

The background features a light gray field with two large, overlapping circles. The circle on the left is dark gray, and the one on the right is a medium gray. In the top right corner, there are several parallel diagonal lines slanting downwards to the right. In the bottom left corner, there are several parallel diagonal lines slanting upwards to the right.

# SATISFACTION LEVELS ON PROJECT INDICATORS

Results of the Focus Group Discussions

November, 2020

## ***“Satisfaction Levels on Project Indicators – Results of the Focus Group Discussions”***

November, 2020

Pristina, Kosovo

**Commissioned by<sup>1</sup>:**



**Commissioned to:**



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UBO Consulting would like to thank all of the individuals who graciously donated several hours of their time to participate in these focus groups. Your advice, knowledge and recommendations have been invaluable in improving our study on the perceptions regarding mediation services, media coverage of labor market topics and social dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> The SDC EYE Project is implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo and MDA



## List of Abbreviations

EYE – Enhancing Youth Employment

SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

VET – Vocational Education and Training

SECK – Social Economic Council of Kosovo

LYAC – Local Youth Action Council



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2020, UBO Consulting was commissioned by the EYE project to conduct a study on measurement of the performance on targeted outcomes of the project. The purpose of this study was to investigate in detail the impact and satisfaction levels among the targeted groups of unemployed and employed youth as well as the business community.

For the purpose of this study, a total of eight (8) focus groups were conducted, with a total number of 77 participants, and an average of 9 participants per meeting.

The following section presents the main findings derived from the focus group discussions with the targeted sample.

### 1.1. Key Findings

- In general, portals like ""Kosova Job", "Portal Pune" "Punesohu.eu", were the most used online job portals by participants of this study, followed by "Gjirafa", "Kastori", "Kërko punë", "Gjej Punë", and "Burime Njerëzore",
- According to participants, private matching services (online portals) serve as preferable mediating sources in comparison to those of public matching. However, they expressed their discontent with the lack of local job portals, that provide information within smaller municipalities of Kosovo.
- Lack of experience, the low number of vacancies and job opportunities. high number of candidates and the large competition formed a great challenge for the participants when probing into the labor market.
- Nepotism was considered to be as one of the main challenges that youth face when seeking for employment.
- Discriminatory criteria, such as gender and age as challenges they had faced while looking/searching for a job, was reported by only a few participants.
- In general, almost all participants were aware of the Employment Office (EO) and the services it provided to citizens. However, the number of registered participants in the employment offices of their municipalities was less than half. This was because EO was considered inefficient and with a high presence of nepotism.
- The participants declared that they feel thoroughly dissatisfied with the media coverage of labor market topics in Kosovo. According to them the media failed to fulfill their role of covering topics involving labor market trends, employment and career.
- Participants believe that the media should promote VET schools and their importance in the labor market, present more programs on Career Orientation.
- There seemed to be a scarcity of media formats that provides relevant job information towards specific social categories such as women, minorities and people with special needs.

- Public debates, as a tool of social dialogue, were not very used by youth. They further explained that the lack of information regarding the where-a-bouts of public debates was the prime reason for their failing to participate.
- In general, the participants held firm belief that the Labor Law was very poorly applied in Kosovo, especially in terms of the work schedule and maternity leave matters.
- The participants from the Egyptian community and Ashkali community declared that the majority of institutions engaged in discrimination against minorities when recruiting for an open job position. Meanwhile, the participants from the Albanian community indicated minorities and women were positively discriminated.
- Information about the Social Economic Council of Kosovo was found to be relatively low among participants.
- All participants found the inclusion of women and minority communities rather important in social dialogue. They believed that women and minority communities must have a say in decision-making in order to produce favorable outcomes.
- Most businesses believed there is a mismatch between education profiles of youth and labor market demands
- Business representatives mentioned these three recruitment methods: a) the recommendation method (candidates are recommended by a colleague, family member or other business representative), b) farming technique (the company fosters young professionals and teaches them knowledge and skills in relevant career paths) and c) hunting techniques (the company pursues specialists and professionals for a job position while offering them a much higher wage).
- While the majority of business representatives promoted the employment of women, there was a hesitation found among them when it came to minorities.
- Amid the main issues centering the challenges of business representatives was the recruitment of qualified workers; this mainly deriving from the shortage of vocational professionals.
- While all business representatives believed that they provided good working conditions for their workers, the representatives of the construction sector did not share the same opinion.
- According to business representatives, VET can play a crucial role in tackling many of the most pressing challenges, such as competitiveness, youth unemployment and social inclusion. To put the VET-sector in the best possible position to do so, it is crucial to increase quality and attractiveness of VET.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) is a program funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo and implemented by the consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo and MDA- Management Development Associates. The overall goal of the EYE is to improve the labor market conditions in Kosovo, thus increasing the employment opportunities for Kosovar women and men overall.

In October 2020, UBO Consulting was commissioned by the EYE project to conduct a study on measurement of the performance on targeted outcomes of the project. In this case, eight focus groups were conducted with selected participants in order to gather in-depth information on the impact and performance regarding the project's deeds so far. This qualitative study that used the focus group method aimed to investigate in detail the impact and satisfaction levels among the targeted groups of unemployed and employed youth as well as the business community. The discussions with the key stakeholders took place in seven different regions of Kosovo during the month of October 2020 and followed a nominal group process.

The main purpose of the research was to better:

- Understand and measure the level of satisfaction of students and unemployed with formal mediation services
- Understand and measure the level of satisfaction of youth representatives with media coverage of labor market topics
- Understand and measure the level of satisfaction of youth representatives with the social dialogue and wish to continue
- Understand and measure the level of satisfaction of business representatives with the social dialogue and wish to continue

For this assignment, UBO Consulting agency assisted the EYE with technical advice in designing, developing and administering the study. Namely, the agency's major tasks included:

- Preparing the research instruments
- Proposing the data collection methods and procedure
- Conducting focus group discussions
- Conducting an in-depth analysis of the focus group discussions
- Drafting a general report

This document is drafted to present the results derived from eight (8) focus groups on *Mediation Services, Media Coverage of Labor Market Topics and Social Dialogue*.



### 3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, UBO Consulting used the qualitative method of research, namely focus group discussions. This method of research is usually used to draw in-depth information from the complex personal experiences, beliefs and perceptions of participants.

