youth employment in Albania, 2021, available at <https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-Albania.pdf/67c313d85dc6a05adc109c9a321b77d6.pdf>

³Youth employment in Albania, 2021, available at <https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Study-on-Youth-Employment-in-Albania.pdf/67c313d85dc6a05adc109c9a321b77d6.pdf>

6. TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SYSTEM TO JOB MARKET

Assessing the current progress regarding policies to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship, training programs for unskilled youth or returnees from migration or for marginalized groups, focus on practice-based teaching, improving curricula by connecting more with the market, and the development of the administration's capacities, the participants in this initiative argue that there is a need to deepen, expand and consolidate policies to promote employment and youth entrepreneurship and improve the transition from school to the workplace for young people in Albania.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The measures proposed to enable a successful transition from school to the workplace by the participants in this initiative and the analysis of the integrated quantitative and qualitative data are presented in grouped form below:

Well-targeted and well-coordinated comprehensive policies with continuous and sustainable funding to promote youth employment, training and entrepreneurship.

- A comprehensive and cohesive framework policy for promoting employment, qualification and training and youth entrepreneurship.
- Sufficient financing, continuous and regular funding for institutions that support and facilitate the transition from school to the job market, including those institutions that offer training and qualification programs as well as those that provide career guidance and counselling, youth mentoring and other support services to promote employment, training and youth entrepreneurship.
- Youth participation in the draft, development, monitoring and evaluation of policies and strategies for promoting employment, training and youth entrepreneurship.
- A systemic approach to youth employment requires the engagement of social partners and other stakeholders throughout the youth employment policy cycle, from situational analysis to impact assessment.
- It is important that this systematic approach also ensures a balance and coherence between policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres, taking into account the possible positive or negative impact on youth employment.

Institutionalized, sustainable and systematic partnerships and political and social dialogue to ensure cooperation between actors that influence the transition from school to the labor market.

- Building broad-based partnerships to strengthen collaboration between school-to-workplace transition actors such as policy makers, business, civil society, educational institutions, media and community.
- A systematic approach to school-to-labour transition also requires promoting and strengthening innovative and multi-stakeholder partnerships through information sharing, mutual learning, drafting of policies and projects in cooperation.

Adequate access, services and infrastructure to ensure equal opportunities and according to young people's aspirations and potential for education and training.

- Comprehensive educational institutions, oriented towards the development of young people's skills and well managed, offering quality education according to young people's aspirations and developmental and labour market needs.
- Stimulation, support and facilitate systemic, sustainable and institutionalized connections between education providers and businesses/employers to enable work-based learning, practice and skills.
- Development and consolidation of guidance, career counseling and mentoring services for young people at an early age for education, training and entrepreneurship choices.

Reliable, fast and accessible information through suitable media for young people about opportunities for education, training, qualification, employment, entrepreneurship.

- One of the essential dimensions for the transition from school to the workplace is access to information about the labor market. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen information and data systems for the labor market, demand and supply, and facilitate interaction through digital tools to serve the youth. It is also important to have knowledge about employers, opportunities for employment or self-employment and entrepreneurship, recruitment procedures, facilities that can be offered by public employment services or social actors.

- Strategic use of information technology and digitization to facilitate the transition from school to labour market.
- Strengthening of information systems is also required to include labour market information disaggregated by age and gender for evidence-based policy making.

The digital training of young people according to the requirements of the time is only one dimension of the transition from school to labour market.

- Investing in the development of skills that support a successful transition from school to the workplace such as skills to give young people a stable foundation and resilience to access the labour market towards decent and satisfying work.
- The investment in basic skills that are confirmed both by international studies and by the data of this initiative are: Basic skills as the cornerstone of educational systems; Soft skills or life skills; Digital skills; Specific skills for the intended job or technical and professional skills.

6.2 SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVE ACTORS IN THE LABOR MARKET

YOUTH

For a successful transition from school to the labour market, in addition to the requirements for institutions and other actors, it is also important to inform, raise awareness and educate young people about the labor market, work culture and expectations from work, as well as about the search process work or self-employment and youth entrepreneurship. Young people must become inquisitive and leave waiting positions, but move into action by being engaged and relying on different networks that facilitate access, such as formal and non-formal youth groups, CSOs, or organizations others in educational institutions.

- It is important that young people seek quality information, at the time and in the media or space that suits them best, career guidance, advice and mentoring and access to opportunities that ensure a successful transition from school to the labor market, always keeping as fundamental rights at work, representation and freedom of decision-making.

- It is necessary for young people to engage in educational institutions and spaces of civil society and media to advocate for quality in education and learning based on competences and based on practice and work.
- It is important that young people proactively access opportunities for training, employment and youth entrepreneurship.
- It is important to dialogue between young people and employers regarding the expectations and demands or needs of each party.

INSTITUTIONS AND POLICY MAKERS

Policymakers aiming and acting to support young people's transition from school to labour market should also consider ways to improve targeting and profiling to provide individualized counseling services, as well as ways to encourage greater involvement of social partners with focus in the engagement of private sector and civil society actors, the promotion of youth networks and the participation of young people in decision-making bodies and the promotion of a favorable climate for youth entrepreneurship.

