

# Youth Partnership

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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



## CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES

### TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI

#### CHAPTER III: KOSOVO<sup>1</sup>

#### Employment and entrepreneurship

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<sup>1</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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### 3.1 General context

#### 3.1.1 Labour market situation in the country

The labour market in Kosovo is in a fragile situation due to low labour force participation rate. During the 2011-2021 period, unemployment in Kosovo hit its highest rate in 2014 (35.3%)<sup>2</sup>, whereas the lowest points were reached in 2021.

In 2021, the labour force participation rate stood at 39.3%. This low participation rate is particularly noticeable among women (22%) and young people aged 15-24 (21.4%).<sup>3</sup> Unemployment is extremely high especially among women, young people and disadvantaged groups.<sup>4</sup> According to ASK (Statistics Agency of Kosovo), in the fourth quarter of 2022, young people in Kosovo were twice as likely to be unemployed as adults. Among persons aged 15-24 and in the labour force, 19.0% were unemployed. Unemployment is higher among young women (23.4%) than among young men (17.2%). In July 2023, there were estimated to be 367 780 employed persons with primary education, compared with 359 487 persons in the same month of the previous year (July 2022) - an increase of 8 293 employed persons with primary education or 2.3%. Most of the employees with primary education are part of the age group 25-34.

In 2022, participation rate of the labour force aged 15-64 years was 38,6 % – 55,5 % for men and 22 % for women – the latter is still below the EU standard which is 27 % (74,5 % of the population belonged to the age group 15-64 years in 2022). The low participation rate is due to the low employment rates among women and young people 15-24 years of age (19.4 %).

The sectors with the highest employment have been the following: trade (16.8% of total employment), construction (10.5%), manufacture (10.4%), and education (10.1%). The employment rate of men is higher in the trading, constructing and manufacturing industries. As regards the employment rate of women, it is higher in education, trade and healthcare<sup>5</sup>.

#### 3.1.2 Main concepts

The labour market in Kosovo, like in other countries, is a complex system influenced by various economic, social and policy factors. The following lists some of the main concepts that characterise the labour market in Kosovo, according to ASK.

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<sup>2</sup>Eurostat; Statistics explained, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement\\_countries\\_-\\_labour\\_market\\_statistics#Unemployment\\_rates](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_labour_market_statistics#Unemployment_rates) accessed 4 September 2023.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization – ILO, available at: [https://www.ilo.org/budapest/countries-covered/kosovo/WCMS\\_649969/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/budapest/countries-covered/kosovo/WCMS_649969/lang-en/index.htm) accessed 4 September 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020, available at: [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/kosovo-financial-assistance-under-ipa\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/kosovo-financial-assistance-under-ipa_en) accessed 4 September 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Employment Strategy – Kosovo 2023-2027 (draft) available at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=42252> accessed 4 September 2023.

1. The **labour force participation rate** is a measure of the proportion of the working-age population (typically between 15 and 64 years old) that is either employed or actively seeking employment. It helps assess the level of engagement in the labour market.
2. The **employment rate** represents the percentage of the working-age population that is currently employed. It provides insights into the level of employment in the country.
3. The **unemployment rate** measures the percentage of the labour force (those actively seeking employment) that is unemployed and looking for work. It is a crucial indicator of labour market health.
4. **Youth unemployment** specifically focuses on the unemployment rate among young people; typically those aged 15 to 24. High youth unemployment is a common concern in many countries, including Kosovo.
5. **Informal employment** refers to jobs that are not formally registered or regulated by the government. Workers in the informal sector often lack social security coverage and employment rights protections.
6. The **long-term unemployed** are people who have been unemployed for one year or more. Long-term unemployment shares show the percentage of the long-term unemployed persons in the total unemployed population in the same age group.
7. **Self-employed** means people who work in their own business, professional practice or farm for the purpose of earning a profit and who either work on their own or employ at least one other person.
8. **Inactive persons** are those who during the reference period were neither employed nor unemployed.
9. **Discouraged workers** are people who do not have a job, who are currently ready for work, but who have given up looking for work because they believe they cannot find work. This category of discouraged people is included in the category “inactive population”.

These concepts provide a framework for understanding the dynamics and challenges within the labour market in Kosovo. Policy makers, researchers and stakeholders often use these indicators and concepts to assess labour market conditions and develop strategies for improving employment opportunities and labour market outcomes.

## 3.2 Administration and governance

### 3.2.1 Governance

The main public bodies that operate in the labour market in Kosovo include the following:

1. [The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare](#) is responsible for developing and implementing labour policies, regulations and programmes in Kosovo. It plays a key role in labour market management and provides services related to employment and social welfare.
2. [The Employment Agency of Kosovo](#) is responsible for facilitating job placement services, vocational training and career counselling for jobseekers in Kosovo. It works to connect jobseekers with employers and promote employment opportunities.

