

Assessing the Impact of Non-Formal Training Providers and Youth Employment in Kosovo

ASSESSMENT REPORT



MARCH 2023

“Assessing the Impact of Non-Formal Training Providers and Youth Employment in Kosovo”

Assessment Report

Implemented by:



Commissioned by¹:



HELVETAS
Swiss Intercooperation

Management
Development
Associates **MDA**

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¹ The SDC EYE Project is implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo and MDA

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Executive Summary

This assessment study was commissioned by the EYE project, with the purpose of measuring project indicators, under Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Accordingly, a survey with a total of 58 training provider companies, partners and non-partners of the EYE project, was carried out. The survey aimed to help the project keep track of the indicator progress, while also understanding and measuring the impact of its support towards training provider companies. Whereas, a total of 14 focus group sessions were organized with employed and unemployed youth. The focus groups were conducted in order to measure project indicators under Outcome 2 and report on the change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation, perception of jobseekers towards Job Mediation Services (JMS), and the satisfaction with the public and private transition to work services of the unemployed youngsters.

Following are the main findings from the survey and focus group discussions.

Key Findings

Outcome 1

- 43% of companies have benefited from the Helvetas-EYE project.
- Most companies operate in the education (40%) and ICT (17%) sector.
- Majority of companies provided ICT training (40%), followed by Engineering and Manufacturing (21%) and Creative and Design (17%).
- Companies received support from the EYE project in developing new training programs/profiles (13), marketing and communication (7), and capacity building (7), with a smaller percentage receiving co-sharing payment of trainers (3)
- Majority of companies (72%) experienced an increase in the relevance of training provision as a result of EYE-facilitated activities, with half of the companies experiencing an increase in revenue
- 53% of companies reported an increase in revenue, while 14% experienced a decrease.
- To reduce costs and increase revenue, companies contracted trainers on a project-basis (40%), found less expensive sources of supplies (33%), signed long-term contracts with companies to train their employees (29%), sold bulk training services at a lower price (17%), and sold training services at a lower price (17%)
- 34% of businesses focused on reviewing current and future capital needs, 29% focused on analyzing and balancing profitability, 19% assessed and improved reporting and planning capabilities, and 17% focused on evaluating purchasing processes of their customers

- 78% of companies received donor funds for training in 2021 or 2022, with new curricula being the most popular (58%), followed by training and development (42%)
- Companies that received donor funds in 2022 spent the most on training and development (62%)
- 67% of businesses receiving support through co-sharing payment of trainers reported they could not have obtained this support from any other source.
- The top three most chosen support benefits were increased relevance of training provision, increased number of participants in the training, and increased collaboration between TP and the private sector.
- Most companies who received support in developing new training programs have seen an increase in revenue, collaboration between TP and the private sector, relevance of training provision, and a greater number of participants in the training.
- 68% of companies reported an increase in revenue, but a slightly higher percentage (73%) reported an increase in costs. The increase in revenue and costs was distributed almost equally across the support activities received by the EYE project.
- EYE partners that received support in capacity building and marketing and communication experienced more revenue increases than costs.
- 80% of EYE partners trained new individuals with the support of the EYE project, and the number of trainees increased by 55% in EYE partners from 2021 to 2022.
- 80% of EYE partners reported that they have started to cooperate more with other businesses, resulting in 241 cooperations among all the EYE partners interviewed in the study.
- The total value of support from donors for EYE Project, EYE partners increased by approximately 15% from 2021 to 2022, suggesting a lack of independence from external aid or support.

Outcome 2

Employed Youth

- Out of 67 participants, nearly 60% were oriented in their career while pursuing their passions and the most preferred professions
- Family and friends were the second most influential factors in deciding which path to follow
- Out of 67 youngsters, less than 10% consulted labour market needs to make the right choice
- Due to a lack of interest and efforts to search for information on labour market needs, almost 80% of participants were not able to assess the availability and level of such information
- It was widely believed that there is a lack of market analysis and career guidance, leading to a mismatch between demand and supply in the labor market

- Lack of suitable job opportunities, especially in small cities/rural areas and for non-majority communities, were mentioned as the main challenges youth in Kosovo usually faces while trying to get employed
- In general, finding a job that suits professional skills took more time for the majority of young women and men (almost 80%)
- Almost all participants (~67) declared that the time span for finding a job varies depending the profession and the job you are looking for. While getting hired in retail could happen within a week, it takes seven months up to two years to find jobs that suits their professional skills (law, bank, accountant, etc.). These statements were provided by participants from Gjakova, Gjilan, Prishtina and Prizren
- Getting employed in the public sector was also deemed as more challenging, as compared to finding a job in the private sector
- Out of 67 participants, almost 80% have used private job mediation services to search for employment opportunities. KosovaJob, PortalPune, Punësohu.com, Burimenjerëzore, Gjirafa, and Telegrafi were the main online job providers, with KosovaJob being the most used one
- Private job mediation services were the most efficient ones, providing sufficient information on job opportunities and being more accessible and user-friendly
- Out of 67 participants, nearly 60% perceived the Employment Agency (EA) to be inefficient and formal, with a reliance on recommendations and nepotism
- In addition to avoiding political influence and nepotism, almost all participants recommended that the EA should update its operating system and increase its cooperation with the business community
- The participants also required more career centers to assist students with enhancing their job search skills, identifying and working toward career goals, and finding suitable careers in line with the labour market
- Internships were also very important to facilitate youth's entrance into labour market

Unemployed Youth

- Out of 76 participants, almost 80% have thought about their career while discussing with family members, peers, or professors
- Family, especially parents, were deemed as major influencers on the youth's career orientation
- Out of 76 participants, only 20% have contemplated their career path since they were younger, following their passions and most preferred professions
- Out of 67 participants, less than 10% plan to decide on their career, considering labour market needs. They claimed to consider factors such as the benefits of each career path in compliance with accessibility into that job market, salary, and others
- Despite the low level of knowledge of labour market needs, nearly 60% of participants claimed that finding suitable to their skill sets and background is challenging.

- According to almost 80% of participants from sessions held in other municipalities (excluding Prishtina), retail is where they can find work easily, compared to other professional jobs such IT, programmer, economist, law, etc., which are mainly concentrated in the capital city. Moreover, the requirements to have extensive experience and a wide scope of knowledge to be considered for the job were additional obstacles to becoming employed
- Out of 76 participants, approximately 90% of participants were not currently looking for a job, or at least not systematically, since they were still pursuing their studies. However, nearly 40% of them were still in high school/university
- Less than 10% of participants (from Gjilan and Prishtina) were looking for a job for about two months. A few other participants from Ferizaj and Peja were searching for a job for a year, respectively two years
- A large skills mismatch and labor market needs, remained the main concern to 80% of focus group participants
- The unemployed youth who were interested in working preferred part-time or seasonal jobs, in order to be able to meet their study schedules
- Private mediation job services were the most used one, as compared to public services
- KosovaJob, UP WORK Kosovo, Gjirafa, and Human Resources were the main job portals mentioned in the focus groups; KosovaJob was reported to be the most used and efficient one
- Almost all focus group participants were unaware of the Employment Agency and its services
- More information on career centers and engagement of students in these centers was considered very helpful in pursuing the right profession, while also facilitating their entrance to labour market
- Out of 76 participants, almost 80% of unemployed youth believed that the formal system of vocational education and training should be based on the needs of the labor market
- Job fairs and internships were also deemed as very important in increasing job opportunities for jobseekers
- As for the EA, the participants claimed that it should make a transition to digital system, increase transparency and avoid nepotism, in order to become more efficient

Introduction

This assessment study was commissioned by the Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project, in order to measure the project indicators under Outcome 1 and Outcome 2. Under Outcome 1, the assessment will help the project keep track of the indicator progress, while also understanding and measuring the impact of its support towards training provider companies. Whereas, the measurement of the indicators under Outcome 2 will be based on the change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation, perception of jobseekers towards Job Mediation Services (JMS), and the satisfaction with the public and private transition to work services of the unemployed youngsters.

Upon the aforementioned requirements, UBO Consulting used mixed research methods, including quantitative and qualitative techniques. In more specific terms, a web-based survey was carried out to measure the project indicators under the 1st Outcome, while focus group discussions were applied for measuring the impact of the project indicators under Outcome 2.

Project Background

The consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo (HSIK) and Management Development Associates (MDA) has been assigned to implement Phase III of Enhancing Youth Employment (EYE) project by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The overall goal of EYE phase III is to increase employability of young women and men in Kosovo. It will be achieved in a socially inclusive and sustainable way through systemic interventions in two interrelated areas: (1) Improved access to trainings and further education (non-formal VET), and (2) Improved access to labor market integration services and information.

The activities of EYE are spread out in 2 outcomes. The aim under outcome 1 is that EYE continues to focus and work directly with training providers in innovating and bringing new training packages to the market that will fulfill a specific need of the labor market. In this context, EYE has provided support to these partners with infrastructure, curriculum development, digital marketing, and outreach. Moreover, EYE has supported them in becoming more innovative, generating revenues, offering new training content, and new ways of delivery, and tapping into new potential customer pools. Whereas, under outcome 2 the project aims that young women and men to make informed career choices and gain more employment opportunities through an improved labor market information system.

During 2021, EYE engaged a service provider to define baselines for project main indicators under outcome 1 related to skills component and outcome 2 which is related to career guidance and job mediation services.

Under outcome 1 *“Young women and men have increased access to trainings and employability through a more market-oriented non-formal training system”*. The baseline for the following indicator has been defined:

- Number of training providers delivering training sustainably in cooperation with private sector without donor support

The aim is to understand how many of those training providers continue to deliver training sustainably in cooperation with the private sector without donor support. A market increase is seen; however, the financial long-term sustainability of these training centres remains a question as a result of donors subsidizing the training.

According to an internal assessment on non-formal education conducted in 2020, EYE has observed new entrants in the non-formal training market, especially in the IT sector. This is a positive development as it shows demand for training, it increases competition and therefore improves the quality of the training delivered. As per EYE’s definition, non-formal training providers are businesses, NGOs, associations, or other types of organizations that offer short-term training in vocational skills development.

EYE provided support to these partners with infrastructure, curriculum development, digital marketing and outreach. Moreover, EYE has supported them towards becoming more innovative, generating revenues, offering new training content, new ways of delivery, and tap into new potential customer pools.

Under outcome 2 *“Young women and men make informed career choices and gain more employment opportunities through an improved labor market information system”* the measurement needs to be conducted for the following indicators:

- Change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation.
- Change in perception of jobseekers towards Job Mediation Services (JMS), (GSI disaggregated).
- The percentage of unemployed express their satisfaction with the public and private transition to work services.

Assessment Methodology

The assessment study encompassed both, the quantitative and qualitative research approach, namely survey and focus group discussions. Different approaches were applied to measure the indicators, under specific project outcomes. While the survey was conducted to measure the indicators under Outcome 1, focus group discussions were held in order to measure the project indicators under Outcome 2.

The following sections present the specific approaches, used for each part of the assessment.

Survey Approach

Outcome 1 indicates that “Young women and men have increased access to trainings and employability through a more market-oriented non-formal training system”. The aim under outcome 1 is that EYE project continues to focus and work directly with training providers in innovating and bringing new training packages to the market that will fulfill a specific need of the labour market.

Although the baseline for the indicator has already been set “*Number of training providers that currently deliver training sustainably in cooperation with private sector without donor support*”, based on whether the training provider receives donor support or not. EYE project was interested to track the indicator by understanding if the project has made a difference in the training providers market and by how much. Also, the EYE project’s aim was to understand if its intervention had an impact on the development of non-formal training market, and to what extent these developments are attributed to the project.

Accordingly, upon the RfQ terms, UBO Consulting has conducted a survey with training provider companies, across Kosovo. The survey sampling was composed of EYE partners and non-partners operating in the sectors covered by the project. Accordingly, UBO used the control and treatment groups to measure the project indicators under Outcome 1. This method is usually used when research is conducted to measure a specific action's impact. By definition, a treatment **group** (also called the **experimental group**) is the group of people who receives the treatment whose effect the researcher is interested in, whereas the **control group** receives either no treatment or a standard treatment whose effect is already known. However, in the case of this study, the treatment group was composed of training provider companies that have been supported by EYE, whereas companies that have not cooperated at all with EYE were placed in the control group. This technique enabled UBO to measure the impact of EYE’s intervention on the development of the non-formal training market and determine to what extent these developments are attributed to the project.

While the treatment group was designed using the list of EYE partners (submitted by EYE), the control group was composed based on the list of accredited training companies issued by the National Qualification Authority. The total number of interviewed companies was **58**. Out of which, **25** companies had received support from the EYE project, whereas **33** training provider companies did not have any cooperation with the project.

Limitations

Some critics suggest that Contribution Analysis (CA) contains an inherent positive bias due to its focus on the degree of contribution, suggesting that the approach would lead to a contribution always being found. In CA specifically, this notion may arise due to the absence of standards or a level of evidence by which one is able to confidently validate the contribution claim through the CA steps presented earlier, by missing key alternative explanations altogether due to the application of "narrow logic" during identification.

One of the solutions to this challenge if the fidelity condition is met is the intervention's activities are implemented as proposed in the result chain, which in many of the result chains of the Project is not the case. Another solution to this challenge is accounting for other influencing factors ensuring that other factors did not influence the chain of results, which is a persisting problem in Kosovo due to the limited availability of relevant and reliable monitoring data and public statistics.

Another overarching limitation was the use of retrospective cases, which meant that data sources included historical data that was not necessarily aligned with the purposes of the study. This resulted in incomplete and potentially inaccurate data and precluded any comparative analysis over time except as it was historically recalled.

Focus Group Approach

Indicators under Outcome 2 “Young women and men make informed career choices and gain more employment opportunities through an improved labor market information system” were measured employing qualitative research methods. Namely, **14** focus group discussions were conducted, in order to report on the following indicators:

- Change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation
- Change in perception of jobseekers towards Job Mediation Services (JMS)
- The percentage of unemployed express their satisfaction with the public and private transition to work services

Focus group discussions were composed of employed and unemployed youth, aged 15-34, including young women and men, living in urban and rural areas, across seven regions of Kosovo. Focus group discussions included majority and non-majority community members.

The specific composition and distribution of focus group sessions is depicted by the following table:

Table 1. Composition and Distribution of Focus Group Discussions

| Region | Focus Group Discussions | Municipalities | Settlement | No. of participants | Gender of participants | Age range of participants | Ethnicity |
|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Prishtina | Employed Youth | Prishtina, Podujeva | Fushë Kosova, Urban (7) Rural (3) | 10 | Women (3) Men (7) | 22-34 years | Albanian, Egyptian |
| | Unemployed Youth | Prishtina, Podujeva | Fushë Kosova, Urban (8) Rural (4) | 12 | Women (6) Men (6) | 16-21 years | Albanian, Ashkali |
| Peja | Employed Youth | Peja | Urban (4) Rural (0) | 4 | Women (2) Men (2) | 20-35 years | Albanian |
| | Unemployed Youth | Peja, Istog | Urban (3) Rural (1) | 4 | Women (3) Men (1) | 15-21 years | Albanian, Egyptian |
| Prizren | Employed Youth | Prizren | Urban (6) Rural (3) | 9 | Women (8) Men (1) | 18-32 years | Albanian |
| | Unemployed Youth | Prizren | Urban (9) Rural (4) | 13 | Women (6) Men (7) | 16-30 years | Albanian, Turkish |
| Gjakova | Employed Youth | Gjakova, Deçan, Junik, Rahovec | Urban (5) Rural (3) | 8 | Women (3) Men (5) | 19-32 years | Albanian |
| | Unemployed Youth | Gjakova, Deçan, Rahovec | Urban (9) Rural (5) | 14 | Women (4) Men (10) | 18-31 years | Albanian, Egyptian |
| Gjilan | Employed Youth | Gjilan, Viti | Urban (3) Rural (5) | 8 | Women (5) Men (3) | 18-36 years | Albanian, Turkish |
| | Unemployed Youth | Gjilan, Kamenica | Urban (3) Rural (8) | 11 | Women (8) Men (3) | 18-27 years | Albanian |
| Ferizaj | Employed Youth | Ferizaj, Kaçanik | Urban (8) Rural (10) | 18 | Women (7) Men (11) | 16-30 years | Albanian |
| | Unemployed Youth | Ferizaj, Kaçanik | Urban (5) Rural (7) | 12 | Women (7) Men (5) | 16-30 years | Albanian |
| Mitrovica | Employed Youth | North Mitrovica | Urban (9) Rural (4) | 10 | Women (4) Men (6) | 19-27 years | Serbs, Bosnian, Gorani, Roma |
| | Unemployed Youth | North Mitrovica | Urban (9) Rural (4) | 10 | Women (3) Men (7) | 19-30 years | Serbs, Bosnian, Roma |

Focus group participants for this assessment study were recruited using **research panels**. Our research panels are built and consisted of the people who participated in our research studies, conducted over the years. When using this method, the panel contacts were randomized than passed for the selection screens. This was done in order to avoid a biased selection and give everyone in the panel an equal chance of selection. Next, in order to draw the names of the potential participants for focus group discussions, the randomized contacts were either systematically or randomly selected. Once the participants' pool was identified, the latter were contacted by phone and asked the screening questions, to assure that they are in line with the recruitment criteria. Afterwards, they were provided with detailed information on the purpose of the study, topic, recording method, confidentiality, place and date, and incentive.