- It is necessary to invest continuously and sustainably in large-scale and synergistic skills development programs among sectors.
- Policies for a successful transition from school to the workplace are related to investments in wider social and economic policies, therefore it is required to strengthen coordination in the operationalization of different strategies and programs to promote employment, training, entrepreneurship.
- Social dialogue should be further promoted and the participation of youth organizations, CSOs, informal groups and networks as well as representative business organizations, trade unions, educational institutions in dialogue with policy makers to identify spaces and opportunities for jobs should be strengthened, protection of rights at work, raising awareness and developing programs for training young people.
- It is important to consolidate and expand programs that provide 360-degree services to youths for the transition from school to the workplace: training, information about the labor market, the job search process, access to financing, markets, counseling, mentoring, orientation combined with skill development.

- Employment services that are already reformed and restructured through National Agency for Employment and Skills NAES at the national level should be strengthened to ensure successful mediation between labour market demand and labor supply by consolidating the modernization and digitalization of these services, staff qualification, cooperation with other local actors such as municipalities, educational institutions, civil society organizations and the media.
- It is necessary to build a unified qualification system that recognizes and evaluates non-formal learning or qualifications and skills provided beyond the education system or VET.
- Encouraging meritocracy and avoiding political intervention in youth employment and giving priority to youths from rural areas to provide education, employment and mentoring and also giving them priority to complete vocational education as an opportunity to empower professions that are disappearing, as well as an opportunity to have more young people in employment from a young age.

BUSINESS AND PRIVATE SECTOR

While on the one hand the business raises concerns about the lack of labor force or disinterested and qualified youths for the specific requirements of the market, on the other hand businesses must be aware that they must offer dignified jobs while respecting the labor rights for young people as well, and provide opportunities for training and qualification too.

- It is important to expand programs that offer opportunities for paid work practices for youths in the form of: internships - work practices for students or traineeships - work-based training for youths who need a qualification or apprenticeship - on-the-job training period for learning a specific profession including the organization of specific trainings by local businesses.
- It is necessary for business to proactively, sustainably and continuously engage with educational institutions to update curricula and programs with evidence and information according to their requirements and the needs of the labor market.
- It is necessary to build networks, informal groups or other forms of youth organization within chambers of commerce or representative business organizations to influence and protect youths.

- To maintain the already successful collaboration with universities for internship programs, job fairs, employment, and to adapt to priority sectors, such as ICT, creative industries, and tourism. In this way, businesses can identify, recruit and integrate graduates that meet their needs. At the same time, through this cooperation, businesses can acquire competencies for improving the skills and knowledge of the staff they currently employ.

SOCIAL ACTORS/ INFLUENCERS/ SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social actors such as civil society organizations, youth organizations, informal groups, networks and community leaders, activists or the media play an important role in the transition from school to the workplace by providing information, holding institutions accountable and promoting transparency, providing opportunities for young people, promoting opportunities for success and fostering meritocracy.

- It is necessary to raise awareness regarding the rights of young people at work, as well as providing information on the possibilities to access programs that offer skills, work practices, training or employment. Providing accurate, complete, timely and appropriate information to young people is essential.
- It is important to further consolidate the programs of CSOs or social actors that facilitate the transition through career guidance and counseling, mentoring and support for youth initiatives.
- It is necessary to strengthen the work with public and private sector institutions for effective policies to promote employment and training through monitoring, evaluation, research, advocacy and action and a constructive and sustainable dialogue ensuring the participation of young people.
- It is important to promote good models and increase the visibility of current achievements, collaborations, successes of young people and encourage businesses that support young people in need or marginalized groups.
- It is important to carry out periodic studies on the needs of the labour market and young people at the local level and share them with other actors through dialogue and common tables.

EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions should prioritize access and quality of education bearing in mind that the purpose of education and skills development is to equip students with the skills they need to have a healthy, productive and meaningful lives, and without access to quality education and training, as well as awareness about their rights at work, young people are not able to get a good job and have a successful transition.

- Continued professional development and investment in resources and infrastructure as well as career guidance and counseling programs for pupils and students as early as possible.
- To update and modernize the curriculum based on genuine market studies and taking into account the institution's mission and vision. Such a thing would make it possible for the designed programs to meet the needs of the market and for the graduates to be equipped with the skills according to their aspirations and potential.
- To strengthen and institutionalize cooperation with business and other actors with a focus on employment and training as well as youth entrepreneurship by signing official agreements as well as programming regular and frequent meetings between the actors involved in order to approve work programs of common interest. The addition of teaching practices in order to train young people during the time of the study. Coordination of educational/university institutions with youth employment priorities, in order to provide appropriate skills for employment.
- Development and consolidation of guidance, career counseling and mentoring services for young people at an early age for education, training and entrepreneurship choices. Inclusion of career counseling services in primary and 9-year school.