3. The [Kosovo Pension Savings Trust](#) is responsible for managing the pension savings of Kosovo's citizens. It plays a role in ensuring social security and retirement benefits for workers in Kosovo. Based on Law No. 04/L-101 on [Pension Funds of Kosovo](#), the pension system in Kosovo is divided into three pillars:
  - first pillar: the basic pension is a pension paid by the Pension Administration (within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) to all permanent residents of Kosovo who have reached the pension age;
  - second pillar: individual savings pensions provided by the Kosovo Pension Savings Trust; and
  - third pillar: supplementary employer pension funds, supplementary individual funds.
4. [Tax Administration of Kosovo](#) is responsible for collecting taxes and social security contributions from both employers and employees. It plays a crucial role in funding various social programmes and benefits.
5. [Kosovo Business Registration Agency](#) is responsible for registering businesses and ensuring compliance with labour and employment regulations. It plays a role in regulating the business environment, which indirectly affects the labour market.
6. [Kosovo Chamber of Commerce](#). While not a direct public body, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce works closely with businesses and the government to promote economic growth, which has a direct impact on the labour market by creating job opportunities.
7. [Trade unions](#). Various trade unions in Kosovo represent workers' interests, negotiate labour agreements and advocate labour rights. Some prominent trade unions in Kosovo include the Confederation of Trade Unions of Kosovo (KSBK) and the Independent Trade Union of Workers of Kosovo (BSPK).
8. **Employers' associations** represent the interests of businesses and employers. They engage in social dialogue with trade unions and the government to shape labour policies and regulations.
9. **International organisations** such as the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union (EU) often collaborate with Kosovo's government to provide support, funding and expertise for labour market development projects.
10. Various **non-governmental organisations** (NGO)s operating in Kosovo focus on labour market-related issues, workforce development and social inclusion. They often work in partnership with government agencies and international organisations.

There are several labour unions in Kosovo that represent the interests of workers and engage in collective bargaining and advocacy for labour rights. Some of the prominent labour unions in Kosovo include the following:

1. **Confederation of Trade Unions of Kosovo**. One of the largest and most influential trade union confederations in Kosovo. It represents workers from various sectors and is involved in negotiations with the government and employers to secure better working conditions and labour rights.

2. **Independent Trade Union of Workers of Kosovo** is another significant trade union in Kosovo, representing the interests of workers in various industries. It is known for its efforts to protect workers' rights and promote fair labour practices.
3. **Trade Union of Education, Science and Culture in Kosovo** focuses specifically on representing workers in the education, science and cultural sectors in Kosovo. It promotes the rights and interests of employees in these fields.
4. **Trade Union of Health and Social Welfare Workers of Kosovo** represents healthcare professionals and workers in the social welfare sector. It works to improve working conditions, wages and benefits for employees in these critical areas.
5. **Trade Union of Municipalities and Services of Kosovo** represents the workers employed by municipalities and local government entities in Kosovo. It promotes the rights and interests of public-sector employees.

There are some research institutes and organisations in Kosovo, which focus on employment, entrepreneurship and labour market research. These institutes conduct studies, provide data and offer insights into various aspects of employment and entrepreneurship in Kosovo. Some of the notable research institutes and organisations in this area are listed below:

1. [Kosovo Agency of Statistics](#) (ASK) collects and publishes data on various aspects of labour market, including employment, unemployment rates and labour force participation. It is a valuable source for labour market research.
2. [Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development](#) is a think tank in Kosovo that conducts research on various policy areas, including the labour market and employment issues. They often publish reports and studies on labour market trends and policies.
3. [Reinvest Institute](#) is a prominent economic think tank in Kosovo that conducts research on the various economic and social topics, including entrepreneurship, employment and labour market dynamics. They publish reports and studies to inform policy makers and the public.
4. [Kosovo Education Centre](#) (KEC) is an organisation that focuses on education and workforce development. They conduct research on education and employment issues, particularly in the context of skills development and vocational training.
5. [American Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo](#) (AmCham Kosovo) conducts research on various aspects of the business environment in Kosovo, which indirectly affects employment and entrepreneurship. They often publish reports on economic trends and challenges.
6. [Kosovo Civil Society Foundation](#) is involved in research and advocacy on various social and economic issues in Kosovo. They may conduct research on employment, entrepreneurship and labour market-related topics.
7. **International organisations** operating in Kosovo, such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), often conduct research on labour market issues, employment and entrepreneurship to support development efforts in the region.

