

# Assessment of Benefits of School-based Career Centers at VET Schools in Kosovo



**IMPACT REPORT**  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This assessment aims to find compelling qualitative and quantitative facts on benefits of School-based Career Centers (SBCC) services at VET schools, by comparing the impact produced by SBCCs through five quality dimensions. The purpose is to define their competitive advantages and incentivize the responsible local and central institutions to provide public funds for dissemination of SBCCs in national level.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Driven by the demand of young people and companies, and supported by different stakeholders, a variety of career services have emerged in the last years in Kosovovo. School-based Career Centers (SBCCs) at VET public institutions, established by EYE project, are well-recognized as providers of services and support. They are established in 9 VET schools over the period 2017-2020. However, this number of 9 SBCCs compared to the need of over 60 VET schools operating nationally in different municipalities is very limited. The scalability still lies in the behavior and will of individual actors at the local level (schools and municipalities) to invest in setting up new career centers.

To incentivize the responsible local and central institutions to provide public funds for dissemination of SBCCs in national level, the best argument is to find competitive advantages of schools with SBCCs by comparing with VET schools that benefit from other models of career centers and schools with no career centers. Details about the research methodology, sample size and fact findings are introduced in the entire research report.

The comparison demonstrates that SBCCs have a large scope over an impressive number of VET students, promote VET profiles, improve the awareness of companies about the benefits of cooperation with VET schools, and attract prospective students. They have a more profound impact on students' employability and practical skills required by employers in the VET sector, thus facilitating the transition from school to work of VET students by making a shortcut between school administration, teachers, employers, and students. However, as graduate tracking is not developed as a service, it is hard to support the result of job placements with numbers.

The other models of career centers and services positively impact the general career orientation and skills of students, especially those who want to explore different education and job opportunities. They apply different operational models and funding, so they are hard to analyze and replicate. Some exist on the municipality level, others in youth centers or as career clubs at VET schools.

The schools with no career center can also contribute to students' employability and skills development. However, they rely on individual efforts of teachers or the initiative of the director, which cannot produce sustainable results.

## **The biggest competitive advantages of SBCCs:**

**Scope and outcome** - Currently, SBCCs are the largest provider of comprehensive VET career services and support, geographically available across thousands of students from 10 grade to 12 grade, while the other career services mainly support the students in 12 grades. Moreover, they also cover 9<sup>th</sup> graders to facilitate them for an informed career decision.

A. Usage level of career services by students (survey with 9 <sup>th</sup> graders and VET students)	
9 Grade Students	10 Grade to 12 Grade Students
<p>69,8% of surveyed 9th graders have benefited from career services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 88% SBCCs</li> <li>▪ 8% other career centers (municipal and youth career centers)</li> <li>▪ 4% other career services (mainly Busulla platform).</li> </ul>	<p>70% of surveyed VET students confirmed the usage of career centers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 92% SBCCs</li> <li>▪ 7% other career centers (municipal and youth career centers)</li> <li>▪ 1% other career services (mainly Busulla platform).</li> </ul>

**Framework and capacity** – SBCCs use a common methodology and staff are proficient in the facilitation of practical learning and helping students make their pathway into the labor market. The number of students who found internships, work-based learning and jobs from SBCC is highest in all grades, moreover other career centers basically offer such opportunities only for 12 grades. This is especially important given the fact that most students and parents have chosen VET schools, in order to ensure that young people get jobs and have the best chances for employability.

B. Job application and interview skills of VET students (survey with students)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no Career Centers
71% of surveyed VET students, confirmed that career services supported them to improve their job application and interview skills		
77%		64%

The improved application and interview skills led to higher successful rate of VET students at SBCC schools finding internships/WBL.

C. Involvement of VET students in internship/WBL (survey with students)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
69.9%	18.1%	12%

This statement of VET students is confirmed by statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research.

D. Involvement of VET students in internship/WBL (database of VET schools)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no Career Centers
58.1%	24.5%	17.8%

VET schools with SBCCs are more recognized by businesses. 45 businesses were interviewed to understand level of cooperation with VET schools.

E. Involvement of businesses in internship/WBL (interview with businesses)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
77.0%	23%	

This statement of interviewed businesses is confirmed by statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research.

F. Involvement of businesses in internship/WBL (database of VET schools)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no Career Centers
73.5%	26.5%	
As a comparison, 40% of the interviewed employers who partner with schools with no career centers have not been involved in internships or practices		

The establishment of SBCCs has significantly improved the level of cooperation with businesses. In addition to internships/WBL, businesses also are involved in different events organized by VET schools to support the student’s employability. These events are the most special among schools that have SBCCs and show an increase in the number of participating businesses in the last three years 2018/2019/2020.

The number of businesses involved in events organized by SBCCs in 2020 to support student’s employability has an increase of 4.4% compared to 2019 despite the situation with the pandemic, while compared to 2018 this increase is 7.4% taking also in consideration increased number of new SBCCs established by EYE project.

**Making VET attractive** - The major social impact of SBCCs on system level is that they made VET more attractive for young people, who want to find a professional track that will guarantee fast employment track, better job prospects and decent payment - this was stated as the main reason to choose VET schools.

In general, there is a serious decline of enrollment in the last two school years due to different reasons – demographic, economic, and social. However, schools with SBCC have managed to have an increase from 64.2% in 2018/2019 to 66.2% in 2020/2021, by helping students to expand their information and explore various educational opportunities, and to reach an informed decision- making on their career choice. While in schools with other models of career centers, enrollment has decreased by 2.9% over the last three school years. In schools without career centers, the situation is stable. The

calculation was made based on the total number of students enrolled in the 18 VET schools included in the research.

<b>G. Trend of enrollment to VET schools (database of VET schools)</b>			
School Year	<b>VET Schools with SBCC</b>	VET Schools with other career centers	VET Schools with no career centers
2018/2019	<b>64.2%</b>	18,4%	18,4%
2019/2020	<b>64,4%</b>	17,0%	18,5%
2020/2021	<b>66,2%</b>	15,3%	18,6%

96% of interviewed community members (parents, teachers, local authorities, media, NGOs) are convinced that career centers should be established in each VET school. 71% of them confirm that career centers help VET schools reduce drop-out rates, and also 78% of the interviewed community members agree that career centers help support students' employment and social inclusion from disadvantaged groups.

In schools with SBCC, women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.

## **KEY CONCLUSIONS & POLICY MESSAGES:**

- The research data shows that School-based Career Center (SBCC) model proves to be highly effective in many VET schools, so it can be easily multiplied in each VET school. Moreover, as a next step, it can also be adapted and scaled across other secondary schools (gymnasiums) as well. The replication of this model requires policy level support and adequate funding for the implementation of activities and involvement of trained staff engaged on a full-day basis.
- Career Centers in VET schools have to be institutionalized and sustained with adequate funding. Public investment and regulation will ensure their effective and quality provision in the long term. A career center is a professional establishment that requires full-time staff engagement and adequate funding for activities. The services of the career centers should be regulated by law, standardised and supported on a national level with resources for the implementation of activities in a quality and sustainable manner.
- Career Centers need to be established in each VET school. The numerous benefits of career centers for schools, students, employers and community justify such investment. Moreover, the need is explicitly declared by all stakeholders - career centers are needed in all types of schools and across all educational levels.
- The Government has a key role in providing strategic leadership, building capacity, regulating the career guidance system, setting quality standards, and ensuring funding mechanisms.



# CHAPTER 1.



## Introduction

Career centers play an increasingly important role in assisting youth in the school-to-work transition, preparing students to successfully navigate their career, and equipping them with the skills demanded in the labor market. They strengthen the cooperation between education and business, foster the employment rate of graduates and bring various benefits to the society.

In the last few years, there has been a growing demand for career support for students which catalyzed the emergency of different career services in Kosovo. Nine (9) school-based career centers (SBCCs) have been established with the support of the EYE project in partnership with municipalities and with the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETA), which serve students of 10 VET schools. Besides SBCCs, there is another municipal-based career center that serves eight VET schools in Prishtina city, career centers at other VET schools established by other donors, and career services offered by youth centers. All these models proved the need for career services and have brought benefits both on individual level and for the society. However, this number is quite limited compared to the need of over 60 VET schools operating nationally in different municipalities. The scalability still depends on the incentive of municipalities to invest public funds in this field and on their awareness that SBCC services add public value (from a policy perspective) and add value through the eyes of clients (e.g., student, business).

Due to these circumstances, it is crucial to find compelling qualitative and quantitative facts on benefits of School-based Career Centers (SBCC) services at VET schools, by comparing the impact produced by SBCCs through key quality dimensions. The purpose is to define their competitive advantages and incentivize the responsible local and central institutions to provide public funding for dissemination of SBCCs in national level.

This assessment report on benefits of School-based Career Centers (SBCC) services synthesizes the main findings and outcomes that were obtained from the quantitative and qualitative research made by Business Foundation for Education together with the local partner M4Success under the mandate received from Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo in the capacity of implementers of Enhancing Youth Employment Project (EYE) – financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation in Kosovo.

#### **The research covered five comparative dimensions:**

- Enrolment rate of prospective students influenced by informed profession-choices of 9th graders;
- Level of students' job readiness and soft skills that help increase the students' employability power;
- Level of businesses' involvement in school activities and their contribution to students' school-to-work transition;
- Job placement rate of graduates, and
- Other benefits in terms of networking, social inclusion, contribution to the community, etc.

#### **by comparing groups of:**

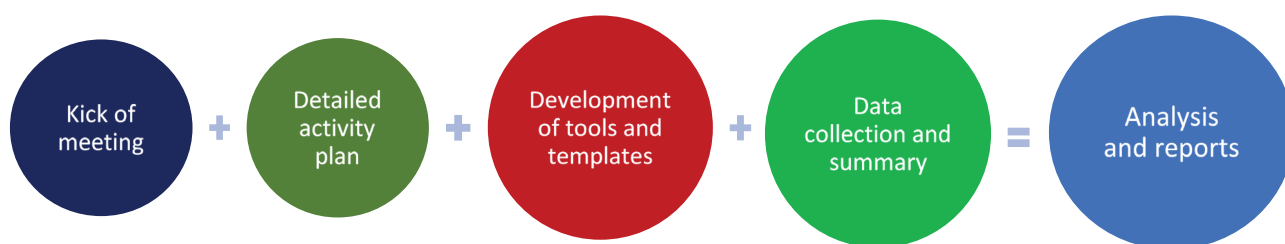
- VET schools that benefit and do not benefit from SBCCs.
- VET schools that benefit from other career guidance activities

The report is complemented by an annex with testimonials and good practices which present the competitive advantages of SBCCs. The document also helps communicate the identified multidimensional benefits of SBCCs with the general public and mainstream the approach across the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. The findings are accompanied by policy recommendations for their further development.

## 1.1. Impact assessment methodology

The Business Foundation for Education (BFE), together with the local partner M4Sucess used the following implementation approach for impact assessment of SBCCs.

FIGURE 1. Implementation approach



The consultants prepared different instruments for collecting the data using the 360-degree evaluation approach to validate the impact with all stakeholders. The data collection instruments included interviews and semi-structured questionnaires, online questionnaires, and focus groups. This way, the quantitative and qualitative information about the impact of SBCC services for the different target groups was collected, and personal testimonies, recommendations, and insights. The field research is conducted in 15 municipalities in Kosovo (Burim, Ferizaj, Gjakove, Gjilan, Kaçanik, Malishevë, Pejë, Prishtinë, Prizren, Rahovec, Shtime, Skenderaj, Suharekë, Viti and Vushtrri) in the period May-June 2021, by involving 4 target groups:

- 9-grade students;
- VET students (10-12 grades);
- employers;
- community members (local authorities, employment and VET agencies, employer organizations, youth centers, NGOs, parents, teachers, media).

The school sample included 18 VET schools, including: 10 schools benefiting from SBCCs established by EYE, 4 VET schools that benefited from other models of career support services, and 4 schools with no career services.

The following set of data has been conducted (figure 2 below):

- online survey with 338 students of 9-grade in the SBCC municipalities;
- online survey with 1,040 VET students;
- focus groups with 55 VET students in SBCC schools and 2 students of 9-grade;
- interviews with 8 students of 9-grade (in the SBCC municipalities);

- interviews with 36 VET students in the SBCC schools;
- interviews with 45 employers;
- interviews with 59 community members (10 parents, 9 local authorities, 8 employer organizations, 10 NGOs, media, youth centers and other organizations cooperating with SBCCs, as well as 22 teachers, directors and other school representatives)
- interviews with 11 career centers coordinators.

**FIGURE 2.** Sample of data

School	Career Center	Online survey		Focus group		Interviews					
		9 graders	VET students	9 graders	VET students	9 graders	VET students	Em- ployers	Community Members	Director/ Teacher	SBCC coordi- nator
Shkolla "Bahri Haxha", Vushtrri	EYE SBCC	21	47		12		3	6	3	2	1
Shkolla "Lutfi Musiqi", Vushtrri			32								
Shkolla "Zenei Hajdini", Ferizaj	EYE SBCC	1	16		1	1	1	4	2	1	1
Shkolla "Nexhmedin Nixha", Gjakove	EYE SBCC	37	98		14	2	3	4	3	1	1
Shkolla "Feriz Guri" dhe Vëllezërit Çaka", Kaçanik	EYE SBCC		51			2	1	3	6	3	1
Shkolla "Shaban Spahija", Pejë	EYE SBCC	187	143		13	1	4	4	5	1	1
Qendra e kompetencës Malishevë	EYE SBCC	1	134	1			2	4	2	2	1
Shkolla "11 Marsi", Prizren	EYE SBCC		191		8		4	4	3	1	1
Shkolla "Shtjefen Gjeqovi", Prishtinë	EYE SBCC	3	62			2	3	3	3	2	1
Shkolla "Jonuz Zejnulahu", Viti	EYE SBCC	71	19	1	1		2	3	2	2	1
Shkolla "Ali Hadri", Peje	Other Career Center/Service		93		1		2	2	2		1
Shkolla "Abdyl Frasheri", Prishtine	Other Career Center/Service		24				3	1	1	2	
Qendra e kompetencës Skenderaj	Other Career Center/Service		42		1		2	1	2		1
Shkolla "Mehmet Isai", Gjilan	Other Career Center/Service	5	0		1		1	1	1	1	
Shkolla Mesme Profesionale, Shtime	No Career Center	2	16				2	1	2	2	

Shkolla "Skender Luarasi", Suharekë	No Career Center		27		1		2	2		1	
Shkolla "Selajdin Mulla Alia", Rahovec	No Career Center		5		1		1				
Shkolla "Mithat Frash-eri", Istog	No Career Center	3	40		1		1	2		1	
Other (Deçan, Mitrovicë J, Kllokot, Dragash, Klinë, Fushë Kosovë)	No Career Center	7									
<b>Total</b>		<b>338</b>	<b>1040</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>

The instruments have been developed based on five quality dimensions provided by the EYE project. They included a set of 21 impact statements / assumptions that were tested during the interviews. The statements are listed in the table below.

**FIGURE 3.** Quality statements

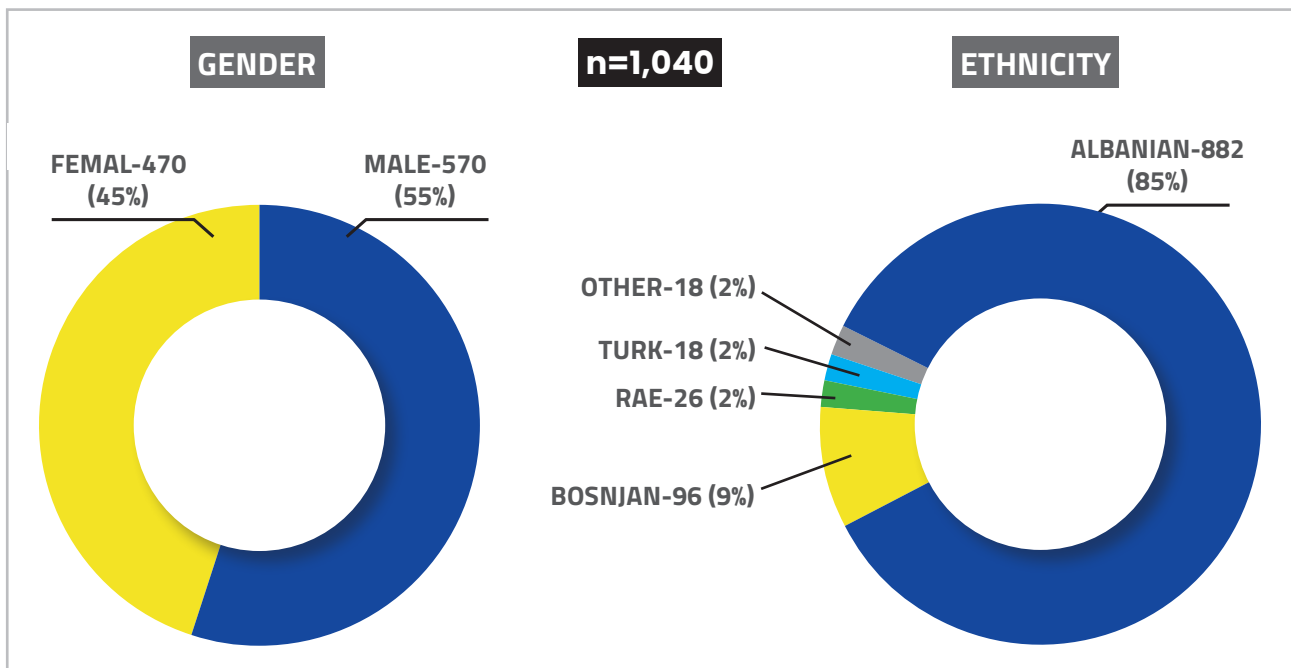
Quality dimensions	Statements
<b>1. Enrolment rate of prospective students influenced by informed profession-choices of 9th graders</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career center services help prospective students expand their information and explore various educational opportunities.</li> <li>2. Career center services help prospective students make informed professional choices and decisions.</li> <li>3. The career center at school is an asset that positively influences the enrolment rate of students.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Level of students' job readiness and soft skills that help increase their employability power</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career centers help students improve their self-awareness and career planning skills.</li> <li>2. Career centers help students improve their labor market information.</li> <li>3. Career centers help students improve their job application and interview skills.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Job placement rate of graduates</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career center services help students find internships and jobs.</li> <li>2. Career center services help students develop practical skills for the world of work.</li> <li>3. Career centers improve graduate tracking and assessment of job placement rates.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Level of businesses' involvement in school activities and their contribution to students' school-to-work transition</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career centers make recruiting interns and graduates easier.</li> <li>2. Career centers help companies promote themselves to students.</li> <li>3. Career centers facilitate the organization and effectiveness of work-based learning.</li> <li>4. Career centers enhance the communication and feedback between schools and businesses.</li> <li>5. Career centers foster the involvement of business in school initiatives supporting students' employability.</li> </ol>

<p><b>5. Other benefits in terms of networking, social inclusion, and contribution to the community.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Career centers help schools build a community of stakeholders and alumni.</li> <li>2. Career centers help students develop transversal social skills and civic competencies for life.</li> <li>3. Career centers help students develop a sense of initiative and agility in a changing world.</li> <li>4. Career centers help students understand and appreciate the importance of different jobs for society.</li> <li>5. Career centers help support the employment and social inclusion of students from disadvantaged groups.</li> <li>6. Career centers services help schools reduce the drop-out rates.</li> <li>7. Career centers should become an essential part of each school.</li> </ol>
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## 1.2. Demography of the students involved in the survey

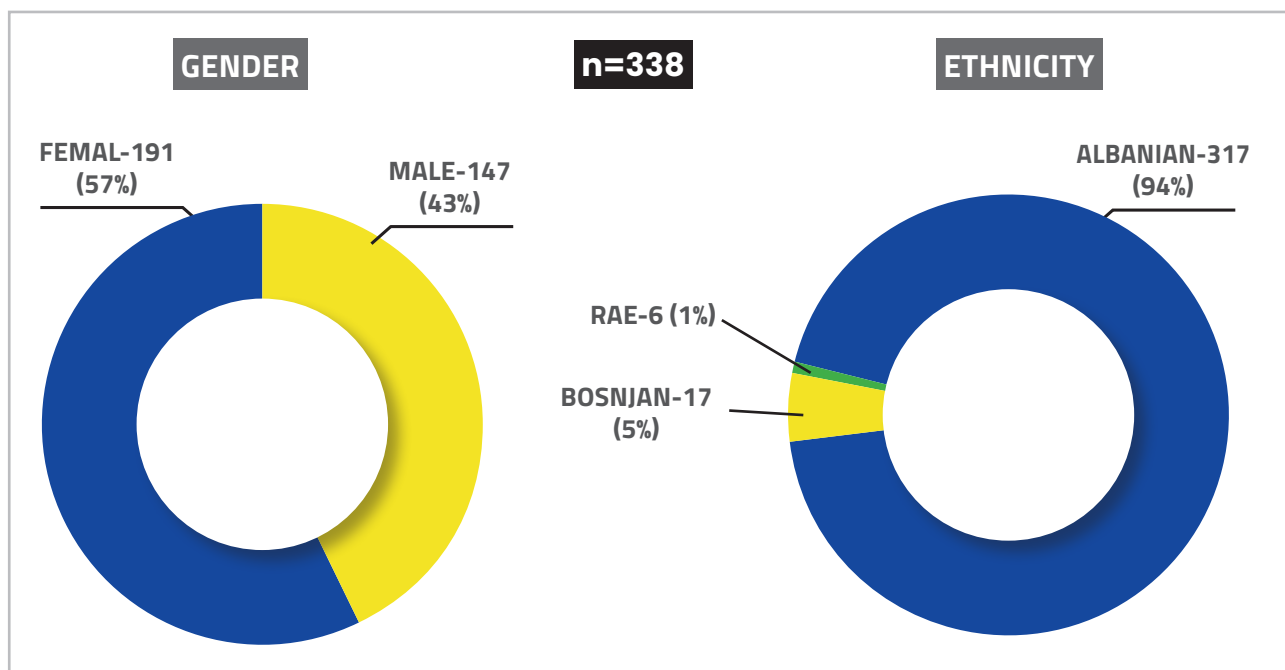
The online survey among VET students involved 570 male and 470 female students in 10-12 grades. In terms of ethnicity, the distribution of VET students who participated in the online survey is: 85% Albanian, 9% Bosnjan, 2% Turk, 2.5% RAE and a smaller number of other ethnic groups (Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4.** Demography of VET students who participated in the online survey, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity



The online survey of 9-grade students has included 338 participants, almost equally represented by gender and predominantly Albanians by ethnicity. (Figure 5).

