



Mission:

*“Ready to serve the cause of democracy, human rights and civil society whenever and wherever the need arises.”*

## DRENUSHAMYHA

# THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN KOSOVO

## Executive Summary

The Young Europeans is the term referred to Kosovo’s youth since 49 percent of its population is under the age of 25<sup>1</sup>, making it the country with the lowest average age in all of Europe. While being considered as Kosovo’s greatest treasure, its high unemployment rate makes it difficult to make good use of it. The government is aware of this distressing issue and it did take its time to address it by making strategies and action plans, however not much was done to implement them. Even though it is a difficult obstacle to overcome there are many approaches to decrease it. Recommendations for moving towards a lower youth unemployment rate are discussed under three approaches:

- The recruitment process for employment should be fair and unbiased, and this should be implemented starting by the government.
- Create accessible and good quality formal, non-formal, and informal education so it is complemented to the labor market demands in the current and future economic circumstances.
- Creating work experience through training, volunteer work and internships.

There are many more which in collaboration with these three recommendations can help Kosovo use its youth to become a well established country.

## Introduction

“The youth is the hope of our future” is a timeless phrase in the Philippine literature of Jose Rizal, a nationalist, a writer and a revolutionary. Its fundamental thought encourages the youth to take action, to create stable communities and a better future, since the youth has experienced the mistakes of the past and are less likely to repeat it. This phrase applies to the current situation of Kosovo which is known to have the youngest population in Europe. Due to its lamentable past, Kosovo’s youth during the nineties either contributed in its liberation during the conflicts with Serbia, hid from it and got educated in secret or fled the country. Although the conflicts ended and Kosovo got its freedom, opportunities for its youth to prosper were and still

are limited. Unfortunately, Kosovo ranks as the country with the worst market situation throughout the region and European Union member states<sup>2</sup>.

## Kosovo’s idle resource

Kosovo is known as the country with the youngest population in Europe; more than 70 percent of its population is under the age of thirty five.<sup>3</sup> The unemployment rate is very high in Kosovo. According to the Labor Force Survey<sup>4</sup> conducted in 2012, Kosovo’s youth was two times more likely to be unemployed compared to the rest of the population qualified for the labor force. Among the people aged from 15 to 24, 55.3 percent were unemployed and the rate is pronounced higher to the young females with an unemployment rate of 63.8 percent than to the young males with an unemployment rate of 52.0 percent. This statistic does not only show the alarming rate of the youth unemployment in Kosovo but also the gender inequality in the workplace, which is another challenge that needs to be worked on by the Kosovar officials. The Enhancing Youth Employment Project<sup>5</sup> foresees that in the coming five years approximately 200,000 youngsters will reach working age and will begin searching for jobs. However without job opportunities they are at risk of descending into poverty in which 35 percent of the population is already living, and another 12 percent is living under extreme poverty. These limited economic opportunities are leading to variety of negative consequences such as some youngsters are turning to the black market, criminal activities or they become victims of violence or other deviant behavior. The situation is very critical, and since Kosovo’s biggest asset is its youth, a lot of work needs to be done in this department.

## Possible approaches to reduce the unemployment rate

There are countless approaches that could be taken to minimize the youth unemployment rate in Kosovo. Although the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports presented the “Kosovo Youth Strategy and

<sup>2</sup> Result of the Labor Force Survey 2012 in Kosovo, published on September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Result of the Labor Force Survey 2012 in Kosovo, published on September 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Result of the Labor Force Survey 2012 in Kosovo, published on September 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Enhancing Youth Employment Project (EYE) –vocational training for Kosovo’s youth; promotes focused private sector investments in relevant subsectors that lead to growth of employment opportunities for young people.

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Action Plan 2010-2012” which addressed this alarming issue in depth and showed steps to overcome it, however little was done to bring this strategy and action plan to life. So in the paragraphs below three possible approaches will be elaborated which will help Kosovo move forward in lowering its youth unemployment rate.

**First approach:** The recruitment process for employment should be fair and unbiased, starting by the public sector.

In today’s Kosovo even with these few job opportunities existing, nepotism is quite noticeable. This not only leads to incompetent people getting a job they do not deserve but also disappoints those who do to the point that they stop trying. The change should begin first in the public sector, where according to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics 78,068 people are employed in that sector. A large number of those employees are not qualified for the position they currently hold. Pushing the public sector towards a fair and unbiased recruitment process not only will it make it stronger but it might also influence the private sector to reduce the unfair recruitment process. Even though this approach might not seem as important in the bigger picture, its significance will be enormous because it will encourage people to try and work harder which will be beneficiary for Kosovo’s future. According to the Labor Force Survey<sup>2</sup> conducted in 2012, 126,200 young people aged 15 to 24 are considered none active youth. None active youth means that they do not work, do not attend formal or informal education so basically they are completely disconnected from the labor market. They represent 35.1 percent of the young population; 40.1 percent young females and 30.7 percent males.