Accordingly, UBO Consulting conducted eight (8) focus group discussions in seven different regions of Kosovo, with 77 participants in total. The discussions were administered as follows:

*Table 1. Administering of the focus group discussions*

TOPIC I: MEDIATION SERVICES							
No. of FGDs.	Target groups	Composition					
		Education Background	Age	Gender	Settlement	Community	Region
3	Students and Unemployed	1. Secondary level VET students, in the last year of studies  2. University students  3. University graduates (in the last two years), seeking for a job, using any of the services from job matching service providers (job portals and public employment services – Portal Pune, Kosova Job, Human Power and public employment offices)	15 -34	1. Women (at least 40%)  2. Men	1. Rural  2. Urban	1. Albanian  2. Egyptian  3. Ashkali  4. Roma	1. Prizren/ Prizren  2. Gjakova/ Đakovica  3. Peja/ Peć
TOPIC II: MEDIA COVERAGE OF LABOR MARKET TOPICS							
3	Youth	1. Unemployed Youth - university graduates (in last two years), seeking for a job, using any of the services from job matching service providers (job portals and public employment services – Portal Pune, Kosova Job, Human Power and public employment offices)  2. Employed Youth – university graduates (in the last two years)	15 -34	1. Women (at least 40%)  2. Men	1. Rural  2. Urban	1. Albanian  2. Ashkali  3. Roma	1. Mitrovica/ Mitrovica  2. Gjilan/ Gnjilane  3. Ferizaj/ Uroševac

### TOPIC III: SOCIAL DIALOGUE

1	Youth	<p>1. Unemployed Youth - university graduates (in last two years), seeking for a job, using any of the services from job matching service providers (job portals and public employment services – Portal Pune, Kosova Job, Human Power and public employment offices)</p> <p>2. Employed Youth – university graduates (in the last two years)</p>	15 -34	<p>1. Women (at least 40%)</p> <p>2. Men</p>	<p>1. Rural</p> <p>2. Urban</p>	<p>1. Albanian</p> <p>2. Egyptian</p> <p>3. Ashkali</p>	<p>1. Prishtina/ Priština</p>
1	Businesses	Have an understanding of what social dialogue is					<p>1. Prishtina/ Priština</p>

Further, UBO Consulting, in cooperation with the EYE, drafted the discussion guidelines. These guidelines focused on topics covered by the study, which included: *Mediation Services*, *Media Coverage of Labor Market Topics* and *Social Dialogue*. The discussion guide consisted of an introduction and discussion section, providing the moderator with a summary of the issues to be discussed at these meetings.

#### 3.1. Recruitment Process

The recruitment process is very important when it comes to selecting a group of people to represent the study sample. Participants for this study were recruited using the UBO research panel, which was compiled and composed of people who have participated in studies conducted by UBO Consulting over the years.

Initially, the list of panels / contacts was randomized based on the criteria of the focus group discussions (municipality, age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment status). This was done in order to avoid one-sided selection and to give everyone on the panel an equal chance of participation. Furthermore, to select the names of potential participants for the focus group discussions, the contacts were selected in a systematic or random manner, using Excel formulas.

Once the list of participants was identified, potential participants were contacted by telephone, and asked some questions to make sure they met the selection criteria. They were then given detailed information on the purpose of the study, the topic, the level of confidentiality, and the place and date.

The ideal number of participants for a focus group discussion where a more complex idea or topic is discussed is eight to twelve. Recruiting more than twelve participants makes group control difficult, as well as limiting participants' opportunities to share knowledge and observations about the topic. Moreover, the lack of opportunities to express their experiences negatively affects the group dynamics and makes participants want to talk (whisper) to each other. However, given the current COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country, and in order to avoid crowds and be able to have social distancing, less participants were recruited for these sessions, as compared to the usual number of participants recruited per focus group. Namely, a number of six (minimum) to ten (maximum) participants were recruited, as compared to the usual range (eight to twelve).

All confirmed participants were contacted the day before in order to be reminded of the time and location of the focus group discussion, and in order to confirm their participation once again.

### 3.2. Demographic information on the Focus Group Discussions

The profile of the participants was created based on gender, age, ethnicity, level of education and employment status. The focus groups that discussed the impact and satisfaction on the mediation services were conducted in Prizren/Prizen, Gjakova/Dakovica and Peja/Peć regions and had the following composition:

*Table 2. The demographic composition of the focus groups discussing mediation services*

Total	Sex		Education			Employment		Residence	
	Males	Females	VET Students	University Students	University Graduates	Employed	Unemployed	Urban	Rural
24	15	9	11	5	8	0	24	13	11
	63%	37%	46%	21%	33%	0%	100%	54%	46%

*Table 3. Ethnic composition of the focus groups discussing mediation services*

Total	Ethnicity			
	Albanian	Egyptian	Roma	Ashkali
24	17	3	2	2
	70%	12%	8%	8%

The focus groups on the media coverage of the labor market topics were conducted in Ferizaj/Uroševac, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Mitrovica/Mitrovica regions and had the following composition:

Table 4. The demographic composition of the focus groups discussing media coverage of the labor market topics

Total	Sex		Education		Employment		Residence	
	Males	Females	University Students	University Graduates	Employed	Unemployed	Urban	Rural
32	11	21	13	19	9	23	22	10
	34%	66%	41%	59%	28%	72%	69%	31%

Table 5. Ethnic composition of the focus groups discussing media coverage of the labor market topics

Total	Ethnicity		
	Albanian	Ashkali	Roma
32	24	5	3
	75%	15%	10%

Finally, the focus groups on the topic of social dialogue were conducted in Pristina region among both youth and businesses. These two focus groups had the following compositions:

Table 6. The demographic composition of the youth focus group discussing social dialogue

Total	Sex		Education		Employment		Residence	
	Males	Females	University Students	University Graduates	Employed	Unemployed	Urban	Rural
10	5	5	4	6	5	5	6	4
	50%	50%	40%	60%	50%	50%	60%	40%

Table 7. Ethnic composition of the youth focus group discussing social dialogue

Total	Ethnicity		
	Albanian	Ashkali	Egyptian
10	7	1	2
	70%	10%	20%

Table 8. Discussion of social dialogue with businesses

Total	Focus Group Discussion with Businesses	

<b>10</b>	“CONZULL”, “ALPHA PRO Consulting”, “Gentle Research”, “Euro Rent”, “STAT-ING”, “Home-Clean”, “BRUNCH”, “CACTUSS Education”, “Pastiqeria Ibja”, “Sadije”
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### 3.3. Session Procedure

The focus group discussion session began with a brief presentation by the moderators on their role, job position and UBO profile. The meeting continued with the moderator thanking the participants for showing their willingness to participate in discussions. Further, the moderators gave a short presentation on the purpose of the study and the main topics of discussion. Furthermore, the basic rules of a discussion and the duration of the session were immediately explained to the participants.

Furthermore, the moderators explained the purpose and need for audio recording of the discussion, as well as sought the permission of the participants for this recording. However, the moderators assured the participants that their opinions would remain completely confidential and that the audio recording would only be used for transcription purposes.

The meeting continued with the discussion on the main topics. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts on each question. The moderator stressed once again that they should feel free to speak and express their thoughts and that there is no need to raise their hand or ask permission. However, the moderator mentioned that if she / he notices that someone has not spoken yet, she / he can call that person and ask for his / her opinion.

When it comes to discussion dynamics, it can be concluded that the latter was not constant in all sessions. It varied depending on the participants' level of information on the discussion questions, willingness to answer, or agreement with the other participants who had already answered.

Once the discussion was over, the moderator shared her / his appreciation of the study participants' contribution and reminded them of the confidentiality of the study.

## 4. RESULTS

The following sections present the results generated by the eight (8) focus group discussions with the young citizens of the municipalities of Prizren/ Prizren, Gjakova/Đakovica, Peja/Peć, Mitrovica/Mitrovica, Gjilan/Gnjilane and Ferizaj/Uroševac, on the topic of mediation services, the level of media coverage of labor market topics, and the level of engagement youth and businesses from Prishtina/ Priština, in social dialogue.

### 4.1. Mediation Services

The mediation services promote an efficient development, integration and use of the labor force. Now, more than ever, stronger employment services play an increasingly important role in job matching, enhancing employability, addressing skill mismatches and linking support directly to employers and workers through operating various active labor market programs.

