



Education Opens up New Prospects

Young people are affected more than most from unemployment because their qualifications do not meet the requirements of the labour market. The SDC is committed to improving the qualifications of young people in order to improve their access to a job and a professional career.

As part of its key domain «Economic Development and Employment», the SDC's country programmes in the Western Balkans focus on improving the labour market competitiveness of young people. The extremely high numbers of unemployed young people is one of the biggest obstacles to the development of this region. An entire generation of young people cannot find suitable jobs. They are demoralised by the lack of prospects in their home country and increasing numbers try to find a future abroad. The emigration of potential young workers is not only a loss for their home countries, but the high level of youth unemployment also harbours much potential for political conflict.

The SDC's programmes focus on vocational education, in particular for young people as they play an important role in the economic and social development of the Western Balkans. In this area, the SDC can contribute the experience it has gained over the course of many years in this region as well as the rest of the world. It also has access to acknowledged expertise in this field in Switzerland.

Challenges in vocational education

With the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the regime change in Albania, the vocational training systems in these countries either collapsed or no longer meet the requirements of the economy. As a rule, the countries in the Western Balkans nowadays offer vocational training at secondary school level, but without any direct economic relevance. The courses are outdated and do not provide students with the qualifications and skills they need. The collapse of government-owned businesses and a private sector which is still weak mean that young people have almost no opportunities to gain practical experience.

However, the dilapidated vocational system is not the only reason why young people experience difficulties in finding jobs. On the one hand, young people account for a very high percentage of the overall population, and on the other, the weak private sector can only absorb a limited number of new workers. Many young people remain unemployed in spite of good qualifications, and this situation can only be changed by improving the economy.



High youth unemployment in Kosovo

The situation of young people in Kosovo is particularly dramatic, as more than half of the population is younger than 25. In the medium term, these large numbers of young people have enormous potential for the development of the economy, but at the moment the level of unemployment is sky high—in particular among young people and women. The government

Technical School Pristina: A student at the Secondary VET School is getting hands-on experience in the mechanic workshop set up by the SDC's VES project.

Facts and Figures Regarding Employment in the Western Balkans

	Percentage of population younger than 15 (2009)	Total unemployment rate	Workers per sector
Albania	23 %	12,5 % (2008)	Agriculture 58 % Industry 15 % Services 27 % (2006)
Kosovo	27,7 %	40 % (2007)	Agriculture 16,5 % (2007)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	14,5 %	29 % (2007)	Agriculture 19,8 % Industry 32,6 % Services 47,6 % (2007)
Switzerland	15,6 %	3 % (2008)	Agriculture 3,9 % Industry 22,8 % Services 73,2 % (2005)

Figures: CIA World Factbook



Young women attending a course in journalism organised by the Women Business Development project financed by the SDC.

has already initiated the reform of vocational training, and a new vocational training law took effect in 2005, but a productive vocational system that meets European standards is still a long way off. The quality and labour market relevance of training courses are far from guaranteed, as evidenced by the fact that only 25 per cent of the 41'000 graduates of vocational colleges find jobs when they finish their training. The SDC has been supporting vocational education for young people and young adults in Kosovo since 2000. The programme started with the establishment of short courses that made integration into the working world easy, but since 2003 the SDC has been focusing on the development and implementation of three-year vocational courses. The aim is to support the development of a vocational system in Kosovo that offers diversified, market-relevant and broadly accessible vocational courses of a good quality. In collaboration with a number of selected vocational colleges, the SDC puts the spotlight on the review and improvement of the practical parts of the curricula to ensure that students gather practical experience. The partner schools have undertaken to grant all interested parties free access to the training courses, and in particular to promote participation by interested students from minority groups.

At a strategic level the Vocational Education Support (VES) project, which is being implemented by Swisscontact, works together with the relevant government

departments to develop suitable national examination and certification instruments. The decentralisation of the educational process is also promoted by transferring more responsibility for the management and financing of schools to the municipalities.

Reform of vocational education in Albania

In Albania, more than 50 per cent of the population work in the subsistence farming sector, which points to the enormous need for action to improve the labour market integration of young people. In an effort to live up to European standards and pave the way for EU integration, the Albanian government is promoting the reform of vocational education. Vocational colleges must offer training courses that meet the needs of the labour market and can react flexibly to market changes.

With the Albanian Vocational Education and Training Support Programme (AlbVET), implemented by Swisscontact, SDC supports since 1994 the government and private providers to improve the standard of vocational training in the country. The project focuses its efforts on four areas: support for the formal educational reform process; development of «learning partnerships» involving the private sector, local authorities and private providers of educational services; decentralisation of vocational education; and improvement of access to training courses for women and members of ethnic minorities.

AlbVET has made it possible for students to receive comprehensive, module-based theoretical and practical education in 20 professions, including advanced courses for students who wish to enter higher educa-

Promotion and Modernisation: a Coherent and Relevant Vocational Education System in Kosovo

Project successes

- 11 of a total of 56 vocational colleges were helped with the introduction of practical courses to supplement their technical and commercial curricula. During this process, all curricula were consistently geared to meet the requirements of the labour market.
- More than 100 teachers at technical, commercial and agricultural vocational colleges received advanced training by national and international experts.

- The establishment of companies where students can do a practical internship allows them to apply their acquired know-how in practice. The support of the SDC programme has made it possible to offer practical internships to students with local companies.
- Every year approximately 3500 students attend training courses supported by the SDC. While the national average of graduates who find a job after college is only 25 %, the average for students attending a three-year course supported by the Swiss programme is 37 %.

