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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT



# Joint Vision – Youth Employment

Implemented by:

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



In cooperation with:

Republic of Serbia  
MINISTRY OF  
YOUTH  
AND SPORT



Republic of Serbia  
Ministry of Education, Science and  
Technological Development





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## Youth Employment: Institutional Partnership

Launching the German-Serbian initiative, which should contribute to growth and employment, is the crucial step in the new Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) project. This project is being implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Energy, knowledge and experience acquired in the recently completed Professional Orientation in Serbia and Strengthening the Structures for Youth Empowerment and Participation in Serbia projects, as well as in the current Reform of Vocational Education and Training in Serbia project, will be used for the strategic alliance of all social partners at different levels with a view to better aligning economic and education policies. The aim is to improve the conditions for the better positioning of young people on the labour market, to provide companies with better access to the qualified staff they need and encourage entrepreneurship in Serbia. The project will initiate an expert National Dialogue for promotion of youth employment which will integrate the proposals, experiences and knowledge gained during the project implementation into a political dialogue within the German-Serbian initiative for sustainable growth and employment.





Ministries cooperate to improve youth employment conditions

# National dialogue for the best solutions

It is very important that the social partners of the Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) project work and cooperate to really contribute to improving the position of young people in the labour market, not only through strategic documents but also from the standpoint of the young person.

**T**he number of young people in the total population of Serbia is continually declining, and the 15-30 age group currently makes up a fifth of the total population. The highest unemployment rate, of over 47 percent, is among the population aged 15-24, but official statistics also point to a large number of unemployed people aged between 30 and 35. About 50 percent of the population aged 15-30 are inactive, while more than 70 percent are inactive in the 15-24 age group. The highest youth unemployment and inactivity rate has been recorded in South and Southeast Serbia. About 20 percent of young people aged 15 to 24 are not included in the education system and have not been recorded on the labour market, nor are they employed.

The National Youth Strategy by 2025, the Education Development Strategy in Serbia by 2020, the Career Guidance and Counselling Strategy, the National Employment Strategy by 2020 and the Strategy to Support the Development of SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness by 2020, are some of the strategic documents which form the basis for cross-sectoral cooperation in the Government of the Republic of Serbia to improve the conditions for greater youth employability and employment. This is also the objective of the Youth Employment Promotion project being implemented by the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale*

*Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, as the leading partner, with the support of the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs.

SNEŽANA KLAŠNJA, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sport

**We are working on the efficient networking of all youth policy stakeholders**



What are the main challenges for a young person when he or she moves from the world of education to the world of work? First of all, it is the lack of professional experience, as well as the incompatibility of knowledge acquired in the formal education system with the demands of the economy and employers. In addition, young people are generally not well informed about the developments in the labour market when making decisions about training for a particular profession. A growing problem is the early school leaving rates – as early as at the level of secondary education.

This is why in the National Youth Strategy, which was adopted for the period from 2015 to 2025, one of the priorities is to increase employability and employment of young people. In order to implement this strategic objective, four specific objectives have been defined: developing services and mechanisms that promote youth employability and employment through cross-sectoral cooperation in the Government of the Republic of Serbia; improving compatibility of knowledge, skills and competencies, acquired during lifelong learning, with labour market needs; creating stimulating conditions for the development of youth entrepreneurship and the development of a functioning and sustainable system of career guidance and counselling. The Strategy also insists on encouraging innovation, supporting the talented youth, and especially on access to education for all young people under the same conditions.

Given the set objectives, it is clear that it cannot be the strategy of just one ministry. In order to improve the quality of life of young people, it is necessary to have active support at the level of



the Serbian Government and cooperation with NGOs, the business world and young people themselves – primarily with the young people from youth associations. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has established a partner infrastructure in youth offices across Serbia, which are continuously upgraded, based on established cooperation standards. They have also developed and promoted peer education. Simultaneously, through cooperation with other ministries and local governments, the Ministry is working on more efficient networking of all youth policy stakeholders.