The mediation services include the job matching services in both public (PES) and private (online portals, newspapers, recruitment agencies, head hunters, temp agencies) sector, which aim to provide better services to both young jobseekers and businesses, allowing a more efficient/effective matching of supply and demand in the labor market.

Consequently, in this study, in order to better understand the above procedures, participants were asked certain questions about this topic. Respectively, they were asked about the personal experiences of looking for a job and the length of this search. They were further asked for a detailed description of the searching patterns for a job, including how and where this search began.

#### 4.1.1. Methods used in job searching

The results generated by focus group discussions proved that most of the participants had been looking / searching for a job recently. Considering the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the country's economy, from the beginning of its spread until recent months, most of the participants had lost their jobs due to this impact. In this context, when asked how long they had been looking / searching for a job, the answers among participants varied. While some participants were experiencing such a situation during this year only, there were others who had been jobless for more than three years.

When asked about the pattern of searching for a job, there seemed to be a dissimilar pattern between applying for a job in the private and public sector, based on the responses provided. In general, the participants stated that when applying in the private sector, the procedure normally involves coming across a job announcement in online portals, sending

out the resume and going through the interviewing or testing phases, based on the companies' specific inquiries.

Whereas, according to them, in the public sector, the recruitment is usually carried out through announcing the job position in the municipality's official webpage, applying online or face-to-face, and going through the testing phase. According to the participants, the test scores are final determinants on the selection of the candidates that seem fit for the job. However, one participant from the municipality of Gjakova/Dakovica claimed that she believes that nepotism is a great factor on recruitment in the public sector, this due to her own experiences of being denied a job on multiple occasions. She further stated that when she requested to see her test or to be pointed out on the errors that she made, the recruiters denied her request by simply saying that they have lost them.

However, a different opinion was identified among the participants of the focus group discussion held in the municipality of Prizren/Prizren. These participants declared that the method that seemed to have brought most positive outcomes for them in terms of finding employment, was the recommendation method. This method, according to them, was rather safe and fruitful in comparison to the online portal applying method.

Further, the participants also declared that they were not very strict in concentrating on a very specific field or job that they thought fit their profile the most or would have been an ideal job. On the contrary, many participants said that they were open to different kinds of jobs and had applied to jobs that were not completely in line with their skill set and education so far.

#### 4.1.2. Sources used in job searching

Further, the results of the study showed that the majority of participants used online employment portals for looking / searching for a job. Portals like "Kosova Job", and "Punesohu.eu" were the most mentioned/used portals for this purpose. However, a very small number of participants used the Employment Office (EO) to find a job.

What can be distinguished among these participants are the statements of the focus group participants held in the municipality of Prizren/Prizren. According to them, although these portals provide enough information as methods to find work, the problem lies in the lack of employment opportunities in their municipality. For this reason, many young people in the municipality of Prizren/Prizren see the prospects of their future in the capital city.

Moreover, two participants in the municipality of Prizren/ Prizren declared that they attended VET Schools in order to gain official recognition of their skills and to receive a certification; nevertheless, their attempt in landing employment resulted unsuccessful.

In a general matter, the participants strongly declared that private matching services (online portals) serve as preferable mediating sources in comparison to those of public matching. As reported by the participants, the portals provide easy access and have a much more solid partnership with the businesses. Therefore, the job applications are handed out directly to the portals, making it possible for more detailed insight regarding the job to be delivered to jobseekers. However, the participants claimed that the institutions/businesses' webpages serve as great sources of information regarding the criteria, job description and other relevant information. According to them, the portals usually display a gist of the job announcement; therefore, the only way of receiving all information is through visiting the official webpage of the job provider.

#### 4.1.3. Challenges faced in job searching

Conducting a job search can be one of the most stressful experiences in a person's life. Whether you are trying to land your first job, or are employed but looking for a change, the demands of a job search can be overwhelming. While every search is unique to the job seeker's goals and situation, some job search challenges are universal regardless of the industry, position, or skill requirements.

This study provided the opportunity to elaborate on the topic of difficulties encountered while looking/searching for a job, and the discussions produced a variety of opinions between participants of different sessions.

Many jobs, even some entry-level jobs, require a certain number of years of previous work experience. However, for many job seekers just entering a competitive job market or looking to make a career change, the required years of experience paradox can feel impossible to surmount. In the focus group discussion held in the municipality of Peja/ Peć and Prizren/Prizren, the lack of experience formed a great challenge for the participants when probing into the labor market. The participants expressed their concerns regarding the hardship they encounter when looking for a job. Also, these participants stated that internships in different jobs should be recognized as work experience. It was pointed out that due to the shortage in job opportunities, the participants were never provided with a chance of gaining relevant job skills/ abilities. Hence, with the participants being unable to gain work experience, whereas every employer sets the work experience as a defining criterion, reduces their chances of getting a job.

According to one participant in Peja/Peć, even without the required work experience, a job candidate can craft an application that proves they are qualified for the job by focusing on their skill sets and demonstrated acumen fulfilling responsibilities a particular position requires. However, he further elaborated, this is not possible due to the lack of knowledge of writing and compiling a CV / resume. Cover letters are often required for specific job



applications and offer a valuable glimpse into the applicant's skills and strengths. Each company requests specific skills and qualifications, and an effective cover letter can give a job seeker a strong edge over his or her competition. In contrast, a poorly written letter can cause a company to discard a job seeker's application without further consideration. Therefore, according to him, the process of writing a cover letter and formulating a CV or a resume should be implemented in the high school curriculum, thus offering all young people some knowledge in this area, which would make the application process easier.

When discussing challenges that the participants usually face when searching for a job, multiple job seeking obstacles were identified among the participants of the discussion held in the municipality of Gjakova/Đakovica. In the midst of those encountered, the high number of candidates and the large competition were considered main barriers that kept the participants from accomplishing employment. According to them, abundance of competitors posed a high challenge. They further explained that the overall number of open positions is much lower than the number of job seekers applying for the position. Most entry-level positions have hundreds of job applicants who are either college students or recent graduates. Due to the large pool of applicants, recruiters and hiring managers cannot dedicate sufficient time to each application, and hence candidates are not readily noticed. The participants further stated that their chosen disciplines are overflowing with college graduates, making it even harder for all these same-field professionals to break into the labor market.

A different prominent factor discussed by the participants of the three focus group discussions was the wide spread of nepotism in Kosovo institutions. Many of the participants shared bits of their experiences, where they had lost a job opportunity due to nepotism. According to them, the high presence of nepotism in Kosovo institutions made employment in the public sector almost impossible. The latter is the most favorable sector for employment, due to better conditions and better treatment of workers compared to the private sector.

A third challenge brought into attention by the participants of Prizren/Prizren was the language criteria placed by nearly all job providers. They declared that even minimum-wage jobs have set the multilingualism requirement; which according to them, was entirely irrational.

Further, based on the results gained from this study, discriminatory criteria were less of a challenge when it came to looking / searching for a job. With that said, only one participant from Peja/Peć stated that she had lost a job opportunity due to her gender, while one participant from Prizren/Prizren stated that his age increased the level of discrimination he encountered during recruitment to various jobs.

The discussion also provided an opportunity to assess participants' perceptions about the efficiency of job matching services provided by both public and private sectors in Kosovo.

Based on the results, the mediation services that the participants considered most successful were the job portals.

Regarding the participants' evaluation of the services provided by each sector in offering job matching services, most participants declared that the private sector performs more efficiently. They further explained the public sector is known for its irregularities and avoidance of responsibility. Therefore, the participants would rather choose private matching job providers as a much more suitable alternative towards finding a job.