Kreshnik Kapceri, graduate of Beqir Cela in Durres, a vocational college supported by the SDC

Kreshnik Kapceri was born in 1984 in Shkozet in the vicinity of Durres, where he still lives with his parents and his two sisters. As a boy, Kreshnik was passionately interested in the job of his father, who is a lorry driver. He accompanied his father on trips with great enthusiasm, and at the early age of 11 he started repairing car engines, more or less successfully.

It therefore made sense that he would attend a course for mechanics at the Beqir Cela vocational college after his compulsory school years. It was his father and his uncle who registered him with the vocational college and made sure that he received further professional training. During the first two years Kreshnik did not really enjoy college, but in the third year, which was more or less entirely devoted to practical work, he started to love his studies. During this practical course it became clear to him for the first time just how much he had learned during the first two years at college. «From the outset I was better than my colleagues, who had already been working here for two years.»

After finishing his studies Kreshnik worked for several companies to gain experience, and at the age of 22 he took the courageous decision to start his own business. The satisfaction of his customers gave him the confidence to take this step, and his father helped him to find the start-up capital he needed to open his own garage.

School cannot teach you everything you need to run your own business—customer communication, for example, cannot be learnt from books, and

he taught himself how to use a computer. Kreshnik is constantly looking for new services which his company could offer: «My business has developed step by step, and today I have two employees and three trainees.» Only one of the trainees does not come from Beqir Cela, and he is also less well prepared for his profession than the others. Kreshnik is thinking of introducing the repair of air-conditioning systems in buses, as this is a service that is not yet offered in Albania. He would also like to go to university to improve his business administration skills in order to manage his business more effectively.

He can recommend Beqir Cela to everybody, as the training offered by this college prepares students for a profession in which they can earn a good living. «Not everybody can be a lawyer», says Kreshnik with a smile. In addition to all his business responsibilities Kreshnik still finds some time to spend with his friends. And he has an important plan for the future: to find the woman with whom he wants to spend the rest of his life.



tion. The courses can be interrupted after every individual module and continued again at a later date.

Networking in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the unemployment figure for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is 45 per cent. This particularly affects women, ethnic minorities, people returning to the country from abroad, and people with disabilities. There is a clear link between education and employment opportunities—the less qualified a job applicant, the smaller the chances of finding a job.

The high level of unemployment is due not only to the country's weak economy, but also the fact that the education system is not geared to the needs of the economy. Secondary schools and vocational colleges do not prepare young people for professional life, and also do not help them to find jobs or plan their careers. Although the government labour offices register the unemployed young people, they do not offer any support that would pave the way to entering a profession. There is also no collaboration with private job agencies. This situation forces many young people to either work in the informal sector after finishing their education, or to leave the country. In the medium term, this «brain drain» can affect the economic development and future prospects of the entire country.

This is why the SDC has been supporting the YEP Youth Employment Project implemented by GOPA (Society for organisation, planning and education) since 2008. The project aims to empower training institutions to adequately prepare the young people they are training for the labour market by offering career advice and job entry programmes. Young un-

employed people should be offered target-focused training courses that will give them the skills and know-how they need to survive on the labour market. The programme also aims to strengthen the capabilities of government and private job agencies and to promote mutual cooperation. The project focuses mainly on young people from rural areas and ethnic minorities.

Gender-specific career choices

The equal treatment of men and women is a key topic in vocational education, as women represent a large percentage of the unemployed. Although women have equal access to higher secondary school education in all countries, the vocational colleges mostly offer technical courses, i.e. courses that are preferred

Phases of the Commitment in Vocational Education in Albania

1994 to 2002: Focus on **quality of vocational education**. Rebuilding of a vocational college in Durres, focus on the requirements of the labour market and cooperation with local private companies.

2001 to 2006: Focus on **outreach and employment**. Development and implementation of modular short training courses in collaboration with public and private providers of educational services; approx. 30'000 students attended these courses; approx. 70 % of the graduates found a job.

Since 2007: Focus on **strategic key areas of educational reform**. Cooperation with all government and private players, improvement of labour market relevance of training courses, decentralisation of responsibility for vocational education in the regions, management of vocational colleges and quality improvement.



After the presentation of the Youth Employment Project (YEP) and its objectives, young people looking for a summer job or long-term employment were asked to prepare their application files and submit these to the job agency Posao.ba.

by men. Albania is a good example for the fact that the percentage of women receiving basic education is on a par with men. While women are in the majority at art schools and teacher training colleges, they are far less well represented at technical vocational colleges.

In an effort to promote the access of women to vocational education, Switzerland supports the development of training courses that meet the career choices of women, such as commercial courses, and prepare

Women in Education in Albania

	Total students (2005/2006)	% of women
Higher secondary education	138'832	48
Basic education	111'770	51
Vocational education (total)	27'062	36
4-year courses at sports, and teacher training colleges	8'486	61
3- and 5-year courses at technical vocational colleges	16'699	20

them for professions where they can apply their qualifications. Women often hesitate to take technical courses because the courses themselves and the environment in which they are offered are not really geared to the needs of women and women are not motivated and supported to choose these promising careers. In its teacher training programmes and the development of courses, the SDC emphasises the need to create an environment that also meets the requirements of women.

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