Table 11: Measures proposed by participants in this initiative

| Key solutions/measures identified at local level | The main local actors identified by all three groups. | Initiatives/ideas for promoting the cooperation of the identified actors. |
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| <p>Inclusion of career counseling services in primary and 9-year school.</p> <p>Diversification of local training offers</p> <p>Conducting full studies of the labour market for supply and demand, at the municipal level</p> <p>Increasing the cooperation of all interested parties</p> <p>Training local businesses on how to absorb local labor.</p> <p>Career counseling through concrete success stories.</p> <p>Creating a career network capable of providing service based on the skills of young people.</p> <p>Increasing the capacities of young people for self-awareness, better self-knowledge.</p> <p>Promotion of soft skills, digital skills and green skills modules in schools.</p> <p>Raising awareness of local youth about rights and obligations at work.</p> <p>The connection of local government with educational institutions.</p> <p>The local government should create stimulating grounds and programs to promote employment through scholarships, etc., without distinction.</p> | <p>Directorates of Social Service at the Municipality level</p> <p>Vocational Education Schools Labor offices</p> <p>Youth Organizations</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Regional Educational Directorates</p> <p>9-Year General and Secondary Schools</p> <p>Universities</p> <p>Local Education Offices/Regional Offices</p> <p>Community</p> | <p>Joint activities that promote employment.</p> <p>Various trainings.</p> <p>Using social media as a tool for collaboration between stakeholders.</p> <p>Production of joint promotional materials by all interested parties promoting the county as an attractive employment destination.</p> <p>Increasing direct relations between labor offices-education directorates-local government.</p> <p>Promotion of local success stories of cooperation.</p> <p>Information about the labour market for young people should be more complete and more concrete from all actors, so that young people can adjust their expectations.</p> <p>The creation of an inter-institutional board at the district level, to draw up a concrete action plan where each institution designates a person to ensure continuity.</p> |

7. ANNEXES

7.1 List of working group members for Albania.

| No | Surname, First Name | Biography |
|----|-------------------------|--|
| 1 | Bora Muzhaqi | <p>Bora Muzhaqi, as of September 2021 holds the position of Minister for Youth and Children. During the period May-September 2021, he held the position of Deputy Minister of Education, Sports and Youth. Between January 2019 and March 2021, she was an external consultant contracted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development within the team of the Minister for the Protection of Entrepreneurship and a member of the Commission for Regulation and Supervision of Organizations providing legal audit services from September 2020 to March 2021. From January 2017 to January 2019, she was a senior tax consultant at “EY”, Tirana, Albania, and from January 2017 to October 2016 she held the same position at “PwC”, Tirana, Albania, while previously she held the position as a tax consultant at “PwC”, Tirana, Albania. She was also a compensation analyst at the Human Resources Department, Citybank, London, United Kingdom, in June-August 2011, and an EU integration analyst in July 2010 at the Directorate of Integration at the Ministry of Defence, Tirana, Albania. She completed her BSc Economics studies at “London School of Economics and Political Science” (London, United Kingdom), “Second Class Honours” in 2012 and at “HULT International Business School” (London, United Kingdom), Master in International Business, Future Leaders' Scholarship in 2013. Participated in the VI Forum for "Democracy in the Council of Europe" as part of studies at the Academy of Political Studies in Tirana, Albania, and is a member of ACCA (London, United Kingdom) accredited by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. She is fluent in English, Italian, German, Spanish and Turkish.</p> |
| 2 | Olti Rrumbullaku | <p>Chairman of the Secretariat of the Bologna Follow Up Group (The Bologna Process and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Oltion Rrumbullaku is a PhD in Economic Sciences from the University of Tirana. During 2019 – 2021 he was deputy minister at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. In the capacity of Deputy Minister, Mr. Rrumbullaku was the Negotiator of Chapter 25 and 26 in the preparations for the process of negotiations for membership in the European Union, as well as the negotiator of the Horizon Europe Programme and the discussion of the agreements in the field of education organised by the RCC in the framework of the Berlin Process. In November 2021, Mr. Rrumbullaku was appointed as Chairman of the BFUG Secretariat, for the term until mid-2024, a secretariat that is supported by a European Commission grant and follows the work of about 10 working groups related to higher education as part of the European Higher Education Area. Since 2019, he is a member of the Municipal Council of Tirana Municipality. Previously, Mr. Rrumbullaku has been engaged in many international projects and IPA projects where we can highlight those for the public administration, as well as for the ADISA public service delivery agency. During all this time, Oltion has been a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tirana, where he has taught various subjects of the Finance Department, including the subjects of Fiscal Administration, Taxation and Financial Management.</p> |