#### 4.1.4. Awareness of the employment offices

This study also elaborated on the issue of registration of participants in the Employment Office (EO). More precisely, participants were asked about their opinion about EO services, and the reasons why they were not registered in EO.

In general, almost all participants had heard about the Employment Office (EO) and the services it provided to citizens. However, only some participants were registered in the employment offices of their municipalities. Further, when discussed about the services provided by EO, participants held a general opinion that the Employment Office does not provide professional services and fails to execute their prime role, that being the facilitation of landing jobs for jobseekers. Their perception on EO's low efficiency and the broad spread of nepotism was considered to be the reason that the participants were not registered to the employment offices in their municipalities.

#### 4.1.5. Awareness of private mediation services

The discussions across all sessions produced similar results with regards to private mediation services. The vast majority of participants were much more aware of online job portals, and had less knowledge of other public and private mediation services.

According to participants, online job portals played a major role in employment sector. Finding and providing a job had become not just quicker but even more effective, that too for both the employer and job seekers. Some participants declared that the online job portals have made it easier for the unemployed and the employed to be prone to promising job opportunities.

Specifically, the participants from Peja/Peć mentioned a portal called "Punësohu në Pejë", which allows the citizens of this municipality to attend open calls for job positions in their municipality. According to them, this particular job matching service provider is advantageous to other matching services, due to it being more time-efficient. The participants from all three focus groups claimed that browsing in other portals for job positions, was often tiring and time-consuming because of the large number of job announcements from different areas of Kosovo, especially from Prishtinë/Priština.

#### 4.1.6. Measuring the satisfaction with private and public job matching services

When it came to measuring the participants' satisfaction of job matching services of the public and private sectors in Kosovo, all three discussions produced similar results between them. Most participants stated a low level of satisfaction when discussing the number of vacancies and job opportunities. As stated earlier, participants believed that the overall number of open positions is much lower than the number of job seekers applying for the positions.

With that said, the participants expressed their concern about the lack of opportunities in their municipality. They seemed to believe that the municipality of Prishtina/Pristina offers a great deal of job possibilities; therefore, all citizens of Prizren/Prizren and Gjakova/Gjakova are fleeing their city in order to meet these job opportunities.

While talking about inclusiveness (facilitating services particularly to women and minority communities), the participants stated that the state of Kosovo had made considerable progress in this matter. According to them, the importance of diversity in public institutions should be of high concern, ensuring that the needs, aspirations and experiences of a diverse range of citizens were reflected in the decision-making process within different institutions.

***\*\*\* Based on the discussions, most participants (70%) were satisfied with the availability of mediation services in Kosovo, and information provided by the latter. However, approximately 60 percent of them were not satisfied with regards to the final result, which is getting a job.***

#### 4.1.7. Recommendations regarding mediation services

Finally, during the discussion of the topic Mediation Services, participants had the opportunity to give their recommendations about improving job matching services. Specifically, they were asked about the interventions that job matching services should undertake in order to provide better services to jobseekers, and other new / innovative ideas that they considered to be the best in this regard.

Generally, the participants declared that job matching providers must engage in conducting more research on the labor market, in order to identify the most required professions/skills. This way, they would be able to provide much efficient job matching services, including internships, especially for VET students with respect to the labor market's specific inquires.

Moreover, the majority of the participants seemed to believe that online applications are a much more advantageous method of applying for a job. They declared that every job matching provider must employ this method, due to its versatile convenience. However,

one participant claimed that face-to-face application is a more inclusive method considering that many elders are not capable of using technology.

A few participants shared their concern on the lack of platforms that provide job opportunities for vocational professions. They believed that this type of innovative service would open up possibilities for many professionals in these areas, especially considering the reluctance of young individuals in pursuing these careers.

Other than that, one participant from the municipality of Prizren/Prizren proposed that VET Schools must create some sort of partnering relationship with the businesses, in order to serve as job mediators to their students.

#### 4.2. Media Coverage of Labor Market Topics

The main goal of the media is to inform or communicate with the greatest number of people possible, all at once. The public relies on the *media* to learn about social and political issues, entertainment, important world events, popular culture and local and global news. A major role of the media is distributing relevant information to the masses regarding job opportunities, labor market trends, career prosperities and other occupational related topics.

Considering the large impact of media in almost all areas of human engagement, it was of focal importance to address the opinions of citizens regarding the media coverage of labor market topics. Therefore, the participants from three regions of Kosovo (respectively, the region of Mitrovica/ Mitrovica, the region of Ferizaj/Uroševac and the region of Gjilan, Gnjilane) were asked to declare their most commonly used sources of information and the motive behind their choice.

##### 4.2.1. The key channels employed for information seeking

Based on the responses provided, the participants typically seemed to employ social media platforms such as Facebook to seek relevant information regarding job opportunities and labor market topics. The participants viewed Facebook as a multipurpose source, while claiming that they make use of it to be attentive to the latest political news, fashion trends, education news and other actualities. Moreover, the participants praised Facebook for its formality and advantage of providing access to multiple job portals.

Relating to the previous statement, job portals were identified as a key source of getting a hold of information regarding job prospects. The participants claimed that they normally browse online job portals, often through their Facebook pages, such as “Kosova Job”, “Kërko punë”, “Gjej Punë”, “Portal Pune” and “Burime Njerëzore”, to stay in touch with the latest job updates. Furthermore, when discussing the platforms that were generally used

for entertainment purposes, the participants stated that they usually browse Instagram to seek new fashion trends and to make connections.

Nevertheless, only one participant from the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane declared that she has put to use LinkedIn in seeking information regarding employment opportunities. She made the point of saying that LinkedIn is a platform that allows self-advertising and networking which helps facilitate career advancement.

An important outcome suggested by the responses was that the traditional forms of media seem to be quite overlooked by the participants. The majority of them declared that they do not use traditional channels of information such as radio, television and printed newspapers. They tended to view these sources as outdated and inconvenient, especially in comparison to job portals and other forms of online channels.

#### 4.2.2. Perceived role of the media regarding labor market topics

A crucial part of this study laid on the perception held by the citizens on the role of media regarding labor market topics. By and large, the participants held the belief that amongst other responsibilities that the media (especially TV) embraces, the coverage of labor market topics must remain a top priority. However, it was declared that the media more often than not, failed to fulfill their role of covering topics involving labor market trends, employment and career. A prime cause for this outcome was perceived to be the media's emphasis on personal profitability, rather than the distribution of relevant and valid information.

Nonetheless, some of the participants suggested that the media is not all to be blamed for the lack of information provided to the audience regarding these vital matters. They claimed that the media did not have sufficient sources of information about new market trends and the research conducted was particularly scarce.

Moreover, the participants held the belief that Kosovo institutions must engage in the provision of relevant research data regarding labor market trends. They proposed that the ministry of Education must gather data, plan concrete sets of action and occupy in assisting of young individuals towards professions that are most demanded in the current labor market. This way, the youth would be more informed on future career tasks prior to selecting a major field of study, rather than entering blindly into the labor market.

#### 4.2.3. Awareness of media formats that treat labor market topics

Further on, this study aimed to shed light to the awareness amongst the participants regarding media formats in Kosovo, such as TV entertainment shows and news, online portals with career sections, weekly newspapers, which provide relevant and accessible information on jobs, professions, careers and wider labor market trends.