**FIGURE 5.** Demography of 9-grade students who participated in the online survey, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity



# CHAPTER 2.



**Findings**



## DIMENSION 1:

### Enrolment rate of prospective students influenced by informed profession-choices of 9th graders

VET schools organize different activities to attract 9th graders to choose occupational profiles offered by VET, such as open-door events, visits to elementary schools, participate in education fairs where they present the school profiles, and offer information sessions for 9-grade students.

However, there is a difference on the impact of such activities among VET schools that have SBCCs, those that benefit from municipal-based career center (e.g. 8 VET schools in Pristina municipality), and those schools that do not benefit at all from career guidance activities in order to improve the enrollment of prosperous students.

Additionally, many young people benefit from the free online platform Busulla.com, where all schools and profiles are presented, and self-assessment instruments help find out the most suitable educational and career options. The platform is used in addition to career services, as it supports occupational exploration and independent decision-making. It plays an important role for students who have limited access to services.

To analyze the impact dimension related to enrolment rate of prospective students influenced by informed profession-choices of 9th graders, there were conducted in person interviews with school directors/teachers and career center staff where available, which introduced facts and statistics of the last 3 school years regarding this issue.

In addition, there are analyzed two quality statements through the online survey with 9<sup>th</sup> graders, which are supposed to influence the decision:

Career center services help prospective students expand their information and explore various educational opportunities.

- Career center services help prospective students make informed professional choices and decisions
- The data was supported by interviews that have been conducted with relative community members - representatives of municipalities, local Employment Agencies and employer organizations.

### Findings from online survey

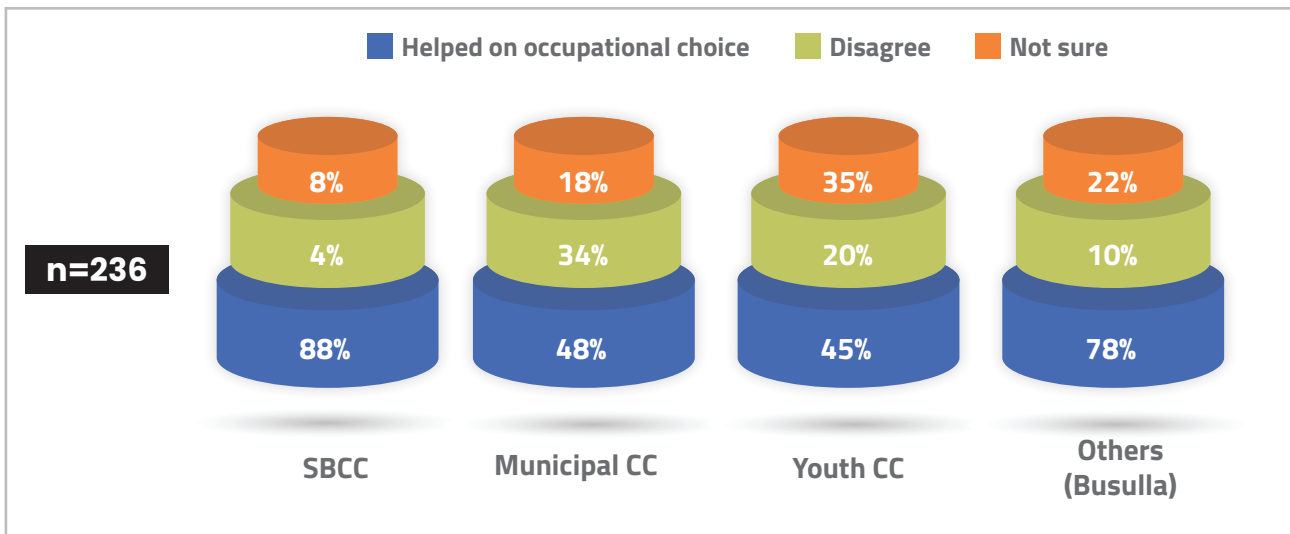
The online survey of 9-grade students included 338 participants, almost equally represented by gender (43% male and 57% females) and predominantly Albanians by ethnicity (92%).

**The majority of respondents (69,8% or 236 students) have benefited from career services. Among the users, the SBCC is quite popular as 88% of them have referred to school-based career centers (208 students), 5% have used services from Prishtina municipal career center, 3% youth career centers and 4% other services - mainly Busulla.com.**

**Out of SBCC users, 88% of them confirmed they benefited for a better occupational choice, 4% disagree, and 8% are not sure. This confirmation for Prishtina municipal career center and youth career centers is much**

lower, while for Busulla 78%. This situation confirms that SBCCs and Busulla platform are most helpful for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to find out which profiles and professional directions interest them.

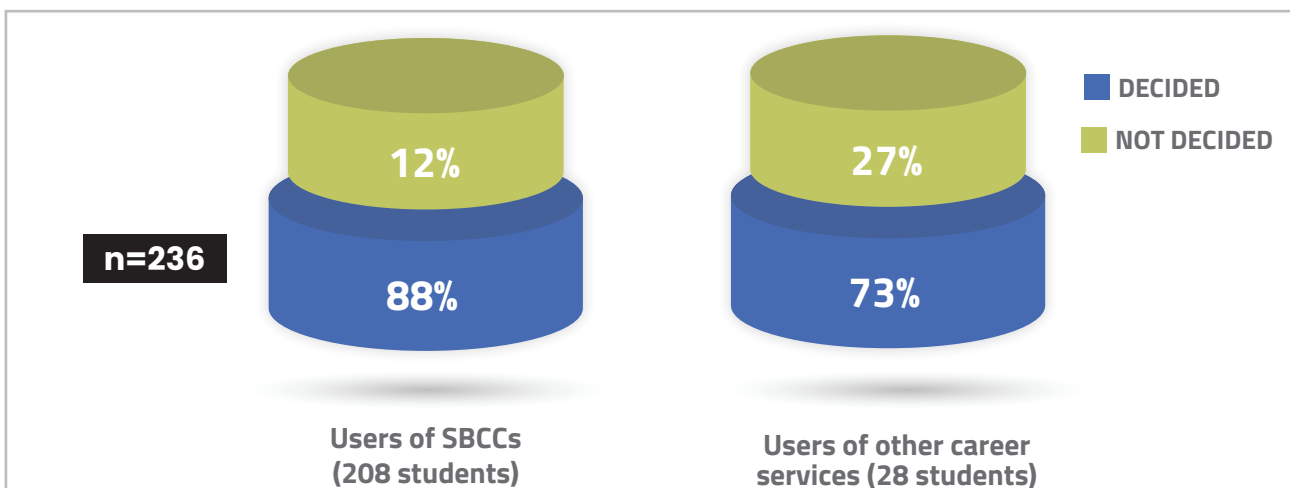
**FIGURE 6.** Influence of Career Services to Occupational Choices of 9th Graders



Another important factor for future occupation of 9<sup>th</sup> graders is their self-awareness on deciding to choose the right secondary school.

Out of 208 9<sup>th</sup> -graders that benefited from SBCCs, 88% of them made an easy decision which secondary school to choose, while among users of other career services (municipal CC; youth CC, Busulla platform) this level of self-awareness is less for 15%. This achievement of SBCCs is based on the various activities they organize to help 9th graders expand their information and explore various educational opportunities.

**FIGURE 7.** Self-awareness level of 9<sup>th</sup> graders on deciding for their secondary school



In general, there is a serious decline of enrollment in the last two school years due to different reasons – demographic, economic, and social. However, schools with SBCCs have managed to have an increase from 64.2% in 2018/2019 to 66.2% in 2020/2021, by helping students to expand their information and explore various educational opportunities, and to reach an informed decision-making on their career choice. While in schools with other models of career centers, enrollment

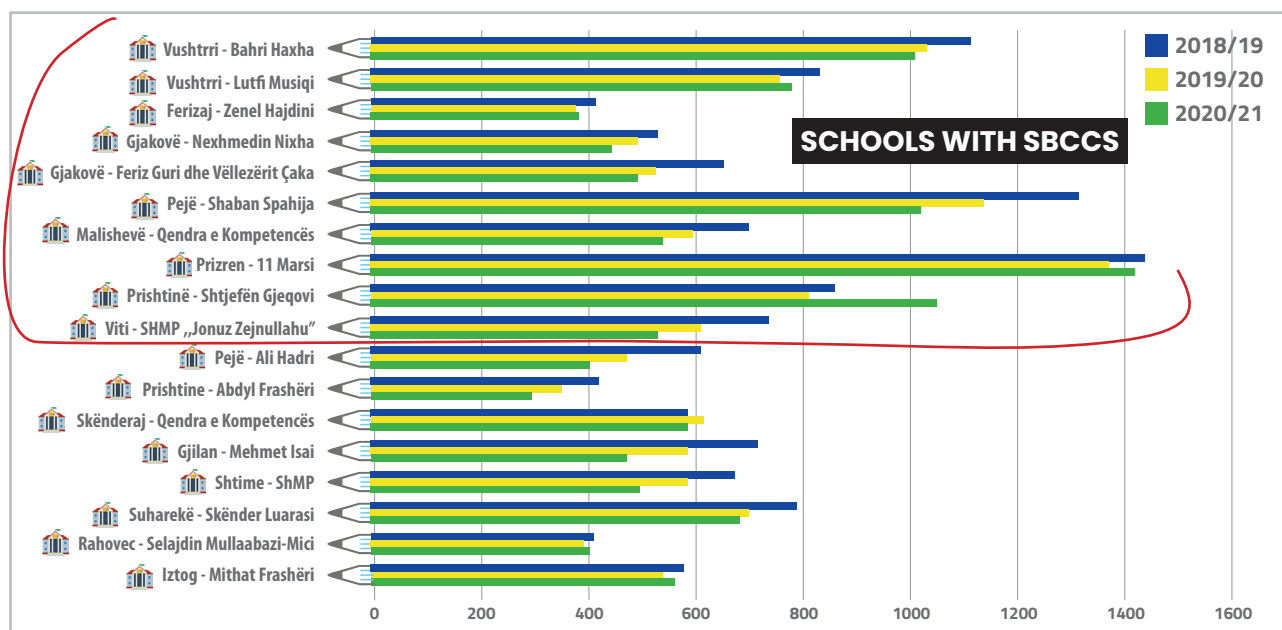
has decreased by 2.9% over the last three school years. In schools without career centers, the situation is stable. The calculation was made based on the total number of students enrolled in the 18 VET schools included in the research.

FIGURE 8: Trend of enrollment to VET schools (database of VET schools)

School Year	VET Schools with SBCC	VET Schools with other career centers	VET Schools with no career centers
2018/2019	64.2%	18,4%	18,4%
2019/2020	64,4%	17,0%	18,5%
2020/2021	66,2%	15,3%	18,6%

Based on the interviews with career center coordinators and school directors and the provided statistics of enrolled students, there is a serious decline in 2019 in most VET schools. In 2020 some of the schools have managed to improve their enrollment, especially in those where SBCCs operate, but for most schools the descending rate continues as the following chart illustrates.

FIGURE 9. Number of enrolled students in VET schools per year



Despite this, during the conducted interviews, school staff shared that the promotional efforts of the career centers have raised the interest of 9-grade students and parents in VET profiles. There are signs that the communication campaign and overall changes made by the school leadership as a result of the career center has brought positive results.

All 46 interviewed community members - public employment services, employers' organizations, parents, municipalities, teachers, parents, NGOs - agree that the school career center is an asset that positively influences the enrolment of prospective students. **94% agree that the career center helps prospective students make informed professional choices and decisions.**

**Beside the good work of School-based Career Centers, the other factors which influence the enrollment rates of students are the policy of local directorates of education (such as reducing the number of students or introducing new profiles based on the needs of the economy) and the admission criteria set by the Ministry of Education. These have been commented on by many stakeholders as very necessary.**

VET Schools have tried to address this issue with more active promotion to elementary schools and public campaigns, however due to the pandemic situation these efforts have been challenged.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS - Enrolment rate of prospective students influenced by informed profession-choices of 9th graders**

### **Conclusions:**

- Career Centers are one of the most effective tools which VET schools can use to improve their competitiveness and attractiveness to prospective students. Among the surveyed 9<sup>th</sup> graders that used career services, 88% of them have referred to School-based Career Centers, while additional 12% to other resources (municipal career center, youth career centers, and Busulla platform).
- SBCCs and Busulla platform are most helpful for 9<sup>th</sup> graders to find out which profiles and professional directions interest them. 88% of SBCC users and 78% of Busulla users confirmed that benefited for a better occupational choice, while for Prishtina municipal career center and youth career centers this share is much lower.
- In general, there is a serious decline of enrollment in the last two school years due to different reasons – demographic, economic, and social. However, schools with SBCCs have managed to have an increase from 64.2% in 2018/2019 to 66.2% in 2020/2021, by helping students to expand their information and explore various educational opportunities, and to reach an informed decision-making on their career choice. While in schools with other models of career centers, enrollment has decreased by 2.9% over the last three school years. In schools without career centers, the situation is stable. The calculation was made based on the total number of students enrolled in the 18 VET schools included in the research.
- All VET schools face decline in the number of students. Despite the slight improvement in enrollment rate in the last year, especially in those where SBCCs operate, a lot of efforts need to be harnessed on local and national level to turn the tide of students to VET.

### **Recommendations on a policy level:**

- Adapt admission criteria based on in-depth analysis of the labour market needs and demographic prospects.
- Introduce more attractive VET profiles in line with the changing world of work
- Improve the conditions for practical training at school – this was commented on both by local authorities, teachers and 9-grade students who say that better facilities and equipped cabinets tip the scales when young people decide where to enroll.
- Conduct promotional campaigns for VET schools to raise the awareness in society about the prospects and the opportunities they provide and address stigma against VET schools.

## STATEMENTS – Dimension 1

Following are some statements of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, teachers, staff of career centers, and community members that refer for the benefits from using career guidance services, and how the situation has been changing over time having career centers installed within schools.

*"Primary schools should be more informed by the Career Centers about the school profiles it offers, and the opportunities, the conditions it has, to orient them in time at the center of the career to make the right decisions, for the abilities they have, because many of them struggle where to go in the high school, many of them try to go same profile as they friends did, which is not the right way to choose the high school."*

*Student, 11th grade, Shkolla "Bahri Haxha", Vushtrri*

### Opinions of students shared in focus groups:

- *"I really liked the info session activity organized by the career center. Prior, I didn't think that I would go to vocational school, but now as I have seen it up close, I got a good impression from the cabinets and advanced conditions, and I will consider enrolling in this field (IT) as I want to study Computer Science."*  
(9-grade student, Kaçanik)
- *"Career centers are necessary especially for students who are not determined what direction to continue and career centers help a lot in choosing a profession. When we were at the career center in the competence center in Malisheva, they told us what professions there are and many of our classmates decided to continue in this school, all this as a result of the career center that helped for selection."*  
(9-grade student, Malisheva).
- *"When we were in the 9-th grade we came to the career center and we learned the opportunities we have to choose directions and how they relate to the faculty. This has been very helpful in choosing the direction."*  
(VET student in SBCC school "Nexhmedin Nixha", Gjakove)
- *"I think it is very good to have someone who can tell you what profession is right for you. It affected me a lot when I talked to someone who had more information about design."*  
(9-grade student, online focus group)
- *"Career orientation has helped a lot of us to decide on vocational school. The career center has been with us showing us the opportunities for different profiles."*  
(9-grade student, online focus group)
- *"I think that career centers should continue to inform students what kind of professions are there, where they can find employment, so they can decide easier in the future."*  
(9-grade student, online focus group)



*"The career center informs you about every direction that you want to follow your dream. If you haven't decided what to do and if you don't know where to ask for help, the center is the solution.*

*The advice and information for the school profiles from the Career center have helped me a lot to decide for the profile I want to go to high school, for the reason that I found myself in Construction and having a passion for art also made it more suitable for me.*

*I have also learned many new things about career guidance, job offers in the relevant profession, how to prepare a CV, how to prepare for a job interview and so on."*

**Albiona Zeqiri, 11 grade student**  
**"Bahri Haxha" school, Vushtrri**

- **"The career center is the best promoter of the school and the achievements of the students.** By giving us information (by Career Center) on what skills are required in the labor market we had the opportunity to change 20% of the curriculum. The engagement in realization of professional practices has improved, and the **interest of students to register in profiles where I am a teacher has increased."**

*Festim Muzaqi, teacher at ShMP "Bahri Haxha", Vushtrri*

- **"As a result of the commitment of the Career Center, the number of students in the school has increased.** They have helped to improve the directions, have implemented professional internship programs, which made the school more attractive for prospective students."

*Shpresa Dibrani, teacher at ShMP "Bahri Haxha", Vushtrri*

- **"I think there has been an increase in student interest as a result of the career center engagement.** There was an expectation of a decrease in the number of students but with the functionalization of the center it is very well. "

*Community member, Municipality Directorate, Kaçanik*

- **"All our organizations have results with success. We can consider as a success story some from our activities, which have positive impact in increasing number of new students in our school. When 9th grade students visit our school, they've changed their mind about registering in our school. We present our school in all primary schools of the city of Prizren and this was another thing which helped for increasing number of students in our school."**

*Hajrije Shehu, SBCC coordinator, "11 Marsi" school, Prizren.*



*"The number of students in "Bahri Haxha" VET School has increased, though there are many factors, but the crucial one is the good functioning of the Career Center in school.*

*Over the years, the career center staff have promoted school profiles and the opportunities it offers, thus attracting more students to the school.*

**Afrim Namani, Vice-President Municipality of Vushtrri**

■ *“The enrollment number has decreased, also as a result of the decrease in the birth rate in general, there is a shortage of students. The enrollment policies need to be adjusted, the criteria have to be applied. We have provided information sessions in 33 schools, at our own expense in order to make them aware of the importance of professional directions. Students and parents should be made aware of professional directions.”*

*Teacher at “Abdyl Frasher”; Prishtine*

■ *“The SBCC has undoubtedly had an impact on the growing interest of students. The number of students has increased as a factor of work and the result of the center (1088 students). The number of profiles has also increased.”*

*Representative of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Pristine*

## **Dimension 2:**

### **Level of students’ job readiness and soft skills that help increase their employability power**

The primary function of the school-based career centers (SBCC) is to equip them with practical skills and to facilitate their employment. For this purpose, the organization of internships and work-based learning is a primary task of SBCCs. Additionally, career centers offer soft-skills training, labor market information and career development support which aim to enhance the smooth transition of VET students from school to work. The SBCC services are available to all VET students from 10 to 12 grade.