Consultation with young people in the labour market in Kosovo is an important aspect of labour market policy and development. Engaging with youth in the decision-making processes and addressing their needs and concerns is crucial for creating inclusive and effective labour market

policies. Here are some ways in which consultation with young people in the labour market has been typically conducted in Kosovo:

1. **Youth employment programmes:** Kosovo's government and various organisations design youth-specific employment programmes and initiatives. These programmes are often developed with input from youth representatives, NGOs and relevant stakeholders. Feedback from youth is collected to tailor these programmes to their needs.
2. **Youth associations and organisations** in Kosovo often play an active role in advocating the rights and interests of young people in the labour market. These organisations provide a platform for youth voices to be heard and engage in dialogue with government authorities.
3. **Surveys and research:** research organisations and institutions conduct surveys and studies to gather data on the labour market experiences and aspirations of young people. The findings from these studies help shape policies and programmes.
4. **Online platforms and social media:** in an increasingly digital world, online platforms and social media are used to engage with young people and gather their input. Websites, social media channels and online surveys are utilised to reach out to youth and involve them in labour market discussions.
5. **Youth councils:** some municipalities in Kosovo have established youth councils or advisory bodies where young people can voice their opinions and concerns. These councils address various issues, including those related to the labour market.
6. **Partnerships with youth organisations:** government bodies and international organisations collaborate with youth organisations to co-create and implement programmes aimed at improving youth employment opportunities. These partnerships ensure that young people have a direct role in shaping initiatives.
7. **Skills development and training:** Consultation with young people often includes identifying the types of skills and training programmes that are most relevant to their needs and aspirations. This information helps in designing effective training and education initiatives.

### 3.2.2 Cross-sectoral co-operation

Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK) and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) are the responsible institutions for monitoring the implementation of the active employment measures. They provide related information about the results achieved. The effectiveness of Active Labour Market Measures (ALMM) in Kosovo is most often analyzed by evaluating the results at the end of the measures implementation period<sup>6</sup>.

Kosovo [Employment Strategy \(2023-2027\)](#), which is focused on employment (reduction of inactivity, increase of employment, development of capacities in full compliance with labour

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<sup>6</sup> See: Country Evaluation Report: PES Kosovo available at: [https://www.esap.online/files/user/docs/benchlearning/Benchlearning\\_Report\\_Kos.pdf](https://www.esap.online/files/user/docs/benchlearning/Benchlearning_Report_Kos.pdf) accessed 5 September 2023.

market's needs, reduction of informality and amelioration of working conditions, etc.), will be monitored in two phases (mid-term and final).

### 3.3 Skills forecasting

#### 3.3.1 Forecasting system(s)

The Survey on Employers in Kosovo, similar to surveys conducted in other countries, aims to gather information and data from employers to gain insights into various aspects of the labour market, employment practices and the business environment. The Kosovo Statistics Agency (ASK) started the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in 2001, running it as an annual survey until 2009. Due to the preparation of the population census, the LFS was not carried out in 2010 and 2011. From 2012, the LFS has been conducted according to the Eurostat methodology as a continuous survey (52 calendar weeks).<sup>7</sup>

The improved questionnaire:

- The survey is designed with specific objectives in mind, such as understanding employment trends, skills demand, wage levels and labour market conditions.
- Survey questions are developed to collect relevant data from employers. The questionnaire may cover topics like workforce composition, job vacancies, training practices and labour market challenges.
- The survey team determines the sample size and the method for selecting participating employers.

#### 3.3.2 Skills development

The findings of the Survey on Employers and the Survey on Occupational Standards are also used as information in the development of the recommendations for education. The [2022-2026 Education Strategy](#) contains several strategic objectives for the five priority areas:

- Increasing inclusion and equal access to early childhood education.
- Raising the quality of pre-university education through the consolidation of quality assurance mechanisms and the provision of quality teaching.
- Harmonisation of education and professional training with the dynamic developments in technology and the labour market for lifelong learning.
- Improving the quality, integrity and competitiveness of higher education.

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<sup>7</sup> Results of the Kosovo 2014 Labour Force Survey (June 2015), Kosovo Agency of Statistics, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/629671468190183189/pdf/98068-WP-P132666-PUBLIC-Box382167B-Kosovo-Labour-Force-Survey-2014-ENG-final.pdf> accessed 5 September 2023.



- The use of digital technology for the improvement of services and quality in education, in accordance with the trends of digital transformation.

The data collected helps stakeholders better understand and develop strategies to enhance employment opportunities and workforce development.

### 3.4 Career guidance and counselling

#### 3.4.1 Career guidance and counselling services

Career guidance and counselling services are valuable resources that help individuals make informed decisions about their education, training and career paths. These services are typically offered by various organisations and institutions, both public and private. [The Education Strategy](#) is the main document for the development of the education sector in Kosovo for the period 2022-2026. The strategy is based on the Kosovo Government Programme 2021-2025 and the analysis of the state of the priority areas of the education sector. Also, the Education Strategy has been drawn up in accordance with the National Development Strategy 2030, namely with the general objective of "accessible and quality education".

The harmonisation of education and professional training with the dynamic developments of technology and the labour market, as a function of lifelong learning, is seen as a strategic objective in relation to professional education and training. Consequently, the main focus within this strategic area is revising the provision of education and vocational training as well as the improvement in terms of quality for further development of transferable skills, digital skills, entrepreneurial skills and professional technical skills, in accordance with the needs of the labour market and with the trends of the digital and green transformations. Professional guidance is provided through legislative work involving the Ministry of Science and Education and the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy.