The common goal is to use all of the taken measures and forms of cooperation to help young people be heard, express themselves, raise their capacities, find themselves through professional development and find employment or become self-employed. Special support must be directed towards the category of youth that is “invisible” to the system. This is why it is extremely important that the social partners of the Youth Employment Promotion project work and cooperate to really contribute to improving the position of young people, not only through strategic documents but also from the standpoint of the young person.

**KATARINA OBRADOVIĆ JOVANOVIĆ,**  
Assistant Minister of Economy

**We will encourage  
entrepreneurial thinking and  
acting**



Improving the business environment is a priority for economic development and employment growth, which includes the young. In addition to improving regulations in order to increase the youth employment rate, there are also other important measures that will contribute to greater availability of knowledge and skills in the labour market in accordance with the demands of the economy. This is why it is necessary to further develop mechanisms that will effectively predict developments in the business environment, as well ensure appropriate adjustment of the educational system to the needs of the economy through enrolment policies, the creation of new educational profiles and reform of curricula. It is necessary to introduce more practical tra-

ining into formal education in cooperation with companies, as well as for employers to be involved in the preparation of curricula. The introduction of an educational model with elements of the dual system, where the conditions exist for such action, is certainly an important measure.

Supporting youth employment and self-employment also requires integrating entrepreneurial training into the formal education system. This way, young people are encouraged to take the initiative while still in school and are trained to take responsibility in managing their own careers in fluctuating market conditions. Acquiring such skills increases their competitiveness in the labour market, whether applying for a job or taking the decision to set up their own business. In accordance with this, the Strategy to Support the Development of SMEs, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness, plans to introduce entrepreneurial training through the contents of school subjects in the primary education, as well as special subjects in secondary and higher education. Activities have also been planned which will contribute to the training and improvement of the teaching staff in schools and universities for carrying out entrepreneurial training with students.

The experiences of successful entrepreneurs show that the entrepreneurial mindset involves the setting of realistic goals and having a well-designed strategy for their implementation, being able to adapt quickly to changes and recognise business opportunities, as well as the ability to learn from mistakes and to successfully apply that experience in the development of their business. For this reason, the Ministry of Economy has a key role in the Youth Employment Promotion project to contribute above all, in cooperation with other partners, to the creation of generations that will have an the entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge and personal and business skills to realise their ideas.

**MIRJANA BOJANIĆ,** Special Adviser to  
the Minister of Education, Science and  
Technological Development

**Our aim is to train young people  
to constantly learn and explore  
new areas**

Youth employment is certainly a priority of the education reform, because the unemployment rate of this group is very high. The education system, in cooperation with local companies and institutions, must be ready to provide appropriate education and training programmes for students, along with actively engaging in the career guidance and counselling system. This way, young people have the opportunity to gain additional competencies and qualifications that increase their employment prospects and ensure their active participation in the social life of their own community.

The principal assumptions for the systematic introduction of elements of the dual education system require establishing a legal framework that will regulate this matter in a number of different segments: rights and obligations of employers and schools; accreditation of student work places; master training of instruc-



tors and their licensing; labour rights of students, teachers and instructors; harmonisation of the general and vocational parts of education and training; flexible organisation of teaching in schools and acquisition of all competencies stipulated by the qualifications standard, regardless of the company where the student studies "on-the-job".

A key prerequisite for such cooperation between the education system and the economy is the existence of as many successful companies as possible in local communities, with which schools can organise practical education and training for students. On the other hand, successful and technologically advanced companies act as generators of economic changes in the local community and, therefore, also of labour market trends. Adapting to the needs of the economy requires the creation of more flexible educational profiles, with broader knowledge and competencies. The student who has been trained throughout his or her studies to continuously learn and explore new facts, has the greatest chance to become faster at adapting to the changing demands of his or her job.

