

# Assessment of the Quality and Effectiveness of School-based Career Center Services



**SATISFACTION REPORT**  
**2021**

## **ABSTRACT**

This report introduces the findings from the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of School-based Career Center (SBCC) services by measuring the satisfaction level of students and businesses. The purpose of this assessment is to help SBCC staff advance their professional performance, develop more effective approaches and services, improve the outcomes, and achieve the most significant possible impact of their services.

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# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	p. 5
CHAPTER 1. Introduction	p. 9
CHAPTER 2. Findings	p. 11
2.1. Career Services for Prospective Students (9th graders)	p. 13
■ Findings from online survey	p. 13
• Usage of career services by 9-grade students	p. 14
• Satisfaction of 9 graders with services of career centers	p. 16
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for 9 <sup>th</sup> graders	p. 19
2.2. Career Services for VET Students	p. 20
■ Findings from online survey	p. 20
• Usage of career services by VET students	p. 22
• Satisfaction of VET students with services of career centers	p. 23
• The efficiency of services and positive effect on students	p. 24
■ Data from focus groups with VET students	p. 27
■ What was most useful for VET-school students	p. 30
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for VET Students	p. 32
2.3. Services for Businesses	p. 34
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for Businesses	p. 40
2.4. Services for the Community	p. 41
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for the community	p. 44
CHAPTER 3. Competitive advantages of the existing career centers	p. 45
CHAPTER 4. Conclusions	p. 51
CHAPTER 5. Recommendations	p. 53

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Demography of 9-grade students who participated in the online survey, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity	p. 13
Figure 2.	Usage level of career services by 9th grade students	p. 14
Figure 3.	Used career services by 9-grade students by ethnicity and gender	p. 14
Figure 4.	Reasons of 9th graders for not using career center services	p. 15
Figure 5.	Factors influencing the decision-making of 9th graders and reasons for choosing VET schools	p. 16
Figure 6.	Satisfaction of 9-grade students from services provided by career centers	p. 17
Figure 7.	Likelihood that 9-grade students recommend SBCCs	p. 17
Figure 8:	Demography of VET students who participated in the online survey, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity	p. 21
Figure 9.	VET students who participated in the online survey by school	p. 21
Figure 10.	Usage level of career services by VET students	p. 22
Figure 11.	Usage level of career services by VET students, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender	p. 22
Figure 12.	Reasons VET students haven't used career services	p. 23
Figure 13.	Satisfaction of VET students with used career center services	p. 24
Figure 14.	Impact of career services to VET students	p. 25
Figure 15.	Share of VET student who found internships/ jobs	p. 25
Figure 16.	Number of students that managed to find internship/jobs by gender and ethnicity	p. 26
Figure 17.	Perception of VET students for acquired practical skills for the world of work	p. 29
Figure 18.	Likelihood that VET students recommend career center services	p. 32
Figure 19.	Employers' consent with statements about career center services	p. 35
Figure 20.	Employers' satisfaction with SBCC activities and services	p. 36
Figure 21.	Likelihood that employers recommend the career center services	p. 39
Figure 22.	Community members' consent with statements about the career center	p. 42
Figure 23.	Likelihood that community members recommend career center services	p. 43

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the last years, various career services emerged across Kosovo, driven by the economy's growing demand for a better-prepared workforce and students' need for more practical skills relevant to the labor market. These include the career centers in VET schools (SBCCs) established by the EYE project, other municipality-level career services, youth career centers, school career clubs, and online career platform Busulla.com. All of these career services produce results and have specific advantages and constraints.

This report introduces the findings from the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of 9 SBCCs services by measuring the satisfaction level of students and businesses, but also understanding the performance of other career guidance services offered in different settings, so that the evaluation of SBCC services is done realistically, considering the competitive advantages but also the disadvantages. The purpose of this assessment is to help SBCC staff advance their professional performance, develop more effective approaches and services, improve the outcomes, and achieve the most significant possible impact of their interventions.

*The analyzed services of SBCCs are grouped into:*

- Services for prospective students (9<sup>th</sup> graders)
- Services for VET students,
- Services for businesses, and
- Services for community.

The key findings from this assessment are summarized below.

## **1. Services for 9<sup>th</sup> graders**

One of the main tasks of SBCCs is to attract prospective students. For this purpose, career centers organize open-door events, visit elementary schools, participate in career fairs, and offer information sessions for 9-grade students. However, as a general trend, all VET schools struggle to enroll students. Most SBCCs report slight improvement in enrollment rate in the last years, but generally, a lot of efforts need to be harnessed by SBCCs to turn the tide of students from VET as following recommendations show.

Improvement of existing services	New services and activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More frequent organization of activities with primary schools throughout the school year.</li> <li>■ Extend the duration of open doors for more than a week.</li> <li>■ Invest more in online campaigns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Provision of individual career guidance support for decision making through Busulla platform.</li> <li>■ Provision of career guidance to drop-out students who- need a second chance.</li> <li>■ Organize career days for parents who are actively involved in the decision-making process.</li> </ul>

## 2. Services for VET students

The primary function of SBCCs is to equip VET students with job readiness skills, offer labor market information and facilitate connection with the labor market through internships, WBL and employment. Even though SBCCs at VET schools are currently the largest provider of comprehensive VET career services and support, geographically available across thousands of students from 10 to 12 grades, still the quality of services still varies across different schools and depend mostly on the maturity of the establishment and the staff experience and initiative.

Following are few key recommendations to make SBCCs fully effective for VET students.

Improvement of existing services	New services and activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Organize Career Fairs annually - to allow students to meet employers effectively.</li> <li>■ Organize Career Days annual at school combining exhibitions, competitions, graduation ceremonies, etc.</li> <li>■ Promote participation of minority and female students in SBCC activities</li> <li>■ Ensure more internships/WBL opportunities for students in all grades (10,11,12)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer more online services for all target groups.</li> <li>■ Create a database of graduates and update it annually to follow their career development.</li> <li>■ Offer more targeted support for students at risk.</li> <li>■ Organize annual round tables or other networking events with relevant stakeholders to exchange most current data about the labour market and education.</li> </ul>

Improvement of existing services	New services and activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer information about further education opportunities in Kosovo and abroad, and about scholarships available to students.</li> <li>■ Promote internal job migration within Kosovo, especially in these towns where students complain of lack of adequate prospects.</li> <li>■ Intensify participation of parents, employers, and alumni in school activities addressing students' employability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer more project-based initiatives and competitions, which help students develop professional and transferable skills</li> <li>■ Offer training in transversal social skills – communication, teamwork, time management, entrepreneurship, creative problem solving, etc.</li> <li>■ Organize preparatory training for students before internships and WBL to introduce them with work ethics, rules, rights and obligations.</li> </ul>

### 3. Services for businesses

The majority of surveyed employers are convinced of the benefits of SBCCs and its impact in several aspects, and their satisfaction is relatively high. However, employers repeatedly recommend that career centers promote themselves more aggressively to create better awareness about the range of services users can benefit from.

*Following are few recommendations for further improvement of services for businesses:*

- Improve information about the SBCC services so companies could fully benefit from them.
- Invite companies to present to students in networking / employer branding events;
- Invite companies to send information about internships, job offers and training which can be suitable for students;
- Promote services in other regions with no career centers, to attract more job offers for graduates.
- Enhance the selection of students who participate in internship or WBL.
- Organize meetings of employers and teachers to exchange feedback after internship / WBL and discuss further cooperation

### 4. Services for the community

The SBCCs are an important factor and driver of the communities. They offer different kinds of services to inform society, parents and establish partnerships with local authorities such as Municipality Directorates of Education, VET and

business organizations, NGOs, media, and other youth organizations. Most interviewed community members confirm the importance of SBCCs for diverse aspects of the society.

*Recommendations for further improvement of services for the community:*

- Activate more the parents' involvement in school activities.
- Establish alumni clubs and organize annual networking events to update contacts, and attract support to school activities.
- Bring community members into the school life and more involved in the SBCC activities.
- Introduce annual survey among students, parents, teachers and school stakeholders to evaluate services, receive suggestions for new activities and feedback for improvement.

On the other hand, in order that SBCCs improve their services and become more effective, their staff need continues capacity building to follow the new trends of service provision, including the digital skills, and to design more effective programs tailored to specific target groups. Following are key recommendations in this context:

- Individual career guidance provision and coaching – SBCC need to be trained in providing career guidance for self-awareness, decision-making and career planning (e.g. using Busulla platform).
- Diversity inclusion and support - how to interact with students from diverse communities / minorities, to improve their attitude, be more sensitive and aware about cultural issues, to avoid discrimination
- Support for drop-out students - organize peer learning events with VET Agency and other professionals to discuss effective approaches to address their needs.
- Marketing skills – career center staff and school leadership will benefit from training in organization of public campaigns and communicating results to the public.
- Delivering online services – SBCCs need to improve their online services for all target groups – for example: online information sessions for prospective students, webinars for decision-making, LM awareness, virtual workshops for employability skills, online career fairs (in case of pandemic), etc.
- Constantly updating information about LM trends, emerging jobs and new skills demanded by the labor force. For this purpose, resources such as [futurejobsfinder.vodafone.com](https://futurejobsfinder.vodafone.com), [atlas100.ru](https://atlas100.ru), [whatchado.com](https://whatchado.com), and CEDEFOP Skills Panorama can be particularly useful.



# CHAPTER 1.



## Introduction

The assessment is designed to address the specific aspects of the quality and effectiveness of School-based Career Centers (SBCC) services, but also understanding the performance of other career guidance services offered in different settings (e.g., municipal career center of Prishtina Municipality, youth career centers, or virtual career services of Busulla platform). The assessment of the quality and effectiveness of SBCC services is made through measurement of satisfaction level of clients (students and businesses), and it is a complimentary data collection to the other assessment of benefits of SBCCs through impact measurement.

*The report presents findings and recommendations to support the SBCCs in improving their services' quality and variety, by addressing the following key services:*

- Services for prospective students (facilitation of 9th graders for the profession choice, career fairs, facilitation of adults-dropped outs, etc.)
- Services for VET students (career education, self-awareness, employability events, internship/WBL, training, labor market and career development information, services for marginalized groups, etc.).
- Services for businesses (internship/WBL, job openings, job fairs, cooperation with private and public employment service providers, etc.)
- Services for community (information for parents, work with local media, etc.).

*The data collection instruments (interviews and semi-structured questionnaires, online surveys, and focus groups) and the survey samples used are the same ones of the other assessment of benefits of SBCC services, as following:*

- online survey with 1040 VET students
- online survey with 338 students of 9<sup>th</sup> grade (in the same municipalities where SBCCs operate);
- focus groups with 47 VET students in SBCC schools;
- interviews with 45 employers;
- interviews with 36 VET students;
- interviews with 10 students of 9<sup>th</sup> grade (in the same municipalities where SBCCs operate);
- 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 coordinators of career centers.

This assessment of School-based Career Centers (SBCC) services is 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.

# CHAPTER 2.



**Findings**

In general, career centers offer cost-effective tools for students, employers, and governments. By using the services offered by the career centers, students are better prepared for the world of work and know-how to find internships/jobs. Employers use career centers to recruit interns and future employees directly and promote themselves as socially responsible entities on a local level. Local and national authorities use the data collected by the career centers for economic development, reforming education, and better preparing the educational curriculum. The career centers facilitate the public-private dialogue for better private sector involvement in reforming education. They facilitate the process for adapting curricula and developing new training programs that better meet the needs of the private sector.

In particular, career centers are essential for VET schools because they serve as a meeting point for education, business, society, and individuals. One of their main goals is to foster internships and work-based learning as an opportunity to apply theoretical education practically by establishing mutually beneficial partnerships between the employers and the VET School.

In the last years, various career services emerged across Kosovo, driven by the economy's growing demand for a better-prepared workforce and students' need for more practical skills relevant to the labor market. These include the career centers in VET schools (SBCCs) established by the EYE project, other municipality-level career services, youth career centers, and online career platform Busulla.com. All of these career services produce results and have specific advantages and constraints.

This assessment report presents the main findings and recommendations regarding the quality and effectiveness of SBCCs services based on the satisfaction level of students and companies. The report also suggests findings and recommendations for improvements of the services to respond to the needs of the students and the global career developments.

## 2.1. Career Services for Prospective Students (9<sup>th</sup> graders)



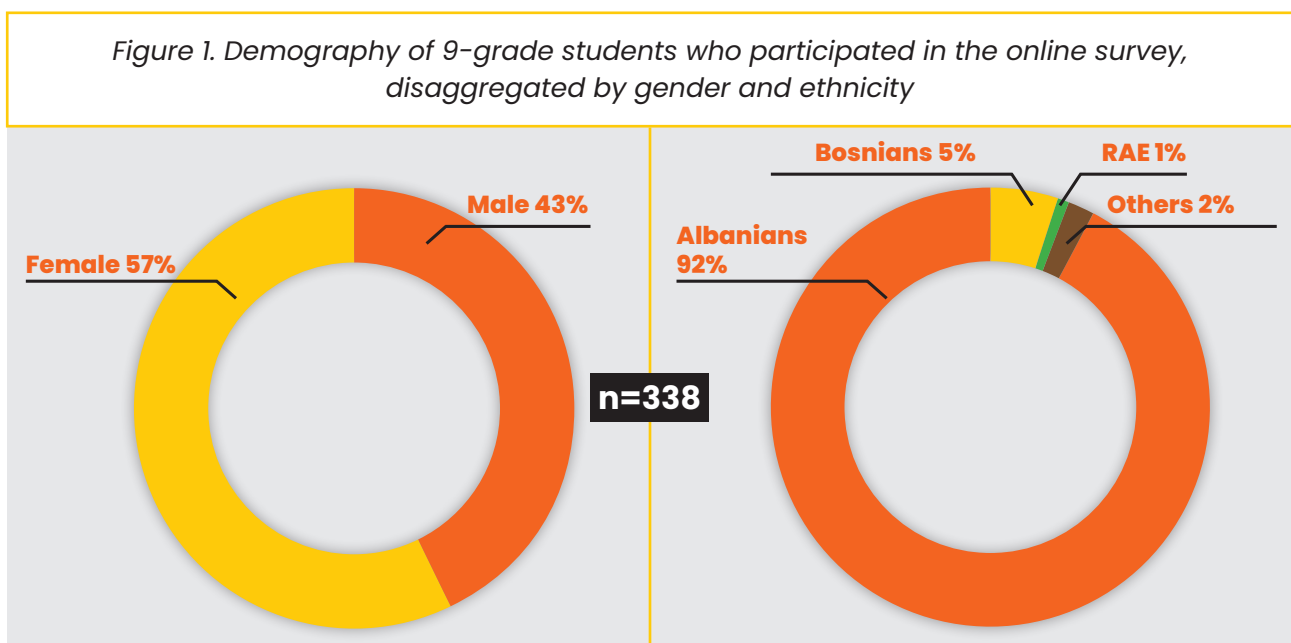
One of the main tasks of SBCCs is to attract prospective students. For this purpose, career centers organize open-door events, visit elementary schools, participate in career fairs, and offer information sessions for 9-grade students.

Besides SBCCs, services to 9-grade students are also offered by municipalities and youth career centers, which are more impartial and oriented towards independent career choices.

Students who don't benefit from career center services, mainly rely on the career classes integrated in the ICT subject (part of Life & Work curriculum field), including the use of national career guidance platform *Busulla.com* where all schools and profiles are presented, and self-assessment instruments help find out the most suitable educational and career options.