1. **Education and training:** Kosovo has been investing in its education system to provide quality education and vocational training programmes. These programmes aim to equip students and young adults with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed career choices.
2. **Career counselling centres:** Kosovo has established career counselling centres and services in educational institutions, where students and individuals can receive guidance on career options, job market trends and educational pathways.
3. **Labour market information:** Kosovo has been working on collecting and disseminating labour market information to help individuals make informed career decisions. This includes data on job openings, salary ranges and skills in demand.
4. **Public employment services:** Kosovo has set up public employment services that assist jobseekers in finding suitable employment opportunities. These services often include job matching, resumé assistance and interview preparation.

5. **Entrepreneurship support:** the government and various organisations in Kosovo have initiated programmes to support entrepreneurship and self-employment. This includes providing training, mentoring and access to funding for aspiring entrepreneurs.
6. **Internship and apprenticeship programmes:** Kosovo has encouraged the development of these programmes in collaboration with the private sector. These programmes give young people hands-on experience in their chosen fields.
7. **Career fairs and workshops:** these are organised regularly to connect jobseekers with potential employers and provide them with information about different career paths.
8. **Online resources:** Kosovo has also made efforts to provide online resources and tools for career guidance. This includes websites and platforms where individuals can explore careers, assess their skills and access job listings.
9. **Vocational education:** Kosovo has expanded its vocational education programmes to offer a wide range of skills training options. This enables individuals to acquire practical skills that are in demand in the job market.
10. **Government initiatives:** the government has introduced various initiatives to support employment and career development, including subsidies for hiring young workers and incentives for businesses to invest in workforce development.

#### 3.4.2 Funding

The total cost for the implementation of the Education Strategy is €322 847 140, of which €19 024 719 (6%) is for education, vocational training and adult education. For the implementation period of the Education Strategy 2022-2026, of the total cost of €322 847 140, it is planned that €185 520 615 (57%) will be covered by the state budget; €33 500 989 (10%) will be provided by foreign financing. The costs include the procurement of psychological measuring instruments, the development of new instruments and methods of assessment, and counselling, including e-guidance, professional training, etc.

#### 3.4.3 Quality assurance

Kosovo had made efforts to establish a quality assurance system and evaluation processes for its professional guidance and career counselling services. [Quality assurance and evaluation](#) are crucial components of any effective career guidance system, ensuring that services meet standards, are effective and respond to the needs of individuals seeking career advice and support.

### 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

#### 3.5.1 Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

The general framework for vocational education is the [Law on Vocational Education No. 04/L-138](#), the purpose of which is to regulate the system of professional education and training in

accordance with the needs of the economic and social development of the Republic of Kosovo, including economic and technological changes, the demands of the labour market and the needs of individuals in the market economy, optimally utilising financial, human and infrastructure resources. Vocational education and training (VET) aim to equip students/candidates with the knowledge, practical skills, skills and competences required in specific professions or more broadly in the labour market. VET is managed by MESTI and the related institutions: - Agency of the Vocational and Adult Education and Training, and Municipal Directorates of Education (DKA). Other ministries and relevant institutions may contribute within their remit.

The VET system refers to approved education programmes offered by licensed educational institutions that use curricula approved by MESTI. These programmes are offered by upper secondary vocational schools (grades 10-12) and post-secondary institutions accredited by the National Qualifications Authority. Through an internal exam, students are assessed for advancement to the next stage of formal VET or for the labour market, while obtaining a certificate at this level enables individuals to immediately enter the labour market for their specific profile.

The [VET system in Kosovo](#) continues to fail to meet the growing needs of the market economy, being mainly school-based, which affects students' opportunities for employment. Although the unemployment rate for young people (15-24 years old) was lower by 15.6% than in the same period of the previous year, the inactivity rate for 2022 continues to remain quite high at 61.5%, increasing by 0.6% compared to the same quarter of the previous year. The rate of inactivity among women was very pronounced at 78.8%, compared to men at 44.2%, according to the ASK report.<sup>8</sup>

According to the KCF (Kosovo Curriculum Framework), vocational training programmes are an integral part of the VET high school curriculum, which is based on competence-based education and learning outcomes. Secondary VET schools in Kosovo offer two main types of work-based learning programmes: work-based learning in the VET schools' own workshops and professional internships in companies. Generally, VET students are sent to a company of their choice to do the work they wish to continue after completing their studies. The internship in the company should provide a strong and high-quality learning environment that enables students to acquire practical skills with the help of trainers who know the working methods and the latest technology.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.5.2 Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships can be an effective strategy for integrating young people into the labour market in Kosovo. These programmes provide valuable work experience

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Vocational education and training in Kosovo: Challenges and Opportunities, available at: [http://kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VET-Education-in-Kosovo\\_Challenges-and-Opportunities\\_ALB.pdf](http://kec-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VET-Education-in-Kosovo_Challenges-and-Opportunities_ALB.pdf) accessed 5 September 2023.

and skills development opportunities for young people, making them more attractive candidates for employers.