The Ministry of Education will be an active participant in the Youth Employment Promotion project and will cooperate directly with other ministries involved at the national level, as well as at the local level through cooperation with schools in the municipalities and regions where the project is implemented. We will try to use our resources in the best way in order to provide quality educated and resourceful teachers in the education reform process and train young people for lifelong learning and taking responsibility for developing and managing their own careers.

**LJILJANA DŽUVER, Assistant Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs**

## Special support for young people who have the greatest difficulties in finding employment

The National Employment Action Plan for 2015 stipulates that the unemployed who fall into the category of those who are difficult to employ, including young people aged 15 to 30, will have priority in joining the active employment policy measures.

Youth employment is also encouraged through special service packages implemented by the National Employment Service. Upon registration with the National Employment Service, the employability of each young person is assessed, an individual employment plan is created as well as the measures that are most appropriate for activating them and raising their employability. For the young with no professional experience with no less than secondary education, an internship programme with a private employer is carried out, so they may acquire practical knowledge and skills for independent work, thereby increasing their employment prospects. Significant support is also directed at young people who have left school and have no qualifications through their involvement in the programme of functional primary education, so they can gain the education and competencies for performing simple jobs.

Young people who have the greatest difficulties in finding employment are those without professional qualifications and the low skilled, with no work experience, the young on welfare benefits, the Roma population and young people with disabilities.

In order to improve their position in the labour market, it is necessary to constantly work on creating equal opportunities for education, employment and decent work.



To this end, it is necessary to develop mechanisms to prevent young people leaving school early, while unemployed young people, who do not have sufficient knowledge and skills for the labour market, need to be informed about the possibilities of further education and training. It is necessary to include these categories of youth in the active policy measures which will most effectively contribute to their employment and at the same time promote flexible forms of employment, work on their personal development, and also strengthen control mechanisms and fight against the grey economy.

Solving the problem of youth unemployment is complex and requires a number of synchronised activities by all social stakeholders. The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs develops a National Employment Action Plan every year in cooperation with other ministries, social partners and other stakeholders, in order to comprehensively process the situation and demands, define priorities, establish corresponding activities and measures for improving the labour market, and in particular for improving the position of young people.



Heinz-Dieter Harbers, Senior Leader of the GIZ Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Programme

# Opening a new chapter

The German-Serbian initiative for sustainable growth and employment will facilitate debate to mainstream and improve existing and better plan future activities which will support and shape growth and employment in Serbia. This political dialogue among key partners in Serbia will be jointly facilitated by the official German development assistance, funded by the German Government.

**W**e are opening a new chapter in our support in Serbia," announces Heinz-Dieter Harbers, Senior Leader of the GIZ Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Programme. At the moment, the two modules under the umbrella of the above mentioned programme, the YEP (Youth Employment Promotion) and VET (Vocational Education and Training) projects, focus on the better alignment of the economic and education policy in Serbia, as well as the encouragement of an entrepreneurial way of thinking and acting. According to Harbers, its essence lies in the achievement of two interconnected goals in a high quality way.

The first goal is to create a more stable and motivating environment through the cooperation of relevant government bodies and institutions and the civil sector, where new generations will have better employability prospects and will be able to plan and manage their careers better. The second goal is to encourage and enable young people to take initiative and responsibility for their lives and professional choices in this process. Both goals are equally important when it comes to creating government growth and employment strategies which should ensure long-term economic and social prospects, underscores Harbers.

YEP is a new GIZ project which has been running since 1 July 2015 in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as the lead partner, with the support of the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs.

## Initiating expert talks on youth employment

Youth employment is one of the most important and most complex issues that every society faces, says Harbers. This is why, in addition to the relevant ministries dealing with the matter, the goal is to involve as many stakehold-

ers as possible in the project on the national and regional level to influence the creation of more stimulating conditions that will better position young people in society. "The primary project goal in this phase is to initiate expert talks. There are many interested parties – non-governmental organisations, schools and companies – which are not communicating with each other a great deal, and our idea is to connect them and help them reach consensus on the ways in which young people, as well as the economy, can be helped, and to have them exchange ideas and examples of good practice."