The other career services which operate on the municipality level and in youth centers also offer different training, career development support and job/ internship opportunities, which mostly benefit 12-grade students.

Students from schools where no career services are available, mainly rely on the career classes integrated in the ICT subject, on support from teachers and practices and other activities organized at school. In some cases, these students have taken advantage of other services available in the town (such as in other schools, for example).

Additionally, students from all schools use the tests and career guidance resources from the platform Busulla.com and learn more about further education opportunities and job prospects in the selected occupations.

**To analyze the impact dimension related to students’ job readiness and employability skills, it has been analyzed to what level:**

- Career centers help students improve their self-awareness and career planning skills.
- Career centers help students improve their labor market information.
- Career centers help students improve their job application and interview skills.



The data collection activities included: online survey with VET students, in person interviews with school directors/teachers and career center staff where available, which introduced facts and statistics of the last 3 school years regarding this topic; focus groups and interviews with VET students; interviews with employers and community members.

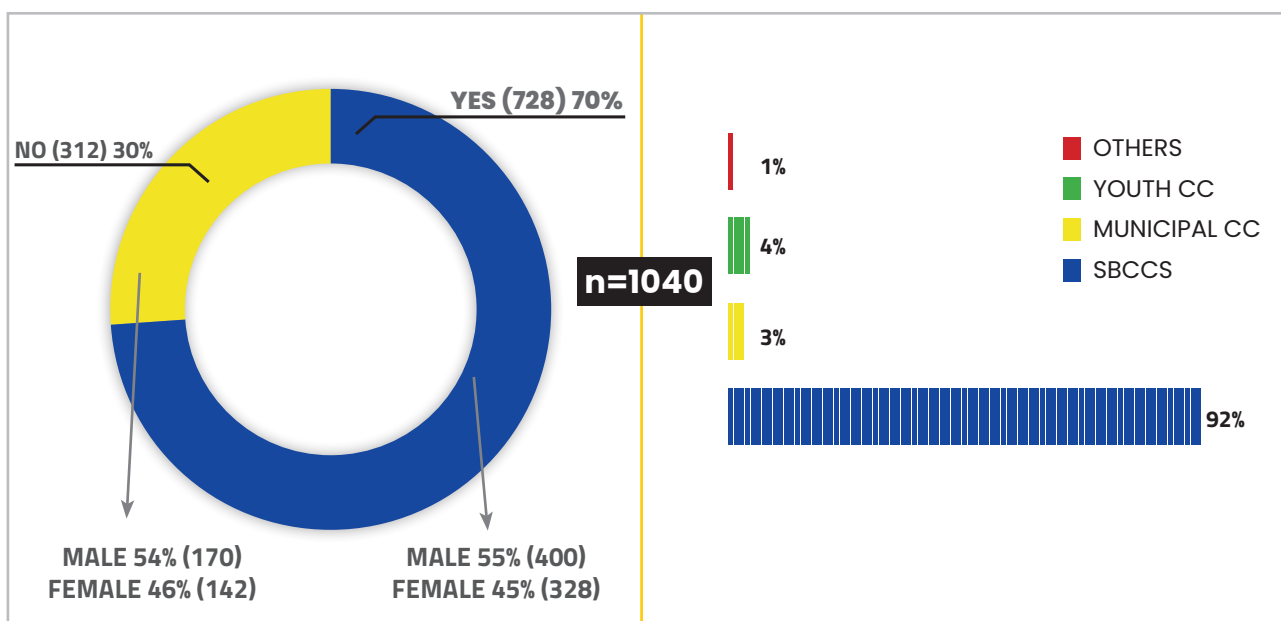
## Findings from online survey

Below are introduced the findings from the online survey based on the compared indicators in the 3 types of VET schools - those with SBCCs created by EYE project, schools using other career centers or services and schools with no career services established.

The online survey with VET students involved 1,040 respondents in 10-12 grades. The share of respondents by gender is almost equal – 70% male (570) and 69% (470) female students. In terms of ethnicity, the distribution of the online survey respondents is 85% Albanians and 15% minorities.

**School-based career centers are well-recognized as providers of services and support. 70% of all 1040 respondents have used career services (728 students). Majority of users (92%) have received services from SBCCs, while the rest of 8% had access to municipal career center, youth career centers and others (mainly Busulla platform).**

**FIGURE 10.** Usage level of career services by VET students



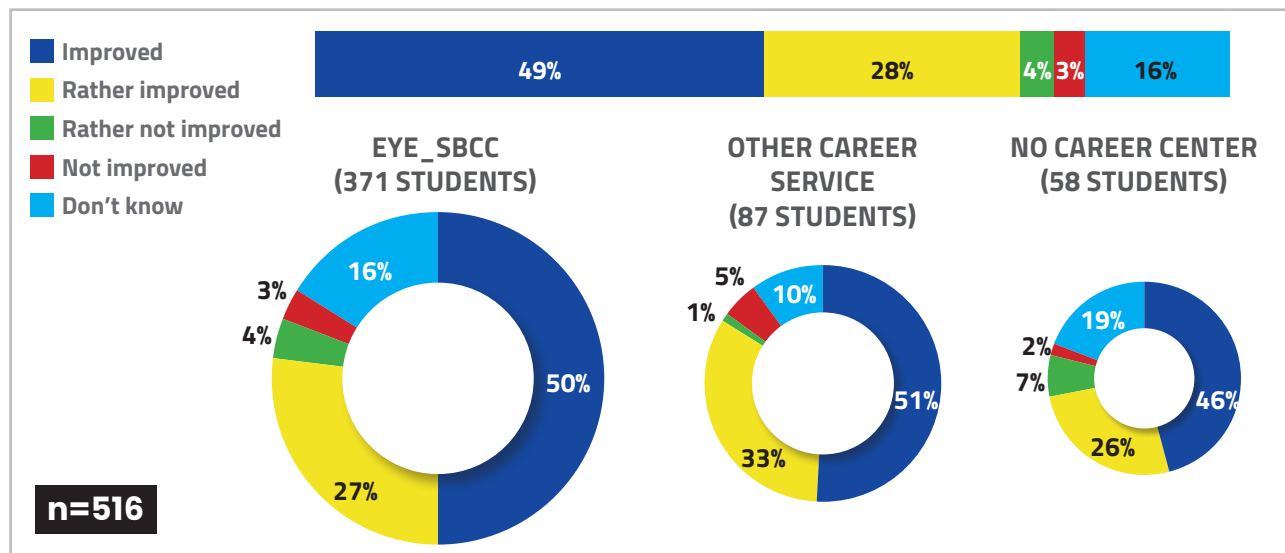
## Career Centers help VET students improve their labor market information

Out of 728 students that used career services, 516 of them answered to the question if the career centers helped them improve their labor market information. 77% of them have improved their skills to find credible information about jobs and career prospects.



However, it is surprising to find that there is no significant difference between students who have benefited from SBCC career services, or other career centers or services, and those with no career support services.

**FIGURE 11.** Level of improved LM information of VET students



The share of employers who confirm the positive impact of career centers on students' job-readiness skills is even higher – 96%.

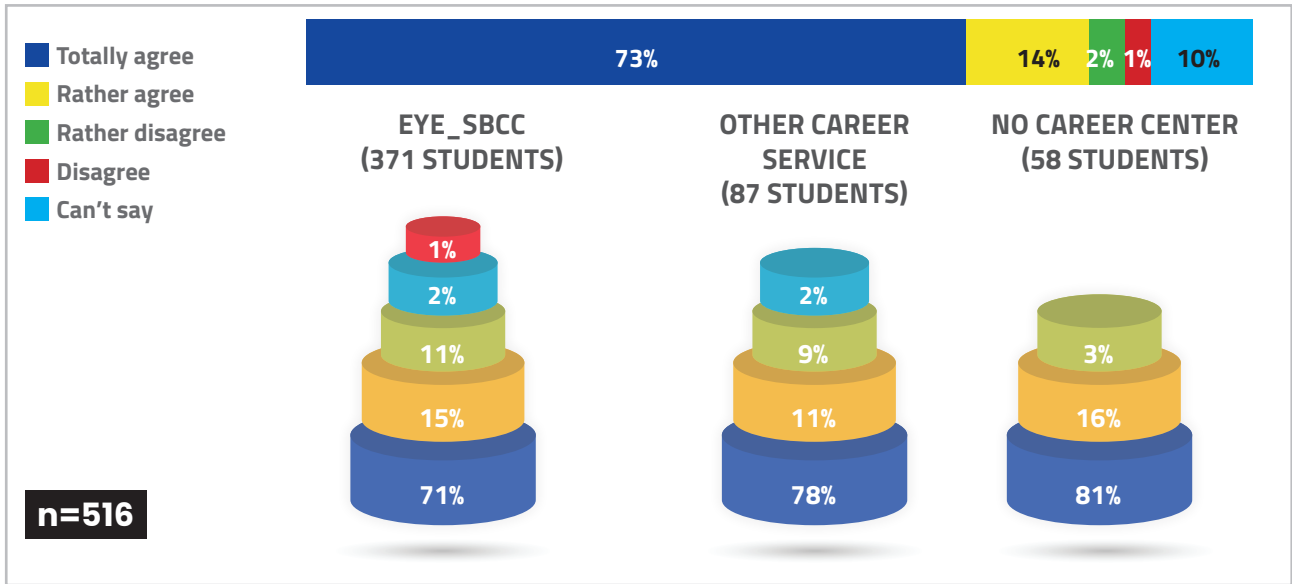
Some career centers, such as the SBCC in Ferizaj have developed a good cooperation with the Employment Office, which organized different activities for informing students in labor market information and opportunities, which eventually had a positive impact on their employability.

### Career Centers help VET students improve their self-awareness and career planning skills

Out of 728 students that used career services, 516 of them answered to the question if the career centers helped them improve their self-awareness and career planning skills. The large majority of students (86% out of all 516 respondents) confirmed positively.

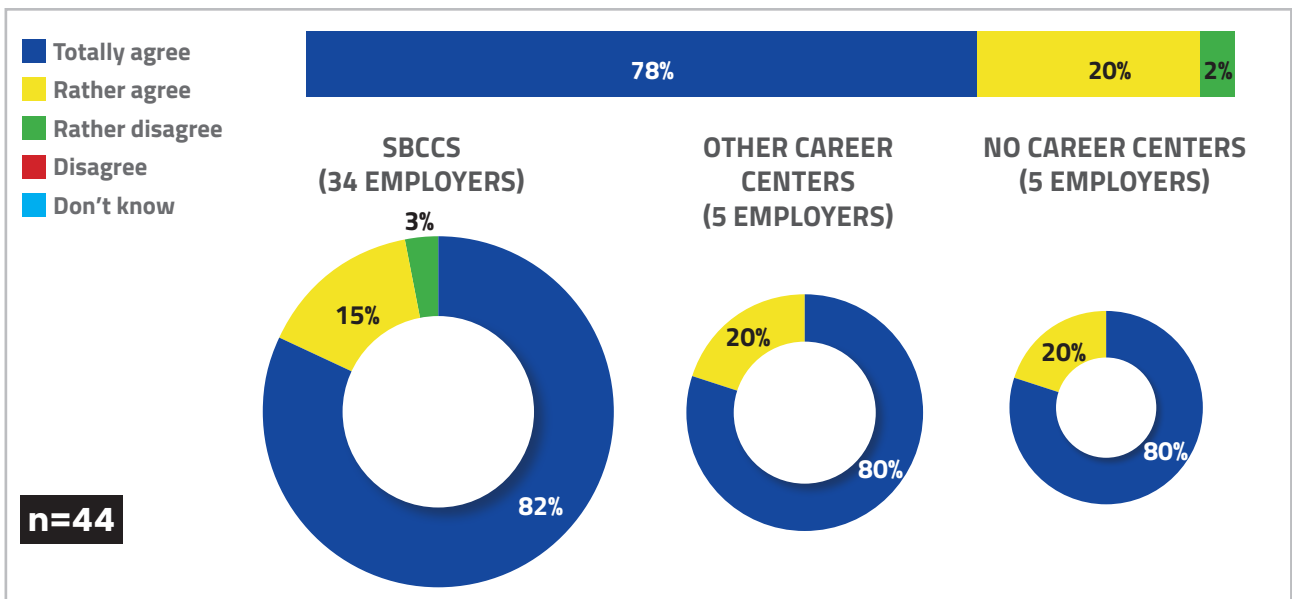
**Students from SBCCs are most sure in their career plans after graduation.** 86% of students from SBCCs say they have already made a decision, compared to students from schools with other career centers and with no career services, where the share of those who still hesitate is  $\frac{1}{4}$ .

**FIGURE 12.** VET students' career decision after graduation



The share of employers who confirm the positive impact of career centers on these skills is even higher – 98%. **The share of employers who work with SBCCs are more positive about the impact of career center's services on students,** compared to those who work with other career centers and schools with no services whatsoever.

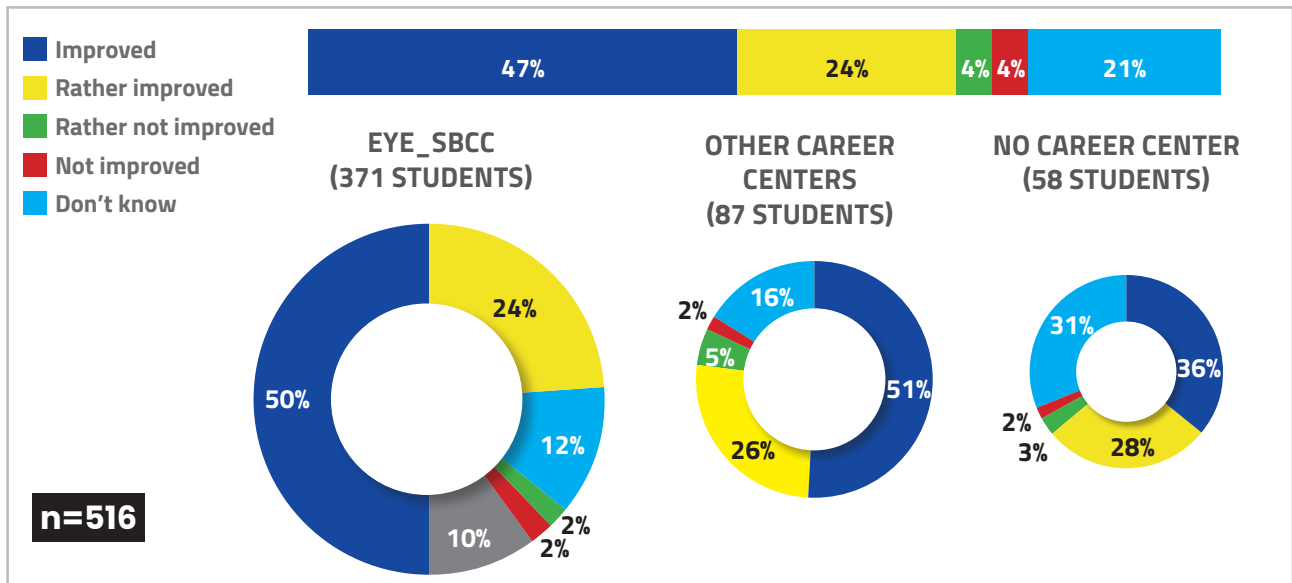
**FIGURE 13.** Employers' consent that career centers help students improve their self-awareness and career planning skills



### Career Centers help students improve their job application and interview skills

Out of 728 students that used career services, 516 of them answered to the question if the career centers helped them improve their job application and interview skills. 71% of them confirmed that they improved these soft skills. Among the students of schools with career centers (SBCC and other centers), this percentage reaches up to 77%, while among the students from schools with no career services this share is lower (64%).

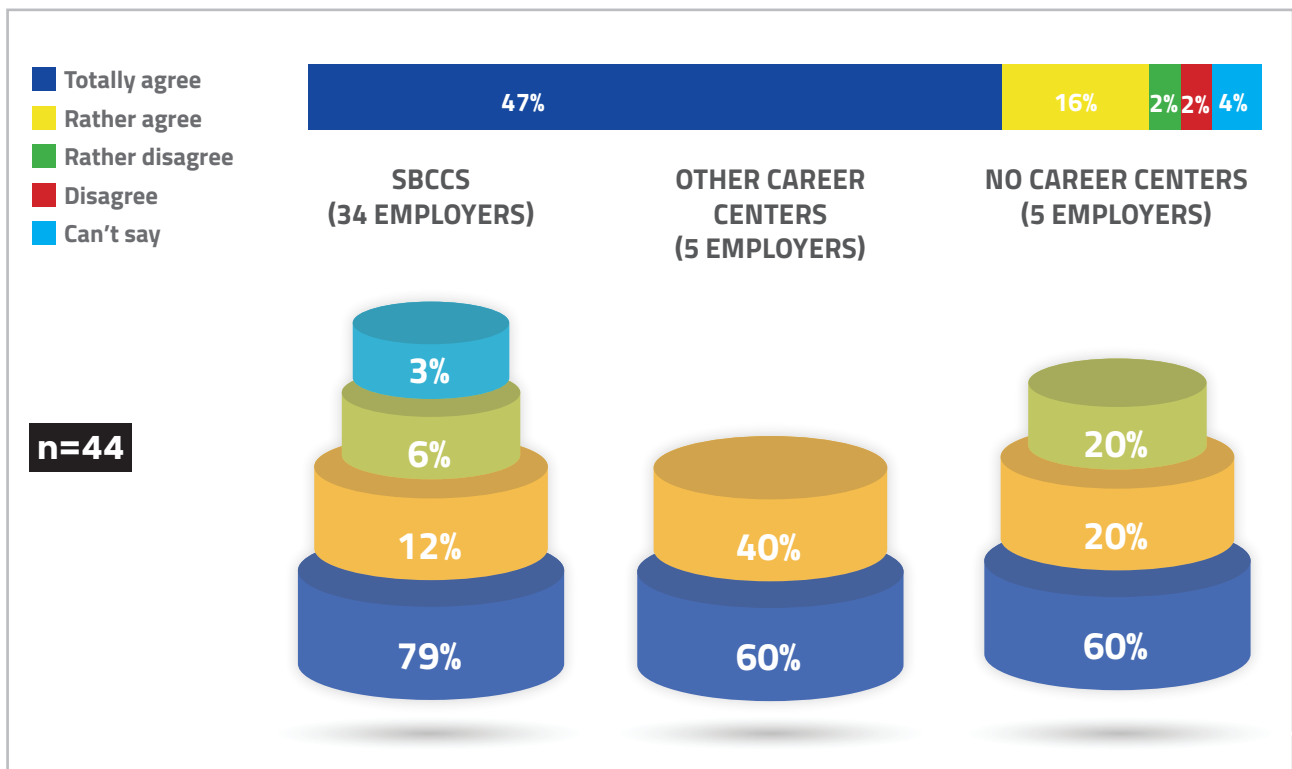
**FIGURE 14.** Improved job application skills of VET students



The students from schools which don't have career centers have gained career skills mainly as a result of school activities, such as Life and Work classes (part of "Information and Communication Technology" subject), individual support provided by teachers, as well as through participation in career fairs, visits to Public employment offices and activities organized by other career centers (SBCCs, youth career centers, municipal career centers); as well as through online platform Busulla.

The share of employers who firmly state that SBCCs help students improve their job-application and interview skills, is much higher than those in the other schools. This is a result of the big number of training and activities organized in these topics.

**FIGURE 15.** Employers' consent that career centers improve students' job application skills



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS - Level of students' job readiness and soft skills that help increase their employability power.