However, [professional practice and practical learning](#) are not always carried out effectively. The problems for the realisation of work-based learning programmes are different from the side of schools and from the side of businesses. Other challenges that hinder professional practice are the lack of a national strategy and appropriate legislation to regulate school–company co-operation to implement work-based learning programmes; the lack of long-term development plans in most companies; and the lack of a co-ordinator in schools, which would serve as a facilitator between schools and companies. Also, in many cases when professional practice or company visits are far from the school or municipality, then the financial implications constitute an obstacle for businesses and schools.

### 3.5.3 Recognition of learning outcomes

Recognition of learning outcomes is crucial for the integration of young people into the labour market in Kosovo as it helps validate and make visible the skills and knowledge acquired through various learning experiences, including formal education, informal learning and practical training. The [formal qualifications in the VET](#) sector range from level 3 to level 5, as regulated by the AKK. Level 3 is achieved after successful completion of grades 10 and 11. Obtaining a certificate at this level enables individuals to immediately enter the labour market for their specific profile, but not to continue higher education. Qualification at level 4 is achieved when students complete grade 12 through obtaining a certificate as part of an internal assessment. Upon completion of this level, students have the right to enter the *Matura* exam to continue higher education.

Promoting the recognition of learning outcomes in Kosovo can enhance the employability of young people, improve the efficiency of the labour market and contribute to the overall economic development of the country. It requires close collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, employers and youth organisations to ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach.

### 3.5.4 Funding

Funding for the integration of young people into the labour market in Kosovo can come from various sources, including government programmes, international donors, private-sector initiatives and non-profit organisations.

[The main source of financing](#) is the public budget. A grant is allocated to municipalities based on a specific formula and municipalities allocate these funds to schools. Teachers' salaries are paid through a payment system managed by the Ministry of Finance, capital expenditures are managed directly by MEST or municipalities and the budget for goods and expenses is allocated directly to schools according to the number of students. VET schools are also allowed to generate income through economic activity, such as manufacturing activities and services and

they can use the income to meet their needs, including paying staff for overtime work. Regarding work-based learning in VET schools, all vocational schools consider that the budget for vocational schools is not sufficient to implement practical learning. Supporting the creation of joint, beneficial and supportive partnerships between VET schools and businesses should be the central pillar of VET reform in Kosovo.

### 3.5.5 Quality assurance

Quality assurance of traineeships in Kosovo, like in many countries, involves a systematic process to ensure that internships and work-based learning experiences provide valuable educational and practical benefits to the trainees. Quality assurance mechanisms are typically designed to safeguard the rights and interests of trainees, maintain the educational value of the experience and foster positive relationships between educational institutions, employers and trainees.

A study on the current challenges of quality assurance in the VET system was based on the qualitative research approach, qualitative data collected through focus groups, interviews and questionnaires. The main findings from the analysis of the situation are:

- deficiencies and inconsistencies in the legal and policy framework for quality assurance in VET;
- other policy issues that negatively affect the quality of the VET system;
- the current state of quality assurance at the system level;
- the current state of quality assurance at the VET provider level (vocational schools and VET).

The main recommendations that emerged from this study are as follows.

- Closing gaps and inconsistencies in the legal and policy framework for Quality Assurance in VET.
- Addressing the main challenges of vocational schools and Training Centres Professional. Vocational education and training providers should have an appropriate degree of autonomy, flexibility, support and funding to quickly adapt their training to changing labour market needs. Incentives for structured co-operation between businesses and schools for the realisation of professional practice in enterprises. The co-operation between [MESTI/AEPWAE](#) and [MLSW/EARK](#) should be strengthened. The development of a co-operation framework would contribute to this goal.
- Consolidation of quality assurance at the system level. The merger of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and the National Qualifications Authority would be in line with the tendency for quality assurance to cover all levels and types of qualifications and would reflect confidence in and sustainability of the certification process.

### 3.6 Integration of young people into the labour market

#### 3.6.1 Youth employment measures

The [Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo](#) (EARK) as an independent body within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and is the main provider of active labour market measures. [Labour of Law 03/L-212](#) in support of Article 65 (1) and Article 49 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, taking into account the Conventions of the International Labour Organization, EU legislation and the basic principles of the open economy and of the labour market, aims to create a functional, comprehensive and stable legal basis for the labour relationship.