Assessment Results

The quantitative part of this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the EYE phase III program in increasing the employability of young women and men in Kosovo. The program aims to achieve sustainable and socially inclusive systemic interventions in two areas: improving access to non-formal vocational education and training and enhancing access to labour market integration services and information. The study will measure the program's impact using quantitative data analysis methods and provide insights into its success in achieving its goals.

Outcome 1

Company Profile

The respondents were initially asked if they had previously benefitted from the Helvetas – EYE Project. Data indicate that 43 per cent of the companies are EYE partners of this project, while the remaining are not. Most companies operate in the following two sectors: education (40%) and ICT (17%).

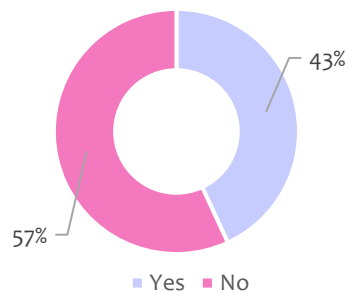


Figure 1. Is the company a beneficiary of Helvetas-EYE project?

Moreover, nine per cent of businesses reported providing training in Arts, Media and Publishing, Construction, and Welding. Only three per cent of the companies offer Catering and Hospitality. Of those that chose 'Other' as an option, 32 per cent mentioned that they offer training in foreign languages, while four per cent are in human resources, architecture, soft skills, medical sciences, and arms and ammunition.

This figure shows the breakdown of businesses by size. It shows that 48 per cent of businesses

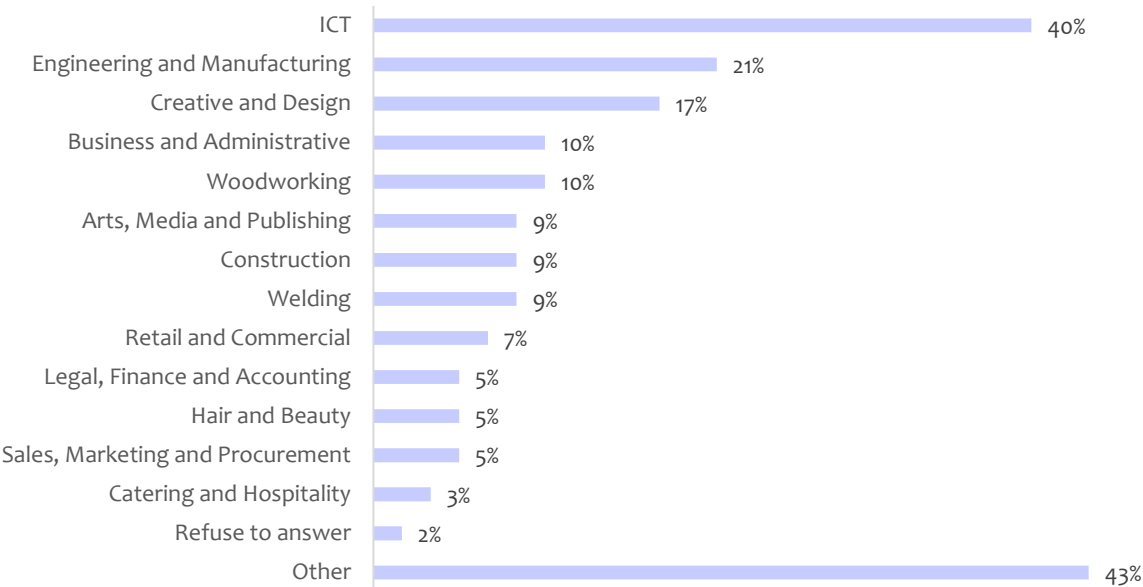


Figure 2. Please tell us the type of training you provide:

are small, 36 per cent are micro, and 16 per cent of businesses are medium.

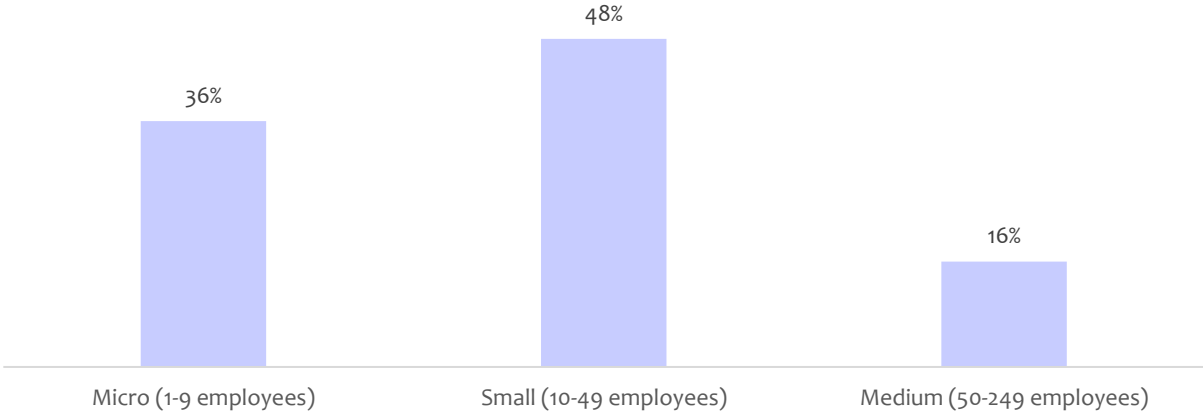


Figure 3. Select the size of the business (Business size is measured by the number of employees)

The study's findings reveal that medium-sized businesses were the predominant recipients of the benefits examined, accounting for 78 per cent of the total EYE partners. This was followed by micro-sized businesses, which constituted 38 per cent of the EYE partners, and small-sized businesses, comprising 36 per cent of the EYE partners.

More than half of the businesses operate in Prishtinë (79%). However, eight per cent of the remaining businesses operate in Mitrovicë and Gjiilan, as well as in Ferizaj (5%), Gjakovë (3%), and Prizren (2%).



Figure 4. Choose the region you operate:

Based on the results, 21 businesses have been operating in the market for 10-20 years, while eight have been operating for over 20 years. Fifteen businesses have been operating for 3-5 years, while only five have operated for up to two years.

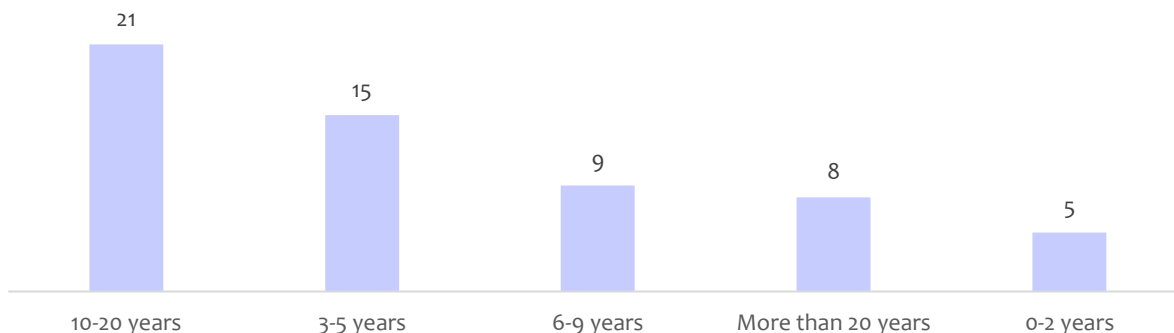


Figure 5. For how many years has your company been operating?

Financial Sustainability

More than half of companies declared that their company had increased its revenues within the last year (53%). The reason for the increase in revenue could be attributed to several factors, including the company's efforts to sign long-term contracts with other businesses to train their employees. Moreover, 21 per cent of the companies stayed roughly at the same level, followed by 14 per cent of the companies whose revenue decreased.

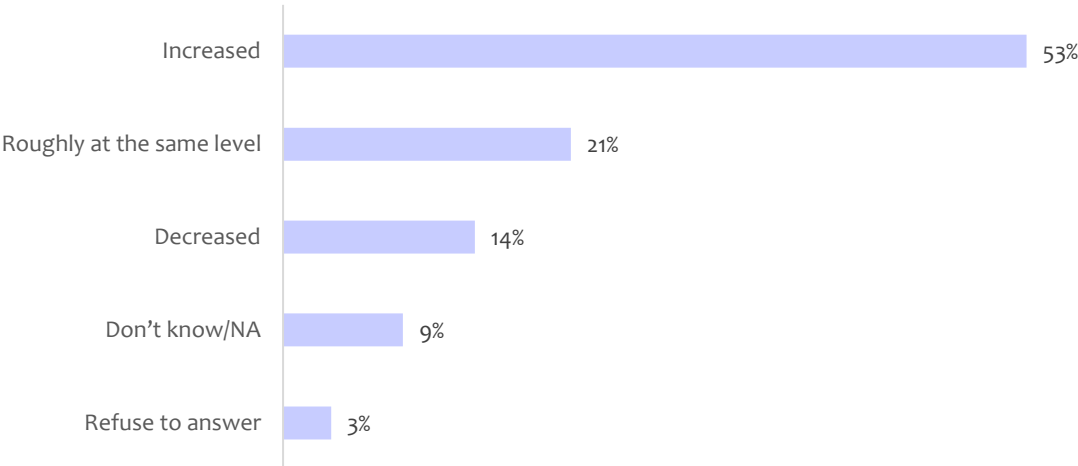


Figure 6. Has the company's revenue increased, decreased, or stayed roughly at the same level within the last year?

An interesting finding is observed when segregating EYE partners and EYE non-partners in order to better understand their revenue changes within the last year. Based on the results, more EYE partners have increased their revenues (17 out of 25) while none of the later have experienced a decrease. Moreover, seven EYE non-partners reported that their revenues are roughly at the same level, compared to five EYE partners that reported the same.

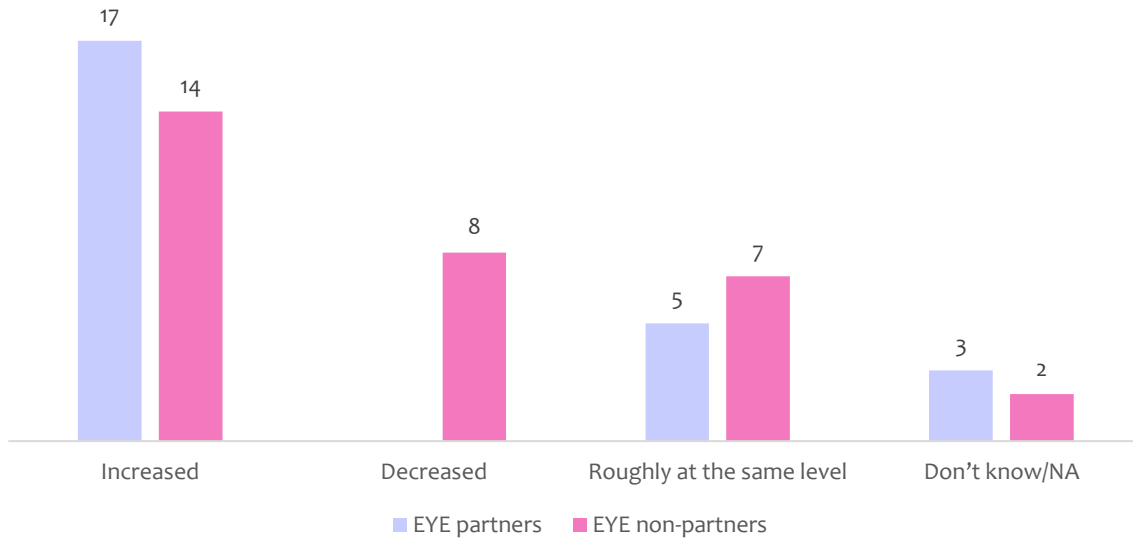


Figure 7. Has the company's revenue increased, decreased, or stayed roughly at the same level within the last year? * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners -Crosstabulation

Additionally, the study aimed to examine the revenue trends among businesses of varying sizes. The study's findings suggest that among micro-sized businesses, 33 per cent reported an increase in their revenue over the past year, while an equal percentage reported that their revenues remained roughly at the same level. In contrast, most small (64%) and medium-sized (67%) enterprises reported an increase in their company's revenue over the past year.

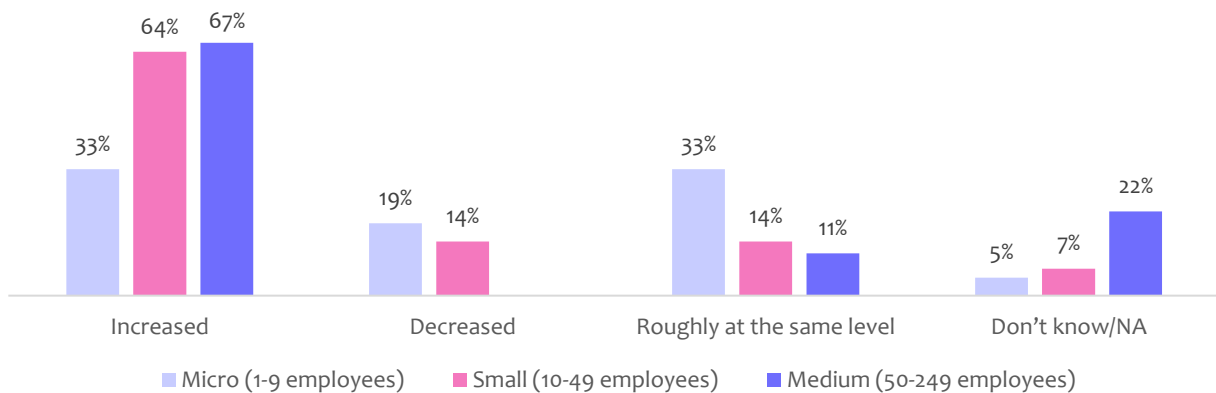


Figure 8. Revenue * Size of business - Crosstabulation

Within the last year, the costs of 69 per cent of the companies have increased, while for the remaining 19 per cent, the costs have stayed roughly at the same level.

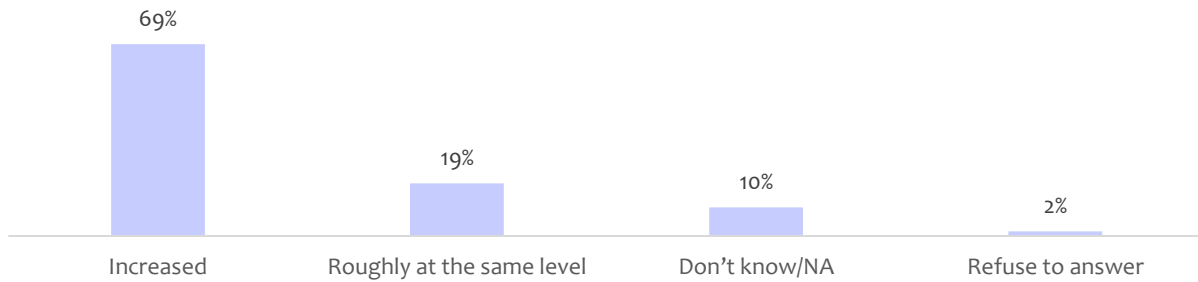


Figure 9. Within the last year, have the costs of the company increased, decreased, or stayed roughly at the same level?

Additionally, the previous results showed that more EYE partners have been able to increase their revenues compared to EYE non-partners. This is in line with the results below, as a smaller percentage of EYE partners of the EYE project have had a cost increase in their company (45% of EYE partners, 55% of EYE non-partners).