Generally, the participants declared that TV shows and other forms of media were not typically concerned with employment related matters; rather, it was the show business and political affairs that usually made the headlines. In addition to this, as per the focus group participants, COVID-19 has become the news of the day on almost all media formats, for months now. Moreover, the participants' responses suggested that the only source for their informing of employment issues remained to be the job portals and Facebook. Some of the portals that were mentioned the most by almost all participants "Portal Pune", followed by "Kosova Job" "Telegrafi.net", "Koha.net", "Oferta pune".

Furthermore, one participant from the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane added that there was a certain TV show named "Imazh" that used to place attention in the discussion of employment-related topics. Nevertheless, the respondents failed to recall any other TV platform that covers these relevant topics.

Relating to the matter in hand, the participants were asked their opinion on the perceived performance of these media formats. They declared that portals and social media platforms provide more quality information that would increase their chances of employment. Also, they praised these media formats for their easy access and time-convenience especially in comparison to more traditional media forms.

Nevertheless, one participant expressed his concern regarding the lack of media coverage on careers, jobs, profession and other related issues. He declared that most high school graduates and college graduates have little to no information on the labor market. Therefore, he stated that it is essential that the media allocates their focus on the employment issue; especially considering that it is the most prominent problem in Kosovo.

Moreover, the participants expressed their discontent with the lack of local job portals, especially when considering that finding employment in smaller municipalities of Kosovo can be quite challenging. One of the participants declared that there is a public webpage called "Gjithçka nga Gjilani" in the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane that serves as an employment mediator. Nevertheless, the participant expressed his reluctance on making use of this portal due to its sharing of personal information of job seekers; which according to the participant, is a serious act of misconduct.

#### 4.2.4. Awareness of media formats that treat labor market topics directed towards marginalized categories

A matter of serious concern in this study was the recognition of participants' awareness regarding media coverage of labor market topics directed towards specific social categories such as women, minorities and people with special needs. Based on the results, there seemed to be a scarcity of media formats that provides relevant job information towards these categories. The participants claimed to have watched many TV shows that advocated

about gender issues, women empowerment, ethnical equality and so on, but none of them had provided useful information regarding jobs, professions, careers and labor market trends.

Consequently, only one participant from the municipality of Mitrovicë seemed to be wary of a media format that provides accessible information regarding the labor market targeting the minority communities. He declared that this particular media is a radio platform called “Radio Roma”, and it is the only form of media in Kosovo that provides such information. Regardless, the participants seemed quite concerned with the lack of attention placed on marginalized groups’ needs; therefore, they stated that it is crucial for the media to cover such news, especially considering the unemployment rates amid the minority communities.

#### 4.2.5. Measuring the satisfaction with media coverage of labor market topic

In attempt of measuring the general satisfaction of participants with the coverage of labor market topics, they were directly asked to express their satisfaction with the media in regards of covering these crucial matters. The participants declared that they feel thoroughly dissatisfied with the media coverage of labor market topics in Kosovo. They further clarified that the media uses their large impact for advertising purposes, rather than informing purposes. The participants claimed that the companies use the media to spread faux vacancies in order to retrieve advertisement for their personal profits.

Moreover, one participant from the municipality of Ferizaj/Uroševac remarked that the media is more heavily concerned with political and entertainment issues; thus, labor market topics were rarely covered. He further discussed on the reasoning behind this phenomenon alluding that the media acted in accordance to the citizens’ interest. Therefore, with the citizens being more preoccupied with show business and entertainment subjects, the media has not much to do rather than provide with what is demanded.

**\*\*\* Based on the discussions, around 90 percent of the participants were not satisfied with media coverage of labor market topics.**

#### 4.2.6. Recommendations regarding media coverage of labor market topics

Finally, the participants were asked to voice their preferences on the media formats to be used in the future to cover labor market topics. The participants from the region of Gjiilan/Gnjilane held the view that the main channel of media to be employed for the coverage of labor market topics is Facebook. The further clarified their preference by stating that Facebook is the most popular platform, that reaches groups of all ages; therefore, it would be the most advantageous channel in reaching a larger audience.

Generally, the majority of participants declared that the coverage of labor market and its' demands by the media was crucial in fostering the youths' knowledge in the occupational field. According to them, this would provide with the opportunity of informing young individuals prior of making the decision of choosing a major field of study. This proposal derived from the participants' belief that the youth have limited information regarding particular fields of studies and their execution in the labor market.

Moreover, the participants from three regions expressed their belief that the media must employ attractive stimulants when sharing news regarding labor market. They proposed the use of animation videos, graphics, colorful pictures and other head-turning visuals in order to attract the audience's attention.

“Our brain itself is attracted to specific colors and things that do not require a lot of energy and concentration.” -Participant from the session in Gjilan/Gnjilane

Additionally, the participants claimed that with the emerge of a television show that is responsive to the labor law issues, some of the main topics that should be included are employment trends, career training, work ethic, prejudice and discrimination in workplaces, how to promote yourself or business through LinkedIn or blogging, TED talks, and so forth.

Lastly, one participant claimed that she would be very pleased if media would cover topics such as gender equality. She declared that this topic of discussion is very crucial in Kosovo, especially if targeting an audience comprised by youth. Other than that, a different participant stated that he thinks that it is important to touch on topics such as spreading awareness on the labor law. He further explained that many individuals lack information regarding their own rights as employees; therefore, the media coverage of this topic would be very adequate.

#### 4.3. Social Dialogue with Youth

Social dialogue is the process whereby social partners negotiate, often in collaboration with the government, to influence the arrangement and development of work-related issues, labor market policies, social protection, taxation or other economic policies. The present study intended to further deepen the recognition of youth's responsiveness and satisfaction with the social dialogue in Kosovo.

Primarily, the discussion with the youth of Prishtina/Priština was set to discover the background on the preferred activities executed by the standing participants. With respect to discussing the focal activities that the participants most willingly engaged in, distinguished activities were identified. The participants declared that reading, painting and walking were the most common activities that they preferred filling their free time



with. Other responses included activities such as listening to music, spending time in nature and crafting. On a general notice, the participants seemed to find nature very calming and soothing, especially when dealing with stressful events during their everyday life.

A unique activity that was encountered among the responses provided, is the fascination with visiting and appreciating vintage vehicles. This one participant revealed that he spends a handful of his time traveling abroad and pursuing this particular interest of his.

Amongst the participants present, only four of them reported to be occupied in youth organizations, forums or trade unions. One of the participants voiced that with the consequences of COVID- 19 pandemic, he had become more motivated to participate in social engagements. He stated that it was important to gather our voices in these difficult times with the purpose of advocating for mutual issues.

Furthermore, one participant declared that she volunteered as a part of suicidal prevention lifeline in Prishtina/Priština, while the other two are active members of different organizations that are occupied with marginalized children's educational prospects in Kosovo.

In general, career and professional growth were identified as main causes for the engagement of participants in such organizations/forums/unions. The participants assumed that partaking in organizations that line with their choice of profession, may further cultivate their relevant skills and abilities.

Nevertheless, other participants disclosed that the reasoning behind their membership in the above-mentioned organizations has more to do with their willingness to make sure that no child is left behind. The participant from the Egyptian community expressed that education and inclusivity of Egyptian community, Ashkali community and Roma community was a heartfelt topic for her; therefore, making it a prime motive for her occupation in such social issues.