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| 3 | Kleina Kasanai | <p>Kleina Kasanai currently holds the position of General Director at the National Youth Agency, an agency that focuses on implementing youth policies, involving young people and supporting youth projects. Her work focuses on young people as well as their drive towards interaction and activation. Kleina has completed her bachelor's studies in Law and completed her master's studies in the field of public law. She has a diverse professional experience, started with her position as an assistant notary at a notary studio and then, during 2013-2017, Kleina worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an adviser to the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. In 2017 she served as the Deputy Prime Minister's adviser, focusing on parliamentary issues and the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the UN 2030 Agenda, a position that focused heavily on the compilation of Albania's Voluntary National reporting on WMDs. He has also worked as an advisor to the Minister for the Protection of Entrepreneurship, focusing on the development of cooperation with enterprises and the development of policies for the benefit of business. Kleina has participated in important training programs that may include: Training on Foreign Direct Investment Policies in Vienna, Training for Young Diplomats in Egypt, Executive Training Program in European and International Affairs for Young Diplomats and Civil Service Officials at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, Strategic Analysis Course at the Institute of Diplomacy and External Relations in Malaysia, Institute for Leaders Preparation (North Macedonia) and has conducted in the following a lot of other training. Kleina is fluent in English, Italian, Greek and is fluent in Turkish.</p> |
| 4 | Julia Liço | <p>Julia holds a Bachelor's Degree in the field of Law and a Master's Degree in Criminal Law from the University of Tirana, Faculty of Law. During 2019, she has conducted an internship at institutions such as the Directorate of Harmonization and Codification, the Ministry of Justice and the General Directorate of Complaints, Municipality of Tirana. Julia Liço has made her contribution during the 2019 elections and 2021 elections as an operator and supervisor. She has also worked for a year and a half at the Ministry of Justice as a specialist at the General Regulatory Directorate of Justice Affairs. Since November 2021, Julia has been part of the National Youth Agency in the position of specialist in the youth projects sector.</p> |
| 5 | Enxhi Lipa | <p>Enxhi holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Epoka University in Albania. She has also developed a range of specialisations in the field of capacity building, scientific research, European integration, national and international project management and soft skills. Since 2015, Enxhi has been engaged in the civil society sector by actively contributing to the improvement of youth policies at local, national, regional and European level. Enxhi Lipa is the Coordinator of the Programme "Youth Develops Capacities", in the initiative Tirana European Youth Capital (TEYC) 2022, at the National Youth Congress. Prior to joining the TEYC 2022 team, Enxhi worked as a Research Officer and Project Coordinator at the National Youth Congress. She has also worked as an independent researcher, trainer and external expert on the issue of skills development and capacity building of young people, women and girls coming from rural areas. Finally, Enxhi has been elected as a youth member of the co-chair of the Western Balkans Youth Lab initiative, a regional project supported by the Regional Co-operation Council. It is also a member of the Group of Experts under this initiative.</p> |

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| 6 | Françeska Muço | Mrs. Françeska Muço is a civil society activist. From an early age, she has been very active and passionate about civil rights and citizen engagement in democratic processes by designing and implementing several projects and advocacy campaigns dealing with youth and women empowerment, education, human rights and peace. Her activities include being part of consultant groups for the drafting of several youth initiatives, action plans and law proposals that have enabled her to be representative of young people on several advisory boards at local and national level. Françeska is also very active in public debates, through participation as a speaker in conferences, in sensitization campaigns, TV shows and interviews. Her professional experience is mostly related to the implementation of projects and fundraising under European Union programmes but also with donors in Albania. From 2018 to 2020, she was a representative of young people in the UN Women Albania Civil Society Advisory Group. She currently holds the position of General Secretary of the Youth Professionals Network of Albania and is part of the Governing Board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and part of the UN Youth Advisory Board. |
| 7 | Fregis Sala | Fregis Sala holds the position of Advisor to the Cabinet of the Minister for Youth and Children, Mrs. Bora Muzhaqi. Fregis has studied Electronics and Communications Engineering at Istanbul Technical University, and has completed working practices at research and development institutions such as Tubitak, Abe Teknoloji and ITU VLSI CAD Lab. Also Fregis speaks English, Italian, Spanish, French and Turkish. |
| 8 | Marsela Delija | Marsela is a student at the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana. For several years she has been engaged as part of Civil Society, initially at the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights in Albania (CRCA), as part of the Youth Parliament of Tirana. Recently, she is also part of the work staff. She also works at the Institute of Social and Humanities as a project coordinator as well as a researcher in the studies done by this organization. Since a few months she has held the position of President of the National Network for Youth in Albania (Anyn), where she previously held the role of member of the Management Board. Marsela is recently part of the youth expert group of the Western Balkans Youth Lab initiative, a regional project supported by the Regional Cooperation Council. |
| 9 | Blerjana Bino | Doc. Blerjana Bino is a researcher in social sciences and project development expert, monitoring, evaluation, learning as well as knowledge management and capitalisation. She has worked in the research and development sector for about 10 years with experience in Albania and the Western Balkan region. She is one of the Co-founders and currently Executive Director of the Science and Innovation Center for Development (SCiDEV), a Tirana-based think-tank that works closely with academy, civil society, public institutions and the media and leads a network of researchers working in democratic development, good governance, media and communication, research collaborations in society and digital transformation. She is a co-founder and member of the Albanian Women's Network at STEM and a member of the Regional Women's Council at STEM. She is a researcher of the Network of Safe Journalists in the Western Balkans. She holds a PhD in Communication Sciences and a Master of Science from the School of Economics and Political Science in London – LSE. She has conducted several research periods: Fellow of the Swedish Institute at the Department of Media and Informatics, Uppsala University; Erasmus Mundus Fellow at the Department of Political Science at the University of Salzburg; Award for Civil Society Scholars Fellow at the University of Westminster in London. |

