

Regional Western Balkan Conference
The Final event of the
**Western Balkan Civil Society Organisations for
Youth Employment Support project**

Thursday, 17th December 2020

12.00 – 12.10

Welcoming Remarks

- Milorad Bjeletic - **Executive Director / Belgrade Open School**

12.10 – 13.10

Cooperation among CSOs and public authorities in the Western Balkans in the policy and decision-making processes regarding youth employability

- Lida Kita - **Specialist in VET and Social Inclusion, Country Coordinator Serbia, Turkey and Israel Operations Department / European Training Foundation**
- Mirela Rajkovic - **Executive Director / South East European Youth Network (SEEYN)**
- Ivan Topalovic - **Project External Evaluator / Strater**

Moderator: Milica Skiljevic, **Project manager / Belgrade Open School**

Session Introduction: The civil society organisations (CSOs) that work with young people in the Western Balkan region are often involved in the area of youth employability as service providers – delivering career guidance services, employability skills training, and mediating between employers and young people in organizing traineeships. Apart from providing services, CSOs can provide significant input in decision and policy making processes. The role of CSOs in providing services for improving youth skills and their experience in working directly with young people should be recognized and used to feed into public policies. However, some challenges pose obstacles to the successful implementation of youth employability policies.

This session reviews the key youth employability policy challenges to map the areas of potential cooperation between CSOs and public institutions in the Western Balkans and thus contribute to improving youth unemployment.

13.10 – 13.20

Break

13.20 - 14.40

Employability in the Western Balkans: Key Findings and Recommendations

- Ajka Rovcanin - **Head of Economic Development Department / Institute for Youth Development KULT**
- Adem Gashi - **Team Leader of the RCC's Western Balkans Youth Lab / Regional Cooperation Council**
- Cristina Mereuta - **Labour Market Specialist (Operations Department) / European Training Foundation**
- Valmir Xhemajli - **Project Coordinator / NGO LENS**
- Aleksandra Djurovic - **Research coordinator / Belgrade Open School**

Moderator: Irena Topalli - **Program Manager / Beyond Barriers Association, Tirana, Albania**

Session Introduction: Young people in Western Balkan countries face numerous difficulties in the process of transition from education to the labour market. One of the key barriers they encounter is the lack of skills that would help them navigate through the modern and dynamic world of work and obtain a favourable job. Youth employment is a pressing issue in the Western Balkan countries and the immense importance of improving youth employability, particularly the skills they possess, has been recognized.

As there are common policies aims across all Western Balkan countries in the area of youth employability and various examples of effective practices, there are multiple opportunities for regional cooperation. All aspects of cooperation that were examined during the Web4YES project implementation have immense potential for further advancement of youth employability in the Western Balkans and may as well contribute to the improvement of youth mobility in the region.

Friday, 18th December 2020

12.00 – 13.30

Self(employability) - Entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans

- Bozina Stesevic - **Program Manager / Association for Democratic Prosperity – ZID**
- Jan Zlatan Kulenovic - **Director of Programs / Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)**
- Darko Radicanin - **Executive Director / Junior Achievement in Serbia**
- Goran Radlovacki - **Project Assistant at Improvement of Employability program / Belgrade Open School**

Moderator: Ajka Rovcanin - **Head of Economic Development Department / Institute for Youth Development KULT, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Session Introduction: Over the past few years, youth entrepreneurship is increasingly treated as one of the government's strategic priorities, especially in terms of addressing the high unemployment rate of youth in all the Western Balkan countries. However, youth in Western Balkan countries see bureaucratic procedures as one of the obstacles to starting a business. Young entrepreneurs are struggling because of the lack of information about registering a business and legislation that regulates their operations.

Entrepreneurial learning is an important policy area in the European Union's 2020 strategy. Promoting entrepreneurship across the education system, especially in schools, is a key part of building competitive job-creating economies. For the past 5-10 years, all countries in the Western Balkans have had a worthy move forward in the overall development and promotion of lifelong entrepreneurial learning. From the evidence gathered, it is suggested that the concept is closely associated with the EU integration processes in the region, and in particular with the view of educational and employment policies harmonization vis a vis the EU 2020 Strategy and E&T 2020.

13.30 – 13.45

Break

13:45 - 15.00

Advocacy for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship: the Impact of CSOs on Public Policies

- Silvia Dervishi - **Project Coordinator / Beyond Barriers Association**
- Mirela Kalamperovic - **Programme Coordinator / Association for Democratic Prosperity – ZID**
- Zerina Selimovic - **Project Assistant at Economic Development Department / Institute for Youth Development KULT**
- Valmir Xhemajli - **Project Coordinator / NGO LENS**
- Filip Kulakov - **International Affairs and Policy Coordinator / National Youth Council of North Macedonia**
- Jelena Manic Radoicic - **Improvement of Employability External Advisor / Belgrade Open School**

Moderator: Vladimir M. Pavlovic - **Senior Policy Advisor, Belgrade Open School**

Session Introduction: The session addresses the low level of participation of CSOs in policy processes regarding the planning, implementation, and monitoring of youth unemployment policies. The panellists will present their advocacy campaigns created during the implementation of the WeB4YES project, which tackles the problem of youth employability on the Western Balkan level. Each partner created policy advocacy agenda for their own country based on the socio-economic needs of the young unemployed citizens or young entrepreneurs.

Advocacy campaigns are designed to bring concrete policy interventions in the field of youth employment and entrepreneurship. Their results are targeting the range of various policy interventions such as putting certain topics on the government agenda, developing concrete proposals for law amendments, developing proposals for new laws or strategic documents, monitoring the implementation of the adopted policy documents, developing law proposals.

15.00 - 15.10

Conference closing

- Fanny Seree - **Policy Assistant in the European Commission / DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (Centre for Thematic Expertise on Economic Governance working on education, employment and social policies)**
- Vladimir M. Pavlovic / **Belgrade Open School**