#### 4.3.1. Attending public debates

When discussing the past experiences of the participants on participating in public debates, only one participant declared that he had previously participated in public debates. He indicated that he attended multiple debates that covered topics such as regulation of students' rights, local decision-making on issues related to the field of art and political affairs. Moreover, he elaborated that the participation on these types of debates was related to his choice of profession and general orientation towards social activism. He further elucidated that with the COVID-19 pandemic emerge he became more motivated in participating in debates that concern the greater good.

Meanwhile, none of the remaining participants seemed to have partaken in any sort of public debate. They further explained that the lack of information regarding the whereabouts of public debates was the prime reason for their failing to participate.

#### 4.3.2. The general perception of the Labor Law awareness regarding Labor Market Topics

Moving forward, this study set out to assess the general perception of participants on the Labor Law. The participants were asked to hand their opinion on the Labor Law and were probed into discussing relevant topics related to the Labor Market such as:

- informality in labor market,
- minimum wage
- maternity leave,
- health insurance,
- formalizing volunteerism,
- on-the-job health and safety,
- the competitive hiring process,
- social and minority inclusion.

In general, the participants held firm belief that the Labor Law was very poorly applied in Kosovo. They further elaborated this statement by concentrating upon the work schedule and maternity leave matters. According to the participants, the 8-hour work schedule as regulated by the Labor Law was rarely executed by the private sector institutions; thus, leaving the employees overworked and maltreated. Meanwhile, the employees working on the public sector rarely respect the 8-hour work schedule, which counts for their poor occupational performance.

As for the maternity leave issue, the participants claimed that more often than not, employers tend to dismiss female employees, once they announce their pregnancy. This, according to them, happened due to the employers being unwilling to contribute in the reimbursement of maternity leave.

A disparate opinion was stated by one participant, who concentrated on the absence of legal action attributed to securing the copyright law. He stated that artists in Kosovo do not obtain legal rights of their intellectual property and creative work; therefore, their life-time work was left unrecognized.

Further, based on the responses provided, most of the participants were aware of the topics such as informality in labor market, minimum wage, volunteerism and social and minority inclusion. However, they had vague information on issues such as health insurance, on-the-job and health safety and competitive hiring process.

When asked about the informality in labor market and minimum wage, the participants shared their unpleasant experiences while working different jobs. One participant expressed that the minimum wage at her recent job was only 150 euros, with a 9-hour work schedule and no break period. The rest of the participants voiced similar experiences, stating that most companies' work conditions were not congruent with the Labor Law.

Furthermore, the participants believed that with the formalization of volunteerism, it would motivate the youth to be more engaged in volunteer work. They stated that if volunteer work would be recognized as work experience, the youth would be provided with broader work opportunities.

Lastly, when discussing the social and minorities inclusivity, the responses provided by the participants quite differed. The participants from the Egyptian community and Ashkali community declared that the majority of institutions engaged in discrimination against minorities when recruiting for an open job position. Meanwhile, the participants from the Albanian community indicated that Kosovo serves as an example to other countries, in terms of social and minorities inclusivity. According to them, Kosovo has regulated laws that allow for positive discrimination towards minorities and women. They further on explained that they did not deny the prevalence of individual discrimination; however, they did not seem to believe that collective discrimination was much of an issue in Kosovo.

#### 4.3.3. Municipal initiatives in enhancing youth employment and addressing relevant topics

When talking about municipal initiatives in enhancing youth employment and addressing relevant topics, the majority of participants declared that municipalities were ought to be engaged in enhancing youth employment and addressment of relevant topics; however, this was not the case. They declared that due to the high levels of nepotism in municipalities, the youth were deprived of employment opportunities. Some of the participants shared personal stories of them applying for a job position; meanwhile the latter was already reserved for a different candidate, long before the job announcement was made.

Moreover, the participants stated that municipalities must employ means of action with the aim of reducing delinquency amongst youth. The participants believed that the municipalities should focus their attention to building cinemas, theatres, sport centers, concert halls and other cultural establishments. This way, the youth would be directed towards constructive activism and productive behavior.

#### 4.3.4. Awareness on the Social Economic Council of Kosovo (SECK)

With respect to the research question that aimed to reveal the levels of awareness amongst youth regarding the Social Economic Council of Kosovo (SECK), the study found that the

youth held very little to no information about the SECK activity. Only one of the participants seemed to be aware of the Social Economic Council of Kosovo's role in Kosovo. According to him, the Social Economic Council of Kosovo was responsible for regulating the minimum wage; however, he did not have further information regarding their role.

#### 4.3.5. Participation of marginalized communities in social dialogue

The view of youth on the importance of inclusion of women and marginalized communities in social dialogue was a crucial component of this study. Therefore, the participants were asked about the importance of youth and social minorities to be participating in social dialogue. All participants found the inclusion of women and minority communities rather important in social dialogue. They believed that women and minority communities must have a say in decision-making in order to produce favorable outcomes.

#### 4.3.6. Challenges of youth in the way of employment

When discussing the main challenges that youth face when seeking for employment, there were no variances amid the responses provided by the participants. All participants considered nepotism as one of the main challenges. However, others added that the education system was the grounding base for all their challenges towards employment. According to them, the education system was very poor, this due to the lack of highly professional vocational schools. They claimed that students must be oriented towards a specific career as early as in high school, in order to produce accomplished professionals.

Moreover, employed participants gave an insight on their particular experiences of reaching employment. They listed several different ways that they were hired. Some of the participants claimed that they had set up their own businesses, in the absence of a labor market and the influence of nepotism on recruitment. However, there were others who were employed through family ties, where the latter had mediated the employment process. One of the participants stated that her participation in the summer camps had given her priority during the recruitment in the organization where she now works.

Furthermore, when discussing the main challenges, the youth had faced in the workplace, the participants listed challenges they had faced since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, one participant indicated that the pay cut as a result of the work release during the pandemic was still going on even though the working situation had improved. Another claimed that government supplements for workers during the pandemic had been taken by business owners.

When describing their experience as employees, a high level of dissatisfaction was observed among the participants. Issues such as overtime, minimum wage, contempt of workers and low level of motivation were common to the experiences of the participants.

#### 4.3.7. Youth's influence on policy

Lastly, the discussion provided the opportunity to elaborate on participants' opinions on the influence they could make on the policy level to improve the accessibility / labor rights / job competitiveness of youth in the labor market. Almost all expressed confidence on their impact in achieving desired outcomes. According to them, with the cooperation of the municipalities and institutions, young people would be able to make a collective change.

#### Satisfaction levels of the youth focus group regarding the social dialogue

- ❖ The general view of participants on their influence of improving the labor market policies
  - All participants declared the firm belief that with the social unification and advocating of common issues, they would be able to cause change on the policy level of accessibility/ labor rights/ job competitiveness of youth in labor market
- ❖ The effect of the social dialogue
  - Almost none of the participants were satisfied with the final result produced by the Social Dialogue.

#### 4.4. Social Dialogue with Businesses

The recognition of the views of job-providers and job-seekers on employment-related matters in Kosovo was noted as the most important outcome to emerge from the data analysis. Thus, this study intended to provide elaborate background on the business' community views on employment and other related issues.