*It is a great turnaround that young people have come to understand that it is easy to find a job with crafts occupations, not only in Serbia, but elsewhere in world*

He adds that in the creation of such a network, the experience, results and the partner infrastructure established through the implementation of the Reform of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the Professional Orientation in Serbia (BOSS) projects are of huge assistance.

The Professional Orientation in Serbia project was recently completed and European experts rate it as one of the best implemented projects in this field in Europe. "Our partners in this project, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education, also confirm that this programme was a great success among young people. In order to help young people make an informed decision about their choice of occupation and actively manage their careers, a functional system of professional orientation in primary schools and youth offices was established. The





**Heinz-Dieter Harbers: It is our goal to contribute to growth and employment and better alignment of economic and education policy in Serbia**

programme comprised 110,000 primary school students and 60,000 young people in youth offices who, among other things, were able to be better informed about their desired occupation in more than 2,000 companies participating in the project. Given such excellent results, as well as the capacities that were built, stakeholders in Serbia can now further develop the career guidance and counselling system and integrate it into all levels of education," explains Harbers.

The activities related to the reform of vocational education and training through the VET project and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development have been implemented since 2002. As of 2013, the focus has shifted to the modernisation and promotion of the three-year technical profiles that are especially in demand in the labour market. Last year the educational profiles locksmith-welder, electrician and industrial mechanic, implemented according to the cooperative education model, were introduced in schools. "This model is based on elements of the dual training which

exists in several European countries, including Germany. Given that it takes decades and major investments to implement the full dual system successfully, only certain elements of this system have been adopted in Serbia through the cooperative education model. The essence of cooperative education is that companies assume their part of responsibility for training the staff they need by providing students with quality in-company training and a certain amount of compensation for their work."

## People are the most important resource of every company

In this school year, 237 students enrolled in the modernised profiles, which is a significant increase on last year's 171 students considering how unpopular these occupations were among young people and their parents until recently, says Harbers. "It is a great turnaround that young people have come to understand that it is easy to find a job with crafts occupations, not only in Serbia, but elsewhere in world, and that they have started enrolling in these profiles. Our priority this year, among others, will be to help change the existing legislation with a view to precisely defining the obligations and rights of all stakeholders in the cooperative education model – companies, schools and students. We particularly insist on clearly defining the compensation for students undergoing in-company training. Parents and students must know what they can expect from enrolling in a particular school. This, of course, should not be the deciding factor, but it is important as it conveys the message of how committed companies are to this project."

Harbers adds that certain government subsidies would be a major incentive for companies to get involved in training the work force they need. "In every country where the dual education system works well, this was achieved also through different government incentives. For example, these can be tax reliefs, but it is important for the government to motivate companies in some ways to get more actively involved in meeting the labour market needs for work force, as well as to develop a good system of control over the use of such incentives", pointed out Harbers.

Companies' readiness to share responsibility for training new generations is a very important precondition for creating better youth employability and employment prospects, and consequently – the success of the YEP project itself. In economic crisis conditions, it is understandable that companies are focused on reducing costs, says Harbers. But, companies' long-term business growth strategies cannot be sustainable if companies fail to understand that people are their main resource, and the foundation of success is investing in their training. "Politicians must also give their contribution by creating a clear strategy detailing the country's economic priorities and passing legislation that will stimulate the development of such and similar initiatives", concluded Harbers.



Application of good practices  
in the Youth Employment  
Promotion (YEP) project

# Determination for the right solutions

This project offers the chance to use the energy, knowledge and experience gained in previous projects for the purposes of strategic alliance of all partners at different levels and with a view to providing employment conditions for young people and convincing them of our determination to find solutions that will actually be of use for them.

**Y**outh employment is a social goal, but also a question of how the measures taken to achieve it have affected the lives of young people. "This is why young people will remain the focus of our activities. The young will support their peers and pass on key messages and experiences about the possibilities and the ways to land a job. They will be the most authoritative in the assessment of how successful we are in creating solutions that provide them with better employment prospects", says Marija Radovanović, GIZ Senior Project Manager for the Youth Employment Promotion (YEP) project.