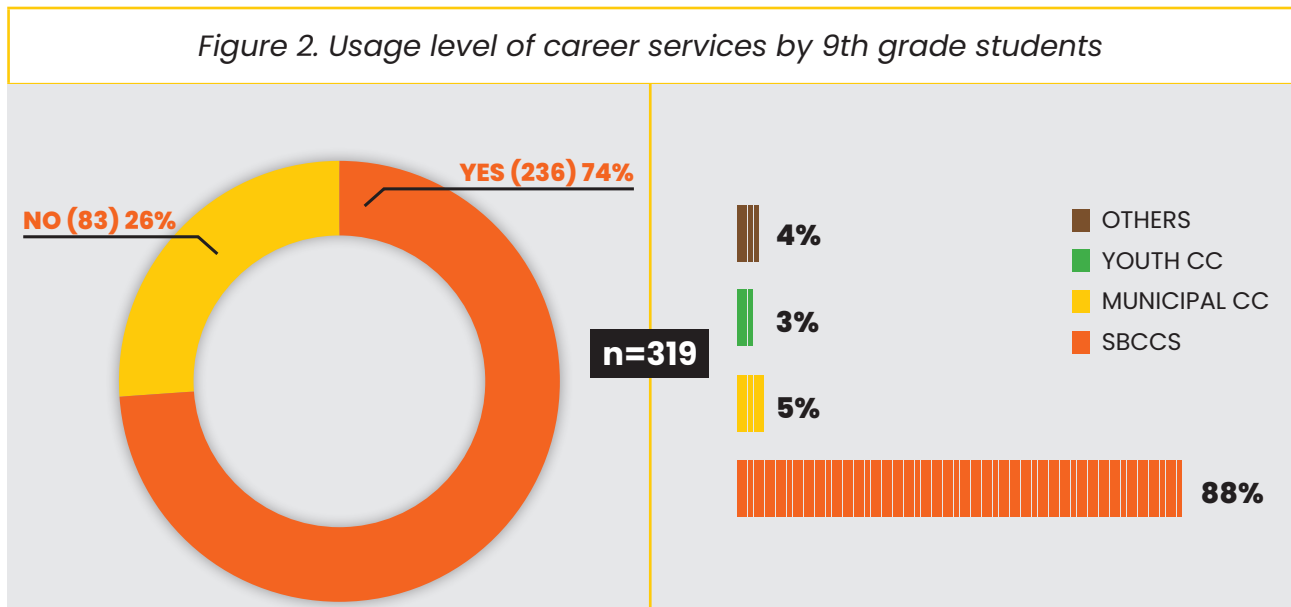
### Findings from online survey

338 students of 9-grade have responded to the online survey, almost equally represented by gender and predominantly Albanians by ethnicity as the following figure 1 shows.

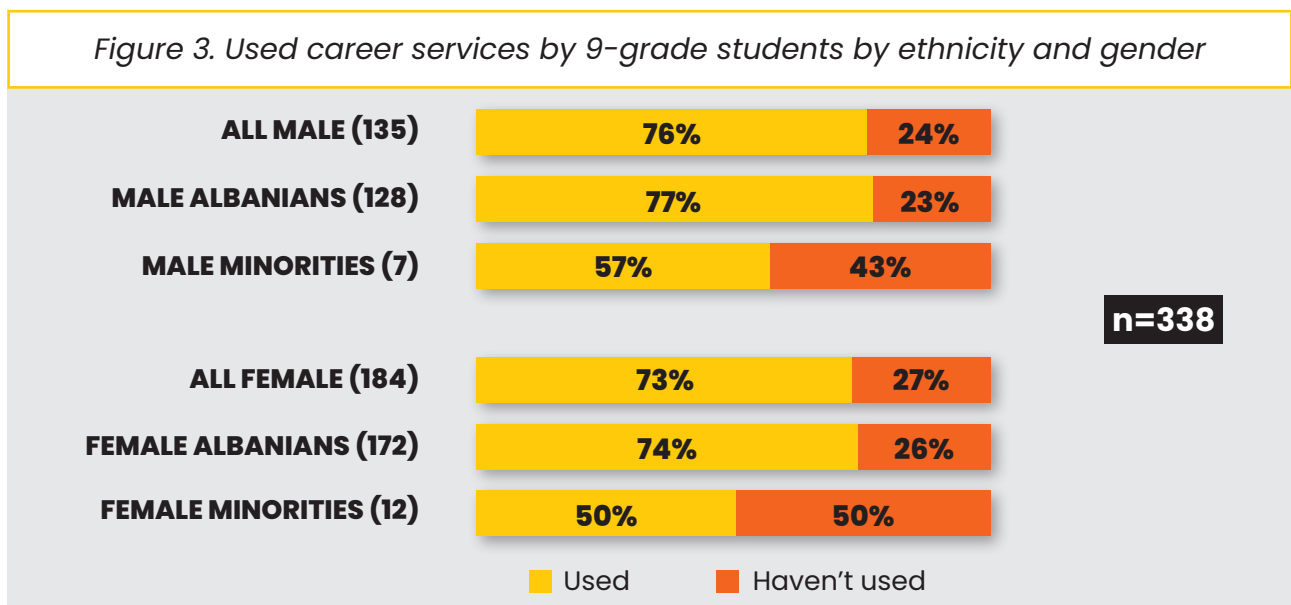


## Usage of career services by 9-grade students

Out of 338 survey respondents, 94% or 319 students answered to the question whether they received any career guidance support. 74% of them (236 students) confirmed that they used career services and majority (88%) referred to SBCC career services, while only 5% have used services of Pristina municipal career center, 3% youth career centers and 4% other services - mainly Busulla.com. (Figure 2)

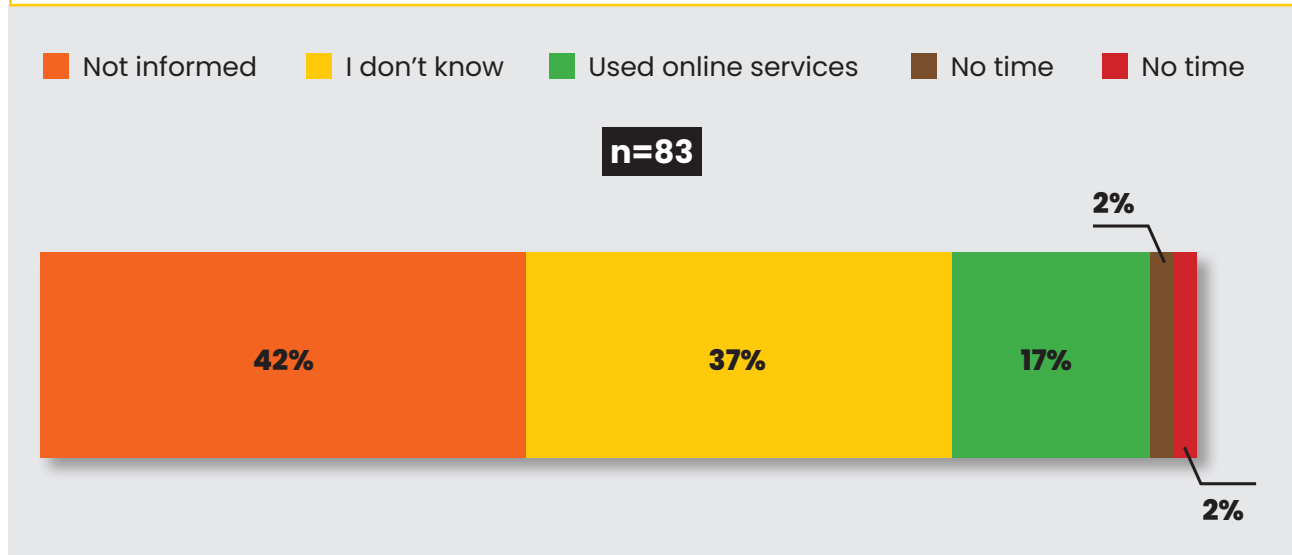


In terms of gender, the usage of career services is almost equal. Out of 338 survey respondents, 76% of all male students and 73% of all female students have used career services, while in terms of ethnicity, both male and female minorities have taken less benefit from available services although they are freely accessible to all 9-grade students.



Reasons for not using career centers services vary, but the key reason is that they have not been informed about the availability of such service. Out of 83 students, 42% of them pointed out this reason, while additional 37% cannot state any reason, and 17% specify that they have already used other online career services.

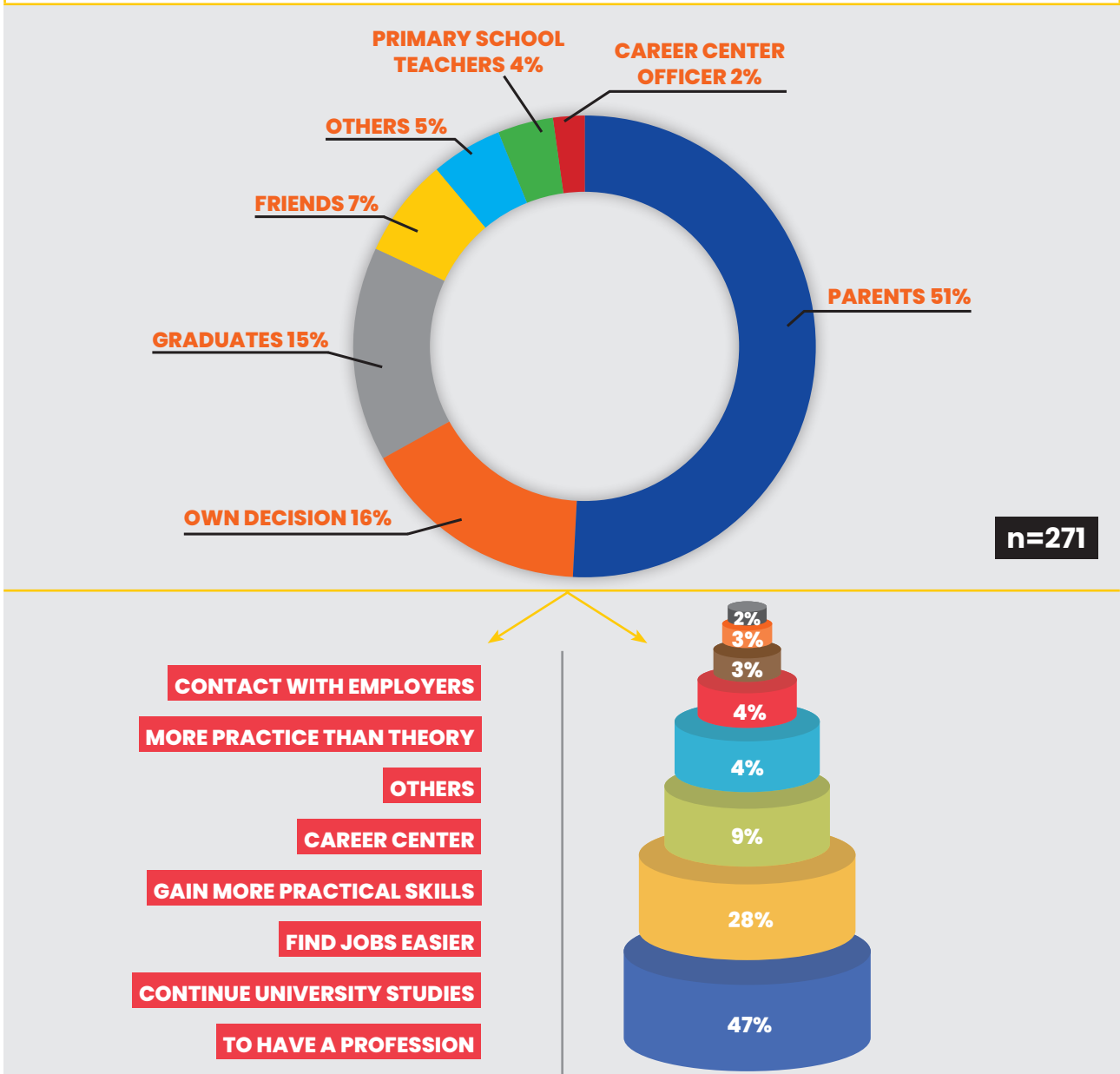
Figure 4. Reasons of 9<sup>th</sup> graders for not using career center services



In order to understand whether career centers have had an impact on students' decision-making about their profession, students have been asked what are the reasons for choosing VET schools. The main reason among 271 respondents include the desire to obtain a profession (47%), or other labor market factors, such as orientation towards more practical learning opportunities, direct contact with employers, to obtain more practical skills, and find a job more accessible – which account to another 18%, which is a promising indicator for future employment. Only 4% emphasize that the existence of a career center that supports students has been the reason for this choice.

On the other hand, the main factors which have influenced the educational choice of 9-grade students are parents (51%), own interests (16%), and recent graduates (15%).

Figure 5. Factors influencing the decision-making of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and reasons for choosing VET schools



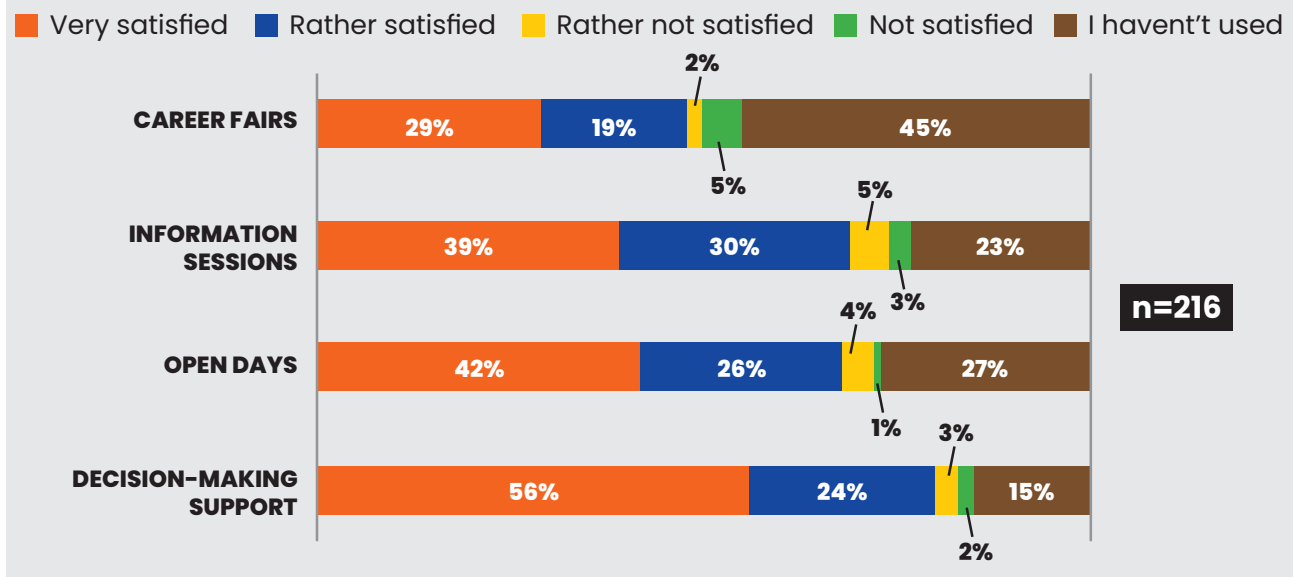
### Satisfaction of 9 graders with services of career centers

As already mentioned, key activities that career centers organize for 9<sup>th</sup> graders are information events (open-door events, information session either in premises of VET schools or elementary schools, and career fairs). However, students are more caring of support for decision-making about further education/career direction. About 80% of surveyed students are entirely or rather satisfied when they received this service from career centers. The information sessions and open doors activity are ranked in the second place with 68% to 69% of students very or rather satisfied.