### Conclusions:

- Career Centers support mostly VET school students to be equipped with practical skills and to facilitate their employment. For this purpose, the organization of internships and work-based learning is a primary task of Career Centers. Additionally, they offer soft-skills training, labor market information and career development support which aim to enhance the smooth transition of VET students from school to work.
- Among the surveyed VET students that used career services, 92% of them have referred to School-based Career Centers, while additional 8% to other resources (municipal career center, youth career centers, and Busulla platform).
- 77% of students that used career services have improved their skills to find credible information about jobs and career prospects. However, comparing this impact dimension among students who have benefited from career centers (SBCC and municipal career center) and those with no career centers, there is no significant difference. Students from schools which don't have career centers have gained career skills mainly through "Life and Work" curriculum area and the online platform Busulla.
- But students from SBCCs are most sure in their career plans after graduation. 86% of them confirmed that they have already decided, compared to students from schools with other career centers and with no career services where the share of those who still hesitate is ¼.
- Soft skills are another important aspect for VET students for a smooth transition from school to work. 71% of surveyed students, confirmed that career services supported them to improve their job application and interview skills. Among the students that benefited from career center support (SBCC and municipal CC), this percentage reaches up to 77%, while among the students from schools with no career services this share is lower (64%).
- The share of employers who firmly state that career centers help students improve their job-application and interview skills, is much higher among them who cooperate with schools with SBCCs (79%) than with other schools. This is a result of the big number of training and activities organized by SBCCs in these topics.

### Recommendations on a policy level:

- Busulla.com is a popular source used for self-inventory by VET students and the career information (labor market and education information) must be constantly updated. Since this is a national platform, it should be more closely monitored by MESTI, to ensure the quality of information and frequency of use.
- Teachers of "Life and Work" and career center staff must be trained to offer adequate individual support and labor market information to VET students.

## STATEMENTS – Dimension 2

Following are some statements of VET students, teachers, employers, and community members that confirm the level of support and help that career centers provide to increase the level of students' job readiness and soft skills that help increase their employability power.

*"Students from school with a career center are much more prepared for the labour market. We had students from VET schools in our office and we helped them register here."*

*Employment Office, Prizren*



*"Our cooperation with the Agribusiness School "Zenel Hajdini", respectively with the Career Center, had a very good and positive impact. Through this cooperation we raised awareness of the students in researching the labor market opportunities, and informed them about the employment services and the importance of finding a job in their profession.*

*For Career Centers it is important to connect with EO because clients who have benefited from these services are mostly employed, especially students who have completed the wood and textile/tailor vocational training courses."*

***Naim Gashi, Director  
Employment Office, Ferizaj***

- ***"Career Center helps students to orient themselves for the future and this is very important. Every student needs to consult with a career center. Maybe sometime we need it, too."***

Employer organization, Gjakovë

- ***"The career center is an inspiration and motivation for students, they have a place to get information about the labor market"***

Fatime Kadriu, teacher at Shtjefen Gjeqovi" school, Prishtine

***"Since the career center was established, students are more prepared for the labor market as a result of training, advice and information provided through the center."*** Afrim Namani, Education directorate, Municipality of Vushtrri

- ***"Initially, I got skills in the basics of architecture since I was a good painter and worked on good paintings but after talking to professors, I decided to move on to graphic design. The advice from the professors has made me orient myself better about what I am more capable of and what profession has more perspectives."***

Student in "Nexhmedin Nixha" school, Gjakovë

- *"The career center has been open for several years and has an extremely good result in the knowledge of the labor market among students. They are trained in various areas of profiles and professions that exist within the state. It has helped my child to know the labor market and also to practice the profession. **My child has had the opportunity to participate in events that are organized and I see the change he had when he participated in the career center, he is more active after attending training in the career center."***

Parent, Prizren



*"The training sessions, organized by the Career Center helped me a lot in preparing my CV and finding a job. Currently, I work at Comodita. I got the first information on career orientation when I visited the Career Center. I have also learned how to work in a team, which is a skill necessary both for work and for life. Moreover, the Career Center coordinator oriented me in studying graphic designing since I have talent for painting. Upon graduation, I will study Graphic Design at university."*

**Ylli Derri, 12 grade student**  
**"Nexhmedin Nixha" School, Gjakovë**  
**(RAE student)**



*"The Career Center works hard in terms of training and providing career orientation tips to students of the school. It prepares students to be more competitive in the job market in the future. Earlier, students graduated from school but did not know what is CV, cover letter, and how to search for a job."*

**Ardiana Kajtazi, teacher**  
**"Shaban Spahija", Peja**



*"The Career Center had a positive impact for my son. **The coordinator of the center has helped my son through career orientation and now my son has a clear vision for the future.***

*I have two sons in this school and I have immediately noticed the positive change in their behavior as soon as the Career Center started working with students. My son informed me about the activities that the center performed. I'm happy that the Career Center started to operate, since they can create linkages and better communication between the school and businesses for providing the internship opportunities."*

Faruk Veliu, parent  
 Center of Competence, Skenderaj

*"We witnessed that after functionalization of Career Center, students are more communicative and more prepared for the labour market. Students now can communicate easier with businesses and companies."*

*Valmira Shabani, Employer, Skenderaj*



*"I am a student of ICT profile, and after graduation, I was planning to change my field by studying English language in university.*

*However, after attending the orientation training, I changed my mind. Now, I have decided to study ICT because as I was informed this is the field which is demanded in the Labour market.*

*The Career Center coordinator can help you with a lot of information, starting from training on how to apply for a job and how to prepare for an interview. I'm thankful to the Career Center coordinators, as they treated us with respect and oriented us in the future career."*

**Dorina Dejlli**

*12 grade student and leader*

*of the school Career Club "Shaban Spahija" school, Pejë*

## **Dimension 3:**

### **Job placement rate of graduates**

To support graduate employment, VET schools heavily rely on their cooperation with businesses, so they organize training on practical skills for the world of work and monitor graduate placement.

According to the model of School-based Career Center, one of its responsibilities is to cooperate with businesses in order to strengthen the cooperation and dialogue of VET schools with the labor market, so within the organizational structure there is the coordinator for cooperation with the labor market. Having a special staff who deals with this task, in schools that have SBCCs, the relationship of cooperation with various economic sectors has significantly improved. Although SBCC is the main gateway to establishing partnerships with businesses, they do not have the mandate to organize and monitor professional practice and the WBL which is part of the curriculum and are managed by professional practice teachers, but SBCCs work closely with teachers to recruit and reach agreements with businesses. On the other hand, SBCCs has the full responsibility for implementation of internships, and in this case contributes a lot to the students who have not had the opportunity to realize the WBL to be accommodated in the internships. MESTI policies are to gradually install the dual system in VET schools, so that professional practice and internships are completely transformed into WBL, and recently has been approved the Administrative Instruction that regulates the WBL.

The advantage in this case is that the SBCCs' commitment covers the entire VET cycle, so VET students from 10 to 12 grade classes get the chance for practical experiences with businesses.



In VET schools that benefit from other models of career centers (e.g. municipal CC), only internships are organized mostly for 12-grade students, while there is no cooperation of career centers with teachers of professional practice. The WBL is very rarely organized by these schools.

Students from schools where no career services are available rely only on the professional practice required by curriculum and organized either with businesses or in the school workshops. Agreements with businesses are made by school leadership or teachers of professional practice.

To analyze the impact dimension related to graduates placement rates, the field research looked for tangible results such as the number of cooperation agreements with businesses, the number of internships / WBL experiences organized in the 3 type of schools included in the sample, the share of students involved in practical training that prepares them for the world of work, as well as for evidence about the overall effectiveness to what extent this has contributed to successful graduate placement.

The data collection activities included: online survey with VET students, in person interviews with school directors/teachers and career center staff where available, which introduced facts and statistics of the last 3 school years regarding this topic; focus groups and interviews with VET students; interviews with employers and community members.

## **Career Centers help students find internships and jobs**

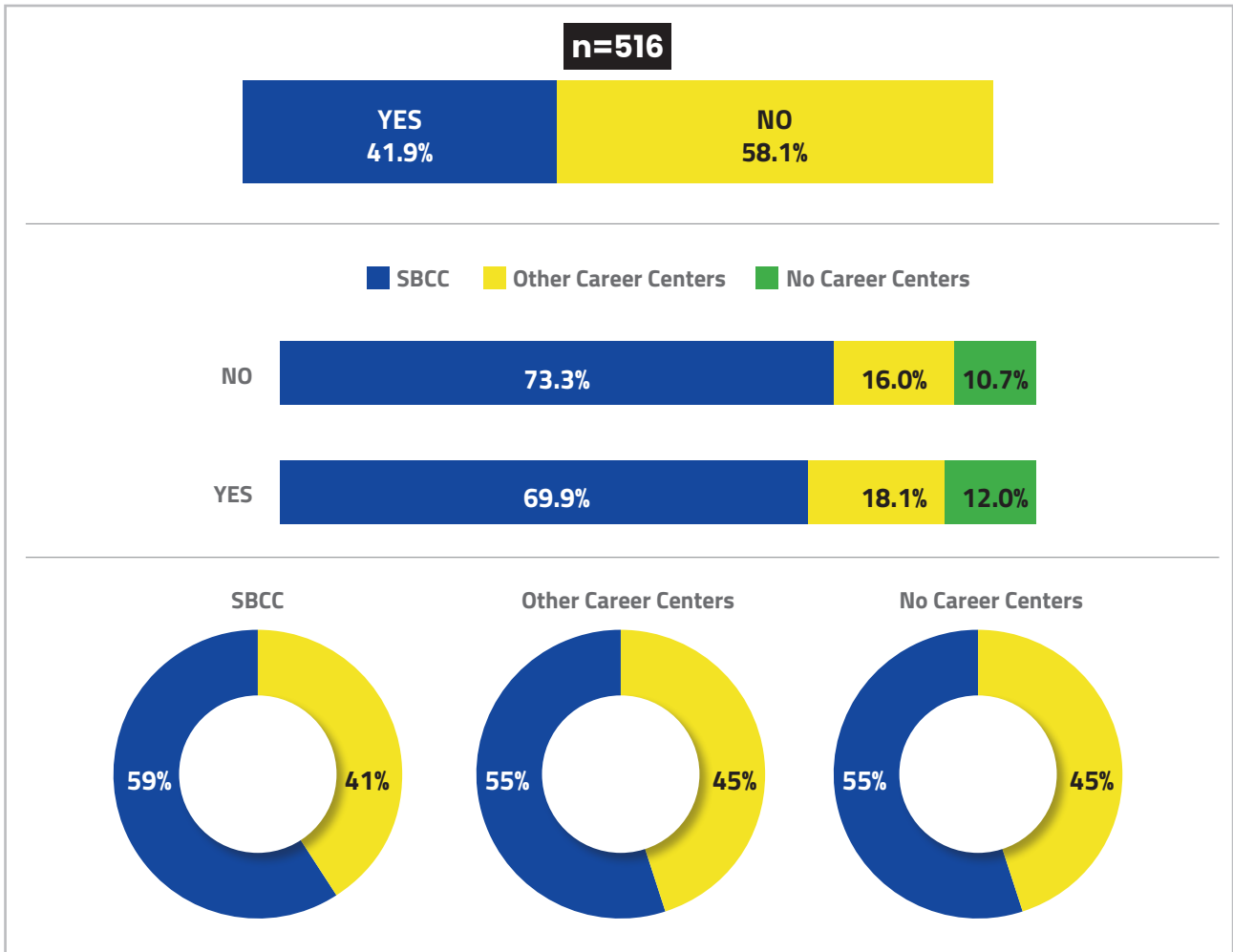
The interviews with career center staff and school principals show that the career centers put much effort in developing contacts with the businesses to support students' transition from school to work. However, as graduate tracking is not developed as a service, it is hard to support the result of these activities with numbers.

Out of 728 students that used career services, 516 of them answered to the question if the career centers helped them find internships or jobs. Of this number, the percentage of those who were able to find internship / job is lower for 16,2% compared to those who did not have this practical work experience (41.9% : 58.1%).

**Students at VET schools with SBCC were significantly more successful in finding internship/job in a percentage of 69.9% compared to the other students at schools supported by other career centers (18.1%) or those with no career centers (12%).**

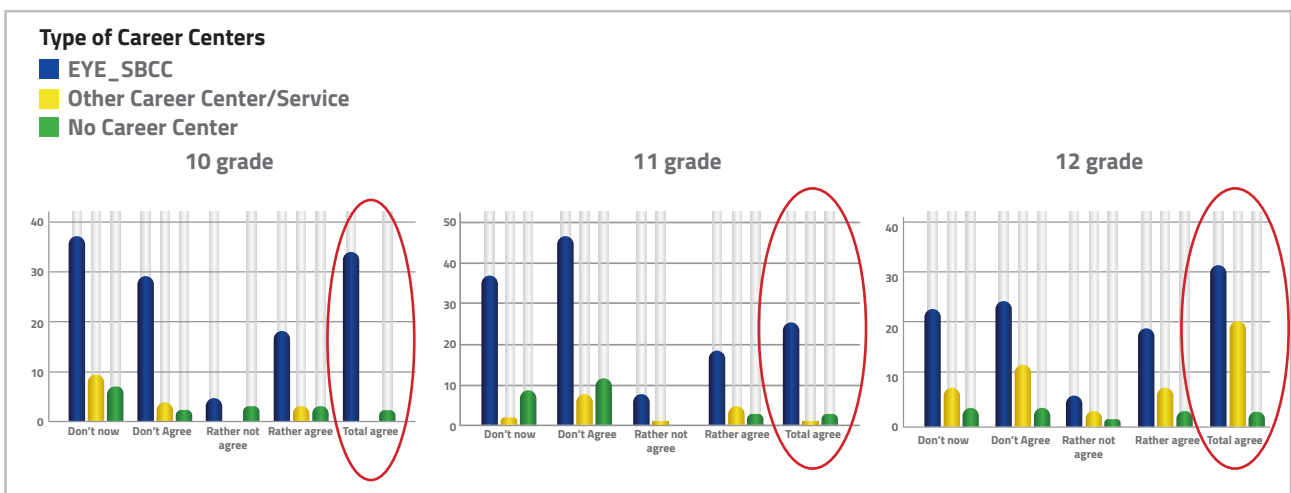


**FIGURE 16.** Number of students that managed to find internship/jobs



Another advantage of schools with SBCCs is that internships and work-based learning opportunities are offered to students starting in 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, while in other career centers they are mostly offered to 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**FIGURE 17.** Number of students that managed to find internship/jobs by grade



Even by gender and ethnicity, the research found out that in schools with SBCC women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.

**FIGURE 18.** Number of students that managed to find internship/jobs by gender and ethnicity



In addition to the online survey with VET students who reflected on their views on the chances of finding an internship/WBL and how much career centers have helped in this regard, statistics were also collected from the schools involved in this research.

The statistical data collected from VET schools shows that there is variety of the types of practical skills offered to students. SBCCs offer work-based learning, internships and organize workplace visits in different cities for all 10-11-12 grade students. Schools with other types of career centers offer

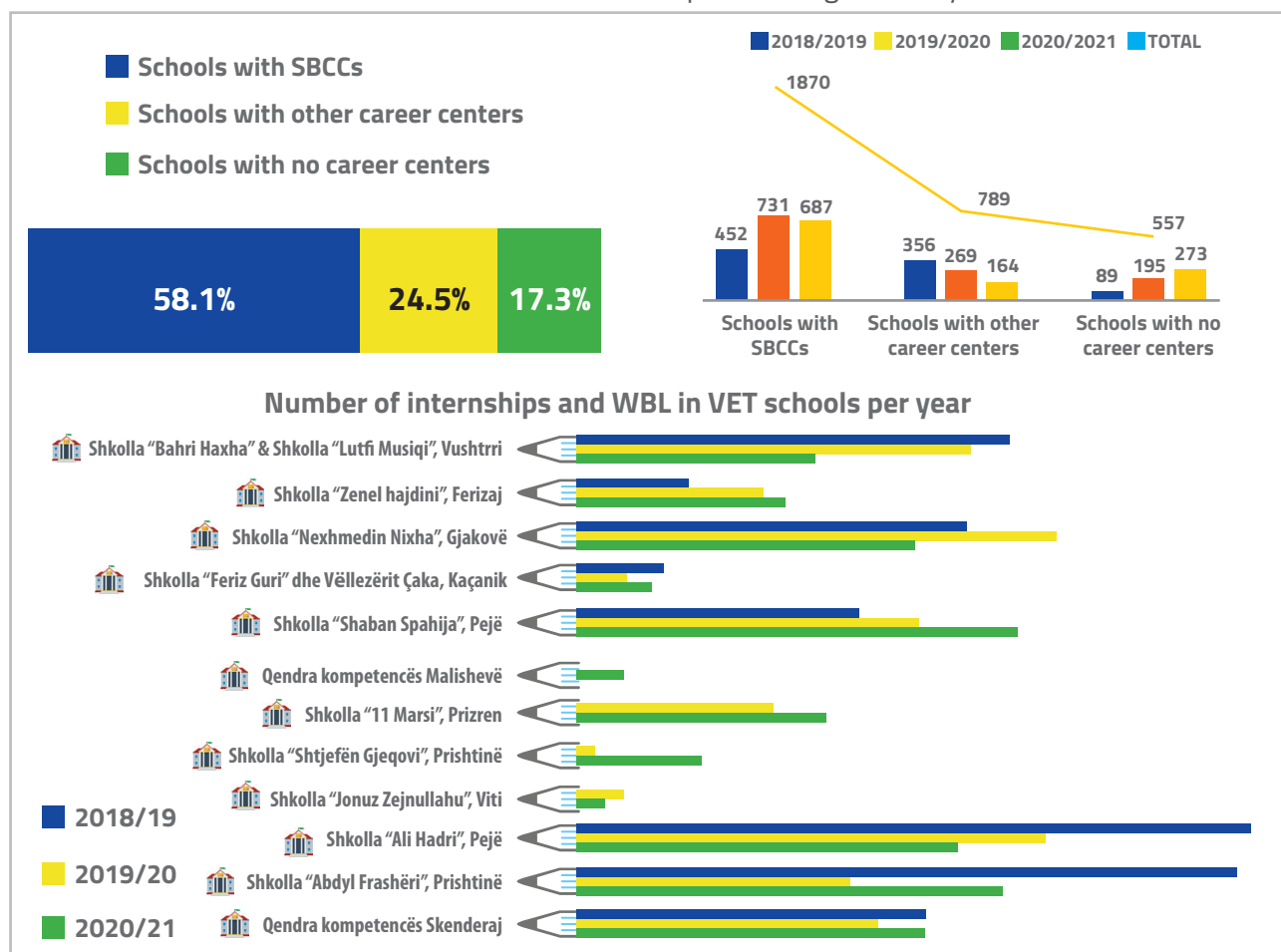
internships and visits to companies only for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, while other schools with no career centers have only professional practice and most of it is implemented in the school workshops and less in companies while very rarely offer internships.

**Based on statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research, out of the total internships / WBL organized by these schools, schools with SBCC lead with 58.1%, to be followed by schools with other models of career centers with 24.5% and those without career centers with only 17.8%.**

**So, it is obvious that SBCCs are the catalyst for creating opportunities and supporting students to acquire work-based experience to have a faster transition from school to work, and such a model of career center seems quite successful.**

However, in the last 3 years the number of organized work-based experiences has varied. Due to the pandemic, the schools have encountered difficulties to conduct internships at companies and some of them have replaced them with practical training in their own premises.

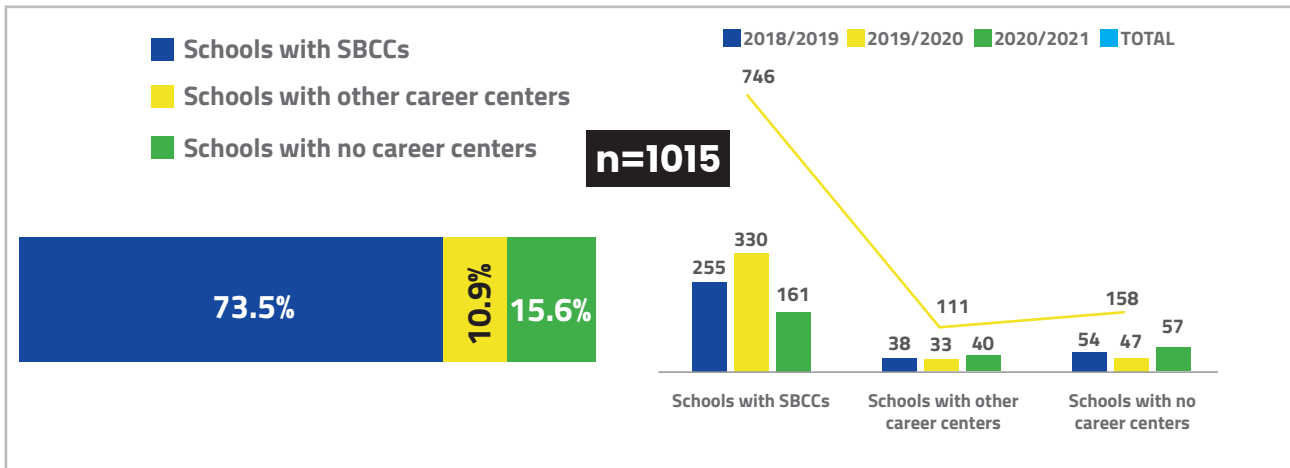
**FIGURE 19.** Number of students involved in internships/WBL organized by VET Schools



The role of businesses in conducting internships/WBL for VET school students is extremely important. The majority of the schools have established formal cooperation with employers, or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), under which the students are placed to get practical skills, either internship, or WBL, or professional practice. However, not all vocational schools have the same level of cooperation.