**Table 1: Young people who are unemployed, not attending school or training (NEET) by gender**

KOSOVO 2012	MALE	FEMALE	OVERALL
NEET young people (in thousands)	58.3	67.9	126.2
The percentage of youth NEET in the population (%)	30.7	40.1	35.1

Source: Results of Labor Force Survey, Kosovo 2012

This none activism is happening for various reasons, however if the recruitment process does not change then discouragement will be added to those reasons which will cause an increase. A large number of unengaged youth in Kosovo not only can cause reduction of profit due to the increased competition but also can lead to brain drain which already has become a concerning matter.

**Second approach:** Create accessible and good quality formal, non-formal, and informal education so it is complemented to the labor market demands in the current and future economic circumstances.

The overall situation of any form of education in Kosovo is still facing a number of difficulties. The formal education system at secondary school and at university does not adequately prepare youngsters for the world of work. The informal education has not yet received a level of visibility and credibility that reveals its contribution to individual development. Also, lack of educational diversity pushes the majority of the youngsters to major in the same field which leads to an economical disbalance; there is more supply than demand.

**Table 2: Occupations of employees by gender**

KOSOVO 2012	MALE	FEMALE	OVERALL
Percentage of employees by occupation (%)			
Legislators, senior officials and managers	8.3	5.5	7.7
Professionals	13.4	31.1	17.0
Technicians and related occupations	6.2	12.5	7.5
Clerk	4.1	8.0	4.9
Vendor service workers and workers in shops and markets	19.3	19.4	19.3
Skilled workers in agriculture and fishing	2.5	3.5	2.7
Craft and trade workers	17.1	4.1	14.4
Factories and machinery operators and assemblers	9.2	1.7	7.7
* Elementary occupations	19.9	14.3	18.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Source: Results of Labor Force Survey, Kosovo 2012

Even though the education system in Kosovo faces many challenges, young people find education attained as being relevant for getting a decent job, therefore the aim of many young Kosovars is to achieve higher education in the belief that it will improve their employment opportunities.

**Table 3: The number of unemployed and the unemployment rate by highest level of education and gender**

KOSOVO 2012	MALE	FEMALE	OVERALL
Unemployment rate (%)			
No education	56.0	82.1	62.5
Class I-VIII/IX	40.3	59.0	44.6
Secondary vocational school	25.9	36.1	28.0
High school gymnasium	35.4	50.2	38.8
Tertiary	11.5	24.4	15.6
Total	28.1	40.0	30.9

Source: Source: Results of Labor Force Survey, Kosovo 2012

The unemployment rate of 62.5 percent was the highest for uneducated persons and the lowest with 15.6 percent for those who have completed higher education. This shows that education does improve the prospects in the labor market and that is the reason that good quality and accessible education system should be established. This education system should poses lifelong, formal and informal training, recognition of informally acquired skills and competencies, access to new technologies and especially personal counseling with an expert, career guidance and support. The reason that a good education system must have personal counseling with an expert, career guidance and support, is to train the young people on how to write good resumes, motivation letters, professional emails etc, so that their chances of find a job get increased. Lamentably this does not eliminate the high unemployment rate of those who have basic education or no education at all. So in this case the government should invest in different kinds of trainings which will teach various trades so that those with little to no education can gain the skills to acquire professional jobs.

However, it appears that many young people in Kosovo delay their entry into the labor market for lack of job opportunities, more than for a reasoned career choice because when recruiting new employees in Kosovo, employers look first at the work experience. So one of obstacles in the recruitment process is the lack of work experience, and here is where the third approach to decreasing youth unemployment jumps in.

**Third approach:** Creating work experience through training, volunteer work and internships.

Voluntary work and internships are a valuable way by which young people can gain practical experience and improve their qualifications. In addition, voluntary work as well as internships empower youngsters; they make them feel useful and they get to spend their time wisely and not in cafes. These and many more are the reasons it is important that throughout the studying period and after it, trainings, volunteer work and internships should be offered to students by both government and private institutions to help them put the theory they study in school into practice. Unfortunately, most people in Kosovo do not realize the benefits of engaging in voluntary work since they are not fond of doing tasks without payment to the benefit of the other people even though it benefits them as well. Partially to be criticized for this is the lack of importance given to this subject. So it is essential to create a policy that makes trainings, volunteer work and internships more attractive to the youth since they are an important part of a healthy society. Moreover, it makes them more attractive to the labor market and increases their chances of employment.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Kosovo's government needs to take action to decrease the impact of this alarming issue. Although unemployment, especially

youth unemployment, has been recognized as threat to Kosovo's prosperity and action plans and strategies were created, the government has failed to implement them. Decreasing youth unemployment is very difficult tasks however taking these simple approaches such as establishing unbiased recruitment process, excellence education system appealing voluntary services and similar strategies will help achieving it.

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