As defined by [Law No. 04/L-205](#), Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (Agjencia e Punësimit të Republikës së Kosovës, APRK) is the public provider of services in the labour market, which aims to manage employment and implement employment policies and professional training. APRK implements active labour market measures such as: professional training through Professional Training Centres (Qendrave të Aftësimit Profesional QAP); training in the workplace; wage subsidies; internships; self-employment and promotion of entrepreneurship and public work.<sup>10</sup>

The [EARK](#) has managed to support a small proportion of jobseekers through active labour market measures. During 2017, EARK assisted 9 173 people registered as unemployed through [ALMM](#) (Active Labour Market Measures) (or 79% of the target number for 2017). The majority of [ALMM](#) are from vocational training at 69%. The groups that have benefited the most from [ALMM](#) are those with upper secondary education (around 56% followed by those with lower secondary education with 28%), while 34% of young people aged 15-24 have benefited from the programmes. The proportion of men who have benefited from ALMM was 66% compared to 34% for women (in professional training with 34%).<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.6.2 Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

The [regulations that assure](#) the flexibility of the labour market aim to define the procedures, rights and responsibilities of the central and local institutions, public or private, the unemployed, registered jobseekers and employers, in determining, implementing, monitoring and evaluating active measures of labour market. The [Strategy for youth 2019-2023](#) plans to promote the development of non-formal education and increased institutional co-operation in the creation of a lifelong learning culture.

Active labour market measures, through internships, aim that the recent graduates from vocational schools and vocational training centres as well as from other vocational training and higher education institutions, interact in the labour market. EARK defines several priority groups for all [ALMM](#), among which the most common are: women, persons with disabilities

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<sup>10</sup> Active labour market measures offered by public providers in Kosovo.

<sup>11</sup> Employment Policy for the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo 2019-2021.

and beneficiaries of social assistance. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport (MCYS) supports measures for unemployed youth aged 18-24 and the GIZ Organisation also targets young people aged 18-35. The measures supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs are aimed at repatriated persons aged 18-64, without any specific targeting.

### 3.6.3 Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

Balancing private and working life can be a challenge for young people in Kosovo, as it is in many other countries. Reconciliation of these two aspects of life is essential for overall well-being and productivity.

Some of the measures taken to balance private life with work life for young people are defined in [Labour Law No. 03/L-212](#).

- Employees under the age of 18 cannot work in jobs which, by their nature or the circumstances under which they are carried out, may harm their health, safety or morals (Article 44 and 45).
- Parental leave can be used up to 12 months after the birth of the child according to Article 49 on maternity leave of Labour Law No. 03/L-212.
- A woman employed during pregnancy or a mother with a child under the age of three cannot be obliged to work longer than regular working hours or work at night, according to Article 48 on maternity protection of Labour Law No. 03/L-212.
- Working part-time or from home as a flexible form of engagement also depends on the agreement between the employer and the employee and is used only to a small extent.

### 3.6.4 Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

Funding existing schemes and initiatives in Kosovo, whether they are related to youth employment, education, healthcare or any other area, typically involves a combination of public and private-sector resources, international aid and non-profit organisations.

Financing of the employment measures come mainly from the national budget. The main body responsible for administering the financing of employment measures is the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy and the main provider through which the money is allocated to the beneficiaries of the measure is the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (EARK).

### 3.6.5 Quality assurance

Quality assurance of the integration of young people into the labour market in Kosovo involves a multifaceted approach that encompasses various stakeholders, policies and initiatives. Ensuring that young people have meaningful access to employment opportunities and that their rights are protected is crucial for their economic and social well-being.



Based on the [Employment Policy for the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo 2019-2021](#), monitoring, evaluation and planning according to evaluation results is not yet a function that is continuously implemented by APRK either at the institutional or client level. Vocational training programmes for adults are rarely designed based on regular surveys of employers (in localities where VETs are located), which aims to identify consistent information about the skills and occupations required by local markets. Therefore, professional training is often disconnected from employers who do not have flexibility to adapt the training according to changing needs.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, funding is a major limitation for ALMM (Active Labour Market Measures) expansion, as almost all measures require additional funding from the private sector. The comparative study shows that compared to EU countries, Kosovo allocates limited resources from public and private sector.

### **3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities**

#### **3.7.1 Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

Kosovo has been working on several programmes and schemes to promote cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities. These initiatives are often aimed at enhancing the skills and employability of young people and providing them with valuable experiences abroad.

The most active programmes for cross-border mobility in Kosovo are the following.

#### **[Erasmus+ programme – Key Action 1 Mobility of Individuals](#)**

Kosovo has participated in Erasmus+ KA1 International Credit Mobility projects in the role of partner country since 2015. From 2015 until 2022 the Kosovo Higher Education Institutions benefited with 7 685 mobilities (incoming and outgoing staff and students). Kosovo students are fully eligible to apply for full master's studies through the KA1 Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programme (EMJM). For the period 2015-2022, there were 41 students selected from Kosovo. Given the data provided, gradual progress has been made and the number of successful applications for EMJM scholarships has evidently risen (only one scholarship in 2016; 9 in 2021; and 13 in 2022, which is an increase of around 30% more successful applications compared to 2021).