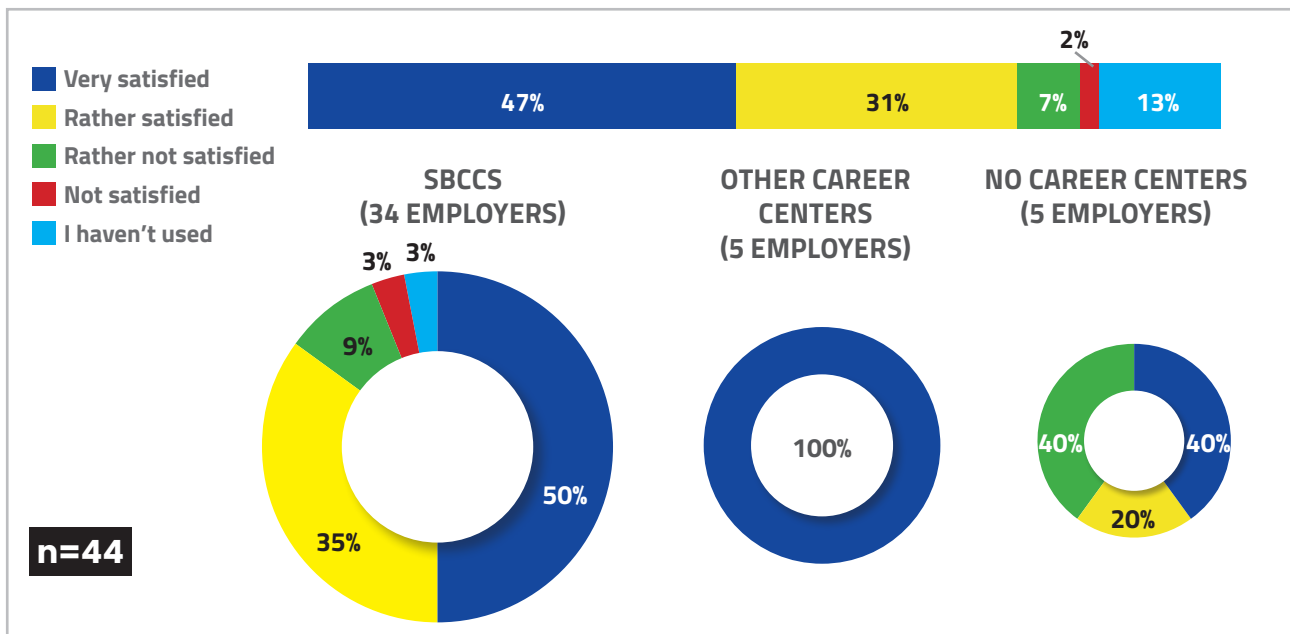
Out of a total 1015 businesses that have participated in providing internship / WBL to students of 18 VET schools involved in the research, 73.5% of them have cooperated with schools that have SBCC, while only 26.5% belong to two other school groups either with different model of career center or with no career center.

**FIGURE 20.** Number of businesses involved in internships/WBL organized by VET Schools



Moreover, 85% of the businesses that have collaborated with SBCC are satisfied with the organized internships and WBL by the schools, while 12% are not fond of it, due to lack of commitment from students. The recommendations employers made is for greater involvement of career centers' staff in the selection of students and their monitoring from teachers' side in the course of the practice.

**FIGURE 21.** Employers' satisfaction with internships/WBL



Additionally, 75% of SBCC employers are fond of the open days at the company organized for students, while among those who work with schools without a career center, only 1 out of 5 has hosted such visits.

**The situation at VET schools with other model of career centers varies.** In 2020 most schools have been challenged in organizing work-based experience at companies, so students have conducted professional practice at equipped cabinets at the school or participated only in one-day visits to businesses (Shkolla “Ali Hadri” Peje).

For example, the school “Abdyl Frasheri” in Pristina sends 12-graders to the municipality career center, where students are being trained, offered jobs and the school doesn’t track them. The school has arrangements, mainly for one-time visits / or less often, on-the-job training but not Internships.

The Center of Competence in Skenderaj has a full-time career coordinator who networks with companies and follows up the internship placement. They have signed MoUs with businesses and provided very detailed reports.

**VET Schools with no career centers** mostly organize work practice for students in 12th grade for 12h/week as part of the Professional Practice subject. Students visit companies 2 days a week based on the teaching schedule in collaboration with the internship professor, based on the curriculum and the job position.

The “Skender Luarasi” school in Suhareke has established an Industrial Board which has an advisory role and will be a bridge between the school and businesses.

According to employers who work with schools with no career centers, it is not enough to equip young people with the skills for work. Most of them believe that the career center will help improve the cooperation and students will be better prepared for the labour market.

The directors of VET schools with no career centers also realize the numerous benefits a career center would provide and all of them have already started considering opening career centers. In most cases this initiative is also supported by the demand from the business.

## **Career Centers help students develop practical skills for the world of work**

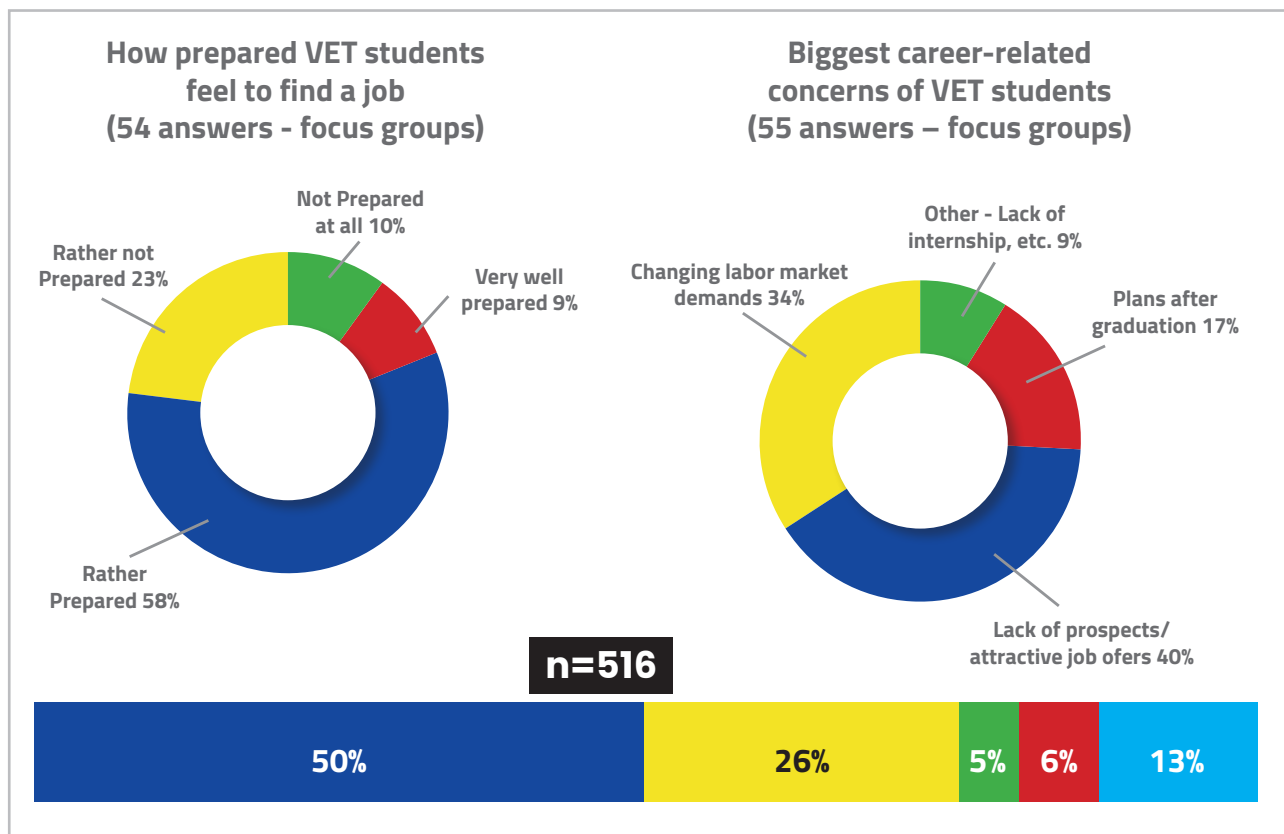
The career centers organize a range of activities to prepare students for the world of work – meeting with employers, workplace visits and job shadowing, invite guest speakers from companies and institutions, practical training which introduce students to the work reality (rights and responsibilities, expectations of employers, code of conduct, etc.) All of these activities are assessed as very helpful by students.

During the focus groups, students of all three groups of schools involved in the research (with SBCC, with other career centers and with no career centers) have been asked to assess how well-prepared they feel for finding a job. The large majority of respondents (58%) answer “rather prepared” and feel unprepared. Only 9% are confident they have enough skills to find a job. On the other hand, 33% of all students in the focus groups don’t feel adequately prepared for the world of work. SBCCs need to continue offering soft skills training for students and organizing more work-based learning opportunities to make them better prepared for the changing world of work.

Students listed as their biggest career-related concerns the lack of prospects and adequate job offers, the dynamic labour market and changing job demands, clarifying plans for the future and the lack of internships and other practical training opportunities.

While results from online survey with VET students shows that 76% of students agree that they are well equipped with practical skills for the world of work.

**FIGURE 22.** Perception of VET students for acquired practical skills for the world of work



### Career centers improve graduate tracking and assessment of job placement rate.

Graduate tracking is not developed in Kosovo. In order to be put in place, it needs coordinated efforts on institutional level for introducing a monitoring system and indicators/ benchmarks involving all schools.

Yet, the study proved that career centers help schools realize the benefits of graduate tracking in terms of measuring and promoting the quality of education and have put in place some internal monitoring activities.

Moreover, schools which have career centers are able to easily provide available data related to internships, training, contracts with businesses, and enrolment of students several years back. As commented by teachers and directors at schools who compare the situation before and after the establishment of the career center, it has significantly improved the level of cooperation with business and facilitated the organization of internships and as a result, graduate placement.

**To improve tracking, schools should create and maintain databases of students after graduation about their employment.**

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Job placement rates of graduates.**

### **Conclusions:**

- Schools need to create and maintain databases for tracking students after graduation about their employment. A centralized benchmarking system and indicators will greatly improve the collection of reliable and comparable data of the schools in Kosovo.
- Students at VET schools with SBCC were significantly more successful in finding internship/job in a percentage of 69.9% compared to the other students at schools supported by other career centers (18.1%) or those with no career centers (12%).
- Another advantage of schools with SBCCs is that internships and work-based learning opportunities are offered to students starting in 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, while in other career centers they are mostly offered to 12<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Even by gender and ethnicity, the research found out that in schools with SBCC women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.
- Based on statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research, out of the total internships / WBL organized by these schools, schools with SBCC lead with 58.1%, to be followed by schools with other models of career centers with 24.5% and those without career centers with only 17.8%.

So, it is obvious that SBCCs are the catalyst for creating opportunities and supporting students to acquire work-based experience to have a faster transition from school to work, and such a model of career center seems quite successful.

- The establishment of SBCCs has significantly improved the level of cooperation with business. Out of a total of 1015 businesses that have participated in providing internship / WBL to students of 18 VET schools involved in the research, 73.5% of them have cooperated with schools that have SBCC, while only 26.5% belong to two other school groups either with different model of career center or with no career center.

As a comparison, 40% of the interviewed employers who partner with schools with no career centers have not been involved in internships or practices. They expect that a career center would give impetus to the practical training of students, which is very necessary.

- Moreover, 85% of the businesses that have collaborated with SBCC are satisfied with the organized internships and WBL by the schools, while 12% are not fond of it, due to lack of commitment from students. The recommendations employers made is for greater involvement of career centers' staff in the selection of students and their monitoring from teachers' side in the course of the practice.
- 33% of all students in the focus groups don't feel adequately prepared for the world of work. SBCCs need to continue offering soft skills training for students and organizing more work-based learning opportunities to make them better prepared for the changing world of work.

## Recommendations on a policy level:

- Internships need to be regulated, more relevant, and offered massively. Internships and work-based learning equip students with practical skills, help them create awareness about the LM requirements and opportunities, and support individual career choices.
- Career centers must be institutionalized and sustained with adequate funding. Public investment and regulation will ensure their effective and quality provision in the long term.
- To measure the quality and effectiveness, indicators and a benchmarking system need to be introduced, overseen by a public body (Ministry, VET agency). The benchmarking system can be used by the centers themselves for improvement and by the Ministry for policy actions (including financing at a later stage).

## STATEMENTS – Dimension 3

Following are some statements of VET students, teachers, school principals, employers, and community members that confirm the level of support and help that career centers provide to integrate students into the labor market.



*"Our statistics show that 50% of our school students, who engage in different programs with our partner companies, are employed by them. This is our success and it improved the reputation of our school. Moreover, through promotion and good work over the years, we are receiving new requests from companies who are asking to have students in internship programs.*

*For example, Bau Market was the one to employ few of our students, and as they were happy with them, they are asking for more students to whom they will offer a job opportunity.*

*Before the Career Center started, we made a lot of effort to get more companies on board and sign MOU with them, now as a result of our work and promotion through the local media, companies are reaching out to us and asking how many students are interested to work, so they will offer jobs."*

**Abdullah Imeri, Director**

*"Zenel Hajdini" Agribusiness and Technology school, Ferizaj*





***“The career center provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the labor market. At the same time businesses test and train students who may be their future employees.***

*The career center has an important role in linking students with the business, by providing information about the job opportunities so they don't have to leave the country.*

*Our company enables students to practice the theory they get in schools. We also inform them about the risks at work and how to address them. We provided internships for up to 2-3 students per year. As a result, we offered jobs to 3 students that showed interest and were committed.”*

***Florent Hoti, employer  
Restaurant Hoti 2, Malisheva***

#### **Some recommendations for improvement from employers:**

*“Students should show greater interest. To show more serious commitment, not to have absences in practice. Counselors or teachers should be more engaged in identifying the reasons for these absences without warning.*

*Since parents play a big role here, meetings with parents should probably be arranged more often.*

***Employer DPZ VES, Vushtrri***

***“The liaison, the cooperation with the professors should be at a higher level, their engagement in practice should be taken seriously, the students should be evaluated fairly.”***

***Employers in Furniture sector, Ferizaj***

***“Students who engage in internships should be conditioned with an assessment or exam at the end of the internship to be given more importance and seriousness at work, to increase the level of responsibility for this part of the internship that she/he performs.”***

***Employer Isuf Shabani, Viti***

***“A syllabus should be created that allows the practice to stop and take place more often than just once a week. The internship should then be evaluated by the school for the firm but also by the firm for the student. There should also be a categorization of firms that provide internships for students.”***

***Employer CTA Rame Elezaj, Peja***

***“The establishment of the school career center enabled better cooperation with business. There is a labor market coordinator, who deals professionally with finding business and formalizing agreements, so that students who go to practice are treated properly.”***

***Representative of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Pristine***

***“Until 2 years ago there was no career center and this is being seen that it is succeeding in many different profiles and students are being employed after practice.”***

*Employer Eximtex, Gjakova*

***“In coordination with the SBCC, we organize internships for 10 to 15 students each year. Many of them are employed afterwards, some - immediately after graduating from school and some others - after college.***

*Employer Lorik Center, Malisheve*

***“The school should cooperate more with businesses, because finishing high school and not having the chance to see the practical side of the theory is nothing. I am very eager to engage students in the practice, so they will improve their work skills in this profession. For me it will be beneficial as well, because I am facing problems finding qualified staff. It’s a win-win situation.”***

*Employer, N.T.P. “R.B. METAL”, Gjilan*

***It would facilitate the work, if there was a Career Center in “Avdyl Frasher”, the more communication/network there is, the better it will be. There are currently no interns. The market needs qualified staff, but the interest of students is weak. I am talking about the dairy field but I believe in others as well.”***

*Employer, Pristine*

***“The career center would facilitate cooperation and there would be a more serious and effective organization. At the time of great work commitments, we do not have the opportunity to get interns because it costs you time to deal with them, they have responsibilities, but in case a professor is appointed, or a head from the school it would be easier.”***

*Employer, Shtime*

***“It is important to have a career center. In addition to liaising with businesses, the biggest problem is the proper realization of professional practice, because otherwise students are not prepared after graduation.”***

*School director, ShMT “Mehmet Isai” Gjilan*

#### **Comments from the focus groups with students:**

*“The bartenders and waitresses are more in demand, there is very little of what we are looking for. In Gjakova this situation is especially difficult and there are no jobs for what we are looking for, while in Prishtina there are jobs of our profession and we have to travel to work.”*

*“They offer you the job but the offer is not correct due to the payment, it demands more than it pays. During work I want to be more trained and, in the future, to open a business of my own.”*

*“We get hired for something else and then they ask us for other additional things which were not foreseen.”*

***"I can say that 9 out of 10 businesses that engage the students from the career center are willing to hire them. For the businesses the recruitment is much easier, because the students are prepared for this profession, and that they are aware of what they have to do in the respective position. Students of VET school "Bahri Haxha", that were engaged in my company, very interested to learn, were very skilled and prepared and have shown very good performance."***

***Employer NSH Kontabilisti, Vushtrri***



*"We have very good cooperation with the school Career Center and are satisfied with their services. They ensure that students are finding opportunities to practice their knowledge in the company whilst following up during the practice and helping them better understand the world of work. The link between school and business is very important, because students can practice what they learn in theory and get the real feel of how one company operates."*

***Ilir Alidemaj, employer  
Bellino Home, Peja***



*"I have very good cooperation with the school Career Center. As a company, I am ready to support them and my doors are open for them and for students who are interested in practicing their knowledge in internships. I think this way I'm training my future employees. "*

***Bajram Ahemtaj, employer  
NTSH 'Hidraulika', Prizren***



*"Placing students to internships is very important for students. They feel more prepared for work when they are directly involved in the business. Workplace education or internship builds a lot of work skills, communication, teamwork, work rules, dress code. It is shaping students professionally."*

***Zehra Kovaqi, SBCC Coordinator  
"Bahri Haxha" school, Vushtrri***

***“Students from school with a career center are much more prepared for the labour market. We were invited to some events. The level of cooperation is very satisfying. We had students from VET schools in our office and we helped them register here.”***

***(Representative of the Employment Office, Prizren)***

***“Students who go through the Career Center are better prepared and more suitable for the job market and it is easier for employers during recruitment.”***

***(Representative of the Employment Office, Pristine)***

*“Students coming from schools with EYE project SBCC are more prepared for a job market, from the work practice at school, internship at businesses and by training offered by the SBCC.*

*The cooperation between the Employment office and school is very good, we have regular monthly meetings with the school director, and CC coordinators. The promotion of the Employment Office through SBCC has an effect but has even more effect when they come and visit the EO offices and see our work in person.*

*Career Centers should be established in other professional schools, but also in gymnasiums.”*

*Representative of the Employment Office, Ferizaj*



*“I learned about the labor market demands and the perspectives of the profession and this motivated me in the “Textile-Confection” profile. Now I am graduating and with the professional practice in school and the internship opportunity, I feel that I’m prepared to start working in this profession.”*

***Almedina Misini,  
12 grade VET student  
“Jonuz Zejnullahu” school, Viti***



*“As a Career Center, we have organized information sessions about the career center services and profiles in our school, for over 900 students in 9th grade from most of the primary schools in our municipality.*