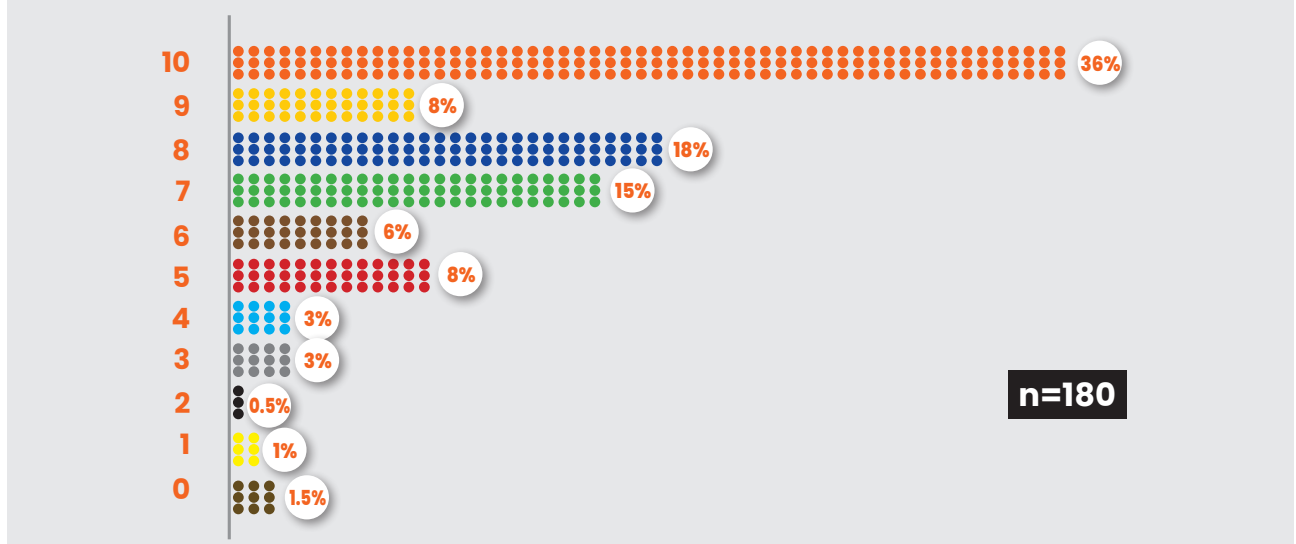
Career fairs were not quite popular among the target group, due to Covid limitations, but also it is visible that their effectiveness is lower than the other activities since 45% of surveyed students didn't use career fairs. SBCCs should consider improving their presence in such events and organize activities in an online format.

Figure 6. Satisfaction of 9-grade students from services provided by career centers



At the same time, the online focus group with 9-grade students shows that students from small villages do not have access to career services and mainly rely on Busulla.com. SBCCs could consider introducing online career services, including online career fairs in order to attract prospective students from smaller villages. Asked how likely it is that they recommend the SBCCs services, 91% confirmed positively by scaling their satisfaction level from 5 to 10. Out of 180 respondents, 36% confirmed with max. scale of 10 that they will surely recommend career center services.

Figure 7. Likelihood that 9-grade students recommend SBCCs



We also tried to understand what was most useful for 9-grade students. Out of 236 students who have used career services, 76% (180) have commented on specific activities and topics which were most interesting and helpful for them. The immediate decisions that students in 9-grade are confronted with, resonate in the topics which they have highlighted as most useful.

- Career decision-making and personal orientation for the future have been most useful for more than 150 students, who mention it in their comments – *“What does that profession bring you in life”, “types of professions and their benefits”, “expanding our knowledge of our profession in the future”, and “knowledge of fields / professions not talked about much”.*
- More than 100 students point out the importance of the provided information related to educational opportunities, professional directions, and schools (*“choosing a professional direction”, “close-up view of subjects”, “knowledge of different directions”, “taking decisions about high school”*).
- More than 50 students comment on the broader perspective and long-term benefits of receiving support for their life and career – *“the orientation for education and career”, “taking decisions for our future”, “preparation for life”, “the help for us to plan our career goals”, “the decision I made”.*
- Students emphasize the benefits of open day events: *“The activities have been useful because it was there that I realized where I wanted to go”, “It helped me to find the profession I love”.* Students are also fond of receiving information about career prospects – *“relevant and current information on the labor market”, “job opportunities after high school”; “to have new career information”; and “familiarity with technology and its advancement”.* Additionally, students appreciate the *“opportunity to learn more about high schools and what they offer”, the “school environment” and “economic conditions in school”.*
- 30 students comment on the improved self-awareness as a result of the open day events and information sessions: *“In these activities the students may find their profession”; “Talking with subject teachers about my skills and wishes”, “I have been informed which profession would suit me best”, “Helping students find a profession where they feel best”.*
- 9-grade students also highlight the benefits of the individual support: *“very good directions”, “the given information and advice”, “The teacher’s opinion for our orientation”, “the individual support for the student”, “to be as honest with yourself as possible about that direction”.*
- Comments about self-awareness via Busulla: *“busulla.com – we learned about all professions”, “knowing yourself”, “subjects that I like”, “my interests”.* Some students also highlight different career orientation exercises combined with *“the explanation from the teacher”.*

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for 9<sup>th</sup> graders

### Conclusions:

- The SBCCs services to 9-grade students play a very important role in improving the image of VET schools, promoting the specific profiles of VET schools, and attracting prospective students. 88% of 236 students that confirmed the usage of career services referred to SBCC services, while the other 12% used services of Pristina municipal career center, youth career centers and services of Busulla.com platform.  
91% of respondents confirmed positively that they will recommend SBCCs services by scaling their satisfaction from 5 to 10.
- In addition to parents, 15% of respondents are influenced in their choice by students, who have graduated from the same school
- In terms of gender, the usage of career services is almost equal. Whereas in terms of ethnicity, both male and female minorities have taken less benefit from available services although they are freely accessible to all 9-grade students.
- The key reason of 9<sup>th</sup> graders for not using the services of career centers, including SBCCs, is lack of information about the availability of such services
- Information events (open doors, information sessions, career fairs) currently prove to be the SBCCs most used approach to attract prospective students. This practice rather promotes specific profiles of VET schools than facilitates 9th graders to make the choice of profession based on their talents and interests, hence doesn't ensure the enrollment of quality students to VET schools. On the other hand, students from small villages have less access to career center services and mainly rely on online platform Busulla.com
- Employability prospects, graduate employment, internships and links to employers are the key factors for the choice of VET schools.
- Obviously, 9-grade students greatly need support for decision-making, and there is a gap in individual provision of such services
- Although VET schools also provide services for drop-out adults, the career guidance services for this category are still underdeveloped

### Recommendations:

- Although majority of 9-grade students confirmed that they used career services (74% out of 319 respondents), more than half of them have been influenced by parents in their decision-making.
- To improve their image and enrollment, VET schools and SBCCs should invest more effort in attracting parents. A good practice is career school for parents at the beginning of the school year and promotional campaigns.

- SBCCs should promote VET schools through happy students, recent graduates, and successful alumni, who are the best ambassadors to be used in promotional campaigns.
- SBCCs could consider introducing online career services (e.g. using career processes and tools of Busulla platform), including online career fairs to attract prospective students from smaller villages
- SBCCs must emphasize and clearly communicate their advantages in terms of employment prospects for VET students, but also keep in mind those students who plan to continue their studies in university and offer them information about existing opportunities
- SBCC staff should be more proactive and take advantage of this gap, by organizing information events combined with practical workshops for decision-making for 9-grade students in different schools. Starting early at the beginning of the school year or even earlier than 9 grade (involving students from 8 grade) is an advantage. Thus, SBCC staff need to further develop their capacity for offering individual career decision-making support and guidance. Bussula platform is an effective online resource that can be used in supporting prospective students in addressing individual interests and preferences
- SBCC should work jointly with the school principals to set up a proactive strategy and develop respective services to attract and support drop-out adults.

## 2.2. Career Services for VET Students

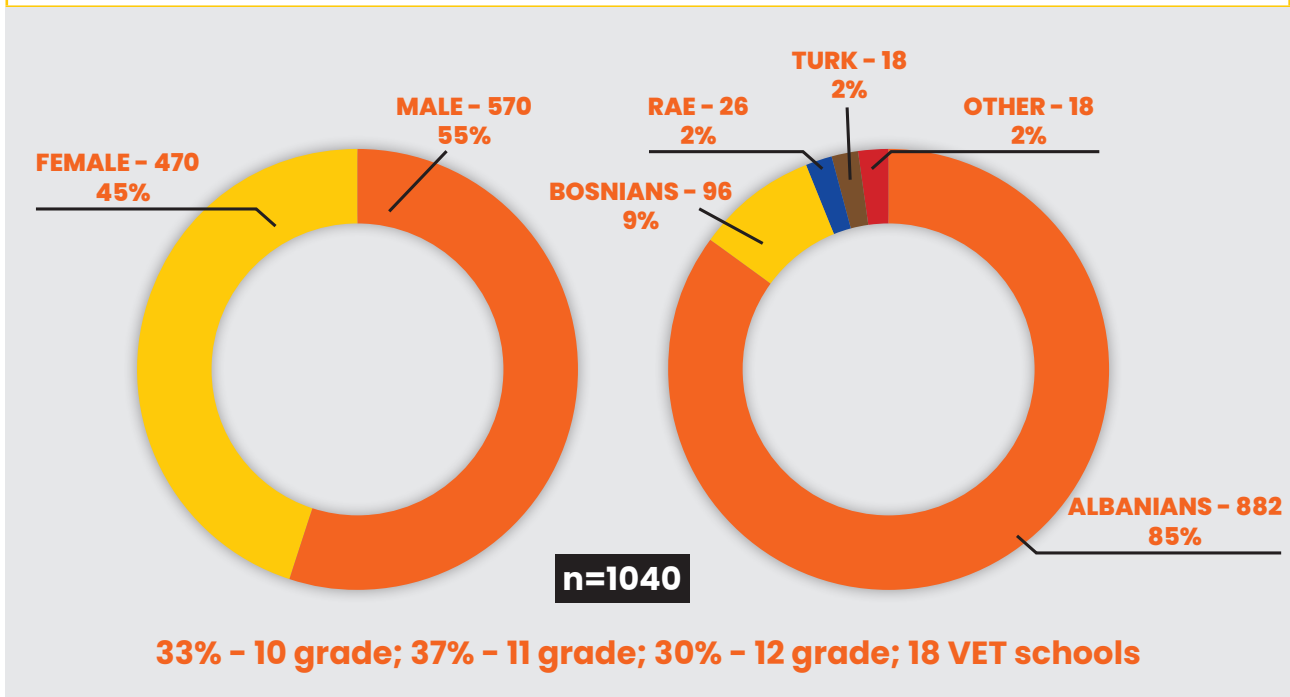


*The primary function of the school-based career centers (SBCC) is to equip them with practical skills and to facilitate their employment. For this purpose, the organization of internships and work-based learning is a primary task of SBCCs. Additionally, career centers offer soft-skills training, labor market information and career development support, and use the tests and career guidance resources from the platform Busulla.com to facilitate students learn more about further education opportunities and job prospects in the selected occupations. The SBCC services are available to all students from 10 to 12 grade.*

### Findings from online survey

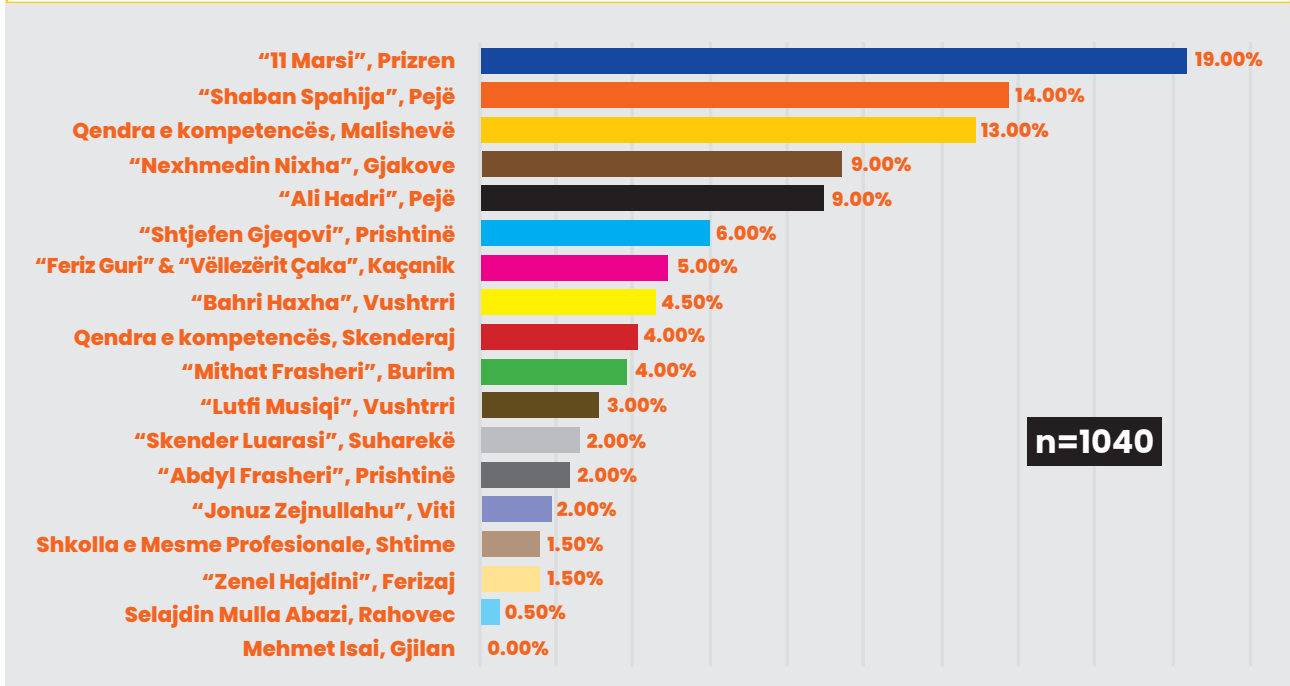
The online survey among VET students involved 1040 respondents from 10 grade to 12 grade. The share of VET respondents by gender is almost equal – 70% male (570) and 69% (470) female students. In terms of ethnicity, the distribution of the online survey respondents is 85% Albanians and 15% minorities.

Figure 8. Demography of VET students who participated in the online survey, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity



Out of total 1,040 respondents, 33% were in 10th grade, 37% in 11th and 30% in 12th grade, coming from 18 schools across Kosovo in 15 municipalities, involving 10 schools that benefit from 9 SBCCs and additional 4 VET schools with other models of career centers (municipal CC and youth CC) and additional 4 VET schools under the category “others” that means no career centers but mainly use platform Busulla.