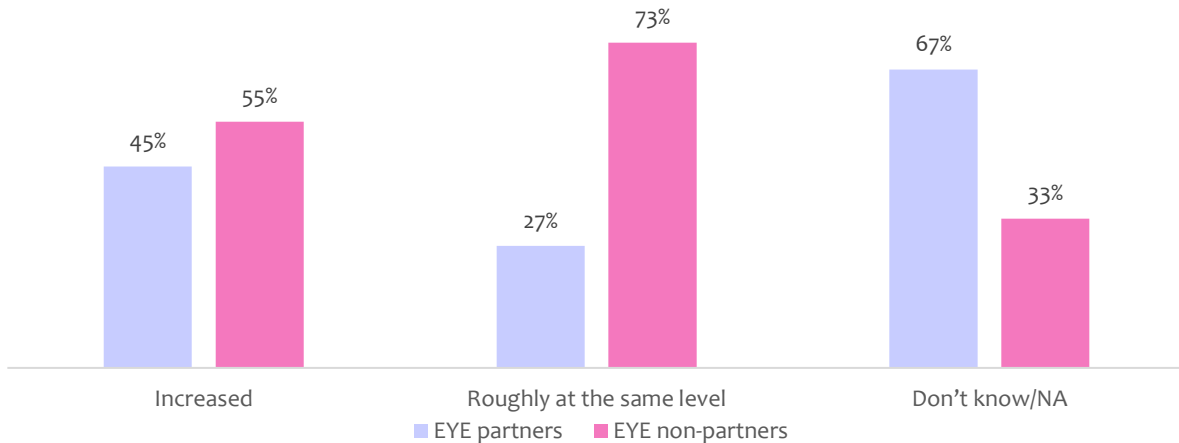


Figure 10. Within the last year, have the costs of the company increased, decreased, or stayed roughly at the same level? * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners-Crosstabulation

The results indicate that 40 per cent of the companies try to reduce costs and increase revenues by contracting trainers on a project-basis. This is followed by 33 per cent of the companies that try to find less expensive sources of supplies. In addition, other companies try to sign long-term contracts with companies to train their employees (29%) and sell bulk training services at a lower price (17%).

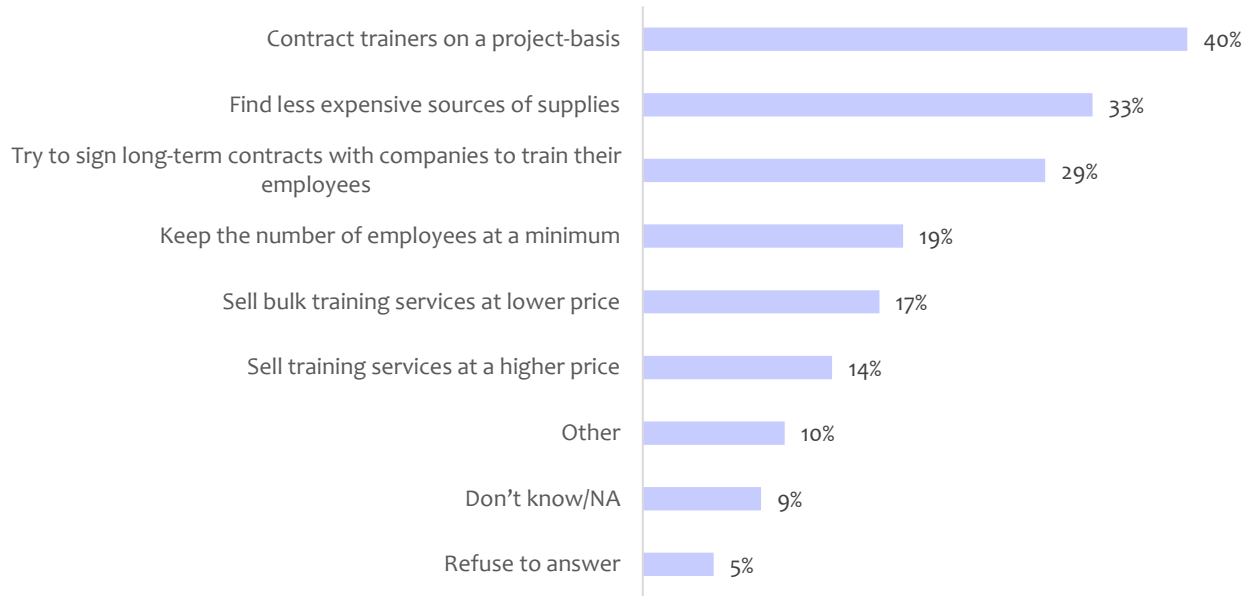


Figure 11. How do you try to reduce costs and increase revenues?

Figure 13 shows that half of the companies financially ended the year with a profit, while nine per cent stated the contrary. In addition, 19 per cent of the company's revenue equalled its expenses, resulting in a breakeven point.

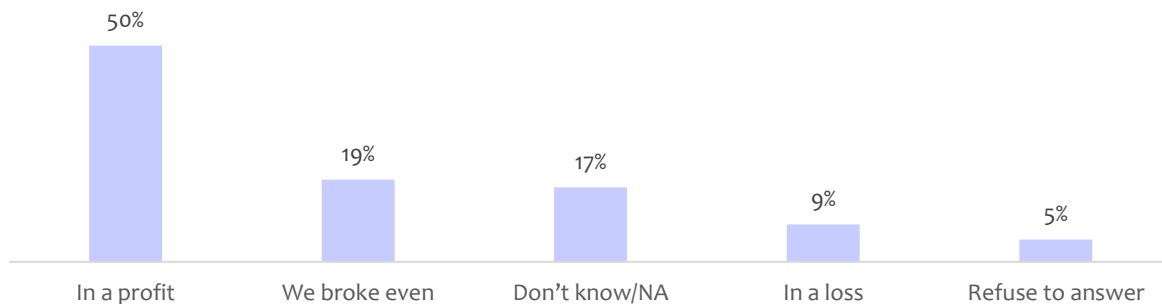


Figure 12. Taking into account last year, how have you financially closed the year?

In addition to higher revenues, it is worth noting that the EYE partner companies had higher costs as well. This is because providing training services to employees can incur additional expenses, such as hiring trainers, purchasing equipment and materials, and renting training facilities.

Furthermore, the data suggests that participating in the EYE Project may have had a positive impact on the profitability of the partner companies (See Figure 14). It is important to acknowledge that this data alone is not sufficient to definitively attribute the profitability of EYE partners. There could be other factors at play that contributed to the higher profitability

of participating companies, such as the specific strategies or resources that they utilized to improve their profitability.

Therefore, further analysis and evaluation of the EYE Project and its impact would be necessary to draw more definitive conclusions about the relationship between the project and the profitability of EYE partner companies.

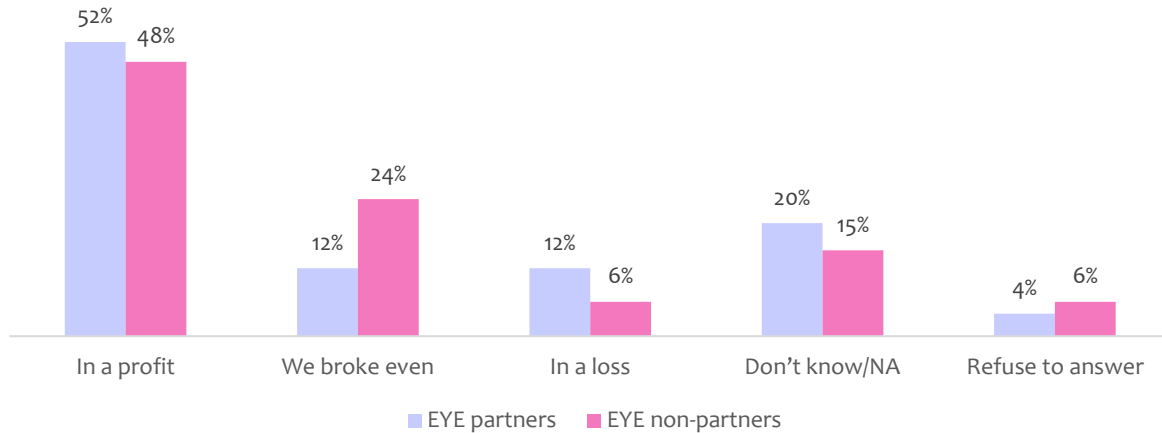


Figure 13. Taking into account last year, how have you financially closed the year? * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners - Crosstabulation

All of the training providers interviewed agreed that conducting a business review of the current situation and future capital needs was the primary means of ensuring financial sustainability (34%). Additionally, 29% of businesses focused on analyzing and balancing their profitability, while 19% concentrated on assessing and improving their reporting and planning capabilities. Another 17% of businesses prioritized evaluating and understanding the purchasing processes of their current and potential customers.

The figure 16 below shows that a larger proportion of EYE partners (40%) believe that reviewing current and future capital needs is essential for ensuring financial sustainability. This might suggest that EYE partners are more focused on long-term planning and financial management, which could contribute to their higher profitability. On the other hand, the perception among many EYE non-partners (33%) that financial sustainability is ensured by analysing and working to balance profitability suggests that they may be more focused on short-term profit maximization, which could be less sustainable in the long run.

However, it is important to note that these perceptions alone do not necessarily reflect the financial practices and strategies of the EYE partners and non-partners. Further research and analysis would be necessary to determine the extent to which these perceptions are reflected in the actual financial performance of companies. Additionally, other factors may contribute

to the difference in profitability between the EYE partners and non-partners that are not reflected in their perceptions of financial sustainability.

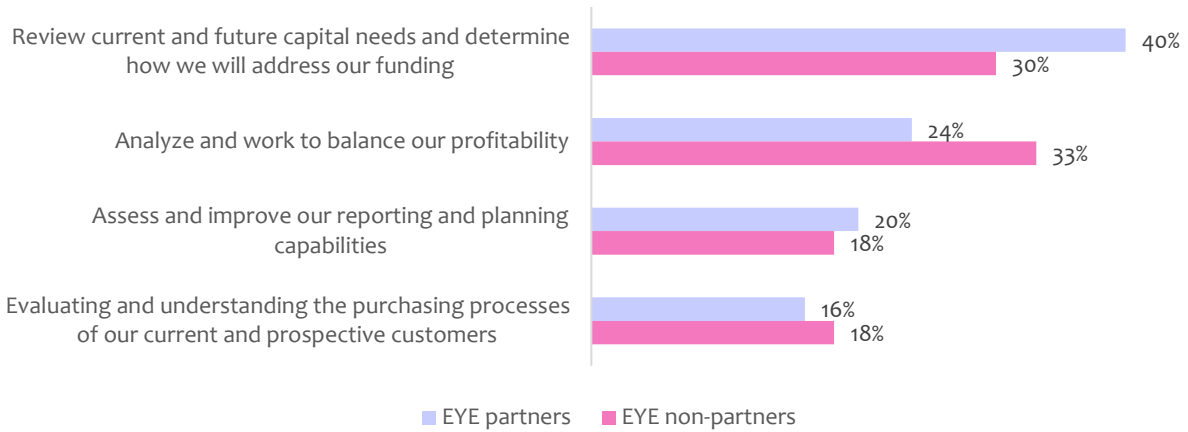


Figure 14. Financial sustainability * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners – Crosstabulation

Most companies (78%) or 45 out of 58 interviewed training providers did not receive donor funds for training in 2021 or 2022, with an average amount of 20K or more. In total, 13 companies received funding in 2021 or 2022.

Companies that received funding in 2021 used the support for various training activities, such as developing new curricula, investing in new facilities, expanding their business, and conducting research and development. On average, these companies received 230,000€ in funding. More specifically, EYE partners received an average of 212,500€ in 2021.

In 2022, companies that received donor funds completed training activities such as expanding their business, investing in new facilities, developing new curricula, and conducting research and development. On average, these companies received 181,833€ in funding. More specifically, EYE partners received an average of 196,200€ in 2022.

More details, on the financial sustainability about EYE partner and non-partner can be found in the Contribution Analysis part.

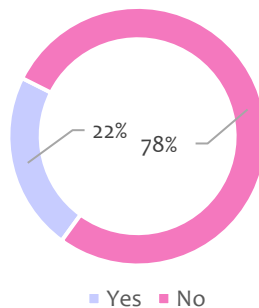


Figure 15. Did you receive donor funds for training in 2021 or 2022 for more than 20K?

The data reveals (See Figure 17) a significant increase in the proportion of businesses that received donor funding of over 20k for training purposes in 2021 and 2022 among the EYE partners compared to non- EYE partners. Specifically, 40% of EYE partners received this funding, while only 9% of EYE non-partners reported receiving it.

The decrease in funding from 230,000€ in 2021 to 181,833€ in 2022 does not necessarily indicate that companies are less reliant on donor funding. There could be various reasons why the average amount of funding decreased, such as changes in the scope of the training programs or the number of companies that received funding. Additionally, it's important to consider that the average amount of funding is just a measure of central tendency and may not reflect the actual amount of funding received by individual companies. Therefore, it's difficult to conclude that the decrease in the average amount of funding indicates a trend towards reduced reliance on donor funding among the participating companies.

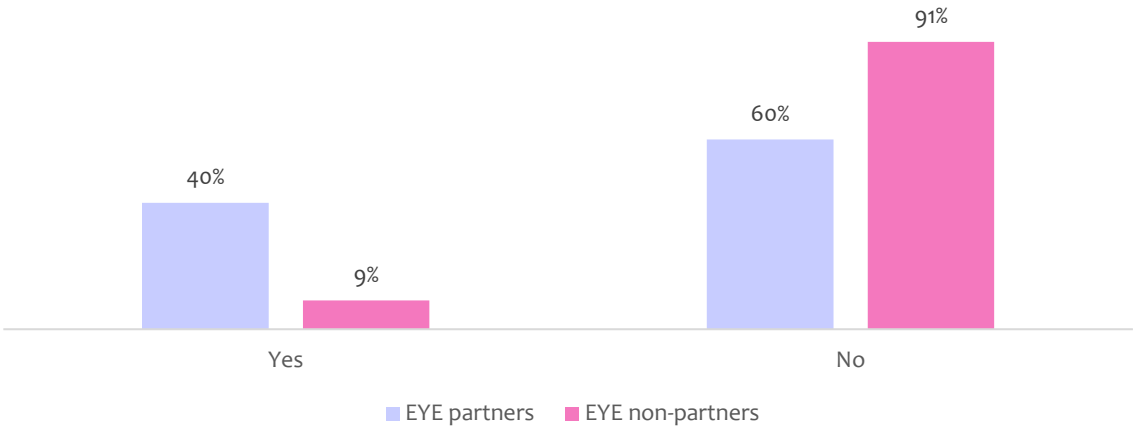


Figure 16. Did you receive donor funds for training in 2021 or 2022 for more than 20K? * EYE partners - EYE non-partners - Crosstabulation

While not all EYE partner training providers disclosed the names of their funding sources, they indicated that they received support from over 15 different donors. Among those mentioned were the European Union, GIZ, HELVETAS, USAID, Peer Educators Network-PEN, RCF, SWISS CONTACT, and World Bank.

The findings related to the companies' ability to continue their activities without donor support in the future are relevant to the previous findings because they shed light on the companies' reliance on donor funding for their sustainability.

The study asked companies if they could continue their activities without donor support in the future, and the responses were broken down into time frames of 1-2 years, 3-4 years, and 5-10 years. Most respondents believed they could continue without donor support, with 55% responding positively in the 1–2-year time frame, but the percentage decreased in the other

two-time frames (48% in 3-4 years and 47% in 5-10 years). This suggests that while some companies may currently be able to sustain themselves without donor support, they may become increasingly reliant on it in the future.

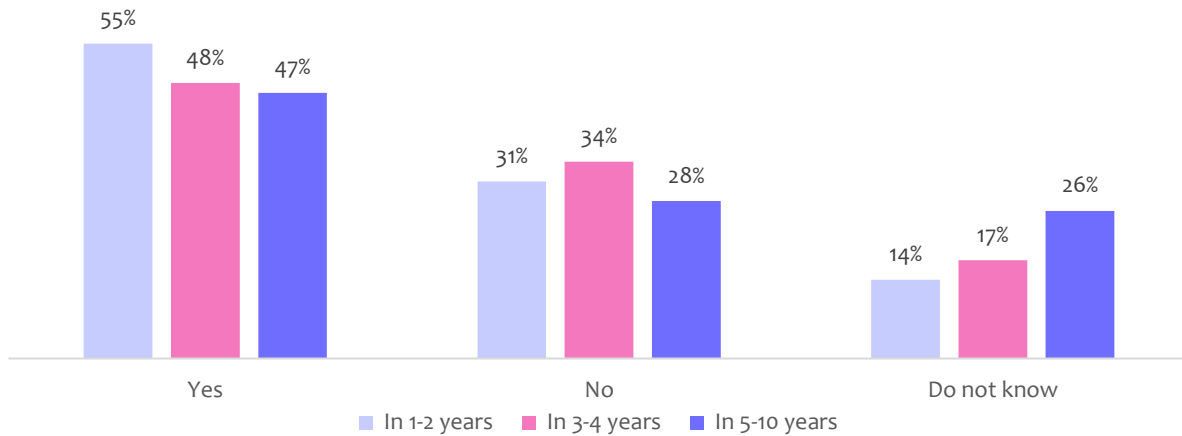


Figure 17. Do you think you could continue with all your activities in the company without donor support?

Additionally, there are differences in the perceptions of EYE partners and EYE non-partners regarding the timeline for achieving financial independence without donor support. The fact that a majority of EYE partners (56%) believe they could continue all activities in the company without donor support for the next 5 to 10 years suggests that the project has had a positive impact on the sustainability of the companies involved. This demonstrates that the training and support provided by the EYE Project may have contributed to the companies' financial independence and their ability to operate sustainably in the long run.