To initiate the discussion, the participants were asked to provide their general view of the labor market in Kosovo. The majority of responses suggested that vocational professionals were often looked down upon by the society; hence, there was a tendency of high school graduates to pursue popular degrees such as economics and law. Therefore, with a majority of youth pursuing similar degrees creates for a high discrepancy of professionals in distinct occupational fields. According to the participants, the disparity amid the types of career paths was responsible for the high levels of unemployment in Kosovo.

Moreover, the businesses' representatives seemed to be preoccupied with the shortage of qualified candidates that were to meet the companies' needs. One participant explained that he had opened a culinary artist job position; however, even after a long time of hunting for recruitment, there had not been any interested candidate. A similar view was shared by a different participant, who voiced his concern regarding the lack of practical knowledge and preparation for labor market amongst jobseekers. He further explained that the

education system in Kosovo fails to foster skills and abilities that are crucial in meeting future occupational needs.

Furthermore, the participants explained that competition is a major issue in Kosovo's labor market. According to them, the wage is often regulated due to competition, rather than qualification or other relevant factors.

On a different note, one participant shed light to prevalent issues that the Informational Technology (IT) labor market was most concerned with. He declared that they were experiencing difficulties recruiting IT experts, due to them being pursued by companies in more developed countries. He explained that considering the current labor market, the companies in Kosovo were unable to pay the targeted candidates the wages that they were offered by foreign countries' companies.

#### 4.4.1. Recruitment process of new employees

During the discussion with representatives of different businesses, they had the opportunity to explain in detail the recruitment process, which was used by their company for staff recruitment.

Generally, the key channel for recruitment amongst the businesses' representatives was declared to be the recommendation technique. The participants stated that the recommendation recruitment method normally brings in successful and high-performing employees. In this case, they explained the method of recommendation by a colleague, business associate, or family, gives the opportunity to the candidates to be invited only for the interview phase. Further, recruitment was based on their previous experience, meeting the requirements, and lastly, their performance during the interview.

Moreover, the participants shed light on two other recruitment techniques which they also tended to employ; respectively, the farming and hunting techniques. As stated by the participants, farming included recruiting unexperienced individuals while providing them with a modest wage. With the farming technique, the company fostered young professionals and taught them knowledge and skills in relevant career paths. On the other hand, the hunting technique was a recruitment method where the companies pursued specialists and professionals for a job position while offering them a much higher wage. The participants explained that farming has resulted to be a non-preferable technique, this due to the businesses' investment in training of new professionals, only for them to pursue other companies after they gained the expertise. Meanwhile, despite the hunting technique being less time-convenient in terms of identifying and pursuing a particular individual, it typically resulted in efficiency and high-performance.

When asked about the set of criteria for employees, especially in terms of gender and minority communities, one participant stated that they have set a “40% women inclusivity” criteria. He stated that the company within which he operated had placed the inclusivity of women as a top priority. Moreover, it was declared that the women in his company held high positions in management and customer service. Other than that, this participant claimed to have recruited employees from the minority community, while using the recommendation method of recruitment.

Further, the participant from the IT sector stated that the inclusion of women in technology had been seen as a challenge for a long time. However, he stated that recently women had been engaging more widely in the field of technology, while praising them for their analytical and logical superiority.

A different view was presented by a gastronomy business’ representative, who stated that he would not engage in recruitment of employees from the minority communities, such as Roma community, Ashkali community and Egyptian community. The reasoning behind this statement was that he would be losing clients if the customer service would be comprised of any member of the aforementioned minority communities.

As per the impact of COVID-19 in the recruitment process, not much discussion took place. While some businesses claimed that due to the Government restrictions their business activity stopped, thus they did not have to do any recruitment, other declared that no change was imposed in the recruitment process, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4.4.2. Issues and challenges according to the business community

Amid the main issues centering the challenges of business representatives was the recruitment of qualified workers; this mainly deriving from the shortage of vocational professionals. The participants expressed that the educational system was to be held responsible for producing this outcome. They stated that the wages for qualified vocational employees were sky-rocketing, however, the youth remained their focus on traditional occupational paths. Moreover, most of the participants declared that VET schools were not regulated properly in terms of administration, management and financing. They explained that due to VET schools not being financed by the education ministry, the teachers’ wages were often left unpaid.

One participant stated that the VET schools were not collaborative with the businesses, basing this on his past experiences. He stated that when VET schools in Kosovo were offered to work with trained professionals from Turkey and Austria, they refused the offer due to their perception of this offer as a form of competition.

Further on, an important focus of this particular focus group discussion was the business community's opinion on whether the volunteer work was to be recognized as work experience. All participants held strong belief that volunteer work must be recognized as work experience. Some of them shared personal stories how volunteering had assisted them in gaining confidence and skills, that lead to prosperity in future occupations. Moreover, they assumed that the formalization of volunteer work would increase the willingness amongst youth to engage in volunteering.

#### 4.4.3. Working conditions provided by the businesses

In a business context, the definition of working conditions provided by the business includes providing a safe workplace, compensating workers fairly, and treating them with a sense of dignity and equality while respecting at least a minimum of their privacy. In this context, participants were asked about the conditions they provide for their employees.

Different participants from distinct sectors of work shared unlike points of view regarding the work conditions that they provide for their employees. While a few participants claimed that their companies offer conditions that were in line with their employees' needs, others kept different views. One participant stated that the conditions that were provided to the employees were horrific, especially those working in the construction sector. He emphasized on the security provided, while stating that the employees working in high objects were not supplied with any safety mean whatsoever.

Moreover, one participant elaborated on the ignorance of companies' owners regarding the relationship between employee satisfaction and productivity. He declared that the employers in Kosovo did not care about work satisfaction factors such as temperature, lighting, proper supervision; all of which create a vast impact on occupational performance.

Furthermore, in order to attain more elaborate information regarding this topic, the participants were inquired to provide their opinion on the Labor Law. The majority of participants held similar views on the Labor Law and its demands. They stated that the current Labor Law was less demanding in comparison to other countries. Moreover, they expressed their indignation towards the government regarding the maternity leave reimbursement. The participants felt discriminated upon by the government, while claiming that the maternity leave reimbursement is a much higher burden for the businesses. In companies dominated by women, in absence of aid from the government, the businesses owners were given no alternative rather than dismissing female employees with announcement of their pregnancy. One participant stated that the maternity leave issue was a substantial factor for the decrease of natality in Kosovo. According to him, the regulation of the Labor Law regarding the maternity leave remains crucial for achieving increased birth rates.



Furthermore, the participants believed that the Labor Law and Labor Laws' implementation were two different matters. According to them, the Labor Law in Kosovo was rarely implemented due to the lack of inspection. Therefore, the execution of the Labor Law became a moral matter for the businesses' owners.

#### 4.4.4. Role of businesses in increasing youth employment

In reference to the purpose of the study, the businesses representatives were questioned on the role of businesses in further increasing the youth employment. Generally, the participants declared that it was crucial for the state to perceive the businesses as partners, rather than opposition. They declared that the state's budget was financed by the businesses, not by the wage taxes of employees. Therefore, it was of great importance the establishment of a firm partnership between the government and the businesses, in order to achieve enhanced employment and further economic development.

Furthermore, it was declared that nepotism remains a great factor in the businesses' ability to execute significant projects. The participants mentioned numerous cases of potential foreign investments that were to be implemented in Kosovo; however, these initiatives failed to succeed, due to corruption in state levels.