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| 10 | Gentjan Hajdari | <p>Gentjan Hajdari holds a Bachelor's Degree in Construction Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Tirana. He has pursued a range of specialization programs at home and abroad in the field of youth engagement, volunteering, community organization, project design and management, youth participation in decision-making and violent extremism. For 14 years he has been engaged as an activist in civil society. His work in the community has been closely linked to the youth of rural areas, in their development and empowerment. He has tried to create positive models of how young people shape the world around them through engagement in community work, testing new ideas and involvement in local governance. He has done this through the creation of 2 community centers in rural areas, the establishment of the Vora Youth Advisory Board, a youth structure representative of the voice of young people in the Municipality of Vora, and the establishment of a number of different programs with a focus on youth training and employment. Since 2016 he has been working at the Youth for Social Change organization, coordinating and managing local and international projects, where he has created bridges of cooperation and integration between young people in Albania and their peers from Europe through the Erasmus+ programme. He has also worked as a trainer and expert on various projects aimed at empowering and enhancing the skills of young people. He has led study campaigns in various fields. Since 2021 he has been a member of the National Youth Council advancing more youth policies at the central level.</p> |
| 11 | Myftar Doçi | <p>Myftar Doçi holds a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from the University of Tirana (Albania) and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Bowling Green State University (USA). He has also completed a one-year Programme in International Relations at the University of Tirana and a one-year Programme in Diplomacy at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy (Austria). In addition, he has conducted the Program for Development and Institutional Management of Ort/USAID. Myftar Doçi is the Executive Director of the National Resource Centre for Training and Technical Assistance (ANTTARC). Since 1999, he manages the Centre's training and technical assistance programmes. He also designs and develops training and technical assistance in organizational development and management, project development and management, good governance, advocacy and lobbying, training of trainers, etc. At ANTTARC, he has also managed major projects focused on capacity development and the under-granting of civil society organizations that are active in civic participation, good governance and anti-corruption, social inclusion, etc. Before ANTTARC, his work experience includes diplomas at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, an external lecturer at the University of Tirana and an Assistant Lecturer at Bowling Green State University. Myftar Doçi is a trainer for workshops on the transition from school to work, organized under the initiative of the Youth Lab of the Western Balkans, a regional project supported by the Regional Cooperation Council.</p> |
| 12 | Dorian Hatibi | <p>Dorian Hatibi graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana. For more than a decade, he has exercised his competence in the field of social affairs, serving for several years as a lecturer of Cultural Psychology and Sociology at Aleksandar Moisiu University in Durres. Currently covers the duty of the Director of Employment Promotion in the Municipality of Tirana</p> |

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| 13 | Engjell Gjugja | <p>Engjell Gjugja was born on 1 December 1989 in the city of Gjakova. He was engaged as a professor of Philosophy/Ethics at the non-public high school " Maria Ndihtare" in Shkodra. The desire and dedication to work with young people served as a "springboard" for his employment in various organizations that realized projects with a focus on this target group. Experience inside and outside Albania has influenced the improvement of the services of public and non-public institutions through innovations that created a welcoming climate for the young people of the city. He was chairman of the National Youth Congress and currently works in the Municipality of Shkodra as Coordinator of the Atelie Youth Center, in the administration of the Municipality of Shkodra. Since 2018, Engjelli has been playing the role of local coordinator of Shkoder, within the program dedicated to youth policies at the local level for three years held by the National Youth Congress in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Tirana Foundation.</p> |
| 14 | Gertian Barajktari | <p>Gertian graduated from the Bachelor and Master of Sciences in Sociology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana. Following the student engagement in the leadership structure of the University of Tirana's organization of excellence and the involvement in several projects for 6 years, he contributes to the public administration. Initially in the position of Specialist at the Directorate of Higher Education and Science at the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and for 2 years holds the position of Director of the Directorate of Planning and Performance at the National Employment and Skills Agency. The experience gained and professional commitments have created an in-depth expertise in policies and issues related to education, training and employment. He has developed a series of training related to management, conflict resolution, impact assessment of legal /sub-legal acts, methodology and provision of training, project management, employment and skills. Gertiani is engaged as a member of the working group for the drafting of the National Youth Strategy and at the same time is a member of the Government Committee at the initiative of the Youth Lab.</p> |
| 15 | Genta Prodani | <p>Genta Prodani, Head of Employment and Migration Policy Sector at the Ministry of Finance and Economy He studied at the Faculty of Law at the University of Tirana with a scientific master's degree, and has completed postgraduate studies at the Industrial Relations Studies Center of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Kaliari, Italy. She has over 20 years of experience in the field of designing labour market policies and programmes with a particular focus on young people and their integration into the labour market.</p> |