*The Career Center provides support services for students of the 10th graders, information of the colleges and universities located in our municipality for students of the 12th grade.*

*We have provided soft skills training for over 70 students in the 11th and 12th grade, and signed 93 agreements to provide them with opportunities for professional practice.*

*As a result, 20 students were employed.”*

***Leonard Shehu  
SBCC Coordinator  
“Nexhmedin Nixha”, Gjakovë***

## Dimension 4:

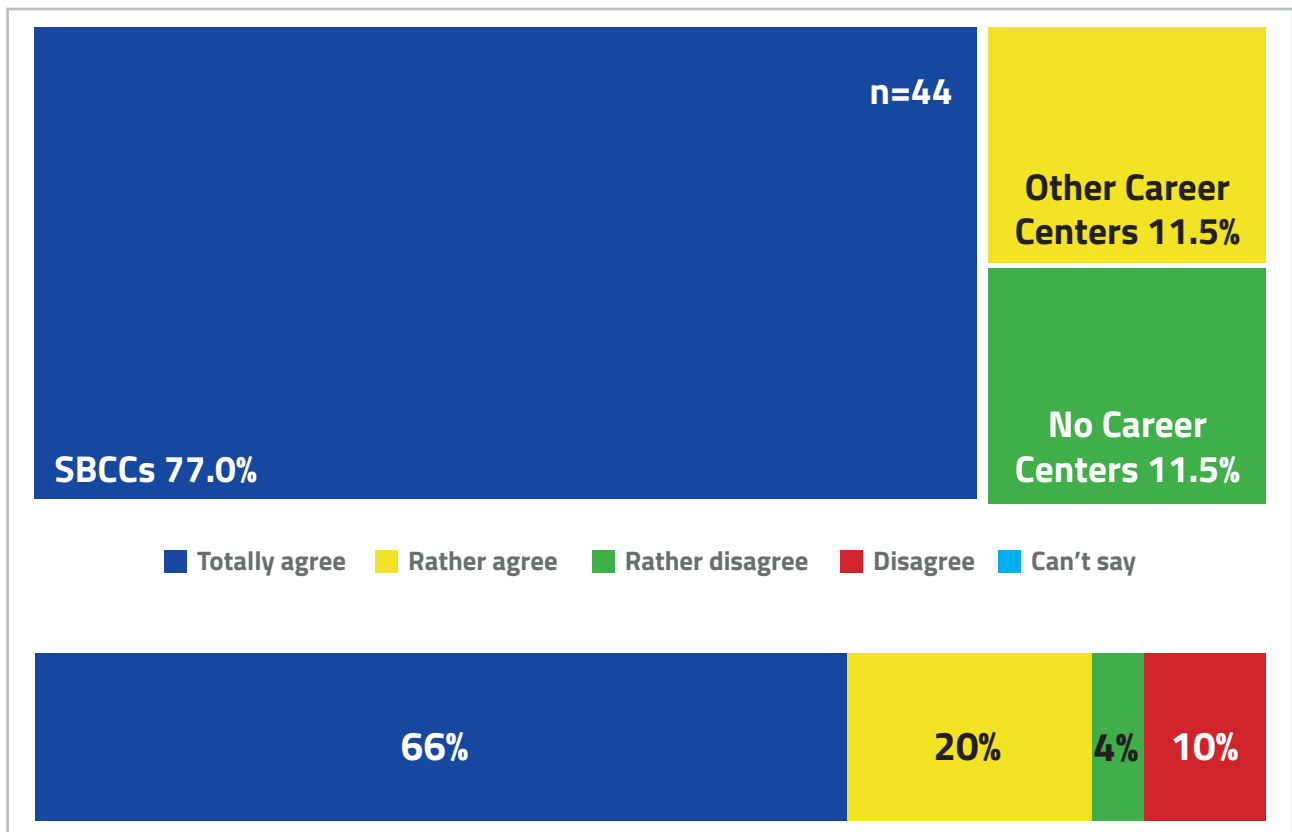
### Level of businesses' involvement in school activities and their contribution to students' school-to-work transition

Career Centers offer various services and activities which benefit companies. They link students looking for practices and graduates searching jobs directly with companies, support the selection and recruitment of candidates, organize career events in which companies promote themselves to students and facilitate the organization of internships and work-based learning. Additionally, the career center links employers and schools, makes communication easier and strengthens cooperation. SBCCs also foster the involvement of business in school initiatives which support students' employability.

To analyze the impact dimension related to level of businesses' involvement in school activities and their contribution to students' school-to-work transition, it has been analyzed to what level career centers help recruiting interns and graduates, help companies promote themselves to schools/ students, how effective they are in organization of internships/WBL, and whether the communication and feedback between schools and businesses is enhanced through career centers.

The data collection activities included: in person interviews with school directors/teachers and career center staff where available, which introduced facts and statistics of the last 3 school years regarding this topic; focus groups and interviews with VET students; interviews with employers and community members.

**FIGURE 23.** Share of interviewed businesses cooperating with VET schools and their satisfaction level



## Findings from interviews with employers

This research involved 44 businesses spread out through 15 municipalities.

The highest level of business cooperation with VET schools is with those schools that have SBCCs. Out of 44 interviewed businesses, 77% of them (34) declared that cooperate with schools with SBCC, while 23% (10 businesses) cooperate with VET schools either having other models of career center or not having at all career centers. 86% of them agree that generally have been enhanced their cooperation with schools and involvement in school activities due to the career centers.

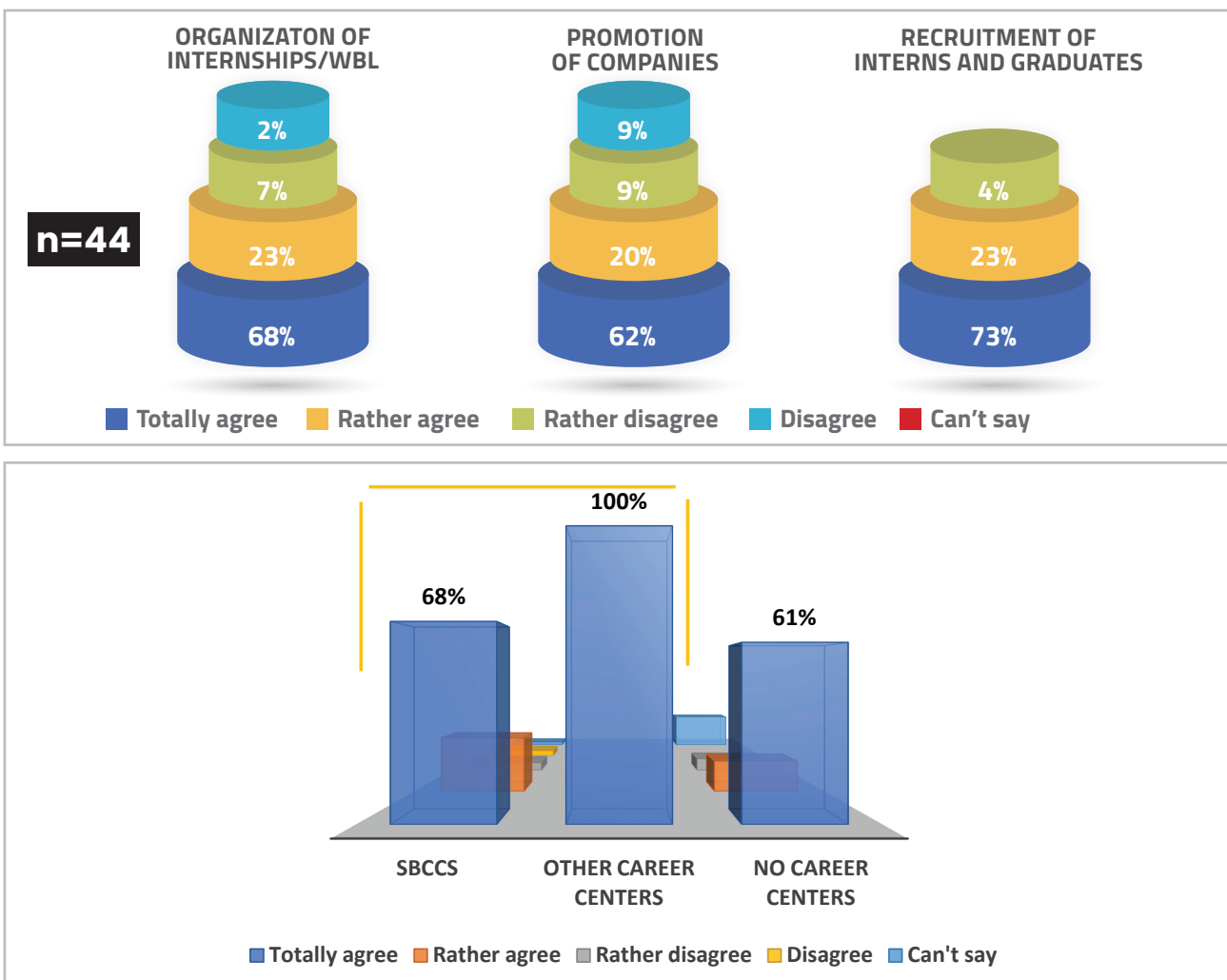
### Career Centers make recruiting interns and graduates easier, help companies promote themselves to students, and facilitate the organization and effectiveness of internships/WBL

Although 86% of the 44 interviewed companies generally agree that the cooperation with VET schools due to the career centers has been strengthened, it is important to understand their satisfaction with some of the main activities of the career centers in which businesses are involved.

The 44 companies interviewed have a consensus of 82% to 96% that recruitment of interns and graduates is much easier thus requiring less effort and time by cooperating with VET schools with career centers. Also chances for company promotion are greater, and the organization of internships / WBL is more effective.

The number of employers who agree with this statement is much higher among those respondents who work with SBCCs and other career services, while lowest in schools with no career services.

FIGURE 24. Satisfaction of employers with activities organized by career centers



## Career Centers enhance the communication and feedback between schools and businesses

Almost all employers (98%) support the statement that Career Centers enhance the communication and feedback between schools and businesses. This exchange is mutually beneficial, as it helps companies offer students more adequate opportunities and conditions for students to practice their skills and knowledge at the workplace. On the other side, the feedback from employers is very helpful for schools to update their curriculum and improve the quality and practical dimensions of teaching.

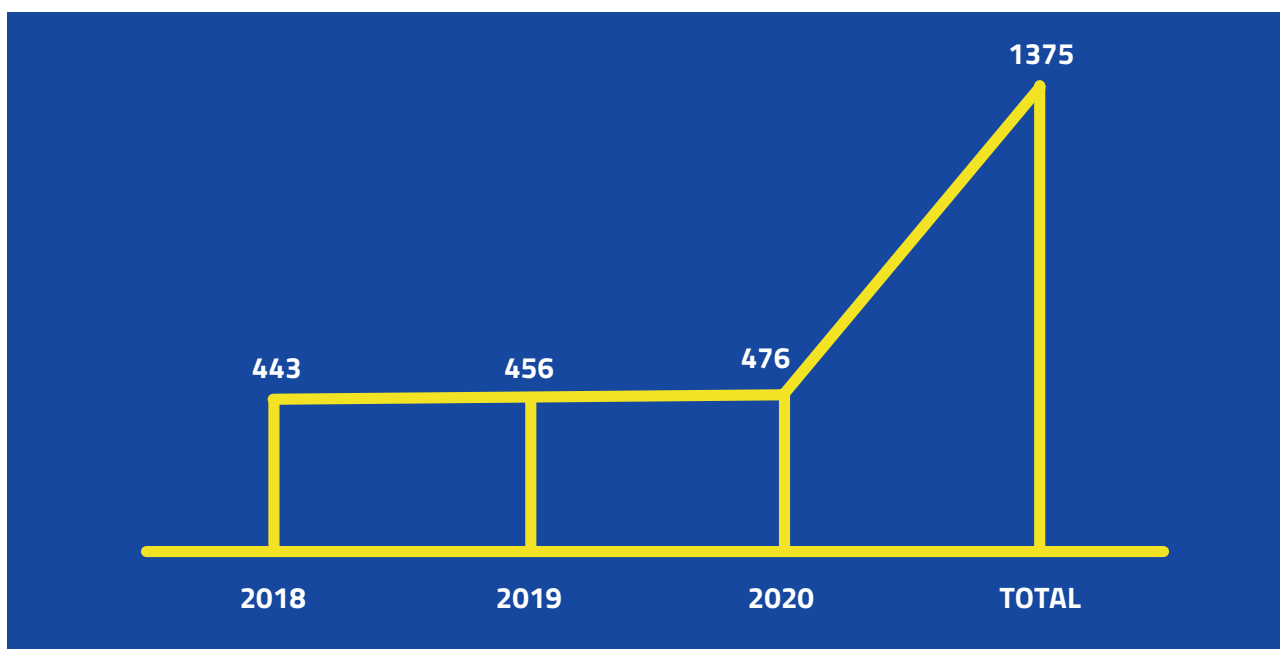
## Career Centers foster the involvement of businesses in school initiatives supporting students' employability

Involvement of businesses in school activities supporting the student's employability has been fostered in last 2-3 years with the establishment of career centers in VET schools.

As stated in the previous chapter of Dimension 3, one of the main activities where businesses are involved is the organization of internships / WBL, and 84.5% of 1015 businesses interviewed confirm that they have achieved this by cooperating with schools that have Career Centers and up to 85% are satisfied or rather satisfied.

Besides internships/WBL, career centers organize different events to support student's employability such as open doors and career fairs. These events are the most special among schools that have SBCCs and show an increase in the number of participating businesses in the last three years 2018/2019/2020.

FIGURE 25. # of businesses involved in SBCC events



The number of businesses involved in events organized by SBCCs in 2020 to support student's employability has an increase of 4.4% compared to 2019 despite the situation with the pandemic,



while compared to 2018 this increase is 7.4% taking also in consideration increased number of new SBCCs established by EYE project.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Level of businesses' involvement in school activities and their contribution to students' school-to-work transition

### Conclusions:

- Career centers have significantly improved the level of cooperation between VET schools and the businesses, which resulted in introducing new profiles, adapting the curriculum, and offering more work-based learning opportunities. The cooperation with teachers who participated in practical training has also improved the efficiency of the offered internship programs.
- VET schools with School-based Career Centers are more recognized by businesses. Out of 44 interviewed businesses, 77% of them (34) declared that cooperate with schools with SBCC, while 23% (10 businesses) cooperate with VET schools either having other models of career center or not having at all career centers. 86% of them agree that generally have been enhanced their cooperation with schools and involvement in school activities due to the career centers.
- The 44 companies interviewed have a consensus of 82% to 96% that recruitment of interns and graduates is much easier thus requiring less effort and time by cooperating with VET schools with career centers. Also chances for company promotion are greater, and the organization of internships / WBL is more effective.

The number of employers who agree with this statement is much higher among those respondents who work with SBCCs and other career services, while lowest in schools with no career services.

- Almost all employers (98%) support the statement that Career Centers enhance the communication and feedback between schools and businesses. This exchange is mutually beneficial, as it helps companies offer students more adequate opportunities and conditions for students to practice their skills and knowledge at the workplace. On the other side, the feedback from employers is very helpful for schools to update their curriculum and improve the quality and practical dimensions of teaching.
- One of the main activities where businesses are involved is the organization of internships / WBL. Out of 1015 businesses that have participated in providing internship / WBL to students of 18 VET schools involved in the research, 84.4% of them confirm that they have achieved this by cooperating with schools that have *Career Centers* (73,5% schools with SBCCs) and up to 85% are satisfied or rather satisfied.
- Involvement of businesses in school activities supporting the student's employability has been fostered in last 2-3 years with the establishment of career centers in VET schools. Besides internships/WBL, career centers organize different events to support student's employability such as open doors and career fairs. These events are the most special among schools that have SBCCs and show an increase in the number of participating businesses in the last three years 2018/2019/2020.

The number of businesses involved in events organized by SBCCs in 2020 to support student's employability has an increase of 4.4% compared to 2019 despite the situation with the pandemic,



while compared to 2018 this increase is 7.4% taking also in consideration increased number of new SBCCs established by EYE project.

## Recommendations on a policy level:

- Relevant local and central institutions need to plan active measures that stimulate the involvement of businesses in schools activities.
- In addition to private businesses, the public sector is also a potential resource to collaborate with VET schools in organizing internships / WBL in relevant profiles. An online platform that would coordinate and manage the recruitment of students from public institutions will strengthen and make this process more transparent.

## STATEMENTS – Dimension 4

Following are some statements of employers, career center coordinators, school principals, and teachers that confirm the satisfaction of the partnership between businesses and VET schools due to operation of career centers. All of them agree that career center's role is quite important when preparing youth for the labor market.



*"We have good cooperation and communication with the professors of the career center. The school-business relations have significantly improved since the Career Center was established. I think that the existence of career centers is very important. We gave good opportunities for students to improve their skills and to follow what they want or love. We started in 2015 with the EYE project. Since then, we have organized courses for 500 children, equipping them with skills in the field of programming. Many of them have continued in vocational schools and now we hope that the first generation will start the faculty."*

**Burim Berisha, employer  
COM-ING, Peja**

### **Comments from employers who cooperate with SBCC schools:**

*"It has been a good cooperation (with the school). We had almost 20 students this year. Their interest was quite impressive. Both genders were present, usually, girls were interested in administrative jobs while the boys were interested in terrain jobs and internet services. We explained to them the internet function and how it goes from the base to the client. I believe that businesses have little space and time to cooperate with Career Centers."*

**Employer in IT sector, Suhareke**

Businesses must become more aware of success stories that prove the value of cooperation both for the students and the companies and, as a result, for the economy. A positive sign is that most of the interviewed employers are aware of their role and clear benefits, like the one below:



*"The Career Center has helped us a lot in organizing internships. Every year we provide internships for approximately 10 to 15 students all this in good cooperation with the Career Center. As a result of internship, many students are offered employment.*

*As part of the business community, it is in our interest to work in close cooperation with career centers and facilitate the development of students during high school through internship, since they will be our future employees. In this way we are investing indirectly in our businesses."*

**Bledar Krasniqi, employer  
Lorik Center, Malisheva**



*"I am very pleased and further interested in contributing to the cooperation of the student-SBCC-Employer trio. It benefits students, employers and the Career Center, facilitates the recruitment of employees, improves cooperation with local authorities, and offers more opportunities to students to be better prepared for the labor market after graduation."*

**Nazmi Azemi, employer  
Korabi Show Shpk, Vushtrri**

**Comments from employers who cooperate with SBCC schools:**

***"It was my first year that I cooperated with SBCC and I'm very satisfied with communication, how they selected the student and I'll use again the opportunities of Career Center services. It was much easier for me as a business to find a student for an internship and I'm sure that it was easy for a student to find an internship with our company."***

***Employer Fjolla Qela, Gjakovë***

***"Cooperation with the Career Center is very good and we appreciate this way of communication, especially professors of Career Center. With them we have collaborated several years before. They continuously informed us about activities and helped with selecting students to practice in our business."***

***Employer Belino, Peja***

***"It facilitates us in finding qualified workers, who have been hired after graduation, or moved to other companies. From the total number of students engaged in the internship through the years, almost 20 were employed."***

***Employer BE Commerce, Vushtrri***

***"It makes it easier to recruit interns and graduates for the employers. The access to potential employees was facilitated by the Career Center. Their engagement is good, and is led by an instructor who assists and supervises students during Workplace Learning"***

***Employers DAQA, Ferizaj***

***"We cooperated earlier with school '11 Marsi' in Prizren for over 10 years, we provided internships for the students of this school. Now we witness that the Career Center is working more in this aspect and it is easier to cooperate and find students for practice."***

***Employers Termomont, Prizren***



***“Career Center supports the development of students’ skills, facilitates the organization of the Work Based Learning, internships, and has increased the employment rate of our school students.***

*It’s a pleasure to see today, the level we have reached with a career center. At the beginning it was a bit difficult and unattainable. However, thanks to the commitment of our staff, awareness raising and promotion activities conducted by our center, it is now well known. This motivates us to be more engaged and contribute more.”*

***Nafije Beqa***

***SBCC at “Zenel Hajdini” Agribusiness and Technology school, Ferizaj***

#### **Comments from teachers:**

*“As a teacher of professional subjects / professional practice, I think the presence of a career center in a vocational school is very important. **The most important service is the collaboration with businesses and linking students with them. Before its establishment, it was very difficult for us to reach cooperation agreements with businesses.”***