For the first time in the history of Erasmus+ programme, VET schools in Kosovo received Erasmus + grants by winning nine capacity building projects in the field of vocational education

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<sup>12</sup> Note: Due to the fact that trainers are employed on full-time basis as civil servants and profiled in specific training programmes, it is difficult for them to respond to the market needs. Thus, the young people do not have many opportunities to choose the training to fit the market's needs. New training programmes are costly in terms of identifying needs, developing professional standards, necessary curriculum, purchasing equipment, etc. and often there is no dedicated budget.



and training. This is a great success taking into consideration that Erasmus+ action for VET in Kosovo was opened for the very first time in 2022.

Some capacity building projects were introduced in Kosovo in 2021 as well, comprising: 8 successful projects in the field of youth and 4 others in the field of sport. Considering the fact that this opportunity is new to Kosovo, the number of applications was very high and the achieved results at this stage are assessed satisfactory.

### 3.7.2 Legal framework

There does not appear to be any specific legal framework for cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees or apprentices in Kosovo. However, cross-border mobility of workers, including young workers and trainees, may be subject to various laws, regulations and agreements, at both the national and international levels. These legal frameworks include the following:

1. A law on granting permits for work and employment to foreign citizens in the Republic of Kosovo based on Law No. 3/L-136. The law regulates the types of employment, conditions and procedures for granting permits to foreign citizens in the Republic of Kosovo, according to conditions provided for by the law, international employment conventions and bilateral agreements.
2. **Employment and work permits:** for individuals from other countries who wish to work in Kosovo, including young workers, work permits and employment authorisation are required.

It is essential for young workers, trainees and apprentices interested in cross-border mobility to consult with relevant government authorities, such as labour ministries, immigration offices and vocational training institutions, to understand the specific legal requirements and regulations that apply to their situation. Additionally, they should seek legal advice or guidance from professionals who specialise in labour and employment law, as well as cross-border employment issues.

## 3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

### 3.8.1 Policy framework

Kosovo has no active learning strategy for entrepreneurship. Some elements related to the entrepreneurship competence are included in [the Education Strategy for 2022-2026](#), which is

being implemented by [MESTI](#). The Education Strategy (ES) is the main document for the development of the education sector in Kosovo for the period 2022-2026. The ES is based on the Plan of Kosovo Government for 2021-2025 as well as on the priority areas for action in education. The ES is organised into five priority areas covering the levels of education in Kosovo:

- **Area 1:** early childhood education
- **Area 2:** pre-university education
- **Area 3:** vocational education training and adult education
- **Area 4:** higher education
- **Area 5:** digitalisation of education.

In relation to entrepreneurial learning, the main focus within this strategic area is to review the provision of vocational education and training as well as quality improvement, in order to develop transferable skills, digital skills, entrepreneurial skills and professional technical skills, in line with labour market needs and digital and green transformation trends.

### 3.8.2 Formal learning

One of the specific objectives of the ES is to better connect higher education with the labour market through the harmonisation of study programmes, an increase in opportunities for practical work for students, co-operation with enterprises and an increase in interdisciplinary programmes and STEM programmes. New professional level-5 programmes will be developed in all public Higher Education Institutions ([HEIs](#)), thus increasing the number and type of programmes offered and the number of students attending them.

The career development centres in HEIs operate with limited staff capacity and the number of beneficiaries of their services is small. Joint development projects between HEIs and enterprises are almost non-existent. Grant schemes will be provided to encourage and support joint projects between HEIs and enterprises.

### 3.8.3 Non-formal and informal learning

There are no non-formal and informal learning programmes for entrepreneurship in Kosovo that are co-ordinated by public institutions or financed from public resources. In the ES it is stated that educational institutions should develop and offer short-term qualifications and non-formal courses that enable continuous professional development, retraining, knowledge and skills for progress in life, work or education.

### 3.8.4 Educators support in entrepreneurship education

In order to provide inter-institutional co-ordination to improve supply and encourage participation in Adult Education (AE), Agency for Vocational and adult education and Training ([AVETAE](#)) and Vocational Education and Training ([VETIs](#)) should co-operate with the Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centres to exchange information on opportunities for provision of various programmes.

Another important element for Adult Education is internationalisation; educational institutions that offer Adult Education will be supported to join various international organisations for Adult Education, in order to promote the mobility and participation of students and teachers in various international projects.

### **3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs**

#### **3.9.1 Access to information**

Young Kosovar entrepreneurs can stay informed and access valuable resources and information through various channels. These channels provide insights into the local and global business landscape, opportunities, networking and support. There follow some key channels for young entrepreneurs in Kosovo.

The [website](#) of the Ministry of Economy where open calls are regularly published by the ministry.

[Kosovo Chamber of Commerce](#): organisations like the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce and sector-specific associations provide information, events and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Sections on the [website](#) of the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports; [the Employment Agency of Kosovo](#), which is responsible for facilitating job placement services, vocational training and career counselling for jobseekers in Kosovo; the [Kosovo Education Centre](#) (KEC), an organisation that focuses on education and workforce development.