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| 16 | Denis Lushi | <p>Denis has completed post-master's studies in Rural Management at the University of Thessaly (Greece) and the University of Blaise-Pascal de Clermont Ferrant (France), and is currently a PhD candidate in Territorial Development at the University of Tirana. As a rural development expert, he has conducted scientific studies and published articles on rural and territorial development as well as issues addressed to young people in rural areas. Committed for a long time to local government issues in projects implemented by UNDP Albania, rural development issues, youth rights and participation in decision-making, capacity building of rural youth and women in entrepreneurial skills, training for start-ups, etc., drafting and implementation of business plans, training and mentoring for entrepreneurs and business needs, etc. It is one of six GIZ and SWG certified TOT trainers for LEADER approach in Albania. Denis is a CEFE business coach and consultant, with 5 years of experience in the field of entrepreneurial skills training and doing business. It has trained over 800 individuals aged 18-50, closely assisting in the drafting of about 50 business plans for start-ups and providing support in setting up 18 new businesses. He is engaged as an advisor in the GIZ-funded CoSolve 19 Round I and II project to mitigate the COVID-19 consequences of Albanian SMEs. Denis has created the organization "Young Entrepreneurs Club – KSR" in Diber, orienting and supporting individuals especially young people who want to become successful entrepreneurs. He is also a young entrepreneur with a start-up business in the field of recycling. Finally, Dennis is engaging as a local youth expert in the Western Balkans Youth Lab, a regional project implemented by the Regional Co-operation Council, funded by EU.</p> |
| 17 | Klodiana Kadeli | <p>Klodiana holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Tirana University and a Master's Degree in " Child and Family Matters' ". She has a long experience of activism in civil society of more than 10 years and an experience of more than 3 years as a social work professional in national and international organizations in youth work. Klodiana is the founder and executive director of the youth organization "Power of Education" in Lezha, which aims at the socio-economic development of young people of Lezha. Klodiana Kadeli has a range of specializations in working with young people, in working with the group and the community. Her academic interests are related to scientific research, project management and individual counselling. She has worked as a trainer and facilitator on youth issues, one of which is youth education and employment. Klodiana is part of the Youth Representatives and Students Committee of the Western Balkans Youth Lab initiative, a regional project supported by the Regional Cooperation Council.</p> |
| 18 | Keti Dhimtri | <p>Mrs. Alketa Lamani has been engaged in civil society for more than 20 years, at the Youth Center in Vlora. She has a long experience in implementing projects for young people and the community and has been directly involved in the management of various projects dealing with youth participation in local decision-making processes and community development. Mrs. Lamani has extensive and consolidated professional experience and expertise in the territory of Vlora, in the field of civic engagement, local government, advocacy and advanced methods of participation. She has worked with international organisations, from a multicultural background, and institutions in Albania. Alketa Lamani has been engaged in civil society for more than 20 years, at the Youth Center in Vlora. She has a long experience in implementing projects for young people and the community and has been directly involved in the management of various projects dealing with youth participation in local decision-making processes and community development. Mrs. Lamani has extensive and consolidated professional experience and expertise in the territory of Vlora, in the field of civic engagement, local government, advocacy and advanced methods of participation. She has worked with international organisations, from a multicultural background, and institutions in Albania.</p> |

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| 19 | Xhensila Mirashi | <p>MSc Xhensila Mirashi is a journalist, activist and young scientific researcher. She is graduated at the university "Fan S. Noli Korça" Master of Science "Media, Culture and Editing", Professional Master "Teacher for AML in Albanian Language – Literature and Arts", and Bachelor of Albanian Language and Literature ". Xhensila is trained on the issue of youth policies; she has conducted an intercourse at the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth in 2015 with the Youth Policy Coordination Directorate. The second internship was conducted at SRD Albania in 2021, as a field interviewer on the Albanian tourist potential. Participated in a series of trainings on youth capacity building, project design and management, media education, right to information, soft skills, etc. She has also conducted two professional courses as "Social Assistant" at Korça RDFPP and "Social Animator" at APA & GIZ Albania. She has held the position of Director and then Project Coordinator at the Korça Regional Youth Center, while now she is engaged as an Expert in management and coordination of mainly youth and media projects at the local level, and is a researcher in scientific research at the national and regional level. Recently, Xhensila is part of the Youth & Student Representatives Committee in the regional project " Western Balkans Youth Lab" supported by the Regional Cooperation Council and financed by EU.</p> |
| 20 | Mirjam Reçi | <p>Mirjam Reçi was born in Durres, on 14.01.1976. He has completed higher studies at the University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Philosophy and Sociology Branch (1998) and Faculty of History and Philology, Albanian Language and Literature Branch (2000). Her experience is related to civil society in Durres and beyond. In 1999 – 2002 he worked for CRS (Catholic Relief Services). Since 2002, he heads the Civil Society Development Center (CSDC) in Durres. All the time of her activation Mirjam Reçi has assisted many organizations in the Durres region through advice, training and facilitation of activities. Reçi's extensive experience with local organizations and the community is among the priorities in her professional career. She engages as a lecturer at A. Moisiu University, Durres, Faculty of Education, Department of Psychology. Reçi has attended Master's and Doctorate studies at the Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana.</p> |
| 21 | Zoica Bardhi | <p>Zoica Bardhi is graduated in Public Relations/Communication at the European University of Tirana in 2013. Also at the European University of Tirana, she completed the Master's Degree in Business Administration and Marketing. She also completed her studies at the Faculty of Medical and Technical Sciences in Tirana for Nursing in 2007. In 2019, she completed USAID's 1-year program "Developing Institutional Leadership". Zoica is the founder and leader of the New Bridges association. She has a long experience in civil society as an activist, leader of a range of projects, and coach mainly with a focus on youth empowerment and youth engagement, good governance, advocacy, etc. In addition to civil society, her experience also includes local and central government. Zoica is a member of the Committee of Youth Representatives and Students established under the implementation of the Western Balkans Youth Lab initiative, a regional project supported by the Regional Co-operation Council.</p> |