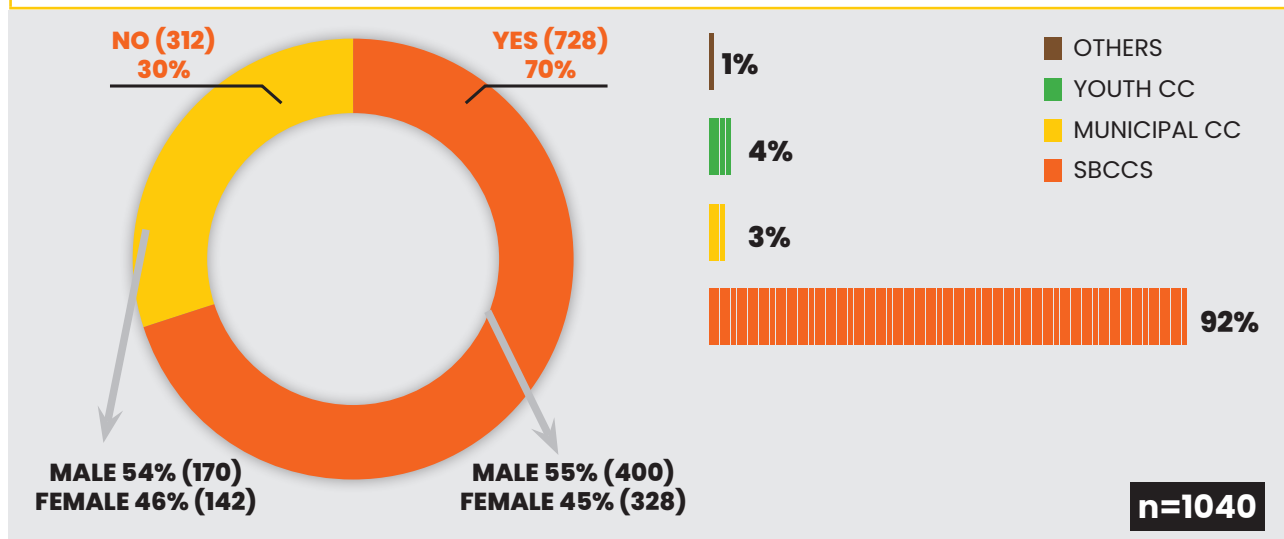
Figure 9. VET students who participated in the online survey by school



## Usage of career services by VET students

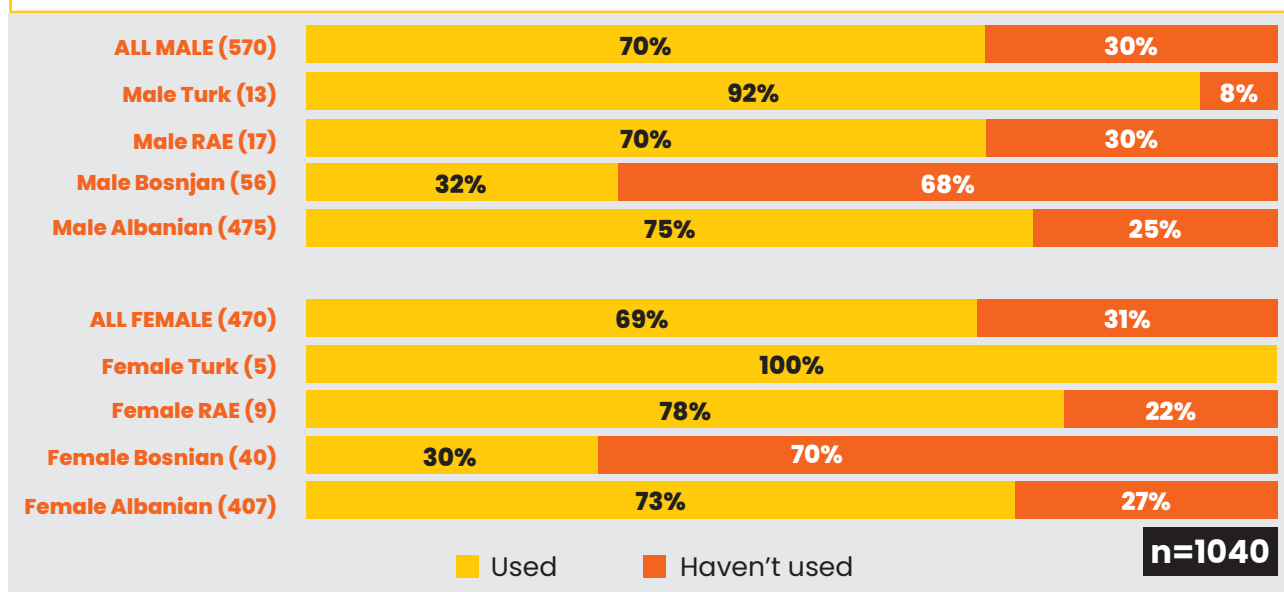
70% of all 1040 respondents have used career services (728 students). Majority of users (92%) have received services from SBCCs, while the rest of 8% had access to municipal career center, youth career centers and others (Busulla platform).

Figure 10. Usage level of career services by VET students



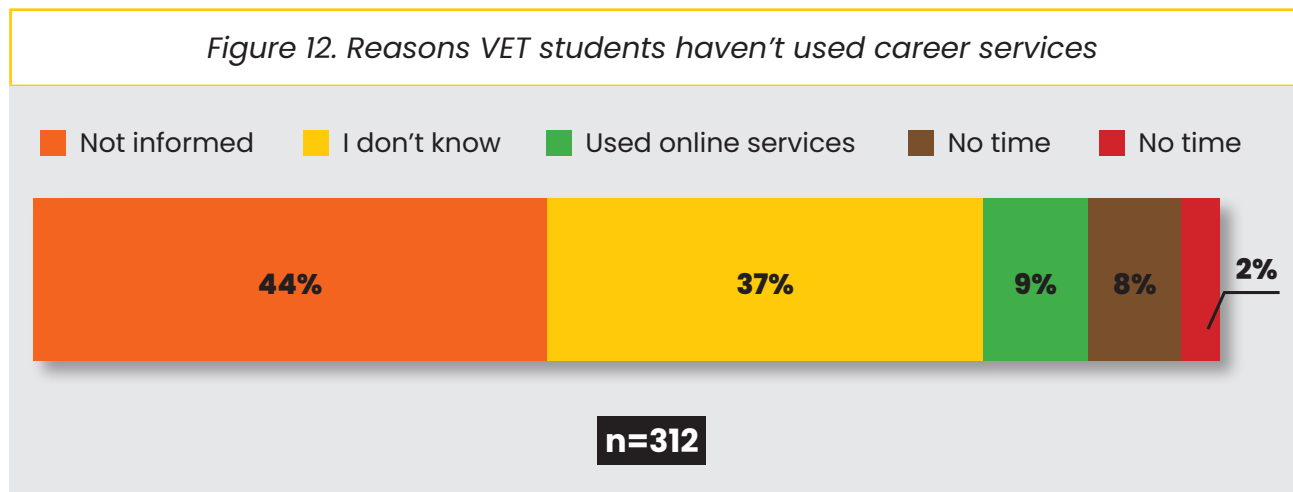
The share of male and female students who have used career services is almost equal (55% M / 45% F out of total 728 users), however there are big differences in ethnicity. Turkish participants from both sexes have most actively benefited from the available services, followed by Albanian and RAE students. Less than 1/3 of Bosnian students have used career services.

Figure 11. Usage level of career services by VET students, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender



Out of 30% or 312 students that do not use career services, 44% of them pointed out that they had no information about them. Another 37% cannot state the reason, meaning that they have been informed about the career centers, yet they are not motivated to visit them.

Career centers have a lot of work to do on promotion, especially to find engaging ways to attract young people among minority groups.

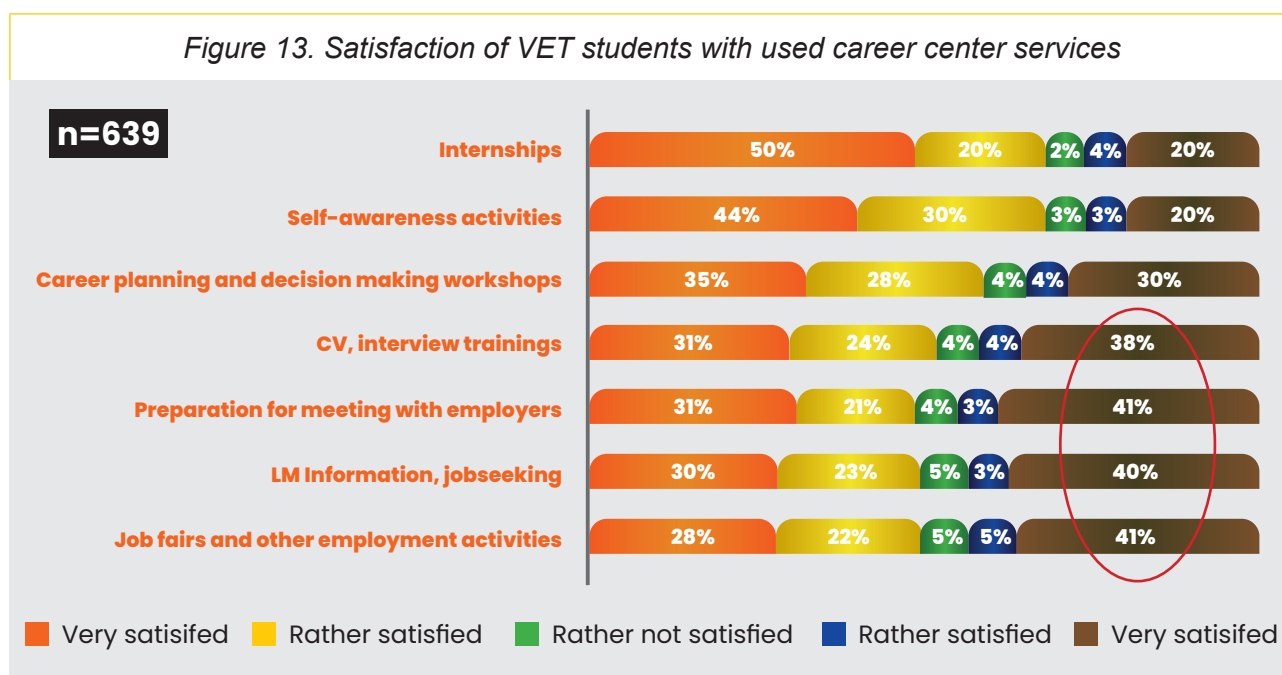


Students who have used SBCC services, appreciate this asset, comparing their experience with peers and friends who have no access to career services at school. *“We are lucky to have a career center because I talked to students from other schools, who do not have a career center even though they were in great need of such a thing. The career center is open, but students from other schools do not have the information that can be consulted at the career center in our school. (student in VET Schools, “Nexhmedin Nixha”, Gjakove)*

### **Satisfaction of VET students with services of career centers**

The career center service most liked by students is their support to find internships and 75% are very satisfied or rather satisfied with this service. The second service ranked according to the level of satisfaction are the activities organized for raising self-awareness about their future career path and 74% of respondents confirmed this, while the third one is career planning and decision-making workshops (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Satisfaction of VET students with used career center services



Due to Covid, career centers have been challenged to organize most of their usual activities over the period 2020–2021. As a result, from 38% to 41% of students could not take advantage of most activities promoting employment (job fairs; seminars on labor market information and job seeking, preparations for meeting with employers, as well as training).

This explains why many schools have relied on the available resources on Busulla.com. At the same time, some schools have demonstrated a more flexible approach in this situation, replacing face-to-face meetings with employers with ZOOM webinars, which have also been identified as very interesting and successful by students.

### The efficiency of services and positive effect on students

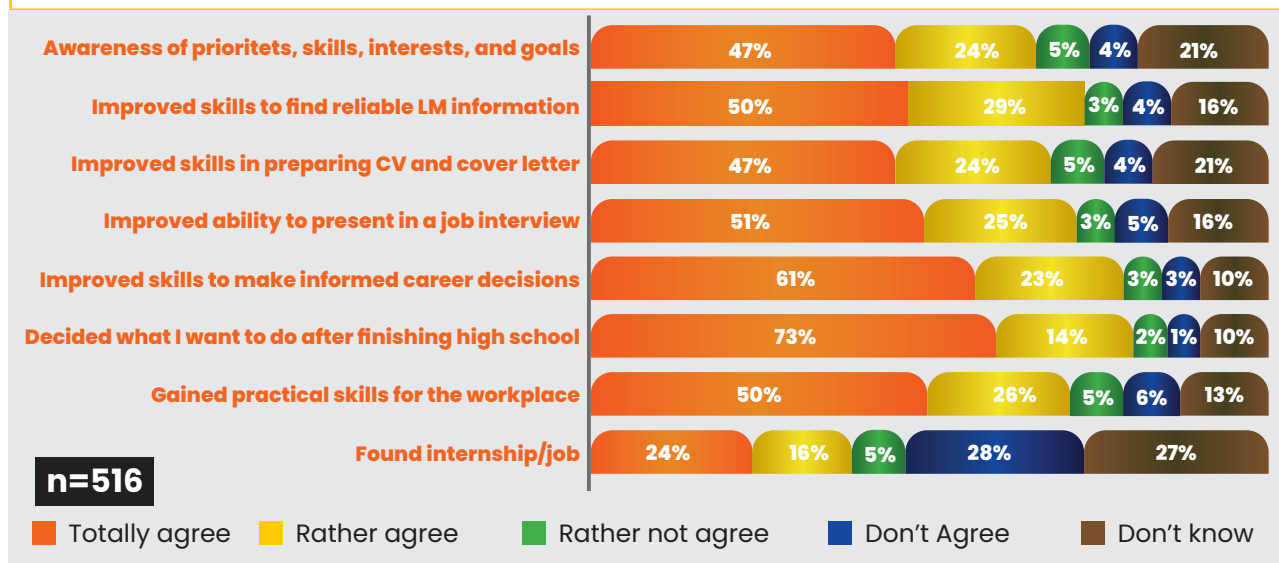
Students confirm the general positive impact of career services on their transversal employability skills. Most students report they have decided what they want to do, improved employability skills and general information about the labour market and their own interests, abilities, talents and goals.

Although 75% of the students are satisfied with their internship / practice experience (figure 13), only 40% agree entirely or partially that they have managed to find internships or jobs.

This is the hardest indicator – both in terms of difficulty to achieve results, and in contrast to other “soft-skill outcomes”, such as for example clarified career decisions, in which 87% give positive answers (Figure 14).



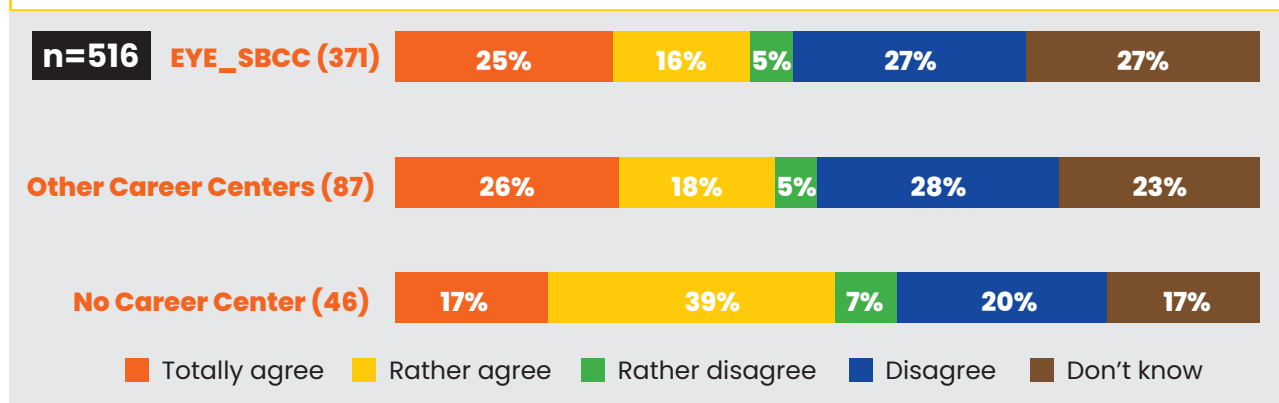
Figure 14. Impact of career services to VET students



Yes, the disaggregation by grades (Figure 15), shows that 41% of the SBCC students in all grades - 10,11 and 12 (or 151 students in total) have managed to find internships and jobs. Beside SBCCs, other career centers and school clubs also help students find on-the-job training and practices. However, as the chart show, this service is mostly available for 12-graders - 45% of 12-grade students (or 39 students) who used other career services, have managed to find internships. At the same time, the share of 12-grade students from schools without career centers who found internships / jobs is only 29% (or 17 students as absolute numbers).