Ardiana Kajtazi, teacher at “Shaban Spahija”, Peja

*“It is easier as the Career Center offers the network for engaging students in practical learning, greatly facilitates the work as a teacher, we don’t need to run after businesses when there are specific people that will engage with them, and create a better functioning of this relationship.”*

Shpresa Dibrani, Teacher at ShMP “Bahri Haxha”, Vushtrri



*“The center has had a role of linking between job requirements and the curriculum, helping to develop their quality.*

*The Career Center has been the incentive for establishing a new profile. Wood-processing has been a highly demanded profession by employers and the opening of a new profile in this school has been encouraged, in order to create qualified staff for the emerging industry.”*

***Zehra Kovaqi, SBCC Coordinator***

***“Bahri Haxha” school, Vushtrri***

Being in the position of linking schools and businesses, career centers use the feedback from companies to plan ahead and improve the quality of teaching. The interviews with school staff provide evidence even of changes in curriculum as a result of this:

***“As a result of the information from the Career Center on what skills are required in the labor market we had the opportunity to change 20% of the curriculum. The engagement in realization of professional practices has improved, and the interest of students to register in profiles where I am a teacher has increased.”***

***Teacher at ShMP “Bahri Haxha”, Vushtrri***

***“Through the career center we can analyse the labour market for internships and jobs. This facilitates the process and increases quality even in the curriculum. Career center played a huge role in providing the needed information for 9th grade students in primary schools who didn’t have enough information for our school. The engagement of teachers who work in the career center has a positive impact because we have first hand information from the career center for the labour market and what companies want for their staff, and we prepare students in theory.”***

***Teacher at “Nexhmedin Nixha” school, Gjakovë***

***“Career center has an impact on better communication between us as a company and school. They support students to prepare better for the labor market. The Career Center prepared students to write a CV, motivation letter, and be ready for an interview.***

*After the functionalization of Career Center, we witnessed that students are more communicative and more prepared for the labor market. Students now can communicate easier with businesses and companies. Maybe the Career Center needs more support to perform its role in the community and especially for students.*

*The Career Center is very important for schools and their students, and institutions should provide more support. It could help more and more students in the future, and this could be a good thing for Kosovo in general, not only for Skenderaj.”*

***Employer HydroSan, Skenderaj***

***“There should be a link between the vocational school and the manufacturing companies for the proper functioning of these two, and that is the Career Center, responsible for the implementation of the developed curriculum.”***

***Isuf Shabani, employer, Viti***

***“We started to cooperate with the school in 2006, but now with the SBCC there is a greater cooperation as they have a plan of activities and specific people work on that.***

*There are currently interns engaged, and the company has appointed an engineer who works more closely with the center coordinator, so that students are better prepared. It is a contribution from the company and more professional to engage someone for student visits at work and internships to track their learning.*

*It is easier to recruit, because students are interested, but also we as businesses know the place where we can meet and find workers.”*

***Isuf Shabani, employer, Viti***

*"The importance of Career Center is high, it stimulates young people for their career and helps them to plan their career. The organization of internship between professors and me as a business, it was done in a professional manner. I provided an internship for 2 students a year.*

*We will continue to cooperate with SBCC. The experience was very good. The students were interested in this profession. School is in close contact with me regarding the internship and I'm always open for at least 1 or 2 students.*

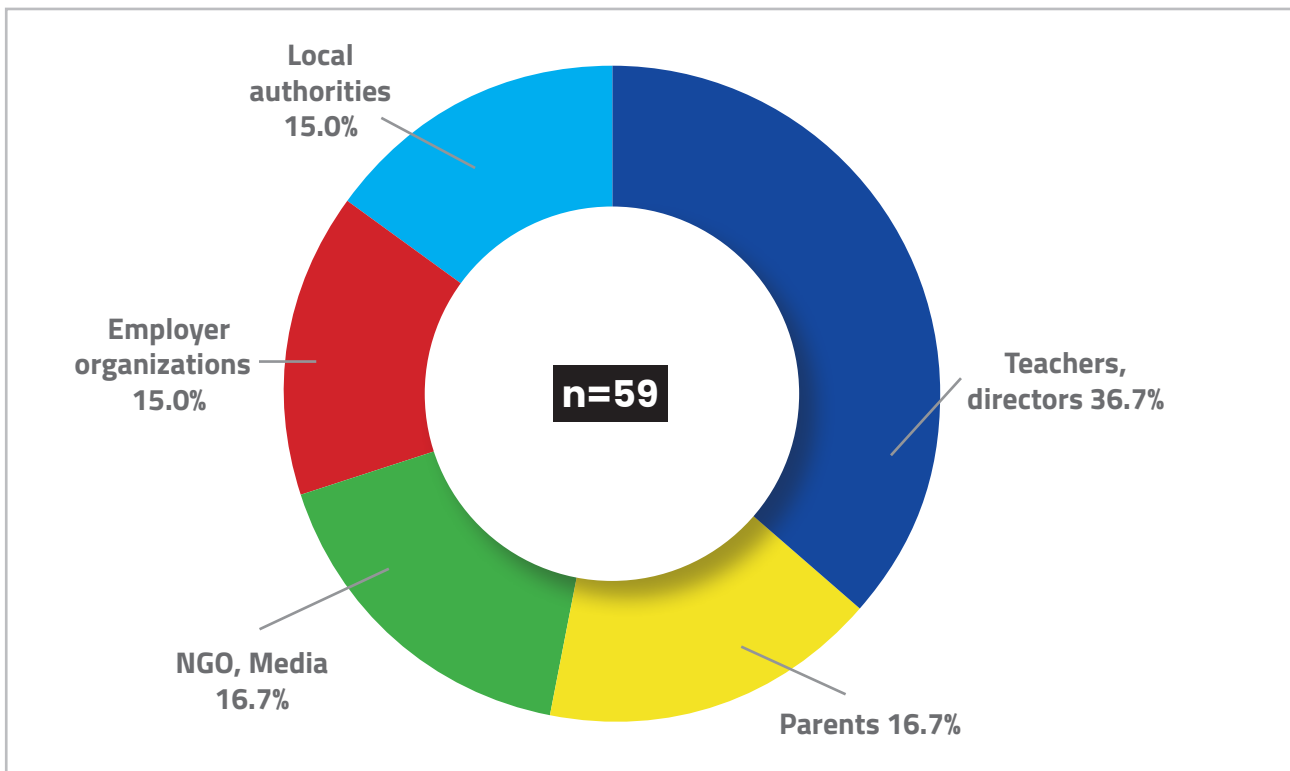
*From this cooperation, both the school and my company benefited but also it has an impact on society because they prepare future employees for work."*

**Advocate Ramadan Paçarizi, Malisheve**

## Dimension 5:

### Other benefits in terms of networking, social inclusion, and contribution to the community

FIGURE 26. Profile of interviewed community members



To assess the additional potential effects career centers produce in society, the survey has involved interviews with 46 community members – representatives of the municipalities (municipal education directorates, employment offices and VET agencies), as well as employer organizations, youth centers, NGOs, parents, teachers, school directors and media.

## **Career Centers help schools build a community of stakeholders and alumni**

**82% of employers' organizations and 85% of community members think career centers facilitate networking with stakeholders and alumni and support community building. The share of those who believe in this is highest in schools with SBCCs.**

Although this might be seen as an auxiliary function of the career centers, this is one of the main predictors of its efficiency and success.

## **Career centers help students develop transversal social skills and civic competencies for life**

**94% of the community members believe that career centers as a whole help students develop transversal social skills and civic competencies for life. The share of those who believe in this is highest in schools with no career centers and lowest in SBCCs among both groups of respondents.**

Based on the comments made during the interviews, employers and community members expect from career centers to prepare students more generally for the economy and society. However, at some SBCC schools there are good practices of engaging students in practical projects (Vushtrri) and as volunteers (Kaçanik), which helps them develop their soft skills.

## **Career centers help students develop a sense of initiative and agility in a changing world.**

The capacity to adapt to new situations, to creatively solve problems and generate solutions is fundamental in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Entrepreneurship skills need to be an integral part of the set of career and life competencies which students in all fields develop at school. The career centers have to support young people to take advantage of their ideas, existing opportunities and challenges to create their own jobs. This is especially valid for economies like those of Kosovo - with a big cohort of young workforce looking for meaningful jobs. Moreover, the gig economy gives a chance especially to skillful VET professionals.

**The scope of services of SBCCs is more focused on employability and not so much on developing general competencies. In the last years soft skills training and more visits of employers and other organizations have been initiated in the SBCC schools.**

**84% of all community members who participated in the research believe that the career centers as a whole help students develop a sense of initiative and agility in a changing world.**

Additionally, there need to be more project-based initiatives and competitions, which help students develop these skills. Among the most interesting and useful initiatives, high-school students especially point out the organized training about opening a business, the product fair and the competitions/projects between graduates, organized by the school and SBCC in Ferizaj.

The results in the other schools are modest but also positive. An employer in Burim, which does not have a career center, shares his own experience that *"those students, who do internships can be*



*prepared very well for the labor market and decide maybe in the future to open a business of their own and be very successful."*

**As a recommendation, career centers have to strengthen cooperation with business associations, startups, and the entrepreneurship ecosystem as a whole, if they want to develop the sense of initiative of young people. Only a few pieces of training about opening a business have been organized for students, however they were highlighted as very interesting and useful.**

### **Career centers help support the employment and social inclusion of students from disadvantaged groups**

**80% of the employers and 78% of the interviewed community members agree that career centers help support students' employment and social inclusion from disadvantaged groups.**

Although the examples shared in this respect are limited, there is an obviously high societal expectation that career centers have the resources to contribute to this effect.

The online survey with VET students shows that the share of male and female students who have used career services is equal, however there are big differences in ethnicity. Turkish participants from both sexes have most actively benefited from the available services, followed by Albanian and RAE students. Less than 1/3 of Bosnian students have used career services.

**The research found out that in schools with SBCCs women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.**

### **Career centers help schools reduce the drop-out rates**

Globally there are growing expectations toward the VET system and career guidance to solve the various problems related to drop-out and social disadvantages. Supporting students at risk of school leaving is a service that is still underdeveloped by the career centers in Kosovo.

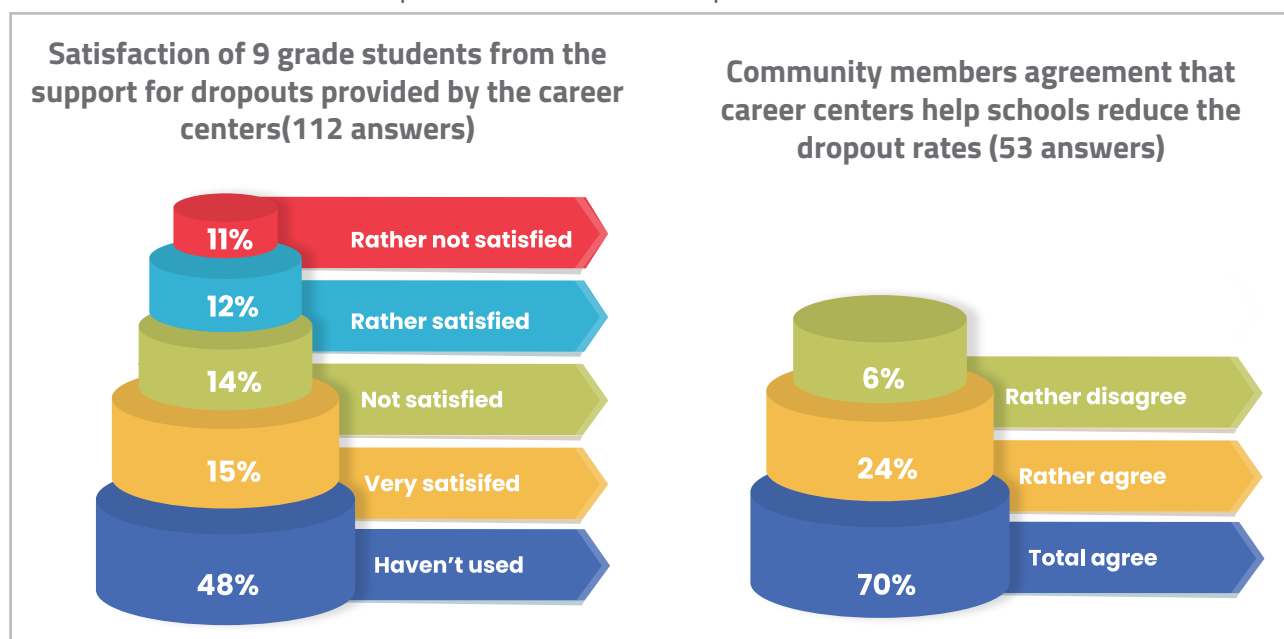
The assessment of services for drop-outs on behalf of the students is polar. Of the 112 students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade who said they have used such support, 27% are fully or partially satisfied, while 26% are fully or partially dissatisfied.

***"We still need to hold training sessions for students with poor grades (drop-out) because they are not yet determined what talent they have or what skills they may possess. I believe that teachers together with the career center can find it and help them in training."***

Student in Gjakova

Although this is not in the primary focus of SBCCs, it might be considered as a prospective service, which could have a positive impact on the enrollment rate.

**FIGURE 27.** Career centers help schools reduce the drop-out rates



At the same time, 71% of the community members and 70% of the employers consent that career centers help VET schools reduce drop-out rates. The share of stakeholders who do not agree is higher in schools with no career centers. Generally, this service is not provided systematically by any of the involved schools and career staff would require specialized training for providing it.

Nevertheless, there are examples of results achieved indirectly, mainly through motivation and engagement in work practices. In some schools, there are also second-chance programs for adult drop-outs, which use work-based training to prepare those young people who have lost motivation or are challenged by traditional classroom learning.

### Career centers should become an essential part of each VET school

The results from the field research are eloquent: 100% of employers and 96% of community members (parents, teachers, local authorities, media, NGOs) are convinced that career centers should be established in each VET school.

The directors of VET schools with no career center also believe that this will be a valuable asset. Most of the local authorities who participated in the interviews declared their support for scaling the SBCC model across all schools – not only VET but also high schools (gymnasiums). It is noticeable that even at schools that do not have career services yet, the staff and the students are aware of the benefits and want such a center.

There is a direct link between the level of usage, satisfaction, and perceived need for career center services at school. The students who are less familiar with the career center's services or haven't received the information and services that correspond to their needs are not convinced of the need for such a service.

The level of staff commitment, especially that of the school leadership, plays a very significant role in the results of the career center. **It is visible (from the focus groups) that in schools, where the school**



management, the teachers, and the parents are actively engaged and support the career center, the variety and frequency of career center activities are wider, their presence in society is more visible, the partnership with the community is more effective, and as a result – the satisfaction and impact on students is much greater.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Other benefits in terms of networking, social inclusion, and contribution to the community**

### **Conclusions:**

- Career centers have a central role in networking and communication with stakeholders and society. 82% of employers' organizations and 84% of community members think career centers facilitate networking with stakeholders and alumni and support community building. The share of those who believe in this is highest in schools with SBCCs
- Career centers help students improve transversal social skills and civic competencies for life through the activities they organize, where students can collaborate and compete, solving challenges. 94% of the community members believe that career centers as a whole help students develop transversal social skills and civic competencies for life. The share of those who believe in this is highest in schools with no career centers and lowest in SBCCs among both groups of respondents.
- Career centers help students develop a sense of initiative and agility in a changing world. 84% of all community members who participated in the research believe that the career centers as a whole help students develop a sense of initiative and agility in a changing world.
- SBCCs are more focused on employability and not so much on developing general competencies.
- 80% of the employers and 78% of the interviewed community members agree that career centers help support students' employment and social inclusion from disadvantaged groups.

The research found out that in schools with SBCCs women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.

- 71% of the community members and 70% of the employers consent that career centers help VET schools reduce drop-out rates. The share of stakeholders who do not agree is higher in schools with no career centers. Generally, this service is not provided systematically by any of the involved schools and career staff would require specialized training for providing it.
- 100% of employers and 96% of community members (parents, teachers, local authorities, media, NGOs) are convinced that career centers should be established in each VET school.

The directors of VET schools with no career center also believe that this will be a valuable asset. Beside the growing demand from the business and stakeholders, there is also an improved understanding of its importance.

Most of the local authorities who participated in the interviews declared their support for scaling the SBCC model across all schools – not only VET but also high schools (gymnasiums).

It is noticeable that even at schools that do not have career services yet, the staff and the students are aware of the benefits and want such a center

## Recommendations:

- SBCCs need to improve their cooperation with other partners, especially parents, alumni, and other community members such as NGOs and youth centers.
- SBCCs need to be more effective in building a broader spectrum of social skills and key competencies such as communication, team building, planning, self-organization, and time management. This can be done through more project-based work and skills contests.
- SBCCs must strengthen cooperation with business associations, startups, and the entrepreneurship ecosystem, if they want to develop the sense of initiative of young people.
- SBCCs need to improve communication with the community on all levels and be more assertive in promoting their results.

## STATEMENTS – Dimension 5

Following are some statements of NGOs, parents, teachers and directors, employers' organizations, and local authorities that confirm that career centers have a central role in networking and communication with stakeholders and society. All of them agree that they are convinced that career centers should be established in each VET school.



*"The Career Center has been one of the few spaces that has kept students away from the street, engaging them more in fruitful activities. The community that has been developed by the activities carried out by our organization in the Career Center spaces, has sustained. And students are still involved in activities and use the network they created. The experience was very positive."*

**Fjolla Shaqiri, Project Manager**  
**"Toka" NGO, Pristina**

### Statements of community members:

*"The establishment of these career centers is important for the role they have, **preparing the students professionally and creating a wider functional network with the stakeholders.**"*

**Dafina Bajrami, Youth Center, Vushtrri**

*"The career center has influenced the school to be involved in many projects and has greatly influenced the advancement of practical learning. **It has a positive role in connecting with organizations, businesses and other actors that can bring benefits to the school, respectively to the students.**"*

Teacher at "Shtjefen Gjeqovi" school, Prishtine

*"**Collaboration between school and our business has been increased** as a result of the establishment of the Career Center in the school!"*

Employer Flower shop – "Lulishte Mala", Viti

***“To have an impact, communication with parents is necessary.*** Throughout these two years, while involving parents, the communication has improved and parents are more engaged in our activities organized by the Career Center.”

***Abdullah Imeri, Director of “Zenel Hajdini” Agribusiness and Technology school, Ferizaj***

*“We have provided opportunities of collaboration with the Career Center of Professional schools in Prizren but they weren’t eager. The cooperation with the Youth Centers as well as with the Youth Organization should be crucially considered.”*

***Youth Center, Prizren***

***“Students should be prepared more for general work, not only for welding, for example,*** because Kosovo as a small market cannot offer you positions that have to do only with welding, but other aspects must also be learned.”

***Employer Hidrodesign, Pristine***

***“SBCCs activities don’t help students develop transversal social skills and civic competencies for life.*** It is very important to know how to use the email, and I would also like to see this training involved, provided by the career center for the students.”