Focus on the youth was the foundation on which the Professional Orientation in Serbia project was successfully conducted, says Marija Radovanović, who led this project on behalf of GIZ since 2011. The project was recently completed with the establishment of a functioning system of professional orientation in all primary schools in Serbia and its integration into the work of youth offices, through peer support. "This was a social and systemic goal of the education and youth sectors. However, in order to reach that goal, we first thought about what such a programme ought to provide a child in primary school and at a youth office in Serbia? This approach proved to be correct and I am certain that in the new project it will also ensure greater creativity in finding so-

lutions and that it will instil a high degree of responsibility so we make the right decisions".

### A programme worth going to school for

When the professional orientation project started, the first reaction of students was: "This is a programme that is worth going to school for". It was a concept that brought innovations to teaching, says Marija Radovanović, which, obviously, fit the needs of primary school children in the seventh and eighth grades. "The programme allowed the young people to get a clear answer to the question: who am I and what are my options? With the support of experts, they were able to become well informed about their chosen occupation and their education and training possibilities, become acquainted with the business through real encounters with world of work in companies, talk to employers, perform some specific work tasks and then decide what to do next based on everything they had done".

By the end of the project, about 100,000 students in primary schools had gained this experience. "I believe that these are 100,000 young people who now know better why they are enrolling in a particular high school and what their employment prospects are once they leave school. However, four years later when we went to speak with the students who participated in the first year of the programme and are now about to enrol in university or find employment, they said that they still needed the programme because, in the meantime, labor market conditions had changed and they had obtained new information and saw new prospects for themselves. This confirms the necessity of integrating the system of professional orientation at all levels of education and training and continuing to develop and adapt it to local specifics through the work of youth offices".

Experience gained through career guidance and counselling has shown that it is very logical to encourage initiatives and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset in young people while still in primary school education. "Number of primary schools have created and accredited appropriate entrepreneurship programmes on their own and initiated trainings on how to turn a hobby into a small entrepreneurial initiative. This is the sort of development we need to encourage through the new project as well. To this end, it is very important that young people at all levels of education gain as many opportunities as possible to get acquainted with the world of work through real encounters and practical education and training in companies – to see what is expected from them, how to take responsibility for their work, but also how to come up with new business ideas and understand what is most important for their implementation".

What are the most important experiences of adults, which can be applied and further developed in the new project? "In schools a large number of professionals have been trained and have become aware of their responsibility for encouraging the development of children in a way that will allow



**Marija Radovanović: Young people will be the focus of our activities**

them to make the best decision for themselves, but also realise that they are entitled to make a mistake. That a mistake is not the end of the world, but rather a chance to take a new step forward, to change something in the life. Teachers gained a set of new methods that have proven to be very successful in working with young people and the support of local teams for professional orientation which included representatives of institutions, schools, youth offices and companies”.

At the same time, the idea of peer counselling, through the work of youth offices, reached a level of development out in the field that very few expected. “From one office that was formed to create a programme for the needs of young people in their communities, in the time frame of three years we managed to build a responsible institution and develop numerous models on how young people can support their peers in tracing the path of their career development. The project also included social science students in their obligatory internship practice with youth offices. Out of 194 students who acted as peer educators, 43 of them managed to find employment. We

did not predict such an outcome, but we did expect students would, through such a type of practice and experience, be able to be better positioned in the labour market”.

An especially important experience was the willingness of companies to participate in the project by organising real encounters of youth with world of labor with schools. “We have cooperated with over two thousand companies in Serbia, and in one school year alone real encounters were organised for more than 52,000 young people. I sincerely believe that these employers, too, will be our potential partners in the realisation of the new project. They can say what competencies they need in their industries, and what young people leaving school need to bring to companies in order to immediately get a job, as well as what employers can do to help young people while still in school gain experiences that would make it easier for them to find employment”.

