

Supporting the Development of Career Guidance Services for Vocational Education and Training Schools in Kosovo

Our Aim:



Create improved and socially inclusive career guidance services that provide early information to students of Vocational Education & Training Schools (VET), and facilitate their school- to-work transition.

Our Approach:

1. Develop two pilot models of VET career centers—one school-based SBCC model and one municipal-based MBCC model, in two different Municipalities.
2. Design a replication strategy by analysing the two pilots (in our case, the school-based emerged as more promising).
3. Introduce characteristics of the SBCC model to key stakeholders, and define a bottom-up development strategy of SBCC sequenced in 4 phases.
4. Identify new partners (in plural) for establishing new SBCCs.
5. Ensure buy-in of institutions responsible for VET schools for joint investments and commitment on ensuring the operational and functional sustainability of SBCC.
6. Develop capacities and know-how of new SBCCs.
7. Advocate with the public and decision-makers at the central and local level on the importance of SBCCs for the VET system and networking with local institutions and other partners.

Context



One of the key challenges to the socio-economic development of Kosovo is the high youth unemployment, which is repeatedly being declared a policy priority by decision-makers. The structural mismatch between the education system and the labor market, as well as the misallocation of youth in professions for which there is low demand results in Kosovo dealing with one of the slowest school-to-work transitions in the region and beyond.

Successful integration of career guidance services result in better human capital outcomes of vocational education and training and improve foster the proper orientation of youth in the labor market, contributing to productivity and economic growth.

Until recently, such services were not present in the VET education institutions in Kosovo. Students were given little to no support to explore their strengths, analyze labor market information and trends, improve their competencies, and choose their career path. The lack of career guidance and counseling is also one of the biggest challenges that prevents the improvement of the VET system.

Though the Law No. 04/L-138 on VET in Kosovo approved in 2013 and the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 both foresees activities to introduce career guidance in all vocational schools in Kosovo, these services were not yet effective in assisting students to select and develop skills relevant to the labor market needs.

Our Approach:

At EYE our aim was clear from the beginning: help create improved and socially inclusive career guidance services that provide early information to youth and facilitate their personal development choices, targeting primarily youth at the level of VET schools. To do this, we needed to develop a proof of concept—or a model whose success we could demonstrate to stakeholders, and then work with them to scale it up.

In our approach, we followed a holistic definition of career guidance as services that assist individuals and groups of any age, at any point throughout their lives, to make informed educational, training, and occupational choices. This is why, ever since the inception of the project, we provided technical, financial and facilitative support to develop e new, inclusive career guidance services in the VET system in Kosovo.

We based our work on the following pillars:

Self-Awareness (to uncover the talents, interests and strengths of prospective VET students).

Opportunity Awareness (to ensure that students can explore the job market and learning opportunities).

Decision-making (to help students study career options and make informed career decisions).

Transition to Employment (to teach job-search and job application techniques, and establish opportunities for Work-based Learning and Internships in local private sector companies).



One of the key things we did is foster partnership between local institutions (municipal education directorates), VET schools, and businesses—all crucial partners to ensure qualitative, sustainable SBCCs. On the national level, we sought strategic partnership with the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, which is developing the Qualification Program for Career Guidance Facilitators. This qualification program is crucial for ensuring the full integration of SBCCs into the VET education system and wide dissemination in national level in Kosovo.

To achieve lasting, systems-level change in VET Career Guidance, we developed a school-based career center (SBCC) model for VET schools in Kosovo using a four-phase bottom-up approach:

1st Phase: SBCC Know-how Development (Profiling the model, creating a manual of services and procedures, creating a short-training program for career guidance facilitators, and creating an operational plan)

2nd Phase: SBCC Capacity Building

3rd Phase: Ensuring Operational and Functional Sustainability

4th Phase: Ensuring Institutionalization for scaling up in the national level.



Key Results

- 9 SBCCs established in VET schools throughout Kosovo.
- 26,000 individual career services provided to VET students, and around 12,000 to prospective students.
- More than 600 businesses and 1,300 parents involved in SBCC activities.
- Over 8,800 students received career information.
- Around 1,000 students gained access to the labor market.
- Around 9,000 students trained in career management skills.

Examples of SBCC's Services

- Offering combined center-based career services with virtual services of the national platform Busulla.com for students of the entire VET cycle (grades 10-11-12).
- Assisting the school instructors of professional practice for more and better networking with local businesses.
- Facilitating 12-graders' easier and faster access to the labor market; with a priority on Work-Based Learning.
- Facilitating prospective students to make informed decisions in choosing their future profession.
- Assisting school teachers for the implementation of the Career Education module within the curricular area "Life and Work".
- Close collaboration with the school career clubs.
- Organizing career and job fairs, and information sessions and round tables with local businesses.
- Developing and providing tailored career services for socially excluded groups (i.e. women, minorities, etc)

Some of the key success factors were:

- Building on existing experience and identifying clear development strategies in partnership with key relevant stakeholders.

- Setting up clear criteria and careful selection processes for teachers who get trained to become career guidance facilitators.

- Ensuring the commitment of the career guidance facilitators to provide combined in-person or virtual services

- Developing state-of-the-art career guidance concept in combination with locally tailored content and delivery

- Encouraging a committed and dedicated local institutions

- Fostering cooperation with other development partners to collaborate, avoid over-lapping of interventions, and use a unified approach..

Contributors:

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