Also, organisations like the [Innovation Centre Kosovo](#) and other incubators, accelerators and entrepreneurial support centres offer resources, mentorship, different courses and workshops in order to enable young people to engage and start their own business and networking events.

#### **3.9.2 Access to capital**

Encouraging young Kosovar entrepreneurship involves providing financial resources and support to help aspiring entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses. Several institutions and organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, offer financial resources and programmes to support young entrepreneurs in Kosovo. Here are some key institutions that provide financial resources for encouraging young entrepreneurship.

1. The [Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade](#) can offer grants, funding programmes and support for entrepreneurship and economic development initiatives.
2. The [Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Promotion Agency](#) (KIESA) provides information on investment opportunities, business support and financial incentives for entrepreneurs looking to invest in Kosovo.

3. [Kosovo Credit Guarantee Fund](#) offers credit guarantees to start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to improve their access to financing from local banks.
4. The [Western Balkans Enterprises Development and Innovation facility](#) offers financing and support to Kosovo-based start-ups and entrepreneurs through investment programmes.
5. Local banks and financial institutions offer various financial products, including business loans, lines of credit and financial advisory services for entrepreneurs.
6. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Kosovo, such as [Kosovo – Women for Women](#), offer entrepreneurship support programmes and funding opportunities for specific target groups.

### **3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture**

#### **3.10.1 Special events and activities**

Through the [SME Competition Programme](#) supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the EU, 152 local SMEs have successfully implemented investment projects and improved their competitiveness. This programme offers SMEs access to EBRD loans and EU-funded grants through local partner banks and leasing companies, enabling them to go beyond their day-to-day operations and invest in purposeful advancements, achieving new standards.

[Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#) is a cross-border exchange programme which gives new or aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other participating countries.

Start-up competitions and challenges: Kosovo hosts start-up competitions and challenges that encourage aspiring entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas. These events often offer cash prizes, mentorship and exposure for winning start-ups.

The [7TH Women Start-up competition](#) is an annual start-up competition in Europe. It was founded in order to give opportunities for female entrepreneurs and their team members to meet investors, receive support and advice to reach their business goals. The competition aims to increase the currently very low ratio of women in business.

[The competition on a business plan](#) is a project that encourages all the young entrepreneurs, with either a business plan or some business ideas to be incorporated into a business plan, who lack finances, to participate in the competition. In this competition, young entrepreneurs with business plans or business ideas can apply to gain support for their start-up.

“[Internship business](#)” is a programme offered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry/KIESA, which provides to a certain number of students and newly graduated students a two-month internship in a business community by building a communication bridge between the government institutions, universities and business community.

“[Women in business](#)” is a project that organises a trade fair where businesses led by women can demonstrate their products for three days.

Entrepreneurship workshops and seminars: organisations, universities and entrepreneurship support centres regularly organise workshops and seminars on various aspects of entrepreneurship, including business planning, marketing and funding strategies.

### 3.10.2 Networks and partnerships

Entrepreneurial networks and partnerships are essential components of Kosovo's growing entrepreneurial ecosystem. These networks and collaborations provide support, resources and opportunities for start-ups and entrepreneurs. The following lists some of the key networks and partnerships that promote entrepreneurship in Kosovo.

Innovation Centre Kosovo is a leading organisation supporting innovation and entrepreneurship in Kosovo. It offers various programmes, events and resources for start-ups and hosts the annual Digital-born conference.

[Kosovo Business Angels Network](#) is a network of angel investors and mentors who support early-stage start-ups and entrepreneurs through funding, mentorship and networking opportunities.

[Kosovo Association of Information and Communication Technology](#) (STIKK) represents Kosovo's ICT sector and promotes innovation and entrepreneurship in the technology industry. It hosts events and initiatives supporting start-ups and tech companies.

[Kosovo Chamber of Commerce](#) offers support and resources to businesses and entrepreneurs in Kosovo. It hosts events, trade missions and networking opportunities.

There are various business incubators and accelerators in Kosovo, including Anibar, CEL and Prishtina Innovation Centre, which provide resources, mentorship and funding opportunities for start-ups.

These networks and partnerships play a crucial role in nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit in Kosovo, fostering innovation and providing the necessary support for start-ups and entrepreneurs to thrive in the local and global markets. Entrepreneurs in Kosovo can tap into these resources and collaborations to accelerate their business ideas and contribute to the country's economic growth.

### 3.11 Current debates and reforms

Since its independence, the Republic of Kosovo has faced a high unemployment rate. Unfortunately, unemployment is mostly widespread among the young people, which is a vulnerable category. In the last decade, the government, aiming to achieve greater employability of the young people, has been working on new measures through a combination of employment, education and social assistance policies. Improvement of the legal framework in this regard is ongoing.

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