However, the contrast between EYE partners and non-partners regarding the timeline for achieving financial independence without donor support is notable. Many non-partners expressed confidence that they could become financially independent within the next 1-2 years, whereas EYE partners had a longer timeframe of 5 to 10 years. This could suggest that the EYE Project may need to examine why some non-partner companies are able to achieve

financial independence more quickly and determine if there are any lessons to be learned or improvements to be made in the training and support provided to EYE partners.

Overall, the EYE Project should continue to prioritize strategies that promote financial sustainability and strive to help companies achieve long-term independence from donor support.

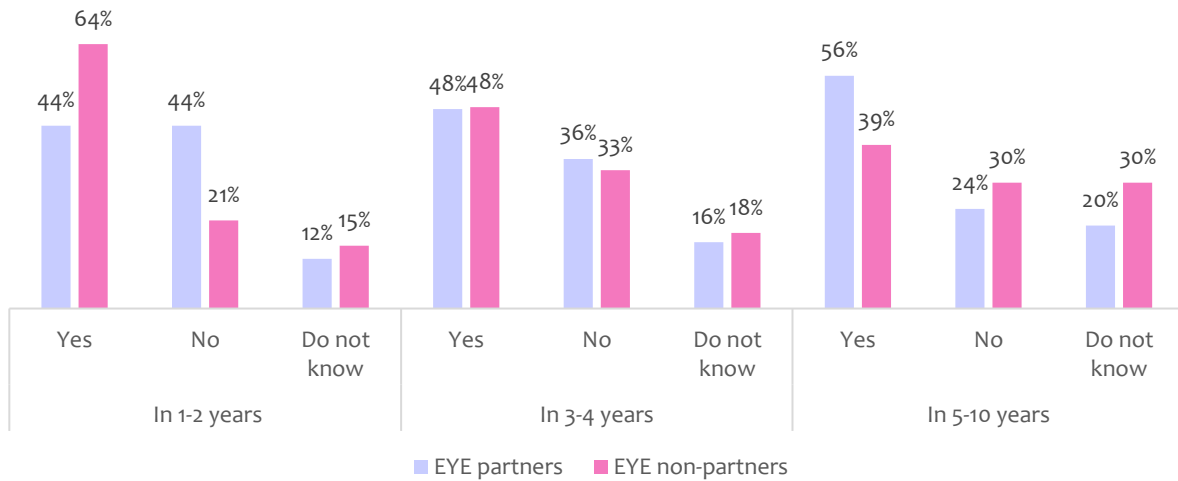


Figure 18. Continuing the company's activities without donor support * EYE Partners – Crosstabulation

Training Provider and Internal capacities of training centers

Furthermore, this section discusses the internal skills development and training providers. On average, the companies declared to have had 14 full-time employees, nine female employees, seven male employees, and three part-time employees.

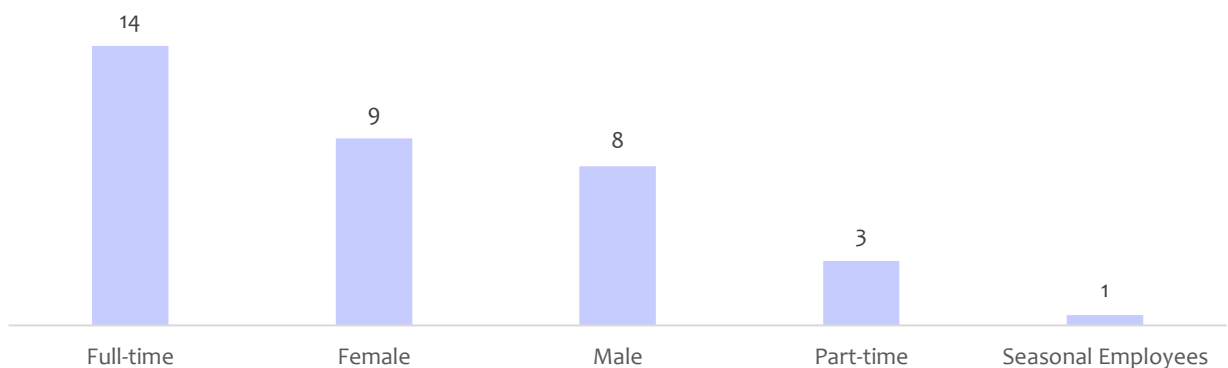


Figure 19. How many employees did/does your company have in 2021?

Based on the figure, the demand for training in their company has increased in the past 16 months (62%). Moreover, 17 per cent of companies reported that the demand was roughly the same, and 17 per cent reported that it had decreased.

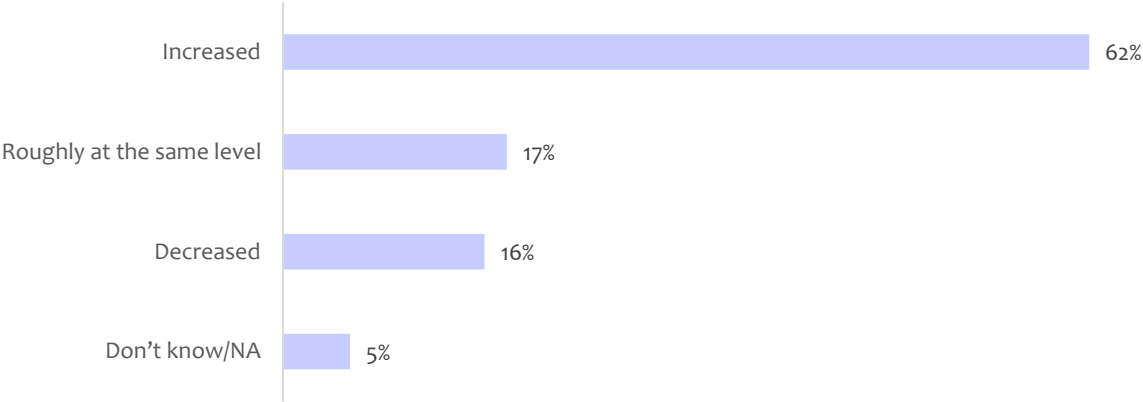


Figure 20. Has the demand for training increased or decreased in the past 16 months in your company?

Half of the companies offer training for 1-3 months, while 24 per cent provide training that lasts 4-6 months. Thirty-four per cent of companies provide training for more than six months. On average, the companies held 160 trainings in 2021 and 203 pieces of training in 2022.

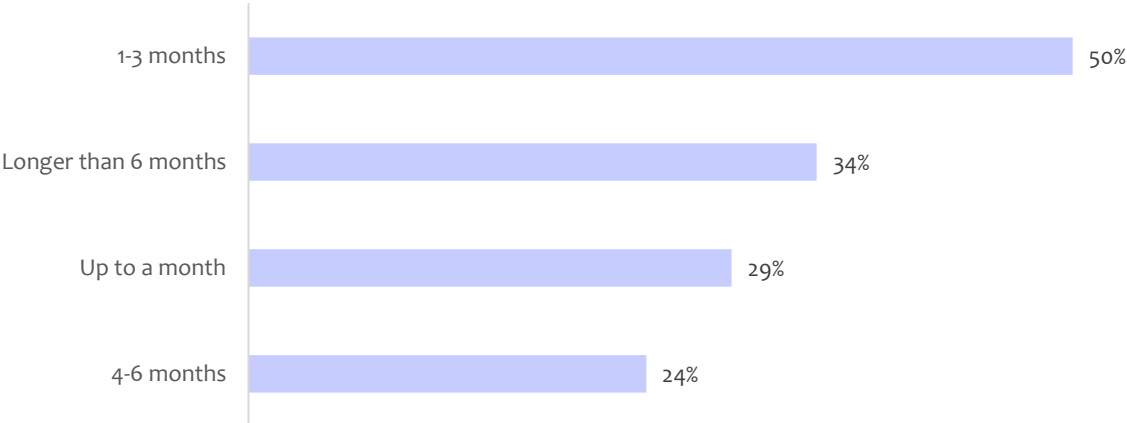


Figure 21. How long are the trainings you provide per level in your company?

In regard to this, more than half of the EYE partners declared that the trainings they provide last up to a month (53%) or 1-3 months (55%). On the other hand, the results show a significant increase of non-partners that provide trainings for longer periods - 4-6 months (64%), or longer than 6 months (80%). The contribution of the EYE project to the EYE partners in this regard is explained in the [Contribution Analysis](#) part in the report.

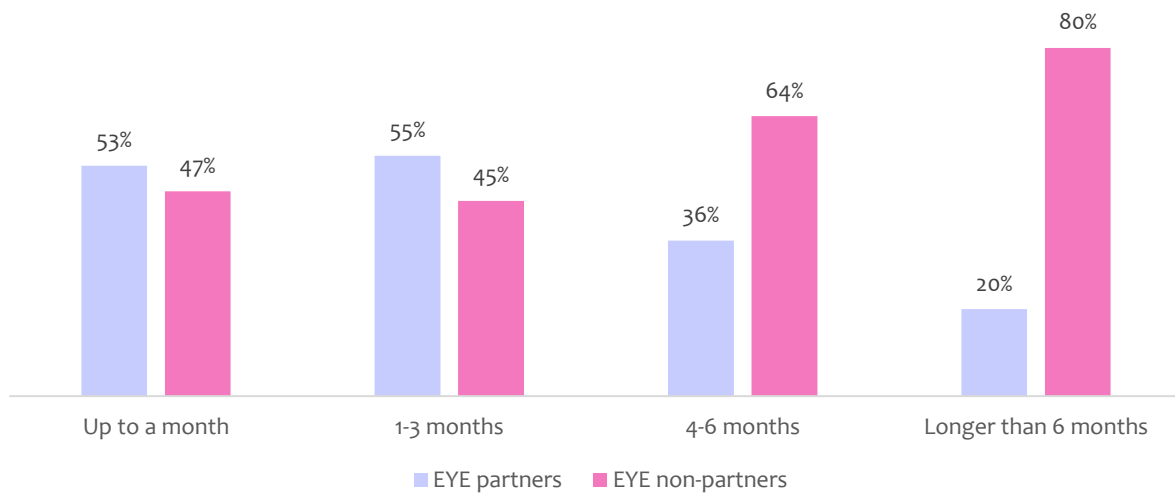


Figure 22. How long are the trainings you provide per level in your company? * Eye partners vs EYE non-partners - Crosstabulation

Businesses were further asked how they decided to offer various training. As such, 55 per cent of companies offer training based on their professional/academic background and then tailor it to market needs. In addition, 22 per cent of companies’ research market needs through secondary sources, and gather input from a specific industry (16%). Only three per cent of the companies use other methods.

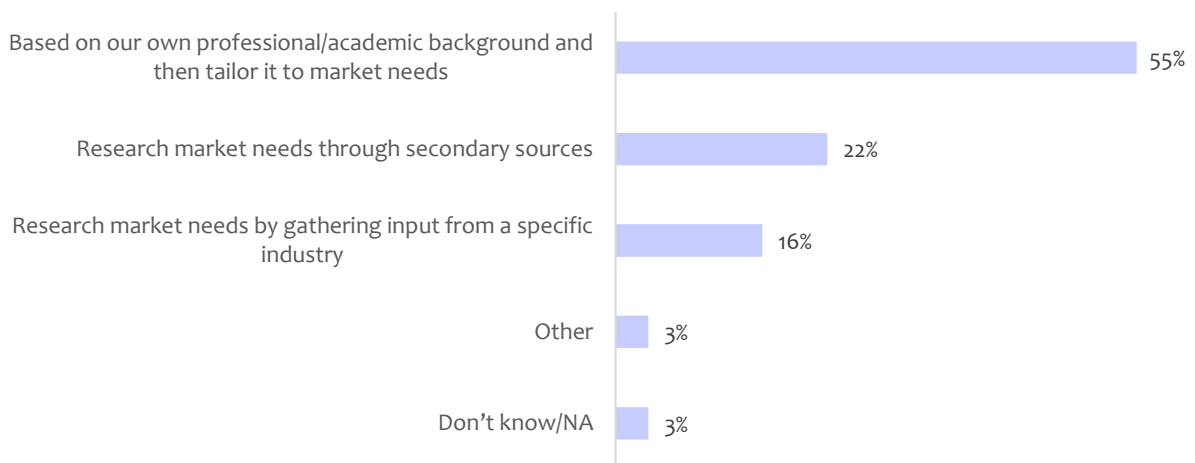


Figure 23. How do you decide what training to provide?

This figure below indicates that 67 per cent of companies have a tracking system for their trainees, while two per cent refused to answer the question. In this regard, the remaining companies declared the contrary (31%).

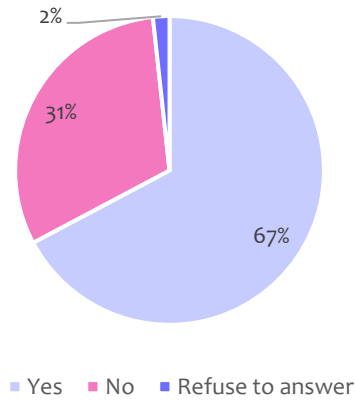


Figure 24. Do you have any tracking system of your trainees?

The data indicate that having a tracking system for trainees is relatively common among businesses, with 67 per cent of the companies surveyed having such a system in place. The proportion of companies with a tracking system was larger for EYE non-partners compared to the EYE partners of the project.

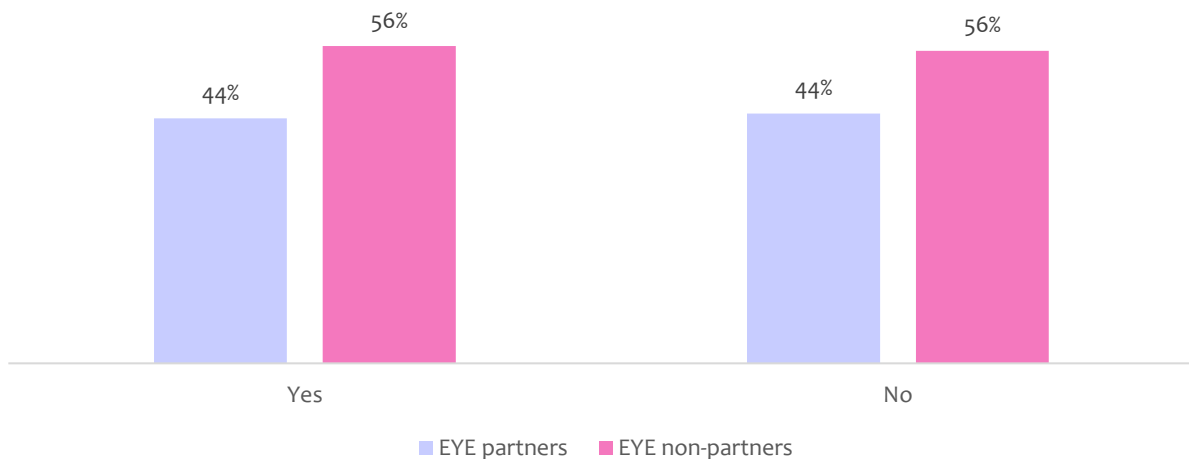


Figure 25. Do you have any tracking system of your trainees? * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners-Crosstabulation

The most popular method to evaluate training effectiveness is to conduct post-training trainee evaluation forms, as 82 per cent of the respondents stated. Other effective methods include having one-to-one discussions with trainees (67%), conducting periodic trainee surveys (36%), and conducting periodic focus group discussions with trainees (18%).

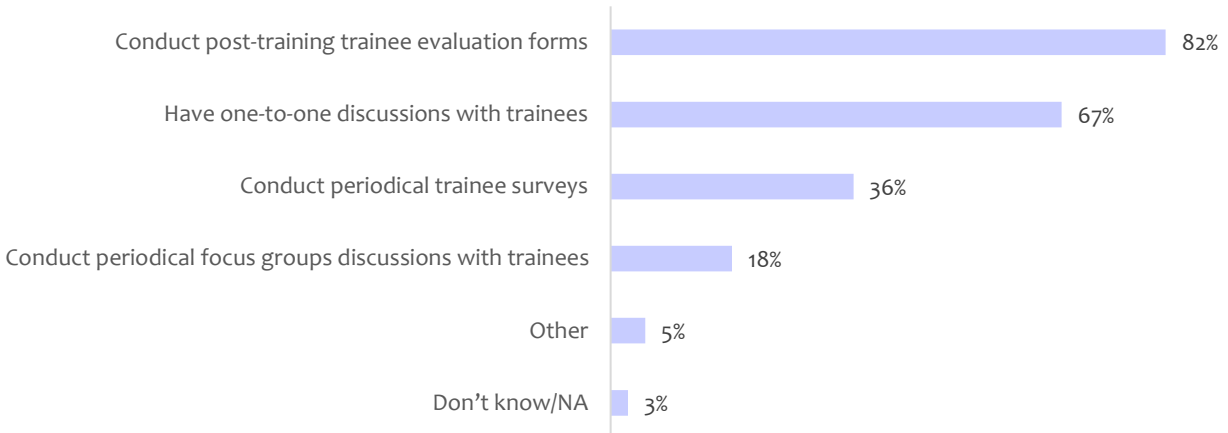


Figure 26. How do you evaluate training effectiveness?