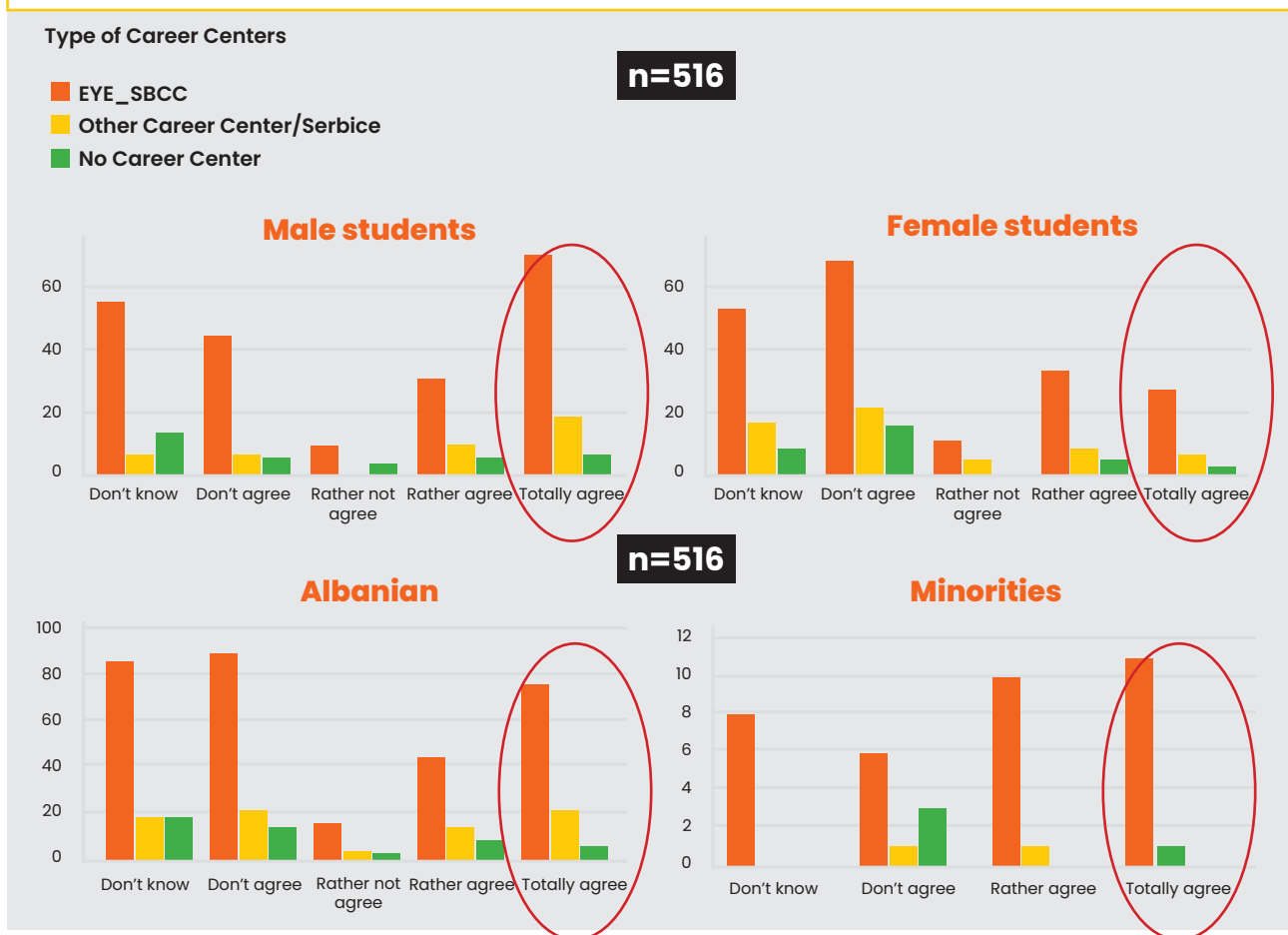
**This makes prominent the importance of career services for students' employability.**

Figure 15. Share of VET student who found internships/ jobs



The distribution of respondents by demographic criteria shows that while the share of students from minorities and Albanians who found internships and jobs is similar, the number of female students who managed to do so is significantly lower (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Number of students that managed to find internship/jobs by gender and ethnicity



**Career centers need to improve the offers and opportunities for girls and encourage them to look for employment. This might require specific work with parents to support this process.**

Although traditional internships are very useful in helping students verify their professional choice and obtain practical skills, the survey shows that 20% of students have not used them.

**Students ask the career centers for help in having more chances for internships since the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, not in the last year. As professional practices require accumulating specific work-related knowledge, the career centers should also consider promoting other work-based learning opportunities, such as volunteering, work-shadowing, etc.**

Additionally, a student in Metal Working, who participated in the online survey, asked for assistance in offering an internship to their class, as they felt ignored by the principal. *“Even though we are only 10 students, we want our direction and we want a solution to this problem for not keeping the practice”.*

Moreover, there are comments about what needs to be improved. Some students in the focus groups were not happy with the quality of offered on-the-job opportunities or with the lack of opportunities.

- *“They offer you the job but the offer is not correct due to the payment, it demands more than it pays. During work I think 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 or emphasized during the job interview or job call.”*
- *“Career center to help increase internships up to 3 years.”*
- *“to be safer and more motivating.”*

Students also need wider knowledge about the labor market and various job opportunities and individual support and guidance, so that they are more aware of their interests and make a more informed career choice in the first place. Career centers should upgrade their skills and offer individual guidance to students, and organize more group training to develop their career management skills.

### **Data from focus groups with VET students**

The participants in the focus group have been asked additional questions to assess the performance of the career center staff. Out of 54 respondents, 45 VET students were familiar with the career center services. They have mostly used visits to companies, work-based learning and practices (32), as well as participated in training on employability skills, LM seminars or career fairs. The majority of those who have used career center services, have benefitted from more than one activity or service.

The main needs, for which the students referred to the career centers, have been related to finding internships/ WBL (49 st.), job offers and labour market information (36 st.), training for job-search, CV or interview skills (36 st.), career fairs (27 st.), link with employers (15 st.) and visit companies (7 st.). Besides, 14 students were interested in scholarships and other 12 - in opportunities to study abroad. They recommend a career center to offer such information to students. Out of 52 respondents, 28 confirm that they have received the needed information and support, 21 - to some extent and 3 haven't.

36 out of 50 shared very positive impressions and general experiences with the career center, 11 were rather positive, 2 were somehow disappointed and 1 had a very negative experience.

51 students were satisfied with the attitude of the SBCC staff, and 49 qualify them as supportive, friendly, competent, while 1 agrees to some extent with the latter.

51 students in the focus groups also listed what career skills & information they would like to obtain/ improve - general skills for work (29 answers), self-awareness (24), planning and decision-making (11). 16 were interested in specific vocational skills and 1

in sales skills. 13 students mentioned job-search skills and 5 labour market awareness. Apart from it, students suggested what services and activities SBCC should organize - the first 3 are mainly related to internships and WBL (22), company visits (18) and meetings with employers (14). 10 students have also noted group employability training, 6 - individual support for career guidance, 3 - soft skills trainings, 1 - career fairs and another one - peer-to-peer discussions.

**Data from interviews and focus groups with students confirm that career centers staff are more comfortable with their role of facilitating internships and delivering labor market information. However, most of SBCC staff is not adequately prepared for offering individual support to students for self-assessment and career planning.**

**For this, it is necessary to develop capacity in career centers for supporting informed decision-making. Students want to learn self-awareness skills and to be trained in career planning (LM information sessions).**

For example, career centers can explain the different types of job profiles and personality using the popular Holland theory with 6 types - RIASEC (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Entrepreneurial and Conventional) is easy to understand and apply. At the same time, it raises the interest in career services. Again, we see Busulla.com as a platform for information, as students are used to being online and to search for information.

The visits by professionals, career fairs, and dual learning practices were acknowledged as very useful. The Generation Z prefer learning by doing and value practically oriented learning, which provides direct access to labor market information and facilitates the link between school and work. Job offers are limited but exist, which is a good indicator for further development.

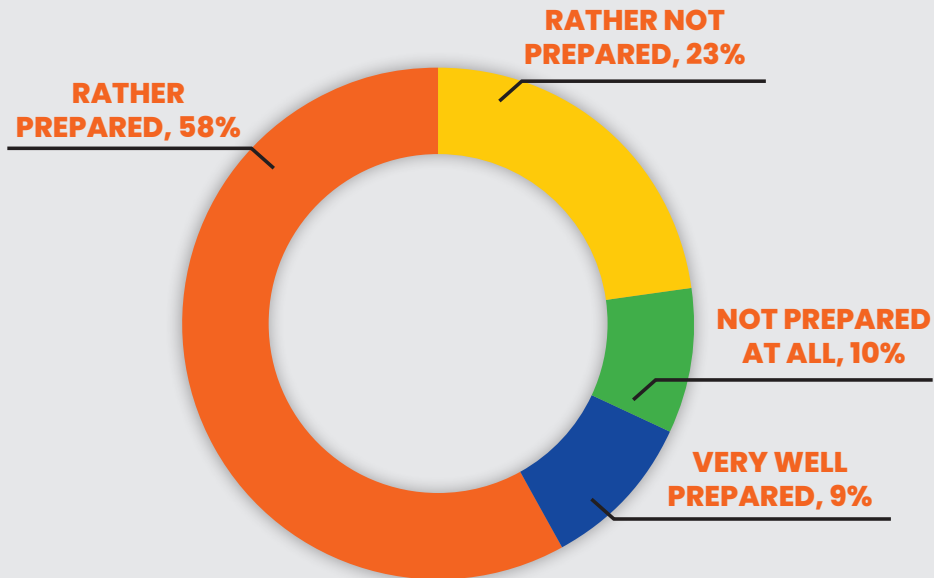
**Students see a gap between primary school and VET, which the career center cannot fill, as they offer services to VET mainly.**

Even though VET schools pursue their individual goals of attracting students to vocational training, it is essential that they also provide a broader perspective of the world of work and more fields of study.

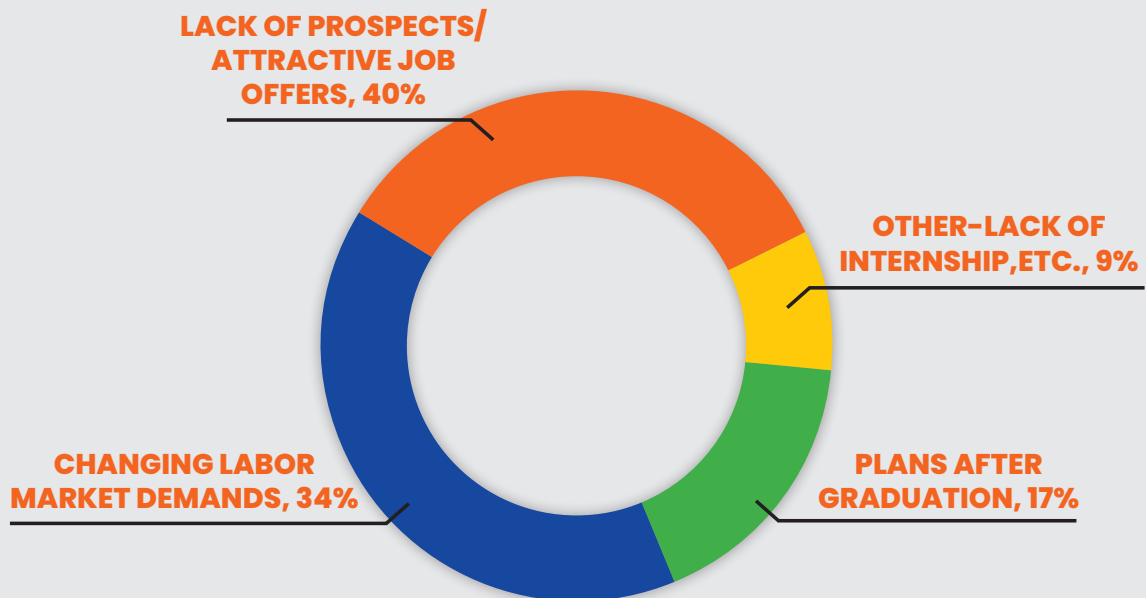
An additional question discussed at the focus groups with secondary school students aimed to identify how prepared they feel for the changing world of work (Figure 21). The majority of students feel prepared to some extent (58%). Almost an equal share (about 10%) of students don't feel prepared at all and on the contrary, think they are very well prepared. They were also asked to identify their biggest career related concerns. 40% pointed to the lack of employment opportunities and attractive prospects and other 9% about lack of internships and practical skills; 34% are worried about the changing labour market and demands; while 17% were still having a hard time deciding what to do upon graduation.

Figure 17. Perception of VET students for acquired practical skills for the world of work

### HOW PREPARED VET STUDENTS FEEL TO FIND A JOB (54 ANSWERS - FG)



### BIGGEST CAREER-RELATED CONCERNS OF VET STUDENTS (55 ANSWERS - FG)



**SBCC staff must provide enough information for the trends shaping the world of work so that students are aware of the challenge, prospects, emerging new jobs, and the type of skills they will need.** As a student comments: *“Educational staff should be more prepared for teaching students about the work they will do in the future.”*

Other comments shared by students in the focus groups relate to services offered by the career centers:

Students recommend expanding the information offered to students:

- *“information about recognition of the diploma outside Kosovo”*
- *“To inform students more about jobs”*
- *“We still need to hold training for students with poor grades because they are not yet determined what talent they have or what skills they may possess. They still do not have the skills or talent to discover, and I believe that teachers, together with the career center, can find it and help them in training.”*

## **What was most useful for VET-school students?**

From 1040 participants in the online survey, 516 (50%) have answered what they found most interesting and useful:

- More than 220 students say that they liked the most the training in job skills – such as CV and motivation letter (135 comments), job-search and job application skills (90),
- More than 120 students emphasize the internships and the specific job skills in the professional areas students are interested in and obtained during the practice in the workplace.
- For 70 students, the most useful part was the soft skills training, communication and teamwork workshops, seminars for emotional intelligence training and discussion with a psychologist,
- Additionally, 40 students emphasize the activities for career orientation (decision making, self-awareness, achievements, resilience, planning for the future)
- 40 – Labour Market information (11 students comment on Labor law, professional ethics, labor rights; 14 students appreciate LM practical activity directed on finding jobs/job openings/payments/job opportunities)
- 30 – Introduction to the workplace/ orientation at work, knowledge for business, procedures in enterprises, preparation for a job fair, for meeting with employers

- 52 - Information sessions related to studies / further education opportunities, professional courses
- 24 students comment that they have *"learned many things"*, gained *"new information and knowledge"*, *"New skills for life"*, *"We have learned important information from different areas"*
- 19 liked the most the used games, exercises, quizzes
- 16 appreciated the activities for familiarization with the career centers activities
- 10 - Visits to companies and other schools
- 25 - Different activities and workshops organized by the career center, which students underline that have contributed to *"more engagements in the classroom"* – to name a few: having guests/different speakers; discussion related to school problems, bullying, diversity; as well as other specific activities such as competitions, product fairs, art exhibitions, eco initiative.
- 16 said that they *"didn't attend so much"* / *"we didn't have activities"*

In addition to the provided assessment of services, many students have added comments to explain what was especially beneficial for them:

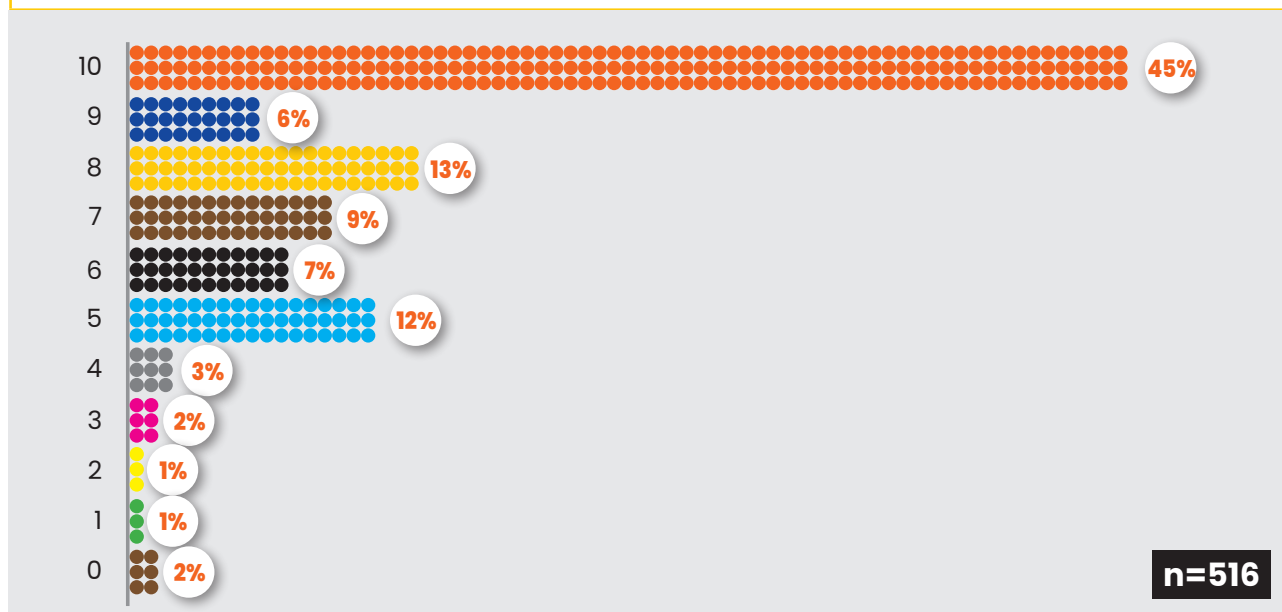
- *"I found work", "I have found internship"*
- *"I have improved my practical skills"*
- *"I have greatly improved my ability to prepare application documents"*
- *"It has enabled us how to apply for a job"*
- *"I made improvements in the job interview"*
- *"I gained confidence"*

The students are very satisfied with the service, and find the staff supportive, friendly and competent. In the online survey many students share their positive impressions from the career services.

- 20 students liked the presentations delivered during the career center's activities, as well as *"the way of presentation"*.
- 8 liked the teachers and 7 – *"The way of communication"*, *"the attitude"*, *"the understanding"*.
- More than 20 students comment that *"everything was good"*, *"I have a great feedback"*
- *I liked it/ I had a good time / I am very satisfied, "It was something completely different", "it was interesting" and the best ones – "It helped me love my job more" and "I hope in the future to have this profession"*.

Among the interviewed students from 10-12 grade, 45% have marked with "10" the likelihood to recommend the career center's services to their friends, 6% mark 9, and 12.5% mark 8. The average for all respondents is 8. (Figure 22).

Figure 18. Likelihood that VET students recommend career center services



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for VET students

### Conclusions:

- The students are very satisfied with the service, and find the staff supportive, friendly and competent. They confirm the general positive impact of career services on their transversal employability skills
- 92% of 728 users of career services refer to SBCCs, while the rest of 8% had access to municipal career center, youth career centers and others (Busulla platform) The share of male and female students who have used career services is almost equal (55% M /45% F), however there are big differences in ethnicity, especially for the Bosnian students who used career services less than 1/3 of all 728 users.
- The career center service most liked by students is their support to find internships and 75% are very satisfied or rather satisfied with this service. The second service ranked according to the level of satisfaction are the activities organized for raising self-awareness about their future career path and 74% of respondents confirmed this, while the third one is career planning and decision-making workshops.
- Due to Covid, career centers have been challenged to organize most of their usual activities over the period 2020–2021. As a result, from 38% to 41% of students could not take advantage of most activities promoting employment



(job fairs; seminars on labor market information and job seeking, preparations for meeting with employers, as well as training).

- Students ask the career centers to provide more internships since the 10th grade. Since professional practice requires accumulating specific work-related knowledge, the career centers should also consider promoting other work-based learning opportunities, such as volunteering, work-shadowing, etc.
- Students see a gap between primary school and VET, which the career center cannot fill, as they offer services to VET mainly.
- Although 75% of the students are satisfied with their internship / practice experience, only 40% agree entirely or partially that they have managed to find internships or jobs. The share in schools which don't have career services is 29%. This makes prominent the importance of career services for students' employability.
- Career centers need to significantly improve the offers and opportunities for girls and encourage them to look for employment. This might require specific work with parents to support this process.
- Students also need wider knowledge about the labor market and various job opportunities and individual support and guidance, so that they are more aware of their interests and make a more informed career choice in the first place.
- Data from interviews and focus groups with students confirm that career centers staff are more comfortable with their role of facilitating internships and delivering labor market information. However, most of SBCC staff is not adequately prepared for offering individual support to students for self-assessment and career planning.
- Busulla.com as a platform for information is recommended to be used as students are used to being online and to search for information.
- SBCC staff must provide enough information for the trends shaping the world of work so that students are aware of the challenge, prospects, emerging new jobs, and the type of skills they will need

## Recommendations:

- Career centers have a lot of work to do on promotion, especially to find engaging ways to attract young people among minority groups
- Career Centers must develop online services, especially to rely on the available resources of the platform Busulla.com
- Career centers should enlarge the scope of their services and include more group training to develop career management skills and individual support to choose the direction that best suits them
- Career centers should upgrade their skills and offer individual guidance to students, and organize more group training to develop their career management skills.
- It is necessary to develop capacity in career centers for supporting informed decision-making. Students want to learn self-awareness skills and to be trained in career planning (LM information sessions)

## 2.3. Services for Businesses

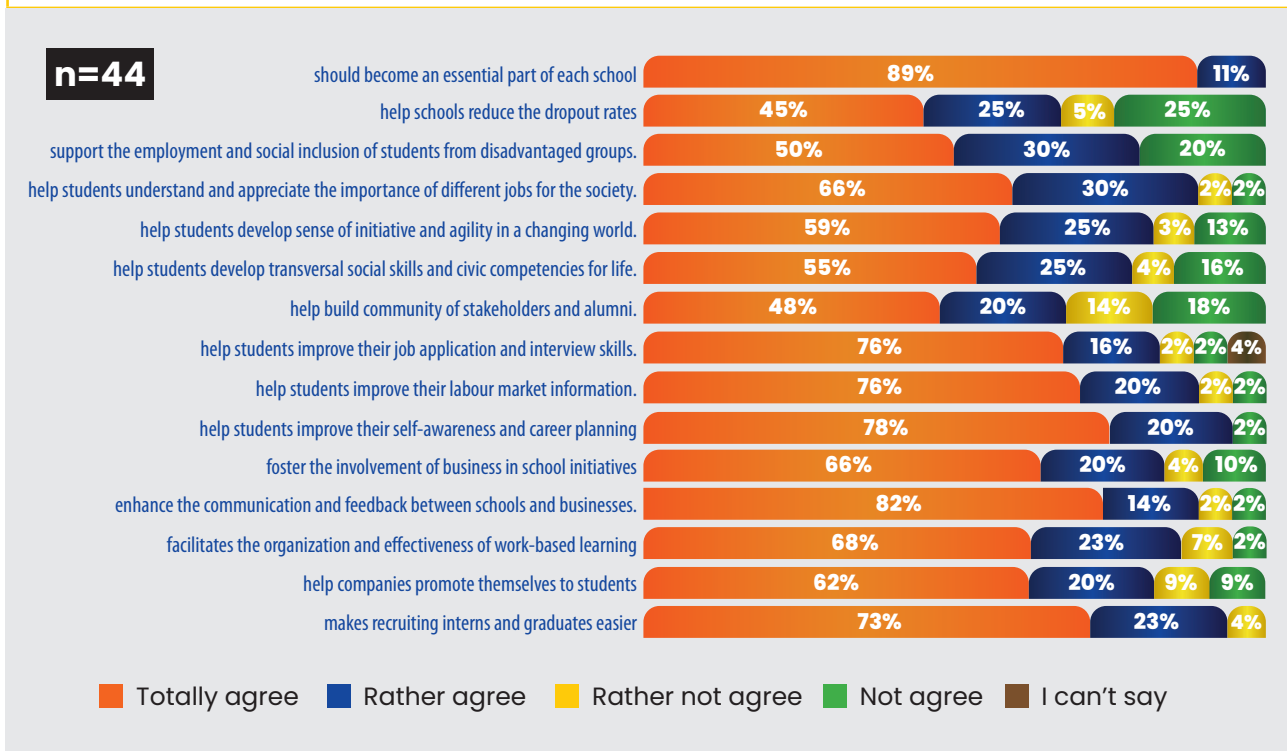


Career Centers offer various services and activities which benefit companies. They link students looking for practices and graduates searching jobs directly with companies, support the selection and recruitment of candidates, organize career events in which companies promote themselves to students and 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.

45 companies participated in the focus group interviews during the research phase, which is higher than the sample size required by the ToR (30 companies). These companies are distributed in 10 regions where they do cooperate with VET schools that have SBCCs (Vushtrri – 6, Peja – 6, Ferizaj – 4, Gjakove – 4, Malisheve – 4, Prishtine – 4, Prizren – 4, Viti – 3, Kacanik – 3) and additional 3 in regions where there is no SBCC or it was just recently established (Skenderaj – 3, Istog – 2, Shtime – 1, Gjilan – 1)

The majority of employers are convinced of the benefits of the career center and its impact in several aspects. (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Employers' consent with statements about career center services



There is a 100% level of agreement about the necessity of a career center at each VET school and about its positive role for building students' skills in general. However they need to enhance the training in transversal skills, in order to prepare students for life.

Employers are more sceptical (also confirmed by the community members) about the capacity of career centers to produce broader social impact. For example - to contribute to reducing school drop-out rate, to support the employability of students from disadvantaged groups, and to build a community of stakeholders around the school.

**To be more effective in this, School Career Centers need to strengthen their networking and build additional competencies in staff.**

More importantly, according to the employers, SBCCs also don't offer enough support for developing the broader transversal skills for life students need.

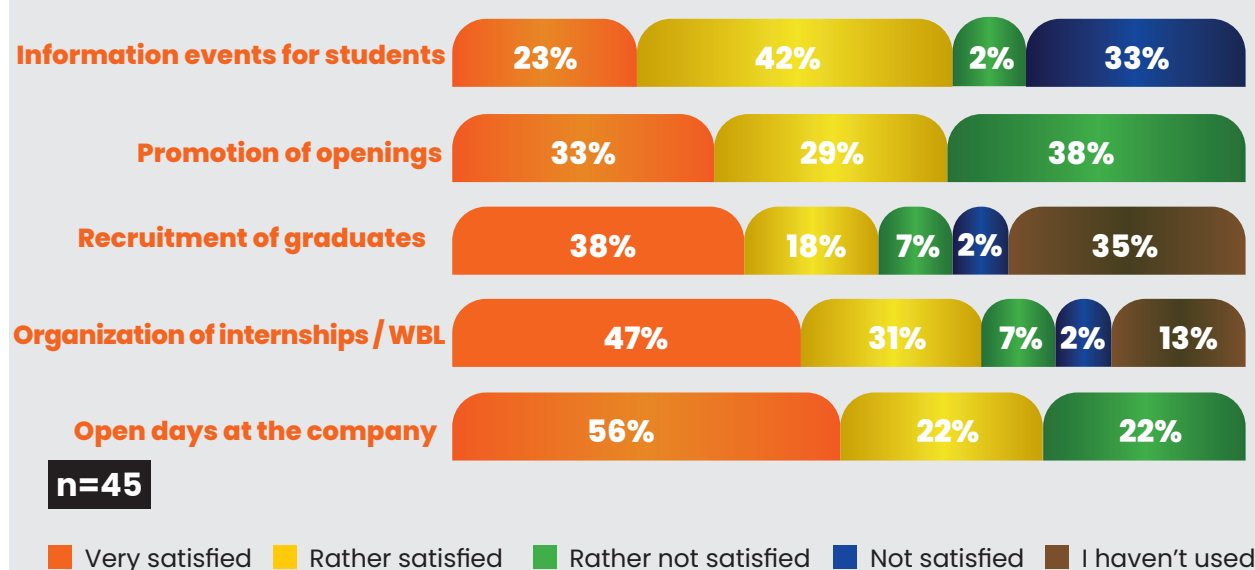
They also have to improve employer branding activities (meetings with employers) to help companies present themselves more effectively to students.

Many employers have added specific comments, such as:

- *“The school-business relations have significantly improved since the Career Center was established. I think that the existence of career centers is very important.” (employer, Peja)*
- *“The Career Center has helped us a lot in organizing internships. As a result of internship, many students are offered employment. (employer, Malisheva)*
- *“Career Center facilitates employee recruitment, improves cooperation with local authorities, and offers more opportunities to students to be better prepared for the labor market after graduation.” (employer, Vushtri)*
- *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 Work-based Learning.” (employers Ferizaj)*
- *“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, Gjakove)*
- *“We witnessed that after functionalization of Career Center, students are more communicative and more prepared for the labour market.” (Employer, Skenderaj)*
- *“Career center is very important for the students, it enables them easier access to the information, and facilitates the link student – school – parent – business. (employer, Viti)*

The level of satisfaction with the services provided by SBCCs is relatively high (Figure 20), with more than 70% of employers fond of the way the internships and students’ visits to companies are organized. There are less companies who have benefitted from recruitment of graduates and promotion of openings through the career centers, and these services still need to improve. The interviews and focus groups show that many of them are not fully aware of the full range of services. Below, there are extracts from opinions shared by employers.

Figure 20. Employers’ satisfaction with SBCC activities and services



Generally, most of them shared their very positive impressions with the work of SBCCs and their services – internship/WBL, job openings, job fairs, cooperation with private and public employment service providers, etc.:

- Around 80% of employers have been involved in internships and have organized open days for students. The satisfaction with the efficiency of these two activities is 78%.
- *“Collaboration between school and our business has been increased as a result of the establishment of the Career Center in the school. We are satisfied with their participation and interest from the students. It is easier to recruit because students are interested but also from our side as businesses, it is good to have the place where we can meet.”*
- About 60% have used career centers’ services to promote openings and recruit graduates. At the same time, more than 1/3 of the employers from regions where SBCCs don’t operate have not used these services, because there were no career centers. SBCCs could take advantage to promote better their services in these regions, where graduates could also find attractive job offers. Generally, SBCCs could promote internal migration within Kosovo, especially in these towns, where students complain of lack of adequate prospects.
- Less than 40% of the employers participated in career fairs organized by the career centers and training for job-related skills, due to covid. Students comment that they would gladly participate in more diverse activities (*“we are ready to participate in roundtables, school activities, for example, to introduce them to the work done by the company, the presentation of hydro projects, etc.” employer in Pristine*).