## Goals set high

The aforementioned and other experiences will be integrated and further developed in the search for new solutions in the YEP project. This will take place simultaneously at the national level through the German-Serbian initiative for sustainable growth and employment, and at the local level through implementation in two reference regions which will integrate their experiences and recommendations in the national expert dialogue on youth employment.

The success of the project will be measured on the basis of four main indicators. The first is how satisfied the young people involved in the programme are, and whether they believe that the project provides them greater employability and employment. The second indicator is whether the local community has succeeded in creating the conditions for employment growth, and that 70 percent of young people, to whom support will be provided, find employment, become self-employed or are included in new measures that increase their employment opportunities within six months of the end of application of the measures. The third indicator is whether models to be applied in selected local communities give results that can be integrated at the national level. The fourth success indicator will measure the achievements of the German-Serbian initiative for sustainable growth and employment concept.

“This project offers the chance to use the energy, knowledge and experience for the purposes of strategic alliance of all partners at various levels with a view to providing employment conditions for young people and convincing them of our determination to find solutions that will actually be of use for them”, says Marija Radovanović who adds: “The great contribution of this project is that we will work with young people, but also with institutions and all interested parties, in order to create local policies that can respond to the needs of young people from a particular community in the most effective way, and that, at the same time, we can apply these experiences in a national expert dialogue that will shape youth employment policies, and therefore their future, as well”.





Modernisation of technical profiles based on the model of cooperative education

# Shared responsibility, a win for everyone

Technical profiles have been higher up on the wish lists of primary school leavers ever since three three-year profiles based on the model of cooperative education were introduced into the national education system last year. They enable students to acquire a broader spectrum of competencies through modernised curricula and far more practical education and training in companies. Education in the locksmith-welder, electrician and industrial mechanic profiles is conceived in such a way that young people's employment prospects are increased, and, at the same time, companies are able to obtain the high quality personnel they need more quickly and at lower costs.

In the last school year, students were able to train as locksmiths-welders in five vocational schools, as electricians in two, and as industrial mechanics in one school. These eight schools obtained support from 34 companies in Serbia which agreed to join the new cooperative education model, says Jelena Stojanović Đumić, Senior Project Manager for the "Reform of Vocational Education and Training in Serbia" project, which has been implemented by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* on behalf of the German Government since 2002. Since 2013, the focus has been on modernising the three-year technical profiles, and the lead implementation partner is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. This school year, two additional schools are offering students the chance to sign up for the locksmith-

welder profile, and one additional school for the industrial mechanic profile.

"Our priority in the process of implementation is quality, not quantity, and therefore, together with our project partner, the Ministry of Education, we are making sure that the criteria for the participation of schools and companies in the project are being strictly followed", underscores Jelena Stojanović Đumić. "The main requirement for schools is to initiate cooperation with a company in their area which need some of these profiles. Companies are expected to provide students with quality practical education and training in their plants, as well as to allocate funds for meal and transport allowances or scholarships. By doing so, companies confirm that they are strongly interested in long-term cooperation."

### Companies recognise their interest

If the cooperation based on the cooperative model is implemented in a quality manner, everyone is a winner: schools offer profiles that are more in line with the needs of the economy, students acquire knowledge which will be more competitive in the labour market, and companies are able to obtain scarce personnel even while they are still students. This is why experts from GIZ will be out in the field from September on, to monitor how trainings in companies are being carried out, in order to determine the way in which they are fulfilling their obligations and what possibilities there are to further enhance cooperation.

### What is the cooperative education model?

The cooperative education and training model is based on the elements of the dual education system which can be applied in our conditions, explains Jelena Stojanović Đumić. "The aim of this project is not to copy the systems of other countries, nor is that possible, but to create solutions based on best practices that can give the best results in our country. For example, in Germany, within the dual system, companies take the responsibility for the students' training and education, while in Serbia the focus is on schools, to which we provide support in initiating cooperation with the state and local institutions and companies."