According to the respondents, developing training based on market research is the safest way to ensure the training is relevant to the market needs (72%). Other respondents make sure that trainings are relevant by developing curriculums jointly with private sector inputs (41%), designing training packages without any analysis (9%), or other relevant methods (5%).

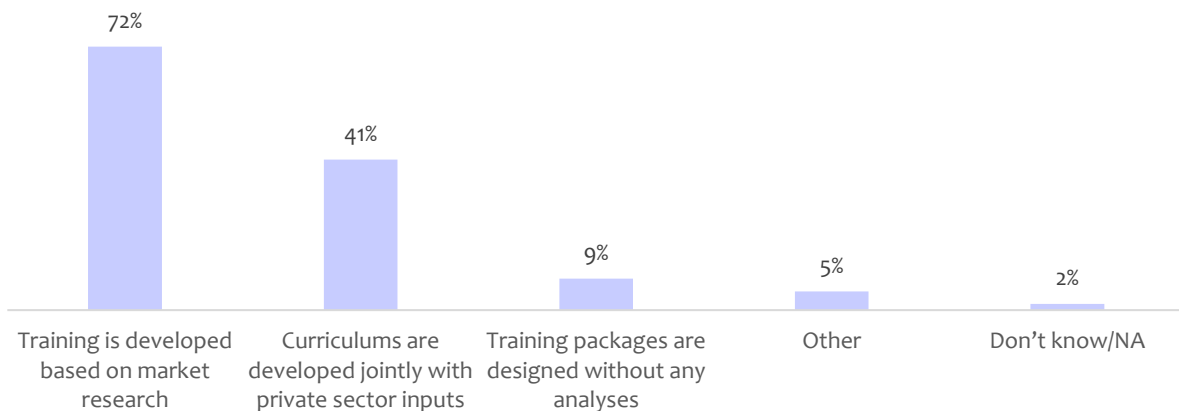


Figure 27. How do you make sure the training is relevant to the market needs?

The finding that using trainee feedback to tailor training modules is a popular method to ensure training sustainability is consistent with the earlier finding that conducting post-training evaluations and having one-to-one discussions with trainees are effective methods to evaluate training effectiveness. It suggests that involving trainees in the training process is key to ensuring its success and sustainability over time. Additionally, using a mix of successful training methods and modern literature on the topic can further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of training modules (See Figure 26).

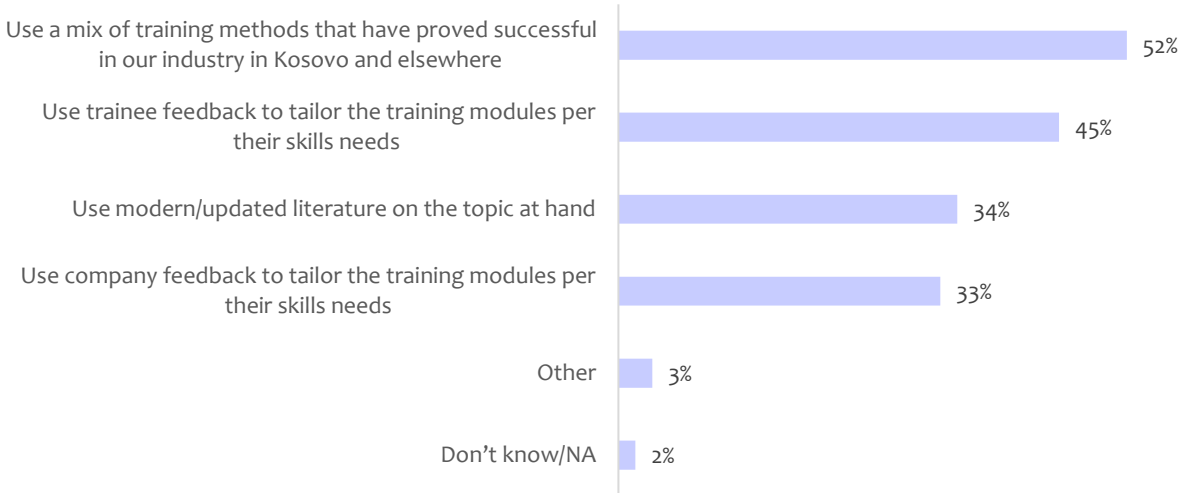


Figure 28. What do you ensure your training modules are sustainable over time?

The findings indicate that both EYE partners and non-partners agree that using a mix of successful training methods is important for the sustainability of training modules. However, there is a significant difference in the importance placed on tailoring training modules to the skills needs of the company. A larger proportion of EYE partners (48%) see this as essential for ensuring sustainability, compared to EYE non-partners (21%).

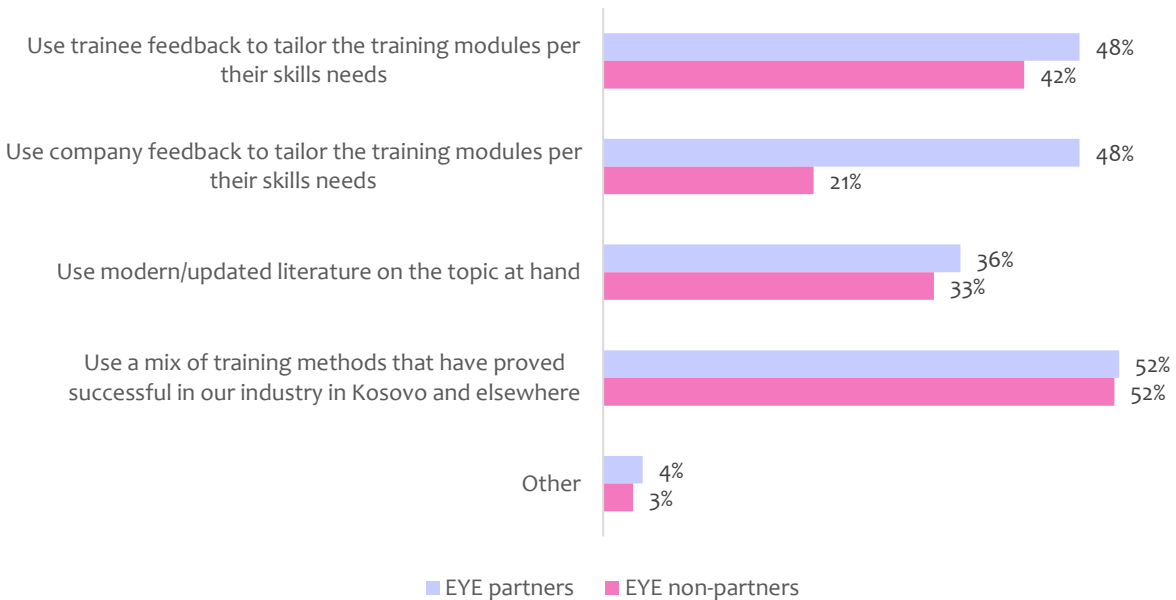


Figure 29. Training modules sustainability * EYE partners – Crosstabulation

Collaboration of training providers with businesses

The success of training programs often depends not only on the quality of the training itself but also on the support provided to trainees after completing their training. In this regard, it is essential to assess the level of cooperation between training providers and businesses that enable trainees to work for them after completing their training. In the following findings (See figure 28), we see that a significant percentage of training providers cooperate with businesses in this manner, while others do not have such cooperation. When analysing the data, it is evident that more of EYE partners have cooperations with other businesses that enable their trainees to work for them (56%). Ninety-three per cent of EYE non-partners opposed this by stating that they do not have such cooperations.

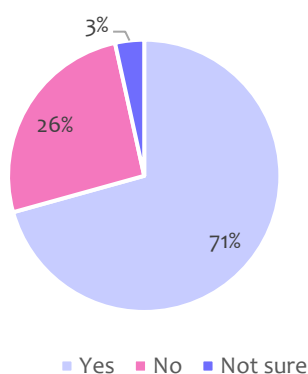


Figure 30. Do you have any type of cooperation with companies or businesses that enable your students/trainees to work for them after they finish the training?

The following findings highlight how the interviewed training providers collaborate with businesses to promote skills development and job opportunities for graduates. Most companies surveyed (87%) reported promoting internships and job opportunities for graduates, while almost half of the companies (49%) offer training packages to businesses to invest in their employees' skills development. Furthermore, 41 per cent of companies tailor their training packages to specific industries. However, fewer respondents reported involving businesses in curriculum development (23%), while 18 per cent have developed feedback mechanisms to ensure that their training programs meet the needs of the private sector. It is worth noting that there was no significant difference between EYE partner and non-partner companies regarding their collaboration with businesses to promote skills development and job opportunities for graduates, as revealed by the aforementioned findings.

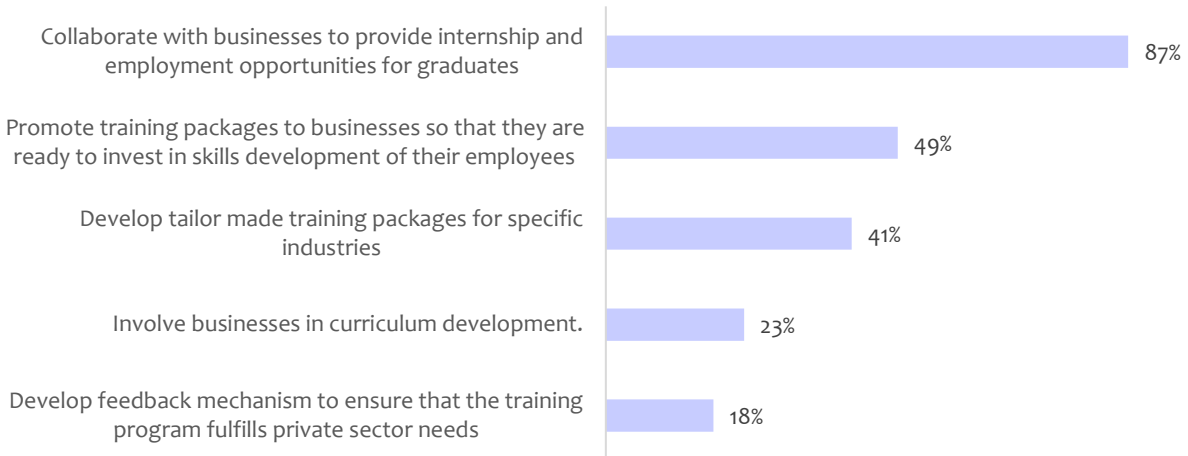


Figure 31. Please select the type of cooperation your company had with businesses.

Figure 34 illustrates that 56 per cent of companies fund their programs and cooperation through training providers and businesses, while the other 15 per cent fund them through the company that hires their trainees. In addition, 26 per cent of companies do it by their means, followed by 13 per cent that does not fund them directly.

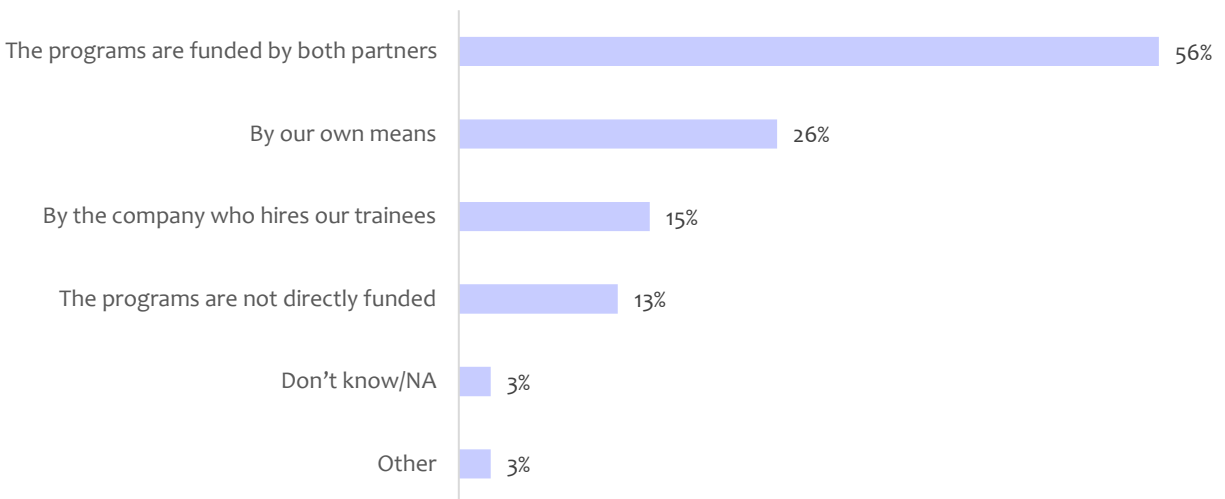


Figure 32. Please tell us how are the cooperation and/or programs funded?

This section of the report discusses the findings related to the reasons why some companies have not established cooperation with other businesses (26% of interviewed companies). The data presented in the figure indicates that 19 per cent of companies have not established cooperation due to the mismatch of labour skills and their offer. At the same time, the same percentage (19%) stated they did not have the opportunity to discuss such cooperation with other businesses. Interestingly, most businesses selected 'Other' as an option, and eleven provided specific information about their established cooperations.

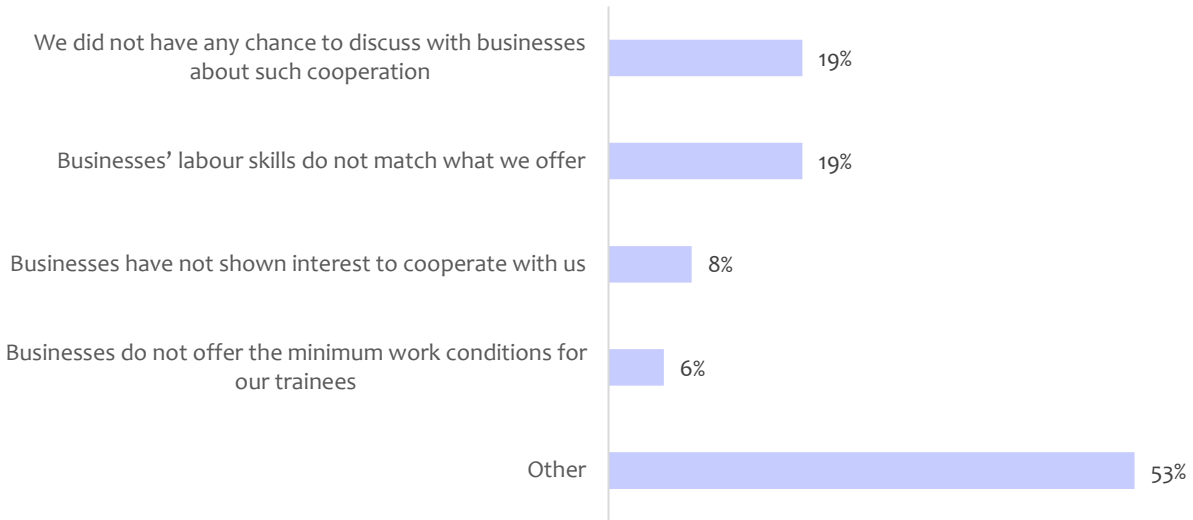


Figure 33. Why have you not established such cooperation?

Collaboration with job-matching service providers and non-formal training providers is crucial for creating an efficient and effective workforce development system. Businesses can access a larger pool of potential candidates with relevant skills and experience by working with these providers. Moreover, job matching service providers can help companies find suitable candidates quickly and easily, reducing the time and cost associated with recruitment. Collaboration with non-formal training providers can also help businesses address specific skill gaps within their workforce, providing their employees with relevant and up-to-date training that is tailored to their needs. Additionally, non-formal training providers can help businesses stay competitive by ensuring their employees have the skills to keep up with the latest developments in their field. Ultimately, collaboration with job-matching service providers and non-formal training providers can help businesses build a strong, adaptable workforce that is well-equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing economy.

The study found that collaboration with job-matching service providers and non-formal training providers was not common among interviewed businesses. Only 33% of businesses reported collaborating with job-matching service providers, with the majority (10 out of 19) working with the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo. In contrast, the remaining nine businesses have done so with private job portals.

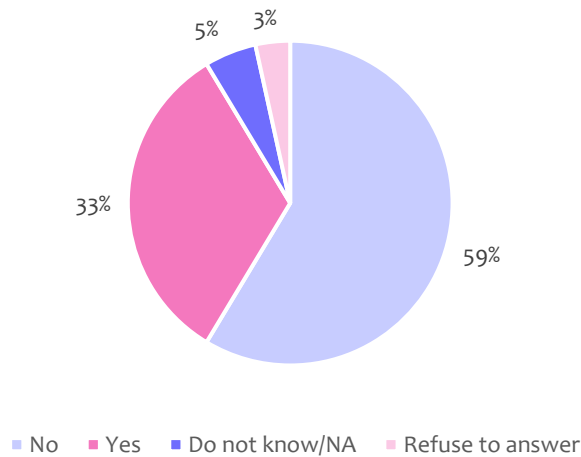


Figure 34. Do you collaborate with any job-matching service providers?