#### 4.4.5. Membership in Business Association or Organizations

When asked about their membership in the Business Association or Organizations, a considerable number of participants declared their membership in a number of business associations such as Economic Association of Kosovo and other consulting organizations. However, it was claimed that these organizations were comprised by individuals that follow personal agendas for individual profit, rather than collective revenues.

Finally, the participants were asked to report their awareness of the Social Economic Council of Kosovo and their levels of satisfaction with their performance. As a result, it was reported that the businesses were generally aware of the existence and role of Social Economic Council of Kosovo. Nevertheless, the participants pointed out that the Social Economic Council of Kosovo failed to fulfill its role of advocating and working towards systematic change. The participants held the idea that Social Economic Council's sole activity was gathering once a year, reflecting on the past year events, and determining the minimum wage.

***\*\*\*Based on the discussion, none of the businesses is satisfied with Social Dialogue in Kosovo.***

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study enable the assessment of the level of satisfaction on the project main indicators. Specifically, this study aimed to investigate in detail the impact and satisfaction levels among the targeted groups of unemployed and employed youth as well as the business community, on certain topics.

### Mediation Services

In general, the results of this study show that there are sufficient available mediation services, especially from the private sector job matching providers. According to the participants, portals like "Gjirafa", "Kastori", "Kosova Job", "Punesohu.eu", "Kërko punë", "Gjej Punë", "Portal Pune" and "Burime Njerëzore", are the most used online job portals by them. Further, while almost all participants have knowledge with regards to the Employment Office (EO), the number of those registered in the EO is relatively small. It is found that EO was considered as less efficient and highly affected by nepotism.

However, when it comes to challenges faced in job searching, the participants of this study did not hesitate to mention a list of them. Lack of experience, the low number of vacancies and job opportunities, high number of candidates and the large competition presented a great challenge for the participants when probing into the labor market.

Following are the recommendations that were collected from the three focus group discussions that the participants were in the opinion would help in solving the above-mentioned problems:

- Match the job criteria with the employee's qualifications and private companies
- Provide opportunities for internships, especially for VET students (the opportunities should be in line with their education profiles)
- VET Schools should create partnering relationships with the businesses, in order to serve as job mediators to their students
- Create an online job application, accessible to all
- Implement CV / Resume compilation in the high school curriculum, including writing a cover letter for a job application
- Post all job vacancies in social media apps, such as Facebook, Instagram

### Media Coverage of Labor Market Topics

Amongst other responsibilities the media embraces, the coverage of labor topics should remain a priority. However, this study revealed that the media fails to fulfill their role of covering topics involving labor market trends, employment and career. In that note, this study also found that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the performance of the media on its coverage on labor market. This level of dissatisfaction grows even more, when

topics directed towards marginalized categories, specifically issues such as empowerment of women and the inclusion of minority communities, are even less addressed by this platform. The media coverage on labor market topics has worsened even more with the recent events with the world pandemic, COVID-19.

Following are the recommendations that were collected from the three focus group discussions that the participants were in the opinion would help in solving the above-mentioned problems:

- The main channel of media to be employed for the coverage of labor market topics is Facebook
- The media must employ attractive stimulants when sharing news regarding labor market, such as animation videos, graphics, colorful pictures and other head-turning visuals in order to attract the audience's attention
- Create a TV show responsive on the labor law issues, employment trends, career training, work ethic, prejudice and discrimination in workplaces
- Address issues of marginalized categories in labor market

### **Social Dialogue with Youth**

The expected outcomes of increased involvement of youth in public debates involve the increase of civic involvement, the prevention of anti-social behavior, the formation of future active citizens, and the empowerment of young people themselves. However, this study revealed that public debates, as a tool of social dialogue, are not very used by youth.

The study results indicated that the Labor Law is very poorly applied in Kosovo. With that belief, participants elaborated on this statement by focusing upon the work schedule and maternity leave matters. Among these declarations, the absence of legal action attributed to securing the copyright law, informality in labor market, minimum wage, volunteerism and social and minority inclusion, are mentioned as issues resulting from this poor execution of Labor Law.

When considering the topic of municipal initiatives in enhancing youth employment and addressing relevant topics, the municipality is not considered to do a good job in this regard. The high level of nepotism influenced the young people in this study to blame the municipality for deprivation of employment opportunities. In this regard, it was reported that municipalities should focus their attention to building cinemas, theatres, sport centers, concert halls and other cultural establishments. This, according to participants would affect the growth of constructive activism and productive behavior. Further, participants believe that with the cooperation of the municipalities and institutions, young people would be able to make a collective change.

When talking about social dialogue, the participants of this study consider it necessary to include women and marginalized communities in the latter. According to them, the aim of social dialogue is to advance opportunities for women and men from all communities to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity.

Following are the recommendations that were collected from the three focus group discussions that the participants were in the opinion would help in solving the above-mentioned problems:

- The municipality should organize public debates on attractive topics of interest to young people
- The municipality should launch a campaign to combat nepotism within its institutions
- The municipality should organize activities for young people that promote social dialogue
- Young people should be given the opportunity to express their influence on the policy level to improve the accessibility / labor rights / job competitiveness of youth in the labor market

### **Social Dialogue with Businesses**

Elaborating on the views of job providers on employment-related matters in Kosovo, the study highlighted several different conclusions. The vast majority of business representatives within this study stated the lack of vocational professionals, shortage of qualified candidates and high competition in labor market, present issues that trouble the business community. According to them, Vocational Education and Training (VET) can play a crucial role in tackling many of the most pressing challenges that Europe is faced with today, such as competitiveness, youth unemployment and social inclusion. To put the VET-sector in the best possible position to do so, it is crucial to increase quality and attractiveness of VET.

Businesses participating in this study, have an important role in supporting young people outside education, but more needs to be done to achieve this. Many private sector companies and their employees already given time and money to support young people and the organizations that work with them. According to them, this helps young people and brings benefits to their businesses. Generally, the participants declared that it is crucial for the state to perceive the businesses as partners, rather than opposition. Therefore, they believe that it is of great importance the establishment of a firm partnership between the government and the businesses, in order to achieve enhanced employment and further economic development.

## 6. ANNEX

### 6.1. Screening questions for the selection of participants in focus groups

Hello,

We are contacting you from the UBO Consulting agency, a research company market located in Prishtina. Our company has been commissioned by the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE), which is a program funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo and implemented by the consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo and MDA-Associate Development Management, to conduct a study. For the purpose of this study, UBO Consulting is organizing discussion meetings with young people and business representatives. This qualitative study aims to understand in detail the impact and levels of satisfaction between groups of unemployed and employed youth as well as the business community. Discussions include topics such as Mediation Services, Media Coverage of Labor Market Topics and Social Dialogue.

On this occasion, we would like to invite you to this meeting, which will be held on XX (date) XX (time), at XX (location).

**\*If provided with a confirmative response, the potential participant is asked a number of filtering questions in order to assure they meet the criteria:**

1. Where do you currently live?
2. Do you live in an urban or rural area?
3. How old are you?
4. What is the highest education level that you have attained?  
\*If the respondent is a secondary level student, they are asked whether they attend a Vocational school or a Gymnasium for further filtering
5. What is your current status of employment?
6. What is your ethnicity?

**\*With the positive confirmation of the participant's attendance, he/she is offered with gratitude and further contacting information for any obscurity presented:**

We are very thankful for your willingness to participate. For any additional information, feel free to contact to this email or contact the following phone number \_\_\_\_\_.