***Youth Center, Vushtrri***



*“The Career Center services are very important, because **some of the things taught are not in the school curriculum, but that students need them later to enter the job market.** It is a place where students can find information about university directions, different training and the labour market, and participate in various activities.”*

***Besim Frangu, SBCC Coordinator***

***“Jonuz Zejnullahu” school, Viti***

*“For the first time this year the school has held a public graduation ceremony, at which principals, parents, partners, employers and other guests have been invited. We organized fairs at school, to promote students’ works and their final products from each profile. Students had the chance to present their projects which sparked competition between them and motivated them to work harder in order to better present themselves.*

***Abdullah Imeri - School Director, “Zenel Hajdini” Agribusiness and Technology school, Ferizaj.***



***“The VET school program and the added value services from the career center in school were life changing for me.***

*I have improved my practical skills and my professional skills. After graduation I was able to use my knowledge and run the advertising agency “Shigjeta Creative Sh.P.K. The VET school was the best choice I have made.*

*The SBCC was a good journey towards my path, and of course if I had to choose again, I would go through the same journey."*

*Enis Mjaki, graduate*

*Feriz Guri & Vëllezërit Çaka school*

*Shigjeta Creative Agency, Kacanik*

*"The benefit we see from this cooperation is when the student comes to us, is trained, becomes a master and becomes part of the company, but there are also those students who have been part of the practical work and now have businesses of their own, i.e **the professional training has affected them to start a company on their own.**"*

*Employer DPZ VES, Vushtrri*

*"It is an advantage to take the students from the school, because they are already prepared with basic knowledge of the profession and we can easily jump to the work process without taking time on giving detailed information. About 30 students have passed through our company, **some of them have started their own company.**"*

*Korab Krasniqi, employer, Kacanik*



*"One of the activities organized by the SBCC that I liked the most, was having successful people visiting us, in order to inspire us towards our path.*

*We met Enkelejda Shatri - a fashion designer and director of "Akademia Evolucion" who has graduated from our profile. She came to our school to tell us her success story, how she started and what her achievements were. It gave me motivation in my chosen profession.*

*The advice from the SBCC has been very appropriate, it has helped me a lot, it has increased my self-confidence, I have also received feedback on how to improve my skills."*

*Vitesa Raci, 12 grade student*

*"Shtjefen Gjeqovi" school, Prishtine*

*"With the opening of the SBCC (at the "Shtjefen Gjeqovi" school), they have made the students indirectly return to schools, not to leave the school. Their performance is very good. Communication with the community has been good, through media promotion, brochures and liaison with parents, have helped raise awareness of the importance of professional guidance. Work is underway with disadvantaged groups to create a guide for that group. Indirectly, the Career Center can reduce the drop-out rate of students by improving their image, promoting school conditions and the opportunities they offer, and the prospects of professional directions in the current labor market."*

*Community member, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Pristine*



*"The cooperation with SBCC makes it easier for us as employers to get employees when there is a will from the students and serious engagement in the job.*

***Professional practice is the most important because it gives a chance also to students who don't excel at school. I have experience with a student who was a bit of a trouble-maker, but I engaged him in the business and gave him an opportunity to work and stay away from problems. He has been working for my company for 2 years now, and he is a different person, very responsible, hardworking and also got promoted, now he is managing the store."***

**Burim Zuka**  
**Forsine Sh.P.K., Viti**

*"I think that high school is a sensitive age, in which **engaging in practice, creating working habits, being more responsible, prevents students from dealing with other negative phenomena that at this time may be very prone to them.**"(Employer Restaurant Verde, Ferizaj)*

*"It is important because it is motivating for work engagement, not dropping out of school, and vocational training of students."*

*(Employer Electro Service, Prishtine*

*"I am interested in helping students who could not continue school, due to lack of finances. I will enable them to get an education and receive certificates. **One student said that he would continue working and leave school but I conditioned him to continue school if he wanted to work for us."***

*Employer CTA Rame Elezaj, Peja*

*"The Career Center has helped reduce the drop-out rates indirectly, by making it more attractive for students, and informing for the future possibilities it offers. They have raised awareness among parents about the importance of professions, they have helped in the school-business connection which is characteristic for vocational schools to enable internships at work."*

*Community member, Municipality Directorate, Kaçanik*

*"We are aware that the career center creates better communication between businesses and schools for completing internships. Even though we practice such a system, still, a carrier center would make it easier. We have already prepared all the necessary things to open a carrier center. We have found the place, as well as 2 certified professors for carrier orientation. "*

*Director of "Skender Luarasi" school, Suhareke*

***Career Center is very important for schools and their students, institutions should provide more support.** It could help more and more students in the future and this could be a good thing for Kosovo in general, not only for Skenderaj."*

*Valmira Shabani, Employer, Skenderaj*



***"The Career Center should be present in every school, as they source information for business connections, enable the creation of a database of employees and measure the results brought by the center. The Career Center should be open all the time during school hours, to have staff who deal exclusively with the center's issues, would be more effective. It would also help teachers, who engage overtime on a voluntary basis. The Career Center is very necessary for high schools to prepare students for the labor market, but the biggest effect is in the lower secondary schools, for the orientation of students to a direction that they have a tendency for. "***

*Director of "Abdyl Frasheri" school, Prishtine*

**Community members who don't think career centers need to be part of each school:**

***"I know that exists but I wasn't very interested in this. They didn't help my child. I think the Career Center should work more for internships."***

*Parent, Pejë*

***"I don't think that every VET school can have a Career Center because it requires a budget which we don't have. VET Schools that have a large number of students should have Career Centers and other schools should cooperate with them."***

*Municipal Directorate of Education, Pejë*

***"In Vushtrri there are only two VET schools, and they are currently having a common Center of Career but if there were other VET schools we would absolutely support the establishment of Career Centers in them as well. Except in VET School, we think the career center is also important for gymnasiums, career guidance should be there too, and offer necessary information for the students."***

***The Career Center is a promoter of the implementation of new policies undertaken for Vocational Education. Good function at the center of the career in Vushtrri has become a model for other Career Centers and Centers of Competence."***

*Afrim Namani, Vice-president, Municipality of Vushtrri*

***"Need for program changes and positioning career services as part of the education. Systematic approach is needed."***

*Director of "Zenel Hajdini" school, Ferizaj*

***"The functioning of the career centers needs to be institutionalized and regulated by law, to be strengthened with institutional support and funds for the implementation of the activities and to be more attractive for the students."***

*SBCC coordinator at "Feriz Guri and Vellezerit Caka", Kacanik*

***"The Career Center should be an essential part of every school because of the role it plays and the liaison it provides between stakeholders. To support and strengthen the career guidance component, there should not be any school that does not offer career guidance for students. Given that the discrepancy between supply and demand is large, the Career Center tends to reduce this discrepancy, and thus students are better prepared for the profiles they want to work in the future. The Career Center is a kind of opportunity or window to access information that they cannot reach during regular learning, or regular curriculum. The center offers a chain link that helps students come out as successful as possible. "***

*Community member, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Pristine*



*"It would be good for every school to have a Career Center - a place where they can make informed decisions. I recommend everyone who wants to be career-oriented to the professions they are interested in, to visit **professional advisors**. The advice and information from the Career Center during the 9th grade, helped me choose the Food Technology direction, and I am very pleased to have used the services of the Career Center.*

*Also, by using the services of the Career Center, it was easier for me to plan my future career, where I can continue my studies and how to access the labor market."*

**Elfete Ismajli**

**10 grade VET student**

**"Bahri Haxha" school, Vushtrri**

*"I think Career centers are important both at both elementary and secondary level, but maybe more in elementary school, since it's more of an issue to decide for the high school, I know that most of my friends haven't decided yet where to go, and this would have helped them."*

**9 grade student, Ferizaj**

*"We are lucky to have a career center because I talked to students from other schools, who do not have a career center even though they were in great need of such a thing. Each school should have its own career center."*

**VET Student, "Nexhmedin Nixha" school, Gjakovë**

*"Each school should have a career center to discuss future activities and career counseling. I recommended being closer with 9<sup>th</sup> graders to constantly consult with career center staff as it is necessary for everyone to have information especially in adolescence. It is of interest to us students to prepare and equip ourselves with practical skills. **At the career center there are more relaxing activities, outside the curriculum, that help us develop professional skills."***

**Student in 12 grade, "Vëllezërit Çaka" school, Kaçanik**

*"Currently we don't have a Career Center but I believe soon we will have one because it is truly necessary given the dynamic life that is being created. Many don't know which path to choose when it comes to a career. It is necessary that the sooner we prepare for the labor market the better. **Getting information about different careers from school helps us in better choosing a career direction."***

**VET Student, "Skender Luarasi" school, Suharekë**

*"We have knowledge about the benefits that the career center can bring to our school. Students will have more training in soft skills; they will be prepared more for the labor market. There will be more activities going on, more collaboration with the community, more engagement towards the cooperation with businesses."*

**School director, ShMP, Shtime**

# CHAPTER 3.



## **Conclusions and Policy Implications**



The comparison demonstrates that SBCCs have a large scope over an impressive number of students. In many cases the employers who have provided the strictest evaluation marks, have also given very positive comments about the role of the career center and valuable recommendations what needs to be improved.

The employers who cooperate with other career centers have given the most positive marks, but less comments. The employers who work with schools who don't have career centers provide speculative comments about the impact of the career centers, given that most of them have no experience with them. At the same time, they also share their comments and expectations that a career centers would improve the situation in these schools and should be established as soon as possible.

**Based on the findings, we can say that SBCCs services promote the specific VET school profile and attract prospective students. They have a more profound impact on students' employability and practical skills required by employers in the VET sector.**

**The other career centers and services positively impact the general career orientation and skills of students, especially those who want to explore different education and job opportunities. They use different models and funding, so they are hard to analyze and replicate. Some exist on the municipality level, other – in youth centers or as career clubs at other schools.**

**The schools with no career center can also contribute to students' employability and skills development. However, they rely on individual efforts of teachers or the initiative of the director, which cannot produce sustainable results.**

### **Are Career Centers and services necessary?**

**Definitely.** There is a high demand for career services both from students and employers for better link between education and labor market. Career centers are a mighty tool in engaging companies, organizing effective practical experience and preparing students for the labor market; and for promoting the school results among prospective results. **The collected data shows that that career centers need to become an integral part of each school – not only VET, but also gymnasiums and elementary.**

### **What are the challenges?**

The main challenges are related to:

- **Vision and support** – career centers are most effective where they are well-integrated, initiated, and supported by the whole school community. This is what makes them different from appointing a teacher with the responsibility to organize internships.
- **Financial support and sustainability** – a career center is not just a place but an operating system that requires a budget for staff, equipment, resources, everyday activities, and events. This is what makes them different from career clubs and other activities which can be done on a voluntary basis once per week.

- **Trained and qualified staff** – the multifaceted tasks of the career center require a full-time trained personnel that is competent in researching the labour market, promotion and networking, organizing training, internships and events, providing guidance and reporting results.
- **Ongoing communication with all different stakeholders** – the career center is a highly specialized department, which bears the responsibility to students who make career decisions and look for jobs; to employers, who need workforce; to the community, who expects that young people will become valuable members of the society.
- **Ongoing improvement and expansion of the services** to serve adequately to all target groups.
- **Career centers have to be institutionalized and sustained** with adequate funding. Public investment and regulation will ensure their effective and quality provision in the long term. The services of the career centers should be standardized and supported on a national level with resources for the implementation of activities in a quality and sustainable manner.

### Strategic framework and vision:

There is a need for a national program and vision, approach, and funding on a central level. To ensure the quality of services, it is essential to introduce a centralized career education framework and build capacity in career guidance. Such a national framework/ curriculum will specify each grade's priorities, learning objectives, recommended topics, and activities and help standardize the content and scope of work.

**The Government has a key role in providing strategic leadership, building capacity, regulating the career guidance system, setting quality standards, and ensuring funding mechanisms.** All these need to be done in partnership with other stakeholders: education and training providers; employers; trade unions; community organizations, students, parents, and career guidance practitioners. Synergy is particularly important between education and employment in order to ensure a better link between the demand and supply of skills, more up-to-date curriculum, and more need-based practical education, to ensure that educational and occupational information are integrated; and that a strong labor market perspective is included in schools' career guidance programs.

All staff involved in career service provision should be qualified under the comprehensive curriculum to provide a range of services – from internships preparation and information about job opportunities to individual support in decision making and group training in career management skills. This will help standardize the provision and guarantee quality.

### The biggest competitive advantages of SBCCs:

- **Scope and outcome** - Currently, SBCCs are the largest provider of comprehensive VET career services and support, geographically available across thousands of students from 10 grade to 12 grade, while the other career services mainly support the students in 12 grades. Moreover, they also cover 9<sup>th</sup> graders to facilitate them for an informed career decision.

A. Usage Level of Career Services by students (survey with 9 <sup>th</sup> graders and VET students)	
9 Grade Students	10 Grade to 12 Grade Students
69,8% of surveyed 9th graders have benefited from career services: 88% SBCCs 8% other career centers (municipal and youth career centers) 4% other career services (mainly Busulla platform).	70% of surveyed VET students confirmed the usage of career centers: 92% SBCCs 7% other career centers (municipal and youth career centers) 1% other career services (mainly Busulla platform).

SBCCs and Busulla platform are most helpful for 9th graders to find out which profiles and professional directions interest them. 88% of SBCC users and 78% of Busulla users confirmed that benefited for a better occupational choice, while for Prishtina municipal career center and youth career centers this share is much lower

- **Framework and capacity** – SBCCs use a common methodology and staff are proficient in the facilitation of practical learning and helping students make their pathway into the labor market. The number of students who found internships, work-based learning and jobs from SBCC is highest in all grades, moreover other career centers basically offer such opportunities only for 12 grades. This is especially important given the fact that most students and parents have chosen VET schools, in order to ensure that young people get jobs and have the best chances for employability.

B. Job application and interview skills of VET students		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
71% of surveyed VET students, confirmed that career services supported them to improve their job application and interview skills		
77%		64%

The improved application and interview skills led to higher successful rate of VET students at SBCC schools finding internship/WBL/jobs.

C. Involvement of VET students in internship/WBL (survey with students)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
69.9%	18.1%	12%

This statement of VET students is confirmed by statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research.

D. Involvement of VET students in internship/WBL (database of VET schools)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
58.1%	24.5%	17.8%

VET schools with SBCCs are more recognized by businesses. 45 businesses were interviewed to understand level of cooperation with VET schools.

E. Involvement of businesses in internship/WBL (interview with businesses)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
77.0%	23%	

This statement of interviewed businesses is confirmed by statistics collected from 18 VET schools involved in the research.

F. Involvement of businesses in internship/WBL (database of VET schools)		
Schools with SBCC	Schools with other Career Centers	Schools with no career centers
73.5%	26.5%	
As a comparison, 40% of the interviewed employers who partner with schools with no career centers have not been involved in internships or practices		

The establishment of SBCCs has significantly improved the level of cooperation with businesses. In addition to internships/WBL, businesses also are involved in different events organized by VET schools to support the student's employability. These events are the most special among schools that have SBCCs and show an increase in the number of participating businesses in the last three years 2018/2019/2020.

The number of businesses involved in events organized by SBCCs in 2020 to support student's employability has an increase of 4.4% compared to 2019 despite the situation with the pandemic, while compared to 2018 this increase is 7.4% taking also in consideration increased number of new SBCCs established by EYE project.

- **Making VET attractive** - The major social impact of SBCCs on system level is that they made VET more attractive for young people, who want to find a professional track that will guarantee fast employment track, better job prospects and decent payment - this was stated as the main reason to choose VET schools.

In general, there is a serious decline of enrollment in the last two school years due to different reasons – demographic, economic, and social. However, schools with SBCC have managed to have an increase from 64.2% in 2018/2019 to 66.2% in 2020/2021, by helping students to expand their information and explore various educational opportunities, and to reach an informed decision- making on their

career choice. While in schools with other models of career centers, enrollment has decreased by 2.9% over the last three school years. In schools without career centers, the situation is stable. The calculation was made based on the total number of students enrolled in the 18 VET schools included in the research.

<i>G. Trend of enrollment to VET schools (database of VET schools)</i>			
School Year	VET Schools with SBCC	VET Schools with other career centers	VET Schools with no career centers
2018/2019	<b>64.2%</b>	18,4%	18,4%
2019/2020	<b>64,4%</b>	17,0%	18,5%
2020/2021	<b>66,2%</b>	15,3%	18,6%

However, there are other different reasons - demographic, social, economic, which considerably have influence on the enrollment rate.

100% of employers and 96% of community members (parents, teachers, local authorities, media, NGOs) are convinced that career centers should be established in each VET school. 70% of employers and 71% of the community members confirm that career centers help VET schools reduce drop-out rates, and also 80% of employers and 78% of the interviewed community members agree that career centers help support students' employment and social inclusion from disadvantaged groups.

In schools with SBCC, women and minorities are four to five times more likely to find internships / jobs compared to schools that have other career centers or no career centers at all.

### **Policy messages:**

The variety of existing services across Kosovo demonstrate the need for professionalization, a single-hearted approach, and support for quality and funding initiatives.

- 1. The establishment of a career center in each VET school is a wise long-term investment** that is well aligned with the needs of Kosovo economic, demographic and societal demands and challenges.
- 2. Career centers need to be established in each school.** The numerous benefits of career centers for schools, students, employers and community justify such investment. Moreover, the need is explicitly declared by all stakeholders - career centers are needed in all types of schools and across all educational levels. This will ensure equal and free access of each student to information and support.
- 3. Career centers have to be institutionalized and sustained with adequate funding. Public investment and regulation will ensure their effective and quality provision in the long term.** A career center is a professional establishment that requires full-time staff engagement and adequate funding for activities. The services of the career centers should be **regulated by law, standardised and supported on a national level with resources** for the implementation of activities in a quality and sustainable manner.

4. **Strategic framework and vision. There is a need for a national program and vision, approach, and funding on a central level.** To ensure the quality of services, it is essential to introduce a centralized career education framework and build capacity in career guidance. Such a **national framework/curriculum** will specify each grade's priorities, learning objectives, recommended topics, and activities and help standardize the content and scope of work.

The Government has a key role in providing strategic leadership, in building capacity, regulating the career guidance system, setting quality standards and ensuring funding mechanisms. All these need to be done in partnership with other stakeholders: education and training providers; employers; trade unions; community organizations, students, parents, and career guidance practitioners. Synergy is particularly important between education and employment, in order to ensure better link between the demand and supply of skills, more up-to-date curriculum and more need-based WBL agenda, to ensure that educational and occupational information are integrated; and that a strong labour market perspective is included in schools' career guidance programmes.

5. **All staff involved in career service provision should be qualified** under the comprehensive curriculum to provide a range of services – from internships preparation and information about job opportunities to individual support in decision making and group training in career management skills. This will help standardize the provision and guarantee quality.

6. To measure the quality and effectiveness, **indicators and a benchmarking system** need to be introduced, overseen by a public body (Ministry, VET agency). The system should initially have a limited number of indicators to provide annual info about the activities of the career centers. For example, schools should be able to provide data disaggregated by years, gender and profiles, about the number of enrolled and graduated students; number and type of activities organized by the career center, number of students and businesses who participated, number of students who have participated in internships/WBL, how many have successfully found jobs 6 months after graduation, and how many have continued their studies and in which directions. The benchmarking system can be used by the centers themselves for improvement and by the Ministry for policy actions (including financing at a later stage).

7. The collection of data during the research clearly showed that schools which have established career centers have better understanding of the needs for collecting indicators and are better prepared to report results over time. Moreover, **the existence of a career center / coordinator is a good predictor for the level of engagement of the school management with students' employability.**

8. **Promotion.** This requires advocacy, synergizing the efforts of different donors and stakeholders and the provision of a **wide awareness raising campaign.** More synchronized efforts of promotion of the existing career centers and the centralized platform Busulla. Influential and recognized individuals have to be involved in the career centers' activities and engaged to spread the word about them. There are a lot of success stories and good practices, which can be spread to promote career services and mainstream them in all schools.

9. **Internships need to be regulated, more relevant, and offered massively.** Internships and work-based learning equip students with practical skills, help them create awareness about the LM requirements and opportunities, and support individual career choices. They need to be regulated, with envisaged insurance and incentives for students (payment, food, transportation). The Government, schools, businesses, and the community share responsibility in ensuring more relevant and attractive WBL/ internship offers to students from 10 to 12 grades, especially for female students and students at risk of drop-out and social exclusion. Accidental insurance for the students of VET schools need to be introduced.

## KEY CONCLUSIONS & POLICY MESSAGES:

- The research data shows that School-based Career Center (SBCC) model proves to be highly effective in many VET schools, so it can be easily multiplied in each VET school. Moreover, as a next step, it can also be adapted and scaled across other secondary schools (gymnasiums) as well. The replication of this model requires policy level support and adequate funding for the implementation of activities and involvement of trained staff engaged on a full-day basis.
- Career Centers in VET schools have to be institutionalized and sustained with adequate funding. Public investment and regulation will ensure their effective and quality provision in the long term. A career center is a professional establishment that requires full-time staff engagement and adequate funding for activities. The services of the career centers should be regulated by law, standardised and supported on a national level with resources for the implementation of activities in a quality and sustainable manner.
- Career Centers need to be established in each VET school. The numerous benefits of career centers for schools, students, employers and community justify such investment. Moreover, the need is explicitly declared by all stakeholders - career centers are needed in all types of schools and across all educational levels.
- The Government has a key role in providing strategic leadership, building capacity, regulating the career guidance system, setting quality standards, and ensuring funding mechanisms.

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