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| 22 | Jetona Myteveli | <p>Jetona Myteveli is a holder of Psychotherapy Degree, Medicine and Economics Degree, is a change agent, moderator and psychotherapist with a private practice in Tirana. She has an extensive expertise with more than 20 years of experience working for international organizations with a focus on institutional and organizational development. She applies a cross-cultural, capacity development-oriented approach, combines and integrates psychological expertise for personal change with organisational knowledge, international experience and a humanistic attitude.</p> <p>Specializing in entrepreneurship, learning through experience and business development. More than 15 years of experience in supporting business development, and in the last 5 years in conducting entrepreneurship trainings and business plans under the National Business Plans Competition - IDEA Challenge 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 by conducting 2 trainings for CEFE ToT Trainers and advising new trainers. Promoting mentoring in Albania, facilitating capacity building of the new business mentors club. The IDEA project has supported the formation of entrepreneurs, developing their business competencies and skills to prepare an applicable business plan and start a business (officially registered 500) and promote an existing business (officially registered 450), which created 900 additional jobs. He currently runs the "Balance" Center, with 44 business experts implementing IDE training and providing change counseling to micro, small and medium-sized businesses affected by the COVID19 crisis under Cosolve 19.</p> |
| 23 | Donald Vullnetari | <p>Donald Vullnetari is an economic consultant focused on labour markets, entrepreneurship, innovation and digital transformation. He currently runs socio-economic consultancy services at Idra Research & Consulting, as well as a lecturer of Economics at the University of Tirana (Department of Economics). He holds a Master of Economic Sciences degree at the University of Tirana and is now pursuing doctoral studies at the Department of Economics, UT. He has been engaged in research and consultancy projects, working with numerous private clients in several industries, as well as with national and international donors such as the World Bank, UNDP, EBRD, UNICEF, AADF. He is proficient in quantitative research methods, including industry assessments and market research, evidence-based economic policy development, and innovative business strategies.</p> |
| 24 | Yllka Sela | <p>Yllka Sela has completed her bachelor's studies in Economics and her Master of Science in Public Management at the Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana. She is certified by the University of Economic Studies in Bucharest, Romania, for management and public policies, as well as for business management in the context of globalisation. In addition, Yllka counts a number of certifications on project management, transferable skills, negotiation, and public communication.</p> <p>Since 2016, Yllka has been working as a consultant for various projects at the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), with a primary focus on sustainable development aspects, at national and regional level. Since 2020, she has been a lecturer for Economic Policies at Beder University in Tirana. She has also worked as a soft skills coach, or as an external expert in media and civil society organizations, on issues related to the economy, youth and enhancing their capacities. Yllka has been selected as a member of the Committee of External Experts under the "Western Balkans Youth Lab", a regional project supported by the Regional Cooperation Council.</p> |

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| 25 | Ganimete Perseku | <p>Ganimete is graduated in the Master of Science in the "Journalism and Communication" branch with a profile in the field of Public Relations at the University of Tirana. During her years of study she has been engaged in training, activities in the field of journalism as well as internships in various media. In 2021, she was engaged in the civil society sector at the "Young Intellectuals, Hope" ("Intelektualët e rinj, Shpresë") organization in Shkodra. As a member of the "Young Intellectuals, Hope" ("Intelektualët e rinj, Shpresë") organization, she coordinates projects focusing on young people, strengthening their capacities at the local level, promoting the participation of young people in democratic processes or supporting youth initiatives to develop business ideas. Under the initiative of the Western Balkans Youth Lab, a member of the youth and student committee group has been elected.</p> |
| 26 | Klevis Hysa | <p>Klevis Hysa is General Director of the National Employment and Skills Agency. He holds a master's degree in Finance and Business Law at the University of Tirana and an Executive SciencesPo Paris degree in public policy and management. Klevis has a long technical experience working as an analyst in the Prime Minister's office to support and coordinate government priorities. In UNDP, among others, he has worked on developing skills for employment analysis for evidence-based policy-making.</p> |