**Jelena Stojanović Đumić: Everyone benefits from good implementation of the cooperative model**

Previous experience with companies participating in the project shows that they approach this type of investment in education very seriously. Foreign companies are more familiar with this model, as they have already encountered elements of the dual education system in other countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland, but there is also a growing number of domestic companies which recognise that it is in their interest to be actively involved in the education of future personnel. Stojanović Đumić underscores that while the project was being devised, the difficult conditions in which companies operate due to the economic crisis were taken into account, so the criteria do not set the number of students they will receive, rather the goal is to provide students with the practical education and training of the highest quality. This is why schools often cooperate with several companies, in order to be able to provide practical education and training to all students studying a particular profile.

The main role of schools in this project is to show initiative in improving their educational offer, in a way that will

most effectively balance the needs of local companies, the wishes of students and the abilities of the teaching staff to implement the new programmes. Cooperative education includes giving practical education and training classes in the first year of study in well-equipped school workshops, and then in companies for the rest of the years of study. For this reason, the project made sure to assist those schools that are in a difficult financial situation in equipping the workshops, with the support of GIZ and business partners, and Stojanović Đumić notes that the introduction of modern technology in the schools increased the interest of students even more.

## Joint entrepreneurial venture

This is also confirmed by data showing that technical profiles are higher up on the wish lists of primary school leavers, especially in areas with a larger number of companies in the mechanical and electrical engineering industry. In towns such as Kragujevac, there is a growing number of students with excellent and very good average grades who enrol in technical profiles. "The average grade in primary school, however, can sometimes be deceiving. Crafts require a high level of practical skills and it is often seen that students with poor average grades later achieve great results in practice, which further motivates them to better master the theoretical part", says Jelena Stojanović Đumić.

She adds that the goal of cooperative education, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge with which it is easier to find a job at home and abroad, is to encourage students to have entrepreneurial thinking. This does not necessarily mean they have to found their own businesses after finishing education, rather it gives them the ability to think innovatively, that each individual creates his or her own opportunities for advancement in the work they perform, that they are ready to accept new things and constantly learn. At the same time, the aims of the project and the way it was conceived require a clear vision and the initiative and creativity of all participants in its realisation. It is necessary that GIZ experts and relevant institutions in Serbia cooperate with local communities, schools and companies in search of solutions that are most applicable to local conditions. "This is why every successful step in the development of this idea is one small but valuable entrepreneurial venture", says Jelena Stojanović Đumić.

The next steps in GIZ's support for the modernisation of technical profiles should ensure the implementation of some more educational profiles, primarily those which are more attractive to women, announces Jelena Stojanović Đumić. At the same time, there will be work on increasing the capacities of institutions that are the carriers of the model of cooperative education, both for managing the model and for changing the laws and by-laws that would set the way the model is implemented.



Cooperation between Businesses and Schools to Boost Employment

# Employers in Schools, Schools in Factories

Examples of good practice in cooperation between businesses and schools, especially in professional orientation and reform of vocational education and training projects, have encouraged the business community to commit itself more to the introduction of elements of dual education in the curricula, says the representative of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, one of the partners of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* in the new project for the promotion of employability and youth employment.

**E**mployers in Serbia say that personnel with technical and technological knowledge is what they need the most, according to the surveys conducted by the Serbian Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, some of the most in-demand occupations are three-year technical profiles, as well as engineers in various fields, especially IT. The common denominator is a shortage of these profiles on the labour market, so cooperation between schools and businesses must be improved, in order for curricula to match the needs of the economy better and more effectively, says Mirjana Kovačević, Director of the Education and Vocational Training Centre at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (SCoC). "This means that secondary-school and university students should have more practical education and training, to become acquainted with the world of work and acquire the necessary work experience in a timely manner. At the same time, employers' training costs for newly hired workers, which are generally high, would decrease, especially when the lack of vocational profiles is solved by retraining unemployed people through part-time education."