Furthermore, it was essential to analyse the data based on the participants who benefitted from the EYE program and those who did not. The analysis revealed that more than half of the EYE non-partners collaborated with job matching service providers, which accounted for 53 percent of the sample. In contrast, 47 percent of the EYE partners reported the same. As the figure below depicts, these results demonstrate a slight difference in this aspect.

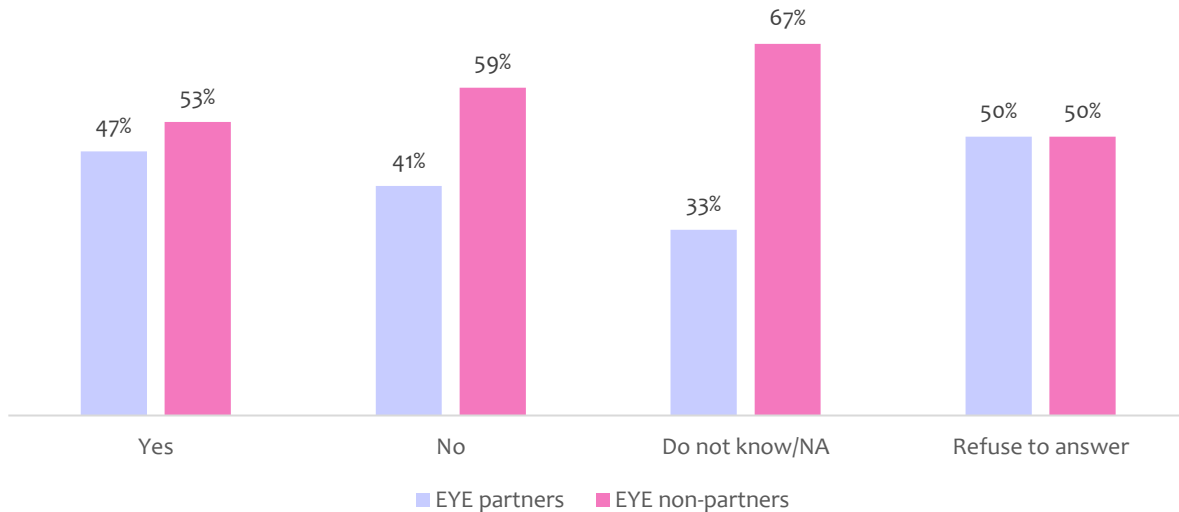


Figure 35. Do you collaborate with any job matching service providers? * EYE partners vs EYE non-partners-Crosstabulation

Contribution Analysis

After conducting an initial analysis of field data through quantitative surveys, it is important to dive deeper into the findings to understand better the impact of various factors on the outcomes of interest. For this, we utilized the 'Contribution analysis of indirect influence to analyse the more challenging area of indirect influence. We measured both intermediate and final outcomes/impacts and gathered evidence that the assumptions in the result chains were borne out. Through this process, we identified the specific variables or factors that contributed to the outcomes and provided factual evidence for at least the key parts of the entire result chain. By using this method, we were able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of various factors and to provide actionable insights for improving outcomes in the future.

Understanding the contribution of the EYE project is crucial for the future provision of education and training. Non-formal training providers can play a critical role in achieving these objectives as they offer alternative educational opportunities outside of a traditional classroom setting. For individuals who may not have access to formal education or are seeking to acquire new skills or knowledge, non-formal training can provide a path towards personal and professional growth. By recognizing the important role of non-formal training providers, the EYE project can work towards reaching its full potential, and that young people have access to the resources they need to thrive in the long run.

The EYE Project recognized the need to increase access to training and employability for both men and women in Kosovo through a more market-oriented non-formal training system. To achieve this objective, it was essential for training providers to deliver sustainable training in cooperation with the private sector without relying on donor support. This approach aligns with the broader goal of developing a self-sustaining Kosovo economy that does not rely solely on external aid or support. By developing a robust and sustainable education and training system, Kosovo can foster the growth of local businesses, generate employment opportunities, and attract foreign investment. Ultimately, this will help to reduce Kosovo's dependence on external aid, increase economic self-sufficiency, and contribute to the country's overall long-term development.

The scope of the activities of the EYE project focused on the following forms of support: Marketing & communication, Capacity building, Curriculum Development, Developing a new training program/profile, Infrastructure, Co-sharing payment of trainers, and Software/platform development. Based on the Result Chain of the project, the forms as mentioned above of support could help reach the desired outputs such as: Increase of the relevance of training provision, an Increase in the number of participants in the training, Sustainable business models, Access to relevant training opportunities, and Skill development.

EYE Project partners' profile

To explore the contribution of the HELVETAS – EYE Project in a set of outcomes, UBO Consulting conducted a comprehensive study, which in addition to the entire sample, involves 25 EYE partners. Excluding the total sample, this section categorizes only the businesses that had previously benefitted from the project. During the analysis, the companies were grouped according to size, with ten classified as small, eight as micro, and seven as medium-sized.

Most of these businesses were in Prishtina, with only a handful operating in Gjakova, Ferizaj, and Mitrovica. It was also discovered that the participating businesses had varying experience levels, with most operating for over three years.

The sample comprised a diverse range of businesses working in different sectors. Among these sectors, the study revealed that most businesses provided training in the ICT sector, followed by engineering and manufacturing and creative design. It was noteworthy that only one business provided training in the field of catering and hospitality.

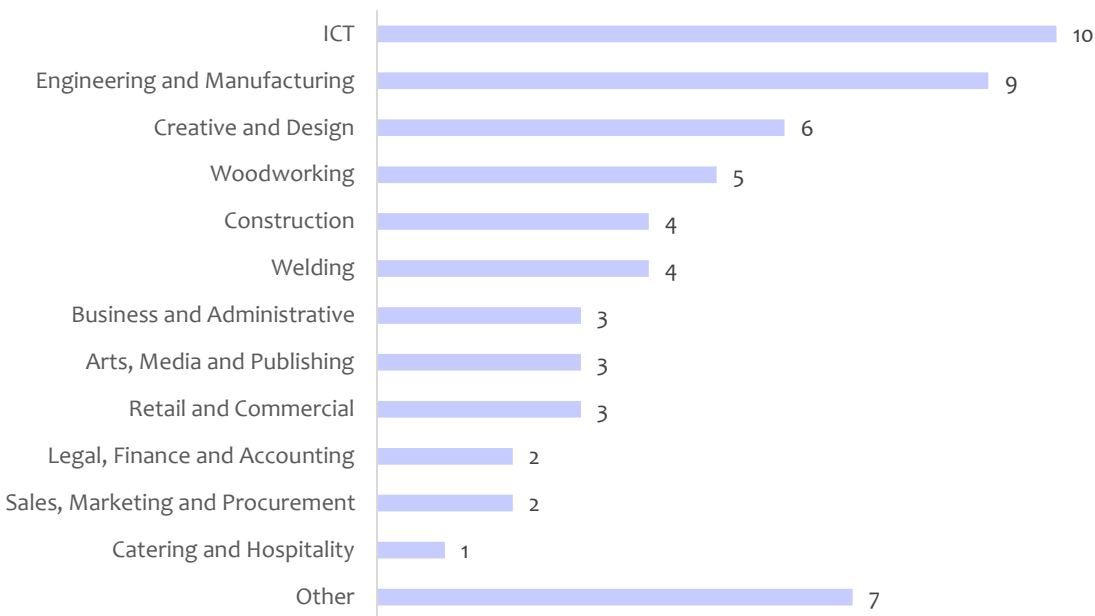


Figure 36. Please tell us the type of trainings you provide: EYE partners (n=25)

According to the respondents, being part of the EYE-facilitated activities resulted in developing a new training program/profile (13). Other respondents shared to have received other forms of support, such as marketing and communication, capacity building (7), infrastructure (6), curriculum development (3), and co-sharing payment of trainers (3).

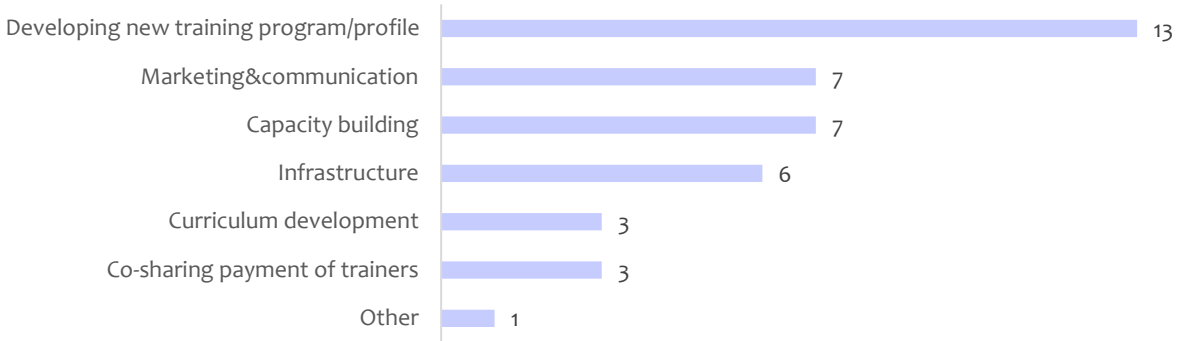


Figure 37. Which of the following forms of support did you get as a result of being part of EYE-facilitated activities?

The study indicates that medium-sized enterprises (71%) and small-sized enterprises (60%) predominantly reported benefits from developing new training programs and profiles resulting from their participation in EYE-facilitated activities. Conversely, micro-sized enterprises primarily identified capacity building (38%) as the most significant benefit.

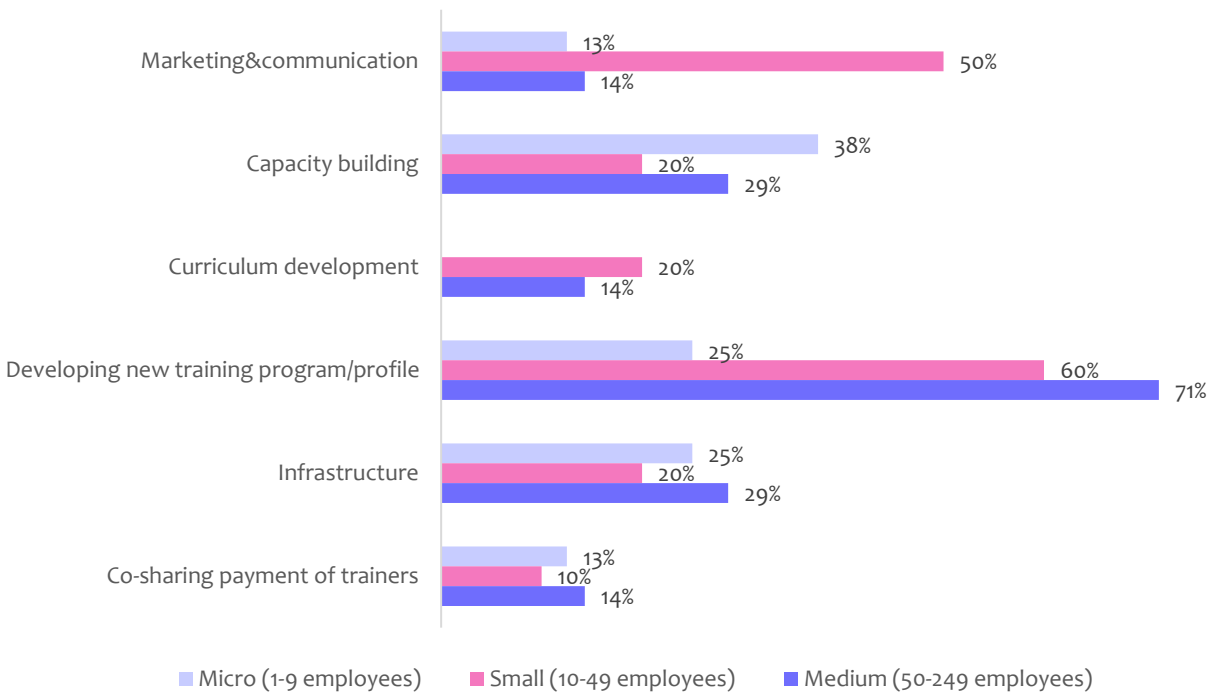


Figure 38. Forms of support * Size of the business - Crosstabulation

The respondents have indicated that they would have probably not achieved similar results if the EYE-facilitated activities had not contributed in this regard (14 out of 25 EYE partners). Five companies think that they would probably achieve similar results, while only four think that, without this contribution, they would not have achieved similar results. Furthermore, three of the companies think that they would have addressed issues that they faced before EYE facilitated activities in a longer time frame, as well the remaining companies think that they would have addressed issues in the same time frame (1) or in a shorter time frame (1).

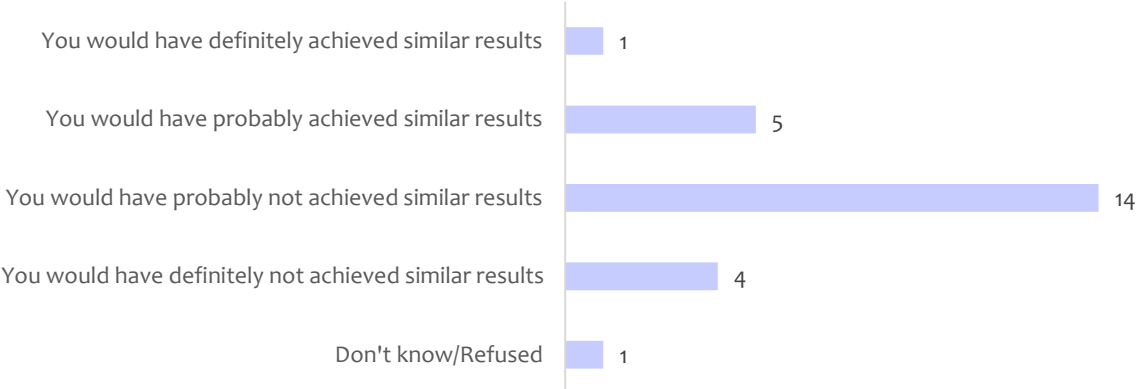


Figure 39. Thinking about the contribution that the EYE project facilitated activities made, do you think ...

The study findings show that all types of businesses, when segregated by size, acknowledge the significant contribution of the project's activities in achieving the outcomes observed. Specifically, 63 per cent of micro-sized enterprises, 60 per cent of small-sized businesses, and 43 per cent of medium-sized enterprises agreed that they would not have achieved comparable results without the support of the project's activities. Notably, the results reveal

that medium-sized enterprises exhibit greater confidence in achieving similar outcomes than micro and small-sized businesses (29%).

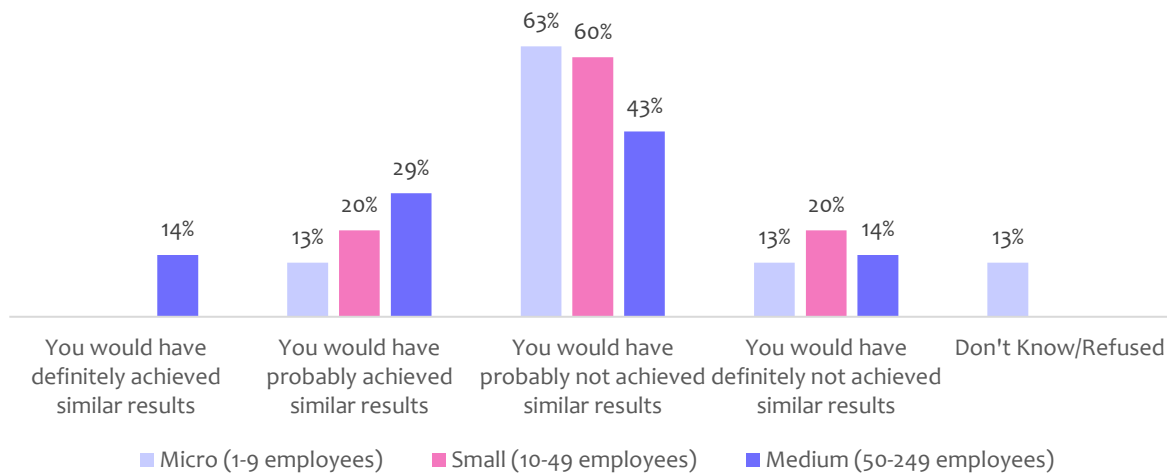


Figure 40. Contribution of EYE project facilitated activities made * Size of business - Crosstabulation

Based on the results, most of the respondents (72%) stated that they had experienced an increase in the relevance of training provisions due to being part of EYE-facilitated activities. This is followed by an Increase in the number of participants in the training. The figure indicates that half of the companies have also experienced an increase in their revenues. Moreover, 17 per cent of the companies reported to now have access to market-relevant information.