7.2 List of entities contributing to the co-conceptualization and drafting of this document.

| Entity name | Type of Entity | Countyity |
|--|----------------|-----------|
| Act for Society | NGO | Tiranë |
| National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) | "Institution" | Korça |
| Berat National Employment and Skills Agency | "Institution" | Berat |
| Complementary Employment and Skills Agency Diber | "Institution" | Diber |
| Lezha National Employment and Skills Agency | "Institution" | Lezhë |
| Shkodra National Employment and Skills Agency | "Institution" | Shkoder |
| Albania Rafting Group | NGO | Berat |
| Albanian Skills | NGO | Tiranë |
| AlbNature | Business | Tiranë |
| Balkan Youth Activism | NGO | Korça |
| Balkan Youth Council | NGO | Durrës |
| Berat Municipality | "Institution" | Berat |
| Dibra Municipality | "Institution" | Diber |
| Municipality of Dimal | "Institution" | Berat |
| Municipality of Himara | "Institution" | Vlorë |
| Municipality of Korça | "Institution" | Korça |
| MUNICIPALITY OF KRUIJË | "Institution" | Durrës |
| Municipality of Kucove | "Institution" | Berat |
| Lezha Municipality | "Institution" | Lezhë |
| SHIJAK MUNICIPALITY | "Institution" | Durrës |
| Shkodra Municipality | "Institution" | Shkoder |
| Municipality of Skrapar | "Institution" | Berat |
| Municipality of Vlora | "Institution" | Vlorë |
| Butterfly Camping | Business | Diber |
| Diocesan Caritas | NGO | Lezhë |
| Caritas Lezha | NGO | Lezhë |
| Changing the Future | NGO | Diber |
| Civil Society Development Center Durres | NGO | Durrës |
| Concept Marketing | Business | Tiranë |
| Co-Seven | NGO | Tiranë |
| Dibër.com | Media | Diber |
| Parent Hand | NGO | Korça |
| Employment Promotion Directorate, Municipality of Tirana | "Institution" | Tiranë |
| GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION | "Institution" | Lezhë |
| Regional Employment Directorate | "Institution" | Berat |
| Directorate of Youth, Education and Sport | "Institution" | Lezhë |
| Active Durrës | NGO | Durrës |
| European Democracy Youth Netork | NGO | Tiranë |
| Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana | University | Tiranë |
| Faculty of Foreign Languages | University | Tiranë |
| Universal Peace Federation of Durrës | NGO | Durrës |
| Albanian Education Foundation | NGO | Durrës |
| Mary Loretto World Foundation | NGO | Lezhë |
| “Stiliano Bandilli” High School | High school | Tiranë |

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| "Sttiliano Bandilli" High School | High school | <i>Berat</i> |
| “Gjergj Kastrioti” High School | High school | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Jani Minga High School | High school | <i>Vlorë</i> |
| Kolin Djoka High School | High school | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Oso KUKA High School | High school | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Said Najdemi High School | High school | <i>Diber</i> |
| Kolin Gjoka High School | High school | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| “Naim Frashëri” High School | High school | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Oso KUKA High School | High school | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Young Intellectuals, Hope (IRSH) | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| IntelyCare | Business | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Tirana Municipal Council | "Institution" | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Local Youth Council | "Institution" | <i>Durrës</i> |
| The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination; | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Puka Youth Movement | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| Malteser | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Nediber.com | Business/Local media | <i>Diber</i> |
| New Bridges | NGO | <i>Berat</i> |
| Observatory for the Rights of the Child | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| Youth Support | NGO | <i>Korça</i> |
| Perspective. | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Power of Education | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Diber County Prefecture | "Institution" | <i>Diber</i> |
| PVN Albania | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Vlora Vocational Training Centre | "Institution" | <i>Vlorë</i> |
| Mental Health Center Towards Development | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| DDAER Social Services Centre | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| H.A.N.A Center | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Albanian Consumer Center | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Arka Youth Centre | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Atelie Youth Centre | "Institution" | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Kucovo Youth Centre | "Institution" | <i>Berat</i> |
| Vlora Youth Centre | NGO | <i>Vlorë</i> |
| Roma Veritas Albania | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Save the Children | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| Save the Children | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| SCIDEV | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Social Service - Lezha Municipality | "Institution" | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Sherm Albania | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| Maria Assistant School | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| ANTTARC Association | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Association of Agriculture and Development of Mountain Districts (ADAD) | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| Egyptian Association of Albania | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Woman in Development Association | NGO | <i>Korça</i> |
| Woman to Woman Association | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| MAYA ASSOCIATION | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Social Inclusion Development | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Terres Des Hommes | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |

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| Torre des Hommes | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| Alexander Moisiu University Durrës | University | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Fan University S.Noli | University | <i>Korça</i> |
| University of Vlora Ismail Qemali | University | <i>Vlorë</i> |
| Luigi Gurakuqi University | University | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| POLIS University | University | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA | University | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| World Vision | NGO | <i>Diber</i> |
| World Vision | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| World Vision | NGO | <i>Lezhë</i> |
| World Vision | NGO | <i>Korça</i> |
| Young Entrepreneurs Albania | NGO | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| YOUTH ACTIVITIES CENTER | NGO | <i>Durrës</i> |
| Youth of BRIDGE | NGO | <i>Berat</i> |
| Youth Voice | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Shkodra Labour Office | "Institution" | <i>Shkoder</i> |
| Regional Office for Youth Cooperation (RYCO) | NGO | <i>Tiranë</i> |
| Berat Local Education Office | "Institution" | <i>Berat</i> |
| LOCAL OFFICE OF PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, KURBIN | "Institution" | <i>Lezhë</i> |

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