**Employers repeatedly recommend that career centers promote themselves more aggressively to create better awareness about the range of services users can benefit from.**

For example, some employers in the focus groups did not know about the career center and were unaware that they could freely promote job and internship offers to students in the career center.

Employers in Pristine expressed concern about the lack of staff due to the lower prestige of VET in society. They suggest that, besides informational campaigns about its services, the career centers help promote VET opportunities and profiles more actively to attract more young people to the field.

*“The market needs qualified staff. But the interest of students is weak, I am talking about this field and there is a lack of staff in this field but I believe in others as well. To have more propaganda, for the awareness of the importance of directions, where they can find themselves after graduation, in primary schools to be visited by successful people of the profession to promote the profession and attract the attention of students. To have them more oriented in crafts, as there is potential. To become aware through advice, campaigns.”*

Another problem is the migration of young people. Some students share their plans to go abroad – either for study or to look for career prospects. They also recommend that they like career centers to provide them with more information about learning and working abroad.

Obviously, this causes a serious problem for business due to lack of skilled staff: *“We have a bigger problem finding a good mechanic than to find an engineer, there are many demands, and the migration factor has influenced the lack of manpower.”* (employer from Pristina).

**9% of the employers are not fond of the services related to internships and graduate recruitment. Some of the comments relate to the organization of service, while others – rather to the attitude and lack of motivation of students. Employers are disappointed with young people who do not show interest and commitment. SBCCs need to enhance their selection functions, in order to be more effective when sending students to companies either for internship or WBL.**

*“Students should be selected properly, as we often have trouble with problematic students, because they can damage the image of the firm due to the stigma ‘HE HAS NOT A WORKER BUT A STUDENT’. We selected some students but we fired some of them because they were not interested and asked personal questions to the business or employees.”*

- *“We have 3 to 4 students, not all of them are interested in working, some of them even don’t show up at times.”*

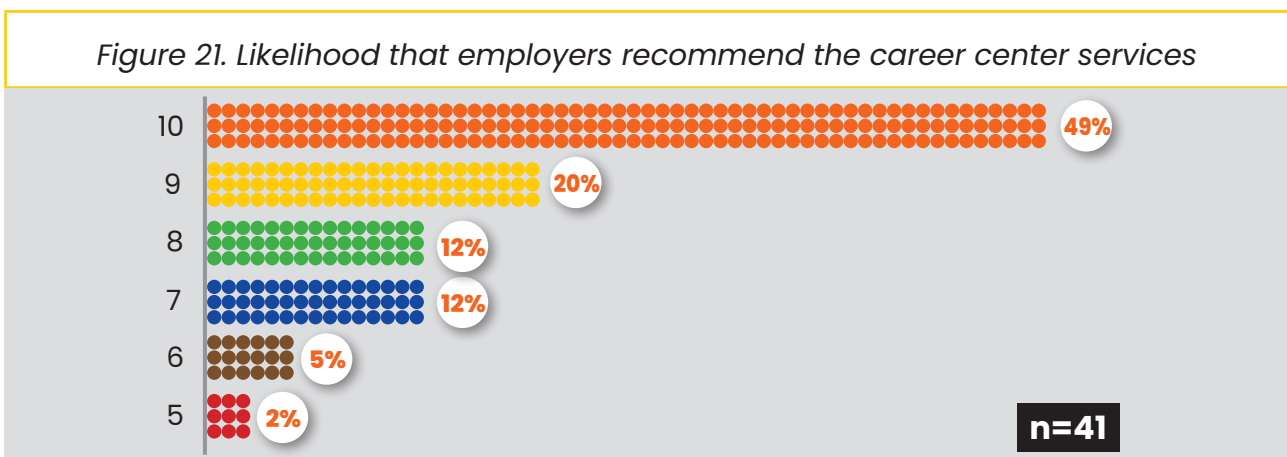
In terms of enhancing internships, employers provide several recommendations:

- *“Need to promote SBCC services to businesses and inform them about the role of the center and organize meetings to discuss the best ways to flourish the cooperation between stakeholders.”*
- *“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.”*

- *“To increase students’ awareness of the importance of internships. 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.”*
- *“Schools need to have the necessary equipment for work-based learning and teach students the basic knowledge in math and basic skills like: how to measure with micrometers.”*
- Many employers comment about the need for insurance of interns – *“It is very risky to take a student because it is also a sensitive job and can be personally damaged, then who is responsible?! I cannot give responsibility to students who may be harmed. Of course, I do not put them at risk but it can happen by accident due to their amateurism, they are under 18 years old.”*
- To organize preparatory training (although in many places students have shared they participated in such training) in order to introduce young people with the rules, rights, obligations and codes of conduct at the workplace, confidentiality, etc. Students themselves confirm the importance of such training, as well as the need for soft skills training in communication skills, workplace behaviour and following the rules.
- To offer incentives to students, such a symbolic payment, transportation and food. For example, in the focus group in Gjakove, the topic was discussed both by students and the school director. Student: *“there are no jobs we are looking for, while in Prishtina there are jobs of our profession and we have to travel to work.”*. The director also comments that the school needs additional resources for student transportation to internships and also for insurances. Such funding is also needed for insurance and transportation of CC staff involved in the activities.

Out of 41 businesses, 49% of them confirmed with maximum score 10 the likelihood that they will recommend the SBCC services, while only 7% answered with the minimum rates of 5 & 6.

Figure 21. Likelihood that employers recommend the career center services



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for Businesses

### Conclusions:

- There is a 100% level of agreement about the necessity of a career center at each VET school and about its positive role for building students' skills in general.
- The level of satisfaction with the services provided by SBCCs is relatively high. Around 80% of employers have been involved in internships and have organized open days for students. The satisfaction with the efficiency of these two activities is 78%.

About 60% have used carer centers' services to promote openings and recruit graduates. At the same time, more than 1/3 of the employers from regions where SBCCs don't operate have not used these services, because there were no career centers. SBCCs could take advantage to promote better their services in these regions, where graduates could also find attractive job offers. Generally, SBCCs could promote internal migration within Kosovo, especially in these towns, where students complain of lack of adequate prospects.

Less than 40% of the employers participated in career fairs organized by the career centers and training for job-related skills, due to covid.

- Employers are more sceptical about the capacity of career centers to produce broader social impact. For example - to contribute to reducing school drop-out rate, to support the employability of students from disadvantaged groups, and to build a community of stakeholders around the school
- Employers repeatedly recommend that career centers promote themselves more aggressively to create better awareness about the range of services users can benefit from.
- Employers are disappointed with young people who do not show interest and commitment.

### Recommendations:

- Career centers must be more effective in this, SBCCs need to strengthen their networking and build additional competencies of staff in order to be more effective to produce broader social impact
- SBCCs need to enhance their selection functions, in order to be more effective when sending students to companies either for internship or WBL
- The liaison, the cooperation with the professors, should be at a higher level, their engagement in practice should be taken seriously.
- Preparatory training need to be organized, in order to introduce young people with the obligations and codes of conduct at the workplace
- Organization of internships involves risks, so there is a need for insurance of interns. Incentives such as symbolic payment, transportation and food need to be ensured for interns



## 2.4. Services for the Community



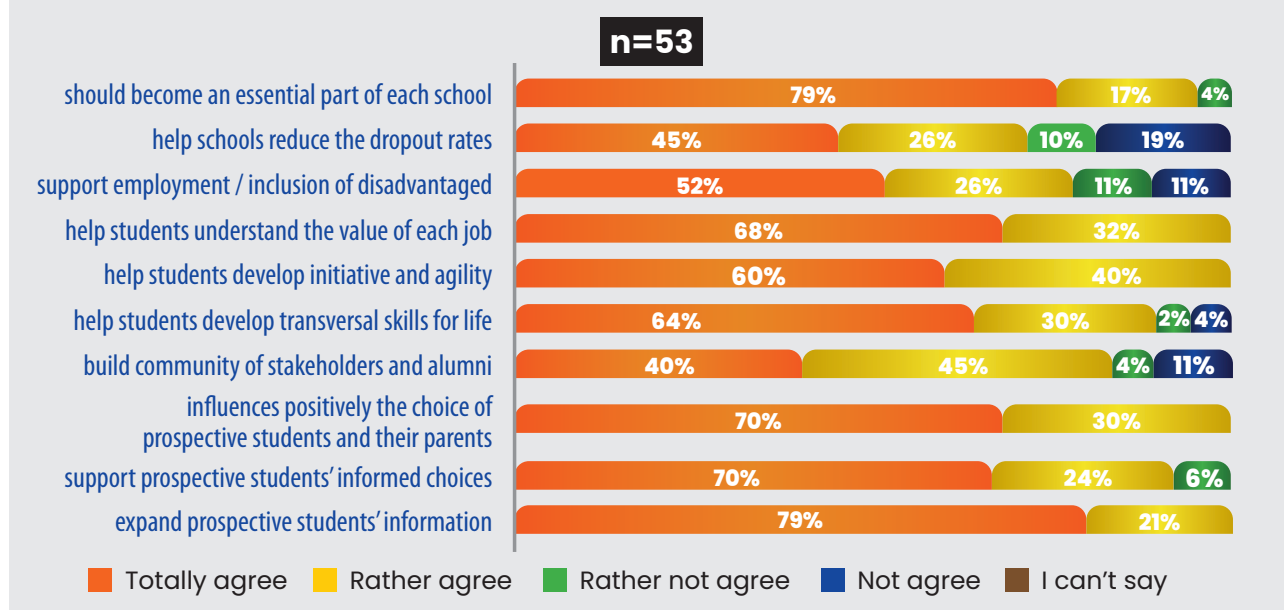
The career centers are an important factor and driver of the communities. They offer different kinds of services to inform society, parents and establish partnerships with local authorities such as Municipality Directorates of Education, VET and business organizations, NGOs, media, and other youth organizations.

59 representatives of the community have been involved in this research.

**Most of them express their support for the career centers and confirm their importance for diverse aspects of community life.**

- Most of all, they recognize career centers as a necessary part of each school, which is responsible for promoting the schools, profiles, and opportunities they provide, thus supporting their informed decisions.
- Career centers are also seen as a place where students can understand the value of different jobs and develop initiative, agility, and transversal skills for life.
- The community members agree that career centers also have a role in supporting the students who are disadvantaged or at risk of drop-out.
- *"The Career Center has been one of the few spaces that has kept students away from the street, engaging them more in fruitful activities."* (NGO)
- *"It is a sensitive age, in high school, which, by engaging in practice, creating working habits, being more responsible, helps students not to go or deal with other negative phenomena that at this time may be very prone to them."* (employer)
- Last but not least, the career centers also play an important role as a school community-building hub, which links students, parents, teachers, employers, alumni, and other related stakeholders.

Figure 22. Community members' consent with statements about the career center



Community members are mostly satisfied with the efficiency of the open days and information sessions for prospective students organized by the career centers (74% are satisfied with these activities). Education and career fairs are rarely organized, especially due to covid situation– 38% have not participated in such events. Of those who did, almost 60% are entirely or partially satisfied. Regarding the primary communication function of the career center to inform the community and media about its activities, community members are more reserved. 14% are rather not satisfied from the efforts made by the career centers, 43% somewhat satisfied, and 33% very satisfied.

### Some comments:

- *"I know how important the Career Center is and I'll always support them. Must have a connection with school and community. For every event we should have good communication and should be invited if we want to have success." (NGO)*
- *"In promotion and marketing, career centers should be more 'aggressive' in the best sense of the word, to be more present." (employer)*

**SBCCs and schools in general must improve the communication with the community on all levels and be more assertive in promoting their results. Career center staff and school leadership will benefit from training in communicating tangible results and presenting them in public – for example, presenting how many activities they have organized, how many students**

**have participated, and the positive effect on them. This also requires keeping records, collecting feedback, and improving tracking.**

**SBCCs should be more proactive in establishing links with the local community and improving all stakeholders' involvement, especially parents.**

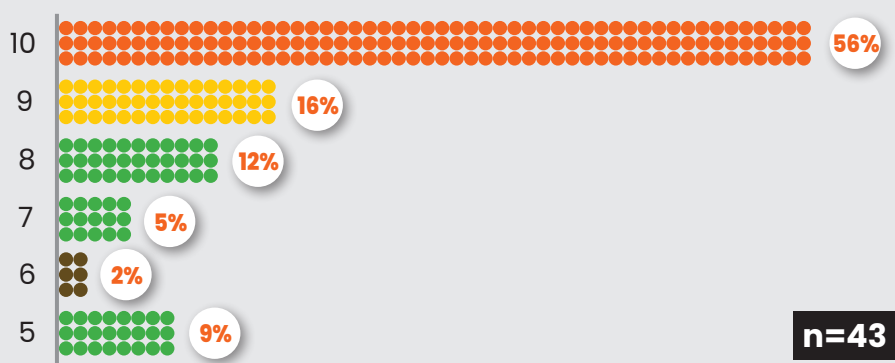
Open days at the end of the school year, especially if they are combined with other activities, can serve many functions – inform parents about the school programs, attract prospective students, demonstrate the activities of the career center, and establish relations with parents. Career centers can organize an awareness raising event for first-year students, parents, and the general community at the start of the school year. Parents and stakeholders can be invited to participate in research to collect contacts and check if they are interested in participating in the activities of the career center – job presentations, internships, and workplace visits, training, etc. The issue with the lower prestige of VET as compared to the general secondary education is commented upon by many schools and employers. This puts a stigma on VET schools which are reviewed as “second chances”. However, there are good practice examples shared by some schools, which – due to their initiatives and public campaigns have managed to demonstrate the quality of education and the positive career prospects for students. As a result, they have significantly improved the image of the school and the enrollment rates.

**Parents are a major decision-making factor, and especially in more conservative communities, it is important that they are “won” for the cause of the career center.**

A wide awareness-raising campaign can also involve influencers who participate in career centers' activities and 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.

The majority of the community members would recommend the career centers with a higher probability. 56% say it is most likely to do so, followed by another 28% who give marks 9 and 8.

Figure 23. Likelihood that community members recommend career center services



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – Services for the Community

### Conclusions:

- Community members express their support for the career centers and confirm their importance for diverse aspects of the society. The majority of the community members would recommend the career centers with a higher probability. 56% say it is most likely to do so, followed by another 28% who give marks 9 and 8
- Regarding the primary communication function of the career center to inform the community and media about its activities, community members are more reserved. 14% are rather not satisfied from the efforts made by the career centers, 43% somewhat satisfied, and 33% very satisfied
- Parents are a major decision-making factor, and especially in more conservative communities, it is important that they are “won” for the cause of the career center.

### Recommendations:

- SBCCs and schools in general must improve the communication with the community on all levels and be more assertive in promoting their results. Career center staff and school leadership will benefit from training in communicating tangible results and presenting them in public.
- Career centers should be more proactive in supporting the students who are disadvantaged or at risk of drop-out
- Career centers should be more proactive in establishing links with the local community and improving all stakeholders’ involvement, especially parents
- A wide awareness-raising campaign can also involve influencers who participate in career centers’ activities and 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.

# CHAPTER 3.



**Competitive  
advantages of the  
existing career centers**

The existing career services in Kosovo are available in SBCCs, youth centers, municipality, engaged to increase the youth employment, and other career centers such as career clubs (working in different lower secondary schools, gymnasiums, VET). Additionally, Busulla.com offers online services. Career guidance has been included in the new curricula for upper secondary education, within the area “Life and Work” as a module within the subject “Information and Communication Technology”.

## **Services of School-based Career Centers (SBCCs)**

School-based career centers (SBCCs) aim to attract students to VET education, equip them with job readiness skills, offer labor market information and facilitate connection with the labor market through internships, WBL and employment.