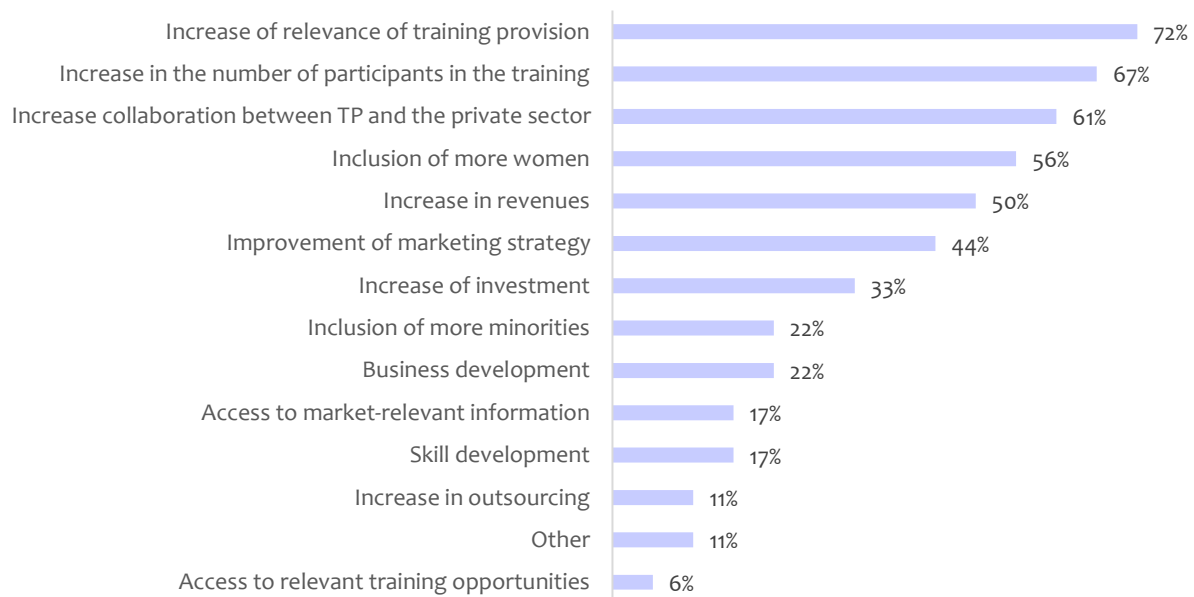


Figure 41. Which of the following support benefits did you get as a result of being part of EYE-facilitated activities?

Furthermore, 11 out of 25 companies were neutral regarding getting support from any other source if not provided by the EYE project. Furthermore, 12 companies strongly agree/agree with this statement, while only two disagree. The facilitated activities provided by the EYE Project that 12 companies could not have gotten elsewhere were: Equipment (3 out of 12), Financial support (3), Curriculum development, marketing and equipment support for the team providing the service (1), and soft skills and capacity building training (1). Furthermore, two companies that disagree specified GIZ, USAID, and World Bank as other actors who could have provided them with the same support.

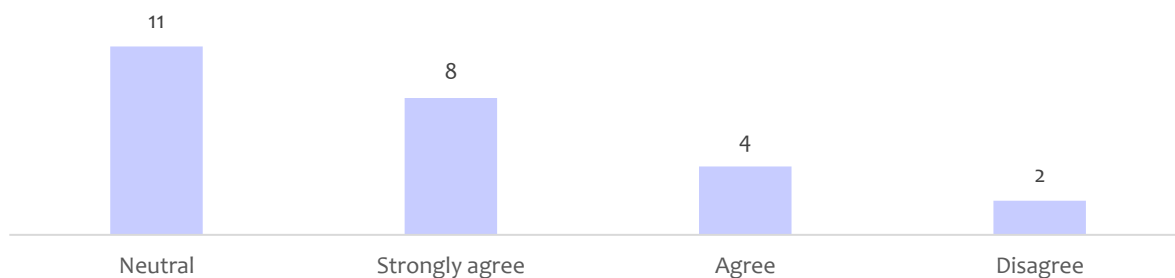


Figure 42. 'The EYE Project has provided the support I could not have gotten from any other source.'

The EYE project provided valuable support to businesses through co-sharing payment of trainers, with 67% of recipients reporting that they could not have obtained this support from any other source. However, businesses that received support in curriculum development had a different perspective, with the same percentage disagreeing with the statement. The support provided by the EYE project in marketing and communication and capacity building received a neutral response from recipients, with 57% neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement (See Figure 40).

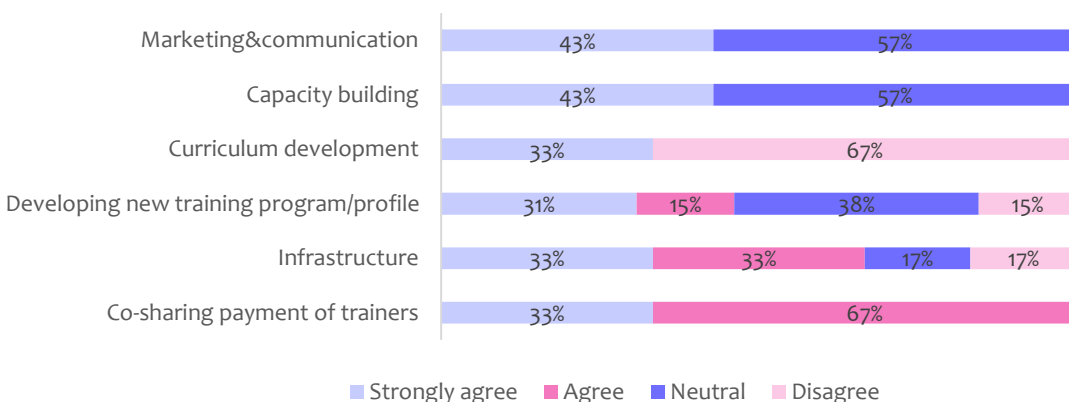


Figure 43. Forms of support * 'The EYE Project has provided the support I could not have gotten from any other source.' – Crosstabulation

Eye partners of the project declared to have received the most support regarding training development, the second greatest support received was regarding marketing and communication, and the third was about capacity development, as shown above. As mentioned above, EYE partners declared which support benefits they got from being part of EYE-facilitated activities. The top three most chosen support benefits were increased relevance of training provision, increased number of participants in the training, and increased collaboration between TP and the private sector.

Most companies who stated that they had received support in developing new training programs have seen an increase in revenue, the collaboration between TP and the private sector, the relevance of training provision and a greater number of participants in the training (See Table 2).

The activities of EYE Project aimed at creating a sustainable business model, the collaboration between non-formal training providers (TP) and the private sector, and increasing the number of participants in the training. Based on the Result Chain, two outputs had the highest correlation with the benefits received by EYE partners, and marketing and communication support contributed to improved marketing strategies. Capacity-building support increased the relevance of training provision and the number of participants, which was not in line with the Result Chain's objective of impacting the inclusion of women, minorities, and new investment. Nevertheless, there was a moderate contribution to the inclusion of women and increased investment due to capacity-building activities (See Table 2). The table below is presented with counts of EYE Project partner companies, in which we can see how much of the EYE partner companies who received marketing and communication support have said to have increase in revenues, investment or other benefits as listed in the table.

Table 2 Support and benefits received from the EYE Project partner companies (n=25)

| | Increase in revenues | Increase collaboration between TP and the private sector | Increase of relevance of training provision | Increase of investment | Increase in the number of participants in the training | Improvement of marketing strategy | Inclusion of more women |
|---|----------------------|--|---|------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Marketing & communication | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Capacity building | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Curriculum development | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Developing new training program/profile | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| Infrastructure | 2 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Co-sharing payment of trainers | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

The project evaluated the revenue generated by private non-formal training providers from new training, with EYE partners asking if their revenue increased, decreased or stayed the same in the last year. 68% of companies reported an increase in revenue, but a slightly higher percentage (73%) reported an increase in costs. The increase in revenue and costs was distributed almost equally across the support activities received by the EYE project. However, more EYE partners that received support in capacity building and marketing and communication experienced an increase in revenue rather than costs. Conversely, EYE partners that received infrastructure support had slightly more cost increases than revenue in the last year.

As a majority of the respondents were involved in EYE-facilitated activities and received assistance in developing a new training program/profile, we have a larger pool of data for analysing costs and revenues in this category. Developing a new training program can be a costly investment for private non-formal training providers, but it is necessary to remain competitive and meet the evolving needs of the industry. It requires significant resources, such as time, money, and expertise, which can contribute to overall costs. However, the study did not provide any data to validate these reasons, or to have more clear idea on why is this increase in costs.

Table 3 Within the last year, have the costs of the company increased, decreased, or stayed roughly at the same level cross tabulated with the support benefits EYE partners got as a result of being part of EYE facilitated activities

| | Revenues | Costs |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Increased | Increased |
| Marketing & Communication | 5 | 4 |
| Capacity building | 5 | 4 |
| Curriculum development | 3 | 3 |
| Developing new training program/profile | 10 | 10 |
| Infrastructure | 4 | 5 |
| Co-sharing payment of trainers | 2 | 2 |

The study evaluated the sustainability of delivering trainings in cooperation with the private sector without donor support. A total of 25 project EYE partners were asked about the donor support they received in 2021 and 2022, with less than half reporting receiving support of more than 20 thousand EUR. In contrast, only three EYE non-partners reported receiving donor funds. The table presented in the study shows an increase in the total value of support from donors for EYE Project partners from 2021 to 2022 by approximately 15 percent, indicating a lack of independence from external aid or support.

Table 4 Total value of donor funds in 2021 and 2022

| EYE Project partners | | EYE Project non-partners | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| € 1,702,021 | € 1,964,022 | € 60,000 | € 220,000 |

The evaluation question in this analysis is about the impact of the EYE project on the number of individuals enrolled in non-formal training providers. Over 68% of EYE partners reported an increase in demand for training, and 80% trained new individuals with the support of the EYE project. The number of trainees increased by 55% in EYE partners and 16% in EYE non-partners from 2021 to 2022, in line with the project's Result Chain. However, the increase in the number of trainees cannot be solely attributed to the EYE project, as EYE partners also received donor support from other projects.

Table 5 Total number of trainees EYE partners had in their company in 2021 and 2022

| Eye partners | | EYE non-partners | |
|--------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| 2021 | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 |
| 4,132 | 6,425 | 4,614 | 5,343 |

Lastly, the study analysed whether EYE partners started to cooperate more with other businesses with the support received from the project. Eighty per cent of the EYE partners reported that they have started to cooperate more with other businesses, resulting in 241 cooperations among all the EYE partners interviewed in the study.

Outcome 2

Outcome 2 of the project aims that young women and men make informed career choices and gain more employment opportunities through an improved labour market information system. This outcome was measured by three indicators, including:

- Change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labour market mediation
- Change in perception of jobseekers towards Job Mediation Services (JMS)
- The percentage of unemployed express their satisfaction with the public and private transition to work services

UBO Consulting conducted 14 focus group discussions to report on the abovementioned indicators. Out of which, seven (7) sessions were held with employed youth and seven (7) with unemployed youth. Focus group discussions included young women and men from urban and rural areas and different ethnicities.

The following subsections present the results from 14 focus group discussions. The results are reported into two groups: the employed and the unemployed youth.

Employed Youth

This section depicts the results from seven (7) focus group sessions with employed young women and men. Focus group sessions with employed youngsters elaborated on several topics, including their path towards studies, job and career, job mediation services, and level of information on labour market in Kosovo. Lastly, employed youth noted specific recommendations in the sense of providing better job mediation services and new/innovative services that are compatible with the labour market in Kosovo.

Career Orientation

First, employed youngsters were asked how they chose their current profession and got employed. It was of great importance to understand what factors were taken into consideration when making such decisions. For almost 60% of participants, childhood passions were the predominant factor in career decision-making. The latter decided to pursue their most preferred professions without considering other factors. Also, they were likely to believe that one would only be successful if one could do what they liked the most.

Nevertheless, family and friends were also among the factors to have had an impact in this regard. Nearly 80% of participants reported that their families and friends had supported and guided them toward a more secure future without putting any pressure on them. Family members, mainly parents, have instructed the participants on the most promising occupations while trying to align their children's skills with labour market needs.

Although in very few cases, family members have opposed their children's choices and wish due to the lack of perspective in some specific fields/occupations. This particular reason was also a significant obstacle to more than 20% of participants. Accordingly, the latter had to make a turn in their career and pursue different professions. These cases were reported during the focus group sessions held in Peja and Gjakova.

“My parents did not support my decision to pursue that field of study because there were limited job opportunities and a lot of associated expenses, and I would have had to leave my family to pursue it.”

– A young participant planning to study Medicine (Peja region)

Whereas only a few participants (less than 10%) based their career decisions on the information they collected from searching on the labour market needs in Kosovo. Before choosing their field of study, these youngsters identified Kosovo's most demanded and promising occupations. In some cases, the perspective of a particular profession was prioritized over the participants' passions and preferences. As a result, they ended up studying IT, programming, nursing, diplomacy, etc.

“Since the pandemic, most work has shifted to an online platform, dictating the increased demand for programming. Programming is being sought because new platforms are created to perform tasks more easily and efficiently.”

– A young participant studying Programming (Prishtina region)

Regarding the information on the labour market needs in Kosovo, focus group discussions did not provide significant outcomes on whether there is sufficient information or not. In general, the participants did not try to search for such information, thus, could not assess the availability and level of information in this regard. However, nearly 20% of participants reported lacking information about job opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, minority communities often had limited knowledge about job announcements from the public sector, regardless of the existing quotes. The participants also claimed that the lack of market analysis and career guidance has led to a mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market.

In addition to the lack of information on the labour market in Kosovo, focus group participants revealed other challenges they have encountered while defining their careers. The main reasons were the lack of job opportunities, poor economic situation, inability to afford study expenses, and nepotism. Almost all participants (~67) across seven sessions reported difficulties getting employed due to the lack of job opportunities, especially in rural areas. Employment in specific professions, such as IT, programming, etc., was also considered very

challenging for youngsters who do not live in the capital city. Moreover, due to the poor economic situation, some youngsters (nearly 30%) have put their studies on hold to secure employment. Thus, balancing work and study is challenging for these young men and women nowadays.

Change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation

Specific questions were asked to employed young women and men, with regard to the time it took them to find a job. Young women and men in the focus groups shared different experiences about their employment.

First, the participants found it hard to define the time it took them to find a job. Almost 80% of them have been looking for a job from time to time until they got employed. Also, almost all participants (~67) declared that the time span for finding a job varies depending the profession and the job you are looking for. While getting hired in retail could happen within a week, it takes seven months up to two years to find jobs that suits their professional skills (law, bank, accountant, etc.). These statements were provided by participants from Gjakova, Gjilan, Prishtina and Prizren.

It took me two years to finally find a job that suits my professional skills. After two years of working short-term jobs, that were not in line with my professional background, I managed to get employed in the Basic Court in Gjilan

– A young participant working in Basic Court (Gjilan region)

However, the participants stated that it all depends on the profession and sector you aim to get employed. Almost 80% of participants thought it usually takes a lot of time for youth to find a job that suits their interests and skills. Also, while they were likely to believe that finding a job in the private sector was easier, getting employed in the public sector was deemed very challenging. In this regard, nepotism and political influence were considered the main obstacles. Moreover, participants from the Ferizaj region noted that due to a decrease in the workforce in Kosovo, there is a need for more employees and therefore, an easiness in acquiring jobs.

Job Mediation Services (JMS)

Next topic during the discussions focused on job mediation services. The participants reported on the job mediation services they have used/usually use, the efficiency of those services, and the compatibility of job mediation services with the labour market needs.

The participants also discussed the job mediation services and methods they used to get employed. In this context, focus group discussions revealed a significant unfamiliarity with the public job mediation services, namely the Employment Agency (EA). Less than 10% of participants from Prishtina, Gjilan, and Ferizaj were registered with this agency. However, none of them could find a job through the EA. The participants generally perceived the employment agency to be formal, with a reliance on recommendations and nepotism. Also, they claimed that the agency lacks cooperation between public and private institutions, affecting the efficiency of its services. The participants further claimed that they were unaware of when someone got employed due to services provided by the EA. More than 20% of participants stated that the EA's inefficiency problem is also related to its management. They believed that the operations of the employment office were disorganized, failing to act as an effective intermediary between employers and employees.

Thus, almost 80% of participants from the seven focus groups utilized private job mediation services to find employment opportunities. According to them, these services are efficient and provide sufficient information on job opportunities. Also, they found them more user-friendly and accessible. The possibility of being directed to the web page of the business/employee and enabling jobseekers to find out more about that specific job provider was considered an advantage of online job portals. KosovaJob, PortalPune, Punësohu.com, Burimenjerëzore, Gjirafa and Telegrafi were the main online job providers mentioned by most participants. However, KosovaJob was the most used online job portal. Also, based on the focus group results, participants from Gjakova and Prizren regions were the most informed on the online job portals.

“For instance, a participant working as a teacher noted that she found her current job through the Kosovajob portal. She did not have any difficulties with the process and to her, it was highly effective and efficient.”

– A focus group participant working as a teacher (Prizren region)

While the vast majority of the participants (more than 90%) argued that private job mediation services are the most used and efficient ones, they noted that either way, knowing people and having connections is always helpful. Hence, almost 80% of participants got employed through recommendations from their friends/relatives. The focus group participants from Mitrovica, Prizren and Ferizaj especially used this method.

Recommendations on Better/New/Innovative Job Mediation Services

In addition to evaluating the path towards career orientation and satisfaction level with job mediation services, the assessment study also aimed to obtain specific suggestions/recommendations regarding better/new/innovative job mediation services. Accordingly, the participants provided specific recommendations.

Regarding the Employment Agency, almost all participants (~67) suggested that the latter should update its operating system and increase its cooperation with the business community. Also, focus group participants claimed that the agency should avoid political influence/nepotism while providing its services.

Furthermore, the participants deemed career centres very important to assist students with enhancing their job search skills, identifying and working toward career goals, and finding suitable careers that align with the labour market. These centres ought to be part of schools, colleges, or universities. A similar example was provided by one of the participants from Gjakova. While in the career centre in one of the schools in Gjakova, he reported on an online platform called “Busulla”, which assists ninth-grade students in understanding their skills better and working toward the right career path. Also, nearly half of participants argued that school curricula should be drafted following the labour market needs and incorporated into career centres.

Lastly, the participants considered internships as a means of connection between education and employment. More than 50% of participants believed that internship programs are crucial for youth to access the labour market easier.

Unemployed Youth

In addition, UBO Consulting conducted seven (7) sessions with unemployed youth. These focus group sessions elaborated similar topics to those with employed youngsters, including their path towards studies, job and career, job mediation services, and information on labour market in Kosovo. Recommendations on better job mediation services and new/innovative services that are compatible with the labour market in Kosovo were provided by this target group, as well.

Career Orientation

The first set of questions for unemployed youth was related to their professional future and career. The participants declared if they had thought about their career orientation, how they chose their field of study, their career plans, and factors they have taken/will take into consideration when making a decision.

Although young, almost 80% of participants have thought about their career orientation. They have discussed this topic with their family members, peers, or professors. The participants claimed these discussions focused on guidance and counselling rather than pressure or imposture. The latter, based on their previous experience and knowledge about the labour market needs, recommended their children/friends/students towards specific fields of study. However, more than 20% of participants, especially those in high school, were still unsure about their future careers. Even though they had some preferences based on the subject they liked in school, none of them had defined their career orientation. Parallel to this, the participants that were studying noted that they preferred the direction they chose based on their favourite subjects at school. Lastly, more than 20% of participants declared that they had contemplated their career path since they were younger, following their passions and most preferred professions.

A few unemployed youths (less than 10%) from the Prishtina region reported different ambitions. The latter expressed a desire to pursue further education and work opportunities abroad, claiming a lack of perspective in Kosovo. According to these participants, there are no jobs, and decent payments and employment are highly affected by nepotism. Hence, they will not try to build a career in Kosovo.

Regarding the main factors to consider when considering a career, nearly 80% of participants acknowledged that the family, especially parents, had a major influence. The participants stated that parents had the greatest influence on their children's choice of profession, often pushing them towards a path that may be more profitable than the profession the child desires. To almost 30% of participants from Mitrovica region, their parents know their abilities and potential best and are considered the most trusted part of this process.

It is worth mentioning that more than 20% of participants planned to follow their friends' paths based on the latter's recommendations. In contrast, other participants indicated that they had considered a variety of fields before deciding on one particular career path. The benefits of each career path in compliance with accessibility into that job market, salary, and others were the determining factors for these participants. Lastly, only 20% of participants decided about their careers based on their preferences and passions, regardless of other factors.

"If an opportunity to model had been presented to me, I would have eagerly taken it. Ever since I was a child, I wanted to be a model, and I am passionate about fashion and style. This ambition motivates me to pursue this dream."

- A young participant (Peja region)

As per the level of information on the labour market needs, focus group discussions did not produce significant conclusions. The participants could not provide an exact estimation, considering the main sources they have usually consulted. They have used a word-of-mouth approach to learn more about their career paths, predominantly consulting their friends and family or peers in the same field. Moreover, passion and preferences were also significant drivers for more than 20% of participants. However, career centres were deemed very helpful in informing and guiding youth toward the right career path. Also, the unemployed youth assessed online sources (social networks, job portals, etc.) as reliable and helpful.

Nevertheless, finding suitable jobs for different profiles was considered a major challenge by nearly 60% of participants. Although currently unemployed, more than 20% expect to face this challenge at some point. It was largely attributed to many available positions being present only in Prishtina. Moreover, some participants (almost 30%) from Gjakova region argued that companies require them to have extensive experience and a wide scope of knowledge to be considered for the job. Unfortunately, they reported that these companies do not provide any internship opportunities to gain this experience. More than 20% of them have been rejected or had no response when applying for similar positions.

"In programming, it is essential to possess knowledge of WordPress, PHP, and HTML as a minimum. However, to be successful in the field, you should strive to gain proficiency in at least 10 additional programming languages."

- A young participant studying programming (Gjakova region)

The lack of job opportunities for specific profiles was also a challenge. The participants claimed a considerable skills mismatch and labour market needs. It has led to a decrease in the number of students in certain fields of study while presenting a significant obstacle to job seekers of these particular profiles.

“There are no architectural job opportunities in Kosovo, which has caused a decrease in motivation to keep pursuing this career.”

– A young participant studying Architecture (Prishtina region)

Change in time it takes a young person to find a job through labor market mediation

A very important part of the discussions with the unemployed focused on the participants' interest in working and the time it usually takes them to find a job. The latter reported if they have been looking for a job and for how long they have been doing it.

Approximately 90% of participants were not currently looking for a job, or at least not systematically. However, nearly 40% of them were young and focused on their studies. Accordingly, almost none of them could specify the exact period of searching for a job.

However, those who have been looking were more interested in part-time jobs as full-time jobs could not meet their study schedules. Also, almost half of them declared to be interested in working during the summer holidays. Part-time jobs and seasonal jobs were more approachable and easier to find. In this regard, almost 50% of participants stated that finding a job in the markets, boutiques, or manual labour is easy, but finding a job that suits their skills is challenging. Yet, youngsters claimed that internships would be the best option to gain working experience and enter the labour market.

Lastly, the time-span for looking for a job varied for those who were interested in getting employed. Less than 10% of participants (from Gjilan and Mitrovica) were looking for a job for about two months. Whereas, participants from Ferizaj and Peja were searching for a job for a year, respectively two years.

For the past two months, I have been looking for a job and plan to get one once I finish school. My goal is to attend university in Prishtina and I'm considering working during the summer to cover the associated expenses. Additionally, I have also been talking to a makeup artist in order to learn the necessary skills.

– A young participant looking for a job (Peja region)

It is worth mentioning that the youngsters (women and men) living in rural areas find it harder to find a job, due to traveling and additional expenses. Consequently, it also takes more time to them to find a job.

Job Mediation Services (JMS)

Nevertheless, focus group participants noted the job mediation services they used when searching for a job. In this regard, focus group results indicated that the youngsters have mainly used private job mediation services, namely online job portals. While KosovaJob, UP WORK Kosovo, Gjirafa, and Human Resources were the main job portals mentioned in the focus groups, KosovaJob was the most used. Also, nearly 80% of participants usually prefer to visit these portals through their Facebook pages. They preferred using these services due to their wide and frequent exposure. Also, considering the use of technology and social network among youth, similar services were more user-friendly. While discussing job portals, a participant from the Prizren region highly evaluated the efficiency of these portals. He emphasized that the information published by the KosovaJob portal enabled him to get a job in a bank, where he worked for three consecutive years. Also, he noted that all information was precise and sufficient for him to prepare for the interview.

“As soon as I graduated, I started looking for a job. Luckily, I got employed at Liri factory. Later on, I started my Master’s degree and along the way, I started to look for another job. During this process, I found a job announcement in KosovaJob and decided to apply. There was a position at BKT bank, and based on the requirements specified in the announcement, I believed I was eligible for that specific position. I submitted all required documents and got the call for an interview. I also got the job and worked there for three years. I can only say that the entire process went smoothly and I was very satisfied with the end result.”

– A young participant studying Economy (Prizren region)

Regarding public employment services, the vast majority of unemployed youngsters (more than 90%) were unaware of the Employment agency. Some even were bewildered when asked about public employment services, namely the EA. The registered participants in the EA were not satisfied with the agency's efficiency. Only one of the participants got an internship from the EA, while other participants did not receive any invitation while being registered at the EA. Lastly, they were likely to believe that the agency's inefficiency is closely related to nepotism.

In this aspect, unemployed youths from the Gjilan region were an exemption. Nearly 80% of participants from this session agreed that the information provided in job portals (Gjilani Network) is not very specific, and they cannot take it seriously or trust such sources. They reported that this mistrust comes from the working hours and salary not being transparent or present in the posts. Others added that even if someone accepts a job, the working hours are disproportionate to the salary amount.

Nonetheless, there was a general belief among the participants that private job mediation services are more efficient than public ones. The participants noted that job portals are active, updated with the newest job announcements, and post plenty of information. Moreover, this information was more accessible due to their social media publication, reaching a wider audience.

Lastly, more than half of participants claimed that unemployed youngsters face many challenges while looking for a job despite the availability of information on the job announcements. They find it very difficult to enter the labour market without internship opportunities, working experience, and suitable job positions. Above all, they foresee that nepotism will make their journey toward employment even more difficult.

Recommendations on Better/New/Innovative Job Mediation Services

In the last part of the discussions, unemployed women and men had the opportunity to share their recommendations on better/new/innovative job mediation services. Accordingly, they provided different suggestions.

Most participants (nearly 80%) agreed that private job mediation services provide sufficient information on job announcements. However, they stated that there is a need for additional sources of information and opportunities. First, almost half of participants, especially those from the Prizren region, believed that career centres information should be available. Also, they stated that school curricula should consist of subjects on career orientation to help them make smart choices in pursuing the right profession while facilitating their entrance to the labour market.

Moreover, focus group participants from the Prishtina region argued that the formal vocational education and training system should be based on the needs of the labour market. According to the latter, the state should redirect its politics in supporting the development of vocational schools instead of encouraging students to choose populist directions.

“The Faculty of Economics continues to accept students despite the fact that there is an abundance of economists already. The state should instead focus on producing more psychologists, language professors, and other professionals.”

- A young student studying economy (Prishtina region)

Moreover, participants from the Gjakova region claimed that students should also take advantage of job fairs and connect with potential employers. They thought that students should have a more proactive approach and engage in similar activities to be closer to job opportunities. More internship opportunities were also required. Youngsters in the focus groups claimed that there should be an increase in accommodations for interns as this is an essential step for gaining work experience.

Lastly, more than 20% of participants suggested that the employment agency should transition to a digital system, making it easier to access job opportunities within the entity and streamlining the application process without requiring a physical presence. Additionally, they emphasized the need to increase transparency and avoid nepotism while providing its services.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Outcome 1

The Helvetas-EYE project has had a positive impact on the businesses in Kosovo, particularly the medium-sized businesses, which were the predominant EYE partners. The project helped to increase the relevance of training provision, increase the number of participants in training, and improve business development. The companies that participated in the project were able to increase their revenue and make a profit, while also reducing costs. The majority of companies in the project operated in the education and ICT sectors. The study shows that the project has been successful in providing support that the companies could not have received elsewhere, particularly in equipment and financial support.

Furthermore, the data presented in this text provides insight into the financial practices and training needs of EYE partners non-partners. EYE partners appear to have a stronger focus on long-term planning and financial management, while EYE non-partners may be more focused on short-term profit maximization. However, further research would be necessary to determine the extent to which these perceptions are reflected in actual financial performance. The majority of companies received donor funds for training, with EYE partners receiving more funding than EYE non-partners. The amount of funding decreased in 2022, but this may not necessarily indicate a trend towards reduced reliance on donor funding. The demand for trainings increased in the past 16 months, and the majority of companies offer trainings that last up to 3 months. There are differences in the perceptions of EYE partners

and non-partners regarding the timeline for achieving financial independence without donor support.

The study also reveals that the most popular method for evaluating training programs is post-training trainee evaluation forms, while ensuring training is relevant to market needs is achieved through market research and curriculum development jointly with private sector inputs. The use of a mix of successful training methods and tailoring training modules to the skills needs of trainees is important for the sustainability of training modules, and businesses play a crucial role in providing internship and employment opportunities for graduates. Additionally, the analysis shows that there is a slight difference in the collaboration between job matching service providers and EYE partners /non-partners. Overall, the project has had a positive impact on the companies, and the study findings suggest that the project's support has been instrumental in their success.

Overall, the contribution analysis of the EYE Project provided valuable support to EYE partners, with the majority reporting that they could not have obtained this support from any other source. The project's support in training development was highly valued by EYE partners, resulting in increased revenue, collaboration with the private sector, the relevance of training provision, and a greater number of participants. However, the impact of capacity-building support on inclusion and investment was moderate, not fully aligning with the project's objectives. The study also found that marketing and communication support contributed to improved marketing strategies, while capacity-building support increased the relevance of training provision and the number of participants. Overall, the EYE Project positively impacted the collaboration between non-formal training providers and the private sector, resulting in increased demand for training and cooperation among EYE partners. However, the project's reliance on donor support raises concerns about its long-term sustainability.

Outcome 2

The following section present specific conclusions drafted based on the focus group discussions with employed and unemployed youth.

Employed Youth

Certain conclusions are drafted based on the focus group results with employed youth. First, passion and preferences, closely followed by parents and friends, were identified as the main factors influencing participants' career decisions. Accordingly, the assessment results showed that employed youth did not find it crucial to search for labour market needs and define their career path upon that information.

Nevertheless, the study revealed a lack of market analysis and career guidance, leading to a mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market. Consequently, youngsters in Kosovo tend to pursue the most popular professions instead of putting more effort into becoming skilled based on the labour market needs. As a result, finding a job that suits the

participants' professional skills is more difficult and takes more time. While one could get employed within a week, in the retail sector, getting hired in the field of law, banking or economy takes seven months up to two years. All that considered, many youngsters are conditioned to get engaged in different jobs, regardless of their profile. Furthermore, entering the labour market in the public sector is harder than in the private sector. Nepotism and political influence were the main factors in this aspect.

Furthermore, private job mediation services were the most used sources of information while searching for a job. Many job announcements, specific information on the requirements, the possibility to connect to the company's web page, and easy access via the internet has made these services more efficient and user-friendly to all job seekers. While most participants mentioned KosovaJob, PortalPune, Punësohu.com, Burimenjerëzore, Gjirafa and Telegrafi, KosovaJob was the most used. At the same time, the majority of participants were not aware of the EA existence and its services. Lastly, the participants who have used EA's services considered the agency inefficient and highly influenced by nepotism and politics. Also, they assessed its system of operation as outdated.

Unemployed Youth

Specific conclusions also resulted from the focus group sessions with the unemployed youth. Compared to the employed group, unemployed women and men were more influenced by their families, peers, and professors while thinking about their careers. However, considering their young age and engagement in their studies, this could be considered an ongoing process based on counselling and guidance rather than pressure and imposture. All that considered, the participants usually do not consult the labour market needs.

Nevertheless, there is fear and doubt among the unemployed youth regarding their future career. They considered that the skills mismatch and labour market needs are the main obstacles. Also, job opportunities are lacking, especially in small cities/rural areas. Accordingly, part-time and seasonal jobs would be the most preferred jobs for this specific target group. Finding a job for this target group varied from two months, up to a year, respectively two.

Like the employed youth, unemployed women and men prefer private job mediation services to public services. KosovaJob, UP WORK Kosovo, Gjirafa, Human Resources, and Job Portal were the main job portals mentioned in the focus groups. The Kosovo job was considered the most efficient one. Lastly, the Employment Agency was almost unknown to the vast majority of the focus group participants.

Considering the similarity of the main conclusions from the focus groups with employed and unemployed youth, the following recommendations refer to both target groups:

- *The education system should focus on enhancing formal vocational education*
- *The formal system of vocational education and training should base on the needs of the labour market*

- *There should be more career centers to help students choose the right profession and get skilled in line with labour market needs. Also, there is a need for an informational campaign on the role and importance of career centers*
- *There should be more internship opportunities for students to help them gain working experience and facilitate their entrance into the labour market*
- *The Employment Agency should update its operating system by making a transition into a digital one, as well as increase its cooperation with the business community and improve its efficiency.*