### **Advantages of SBCC services:**

- SBCCs at VET schools are currently the largest provider of comprehensive VET career services and support, geographically available across thousands of students from 10 to 12 grades.
- SBCCs use a common methodology and their staff is proficient in the facilitation of work-based learning and helping students make their pathway into the labour 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.
- SBCCs make 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.

It is clear that each SBCC promotes the respective VET school, so the open-door events and information sessions mainly serve those 9-graders, who would like to further explore the VET school / profile and confirm their choice. Collected examples in the research show that students have changed their decision based on personal impressions and well-delivered information about the prospects the school provides. Moreover, these information days and campaigns organized by

SBCCs for 9–grade students have also a very positive effect both for students and for schools, in terms of improving their image, promoting their specialties on a local level.

### **Disadvantages:**

- The SBCCs follow the same model, however the quality of services still varies across different schools, and depend mostly on the maturity of the establishment, the staff experience and initiative.
- This genuine bond with the VET school's objectives is a limitation of the SBCC services, which might narrow the opportunities and bias the choice of students only to VET. For example, 9–grade students are confronted with the task of choosing where to continue their studies. To do so, they need support in making the best choice of school, based on their interest, talents and aspirations. The services provided by the SBCCs aim to support the VET career choice and demonstrate the benefits of the specific VET school, so the information and guidance pursue this objective and orient the students toward the existing profiles offered by the school.
- The same limitation refers to VET graduates. The philosophy of school-based career centers is to offer more services related to job orientation and connections with the world of work than to opportunities for further education in higher education institutions or non-formal training. However, the career plans of many VET students include academic studies, so SBCCs have to respond to the need for information about further education options.
- There is a gap in support, related to unbiased career guidance services, which prevents SBCCs from being fully effective for students.

### **Other career services**

Other career services such as those offered by municipalities and youth career centers are offered mainly to students in 12 grades and might be more suitable for those students who need to explore options in a more objective way and find out what matches their interest and preferences.

### **Advantages:**

- These services are more oriented towards helping prospective students discover their strengths and interests, find out about the existing education and career opportunities and develop general soft skills and employability.

- The services of those establishments aim to equip students with a broader skill set, needed for a versatility of careers, rather than for a specific profession, which makes them appropriate for students for gymnasiums who aim at continuing their education.
- The support is offered through career planning workshops and training in transferable skills needed in life, work and further education. Some staff have been trained to use Busulla.
- Youth centers in particular seem to benefit from the close links to NGOs and other community organizations which offer workshops and activities on a broader spectrum of topics from civic life (ecology, entrepreneurship, art), which are interesting for young people. Some staff members have been trained to provide support using the site Busulla.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Career services offered by municipality-based career center have limited geographical and demographic scope – they are local and used mainly by students in transition (9 and 12 grade).
- Career services provided by youth centers are not sustainable, not standardized and are provided by unqualified staff.
- Career services at different schools differ a lot – some have evolved from career clubs, others are just recently established with the main function to offer employability training and practices to students, so they still lack credibility.

Students from schools where no career services are available, mainly rely on the career classes integrated in the ICT subject and other activities organized at school. In some cases, students have taken advantage of other services available in the town (such as in other schools, for example). In other cases like in Suhareke, the school leadership has established active cooperation with companies to offer practices for students, although they still don't have a career center. Teachers provide individual support through Busulla.

### **Busulla.com**

This is the main online source of career services in Kosovo and the sole one for many students, especially those in small villages.



## **Advantages:**

- The platform is freely accessible for students from 8 to 12 grade.
- It contains self-assessment instruments for exploring individual traits and interests and matching of students to suitable careers.
- The platform presents more than 300 occupations. There is also a database of all public and private upper secondary schools, colleges and universities, and vocational training centers.
  
- The greatest advantages of the Busulla platform are its accessibility from students regardless of their location and ethnicity, as well as their comprehensiveness in terms of career information and support. The platform is used and promoted as a career tool nationally.

## **Disadvantages:**

The platform still cannot replace career centers neither in presenting schools to prospective students, nor in providing services to students and employers. Students need a physical space, where they can find information, support, participate in training and meetings with employers, etc.

## **Based on the comparison (see the table below), 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 the employers in the VET sector.
- Other career services have a positive impact on the general career orientation and broader transversal skills development of students, especially those who want to explore different education and job opportunities.
- Bussula is an accessible and comprehensive platform that can be promoted to all students, to support independent career decisions and used as an additional career tool by staff.

All types of career services available across Kosovo, have a positive impact on the young people. The students, parents, employers, and community members who are familiar with the career centers' activities recognize their benefits and firmly state the need and importance of establishing career services in all types of schools and at all levels.

## Comparative table of advantages of the existing career services

	SBCC services	Other career services (municipality, youth, school career clubs)	Services of Busulla.com
1. Target groups	Mostly 10-12 grade; 9 grade	Mostly 9 and 12 grade	8-12 grade
2. Accessibility	On local level (9 towns), limited during Covid	Only on local level (few towns), limited during Covid	On national level, open online access
3. Popularity	Relatively well known, but need more promotion	Need more promo- tion	Well recognized, 1600 teachers trained, but still not fully utilized
4. Popularity	Relatively well known, but need more promotion	Need more promo- tion	Well recognized, 1600 teachers trained, but still not fully utilized
5. Quality	Generally good, but varies	Generally good, but varies	Very good
6. Focus / objec- tive	Promotion of VET profiles, Practical skills and placement	Informed career de- cision, Transferable skills for life and career	Informed career de- cision, Broad overview of opportunities
7. Services for 9-graders	Information about the VET school profiles LM information and prospects in the VET field Information days, open door weeks, career fairs	Information about different schools and profiles Individual / group career support	Information about schools and profiles LM information (300 occupations) Assessment instru- ments Online career guid- ance

# CHAPTER 4.



## Conclusions

As a general trend, all VET schools – those that have established career centers, other career services and those that don't – struggle to enroll students. Most SBCC report slight improvement in enrollment rate in the last year, but generally, a lot of efforts need to be harnessed to turn the tide of students from VET. Vocational schools have to stay competitive and attractive to students and school-based career centers can contribute to it.

The career center is a sign of engagement of the school with the students' employability. But the key to the success of the career center and the school results, is the commitment of school leadership and staff about the mission of the school to prepare students more effectively for the society and the labour market. The whole school community should share the same vision.

Among the main steps toward this include a public campaign that explains the major benefits of VET and changes the main stereotypes in the society. Being on the forefront of communication, SBCCs can play a key role in it. The data show that school-based career centers at VET schools positively influence the public image and attractiveness of VET profiles.

VET schools need to introduce an effective tracking system and monitoring of performance through common indicators such as number of enrolled and graduated students; number of companies offering internships and participating in school activities, number and type of events organized by SBCC, etc.

What seems to be most important for prospective students and parents is evidence of results about the practical career benefits of the school and profile. So, during these events, SBCCs have to put more efforts on presenting tangible results and data about

- number of companies which offer work-based learning opportunities;
- % of students in each grade who have participated in work-based practices in the last year;
- % of graduates who have successfully found jobs after graduation;
- % of graduates who have continued their studied in universities;
- business demands in the sector (data from Employment agency and employers);
- frequency and diversity of career center activities;
- testimonies and satisfaction rate of students
- shared personal examples of successful alumni, etc.

# CHAPTER 5.



## Recommendations

## 5.1. Services for 9-graders

### Recommendations for improvement of existing services:

- SBCCs need to be more proactive in outreaching prospective students. They have to organize information sessions in elementary schools more often, in more schools and involve students from lower grades.
- Promotional campaigns and open doors have to be longer than one week.
- SBCCs should improve their presence in social media, websites and in local media. Students and parents look up information online, so instead of brochures and printed materials, schools need to invest more in online campaigns / videos, which could be easily shared and disseminated across the target groups.
- Recruit students or support student's media clubs to promote the school in social media and help in promotional campaigns.
- SBCC should engage parents, as they have a key role in the choice of direction. For example, organize a career school for parents.
- SBCCs should involve stakeholders (Employment agency, employers, municipalities) in their campaign to present tangible results – data of demand, opportunities, employment prospects for each region and could be done in partnership with municipalities, employers and employer organizations.
- Engage those factors who influence the most the decision of young people – parents, successful alumni (celebrities, influencers) who can serve as role models, recent graduates, current students (peers), as well as employers and community members who can provide their positive perspective about the profiles.
- VET should be promoted to students not as an alternative to, but as another track that can lead to university. There is a growing number of students who plan to pursue academic education. VET schools should improve their image of “second-chance” for low achievers and be promoted as attractive and beneficial to those students who aim for academic education as well.

In order to be more effective and attractive for prospective students, they can use the AIDA marketing approach:

- Attention – start by asking students about their carer plans. Provide general advice about decision-making, which is the most relevant topic for all 9-grade students and will immediately focus their attention. Use interactive discussions and step-by-step guides to facilitate students in the process.
- Interest – raise awareness about labour market trends, the demand for specific profiles, most needed jobs, payment and opportunities by sectors;
- Desire – link this with the prospects for students in terms of employment and further education offered by the school: present the profiles and tangible results (internships, number of graduates who find employment and continue their studies in universities, etc.). Show videos with alumni and students from the school.
- Action – offer individual support for decision-making and invite students to visit the school. Here, SBCCs could make better use of Busulla for offering more personalized support.

#### **Recommendations for development and provision of new services and activities:**

- SBCCs can add value to services for students in 9th grade by offering individual career guidance support for decision making,
- Career guidance could be also offered to drop-out students who need a second chance.
- Organize career schools for parents who are actively involved in the decision-making process.
- Involve alumni and students in promotional campaigns.

## **5.2. Services for VET students**

#### **Recommendations for improvement of existing services:**

- SBCCs have to offer more training in transversal social skills – especially related to communication, teamwork and time management, as well as entrepreneurship, creative problem solving, etc.
- Activate cooperation with youth and municipality career centers to mutually benefit from staff capacity. For example, youth centers can organize training in communication, time management and teamwork; and SBCC can offer information about the labour market, and training in employability skills and job search strategies.

- Organize Career Fairs annually – in a physical and online format – to allow students to meet employers effectively.
- Organize more peer discussions on career topics.
- Organize annual career days at school combining exhibitions, competitions, graduation ceremonies, etc. at the end of the year to promote successful results and link graduate students with employers. Invite the media and all stakeholders.
- Promote participation of minority students in SBCC activities.
- Ensure more WBL opportunities for all students in all grades (10,11,12)
- Ensure enough and attractive opportunities for female students and encourage them to apply.
- Offer information about further education opportunities in Kosovo – many VET students comment on their plans to continue their studies.
- Offer information about scholarships available to students.
- SBCCs should also make students aware of more flexible working arrangements, which might be relevant for those who plan to combine work and study: part-time jobs, work on demand/ project-based assignments, seasonal work, etc.
- Promote internal job migration within Kosovo, especially in these towns, where students complain of lack of adequate prospects.

#### **Recommendations for development and provision of new services and activities:**

- Offer more online services for all target groups – for example: online information sessions for prospective students, webinars for decision-making, LM awareness, virtual workshops for employability skills, online career fairs (in case of pandemic), etc
- Create a database of graduates and update it annually.
- Offer more targeted support for students at risk.
- Invite successful alumni to share their story and inspire students as role-models. This approach can be especially effective for students in risk or minorities with speakers from the same groups.
- Organize annual round tables or other networking events with municipalities, employment offices and employer organizations to exchange most current data about the labour market and education. Invite them to all public events.
- Invite parents, employers and alumni as guest speakers, in career days and other school activities addressing students' employability;
- Offer more project-based initiatives and competitions, which help students develop professional and transferable skills
- Organize entrepreneurship trainings for students who are interested in setting up their own companies or invite startups to organize such entrepreneurship trainings.



- A growing number of students are interested in work and study abroad but are not aware of the risks. SBCCs can organize seminars to inform students about the opportunities and challenges, especially fake offers, shadow economy, health and social risks (modern slavery, human trafficking) that they should be aware of.
- SBCCs to cooperate with teachers and employers in formulating individual learning plan for each student who participates in on-the-job training. This will allow to monitor and evaluate the students' progress and effectiveness of the practice.
- Organize preparatory training for students before internships and WBL to introduce them with work ethics, rules, rights and obligations.
- Establish mentorship and "professional buddy" initiatives, where young professionals will have the chance to show their leadership abilities by supporting VET students in the workplace during work placements, under the supervision of elder professionals.

### 5.3. Services for employers

#### **Recommendations for further improvement of services:**

- Improve information about the SBCC services so companies could fully benefit from them;
- Invite them to present to students in networking / employer branding events;
- Invite companies to send information about internships, job offers and training which can be suitable for students;
- Promote their services in other regions with no career centers, to attract more job offers for graduates.
- Be more involved in the implementation of the WBL by introducing students learning plans;
- SBCC need to enhance the selection of students who participate in internship or WBL;
- Organize meetings of employers and teachers to exchange feedback after internship / WBL and discuss further cooperation.

### 5.4. Services for community

#### **Recommendations for further improvement of services:**

- SBCC have to activate parent involvement in school activities through students – for example, by participating as guest speakers at Career Days to present their jobs, offering work-place visits, etc.

- Establish alumni clubs and organize annual networking events to update contacts, and attract support to school activities (training, internships, equipment, promotional campaigns and other initiatives)
- Invite community members to school activities such as open-door weeks; orientation day for freshmen; Career days at the end of the school year. Representatives of local authorities, Public Employment Services, media, NGOs, employer organizations, teachers and directors of elementary schools and parents need to be brought into the school life and more involved in the SBCC activities.
- Introduce annual survey among students, parents, teachers and school stakeholders in all VET schools in order to evaluate services, receive suggestions for new activities and feedback for improvement; collect evidence/ testimonials which can be used in the promotion of the school; and last but not least – engage stakeholders who are willing to cooperate in school activities.

Based on our expertise we recommend the following further training and organizational restructuring for SBCC staff and activities:

### **5.5. Further training**

- Individual career guidance provision and coaching – SBCC need to be trained in providing career guidance for self-awareness, decision-making and career planning.
- Diversity inclusion and support - how to interact with students from diverse communities / minorities, to improve their attitude, be more sensitive and aware about cultural issues, to avoid discrimination
- Support for drop-out students - organize peer learning events with VET Agency and other professionals to discuss effective approaches to address their needs.
- Marketing skills – career center staff and school leadership will benefit from training in organization of public campaigns and communicating results to the public.
- Delivering online services – SBCCs need to improve their online services for all target groups – for example: online information sessions for prospective students, webinars for decision-making, LM awareness, virtual workshops for employability skills, online career fairs (in case of pandemic), etc.
- Constantly updating information about LM trends, emerging jobs and new skills demanded by the labor force. For this purpose, resources such as

[futurejobsfinder.vodafone.com](http://futurejobsfinder.vodafone.com), atlas100.ru, whatchado.com, and CEDEFOP Skills Panorama can be particularly useful.

## **5.6. Organization of SBCC activities**

- Introduce separate working days of the career center according to the direction/profile.
- Set a calendar of activities with the schedule in which direction they will work and the career center awaits the students of those directions.
- Offer opt-out option from mailing groups. In the more active career centers, some students feel overwhelmed with the information about the career center's training. The SBCC staff may also consider alternative ways to inform students about the calendar of activities, such as placing it on a visible place at school and using the Facebook page/ page on the school website, so that students will not feel.

## **5.7. Management of SBCC activities**

- The SBCC staff should be involved full-time in the career center to produce better results. An efficient career center requires more resources and more dedicated efforts. Involvement of career center staff on a full-day basis will increase the quality of services and efficiency, as professionals will not have to switch between different roles (administrative / teaching and those at the career center).

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