In addition to practical education and training, it is necessary for employers to be more actively involved in the drafting of curricula, as well as to simplify the procedure of developing said curricula and making them more flexible. "This is especially important in the field of vocational education, where classroom teaching should also stay on par with the dynamic changes in equipment and technology", believes Kovačević who announces more intensive involvement of the SCoC in the promotion of three-year technical profiles through professional orientation of students and other activities, as these occupations, although in great demand, generally remain unpopular among young pe-

ople and their parents. "The general public is not sufficiently informed about the changes in the status of these occupations, which are not only in demand, but are usually well-paid compared to the average salary in Serbia. At the same time, modern manufacturing is based on a high degree of automation and safety standards, which means that working conditions are considerably better than before", explains Kovačević.

*The general public is not sufficiently informed about the changes in the status of technical occupations, which are not only in demand, but are usually well-paid compared to the average salary in Serbia, and the working conditions are far better and safer*

## Education after school

Promotion of the best experiences in the cooperation between businesses and schools is particularly important for creating a critical mass necessary to obtain systematic support for the education reform initiatives and their inclusion in a proper legal framework. Kovačević is of the opinion that the GIZ projects, which introduced the professional orientation programme in primary and secondary schools, are a good example, as well as the new tech-



**Mirjana Kovačević: Employers should be more actively involved in the development of curricula, especially in vocational education and training**

nical profiles in vocational schools, with far greater involvement of businesses in the education of students. "These projects have encouraged the business community to speak out and commit itself more actively to the reform of vocational education and training, in particular, to the introduction of elements of dual education, in accordance with the models used in Germany, Austria and some other European countries".

The result is a cross-sectoral Working Group for the introduction of cooperative technical education, which includes representatives of the ministries of economy, education, labour and employment, as well as the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, the Institute for Improvement of Education and the National Employment Service. The Working Group is tasked with setting the conditions and steps for introducing vocational education and training which will be based on the dual model, including proposals for the reform of the legal framework, identifying occupa-

tions where this model may produce the best results, standardising the manner of cooperation between schools and businesses, proposing tax incentives for greater involvement of companies and a number of other activities, says Kovačević.

On the other hand, German experience can be useful for establishing a higher quality system of informal education and further professional development of company personnel. Research by SCoC shows that a considerable number of businesses in Serbia do not have a methodology for priority-setting in education, and consequently, no personnel management system. When it comes to training and seminars organised by SCoC, in addition to those which are mandatory, businesses are most interested in updates regarding changes in local and EU legislation, as well as quality control training.

Last year, SCoC organised more than 170 different trainings on the most up-to-date topics in the area of business education with renowned speakers who have extensive practical experience, says Kovačević. These trainings were attended by more than 2,000 people. Due to the difficult economic situation and limited company budgets, especially in the SME sector, "we are trying to offer most of the trainings free of charge, or at affordable prices with the option of discounts in line with certain conditions", says Kovačević.

## Young entrepreneurs teaching entrepreneurship

A special target group are young people, for whom the SCoC has recently formed the Youth Entrepreneurship Bureau. Its programmes and activities are carried out in cooperation with educational institutions, youth offices, youth associations, start-up companies and incubators, in order to stimulate growth of self-employment. The programme brings successful young entrepreneurs together through a variety of events and forms of training, where they share their experiences of starting one's own business with the participants. Initiatives for intensifying cooperation among young entrepreneurs in the region are also particularly addressed.

The Serbian Chamber of Commerce is one of the key partners of GIZ in the implementation of the new YEP (Youth Employment Promotion) project, which focuses on improving the conditions for greater employability and for youth employment. "Our contribution, as I see it, is primarily in stimulating and linking all stakeholders on whom youth employment opportunities depend", says Mirjana Kovačević, "and also in proposing solutions for boosting employment that will best meet the needs of the economy. At the same time, considering the large number of different associations in the civil sector which place focus on these issues, in my opinion, the SCoC is the institution which should ensure the synergy and cooperation of all, in order to successfully achieve the set goals."





Serbian Association of Managers support to young professionals

# Independence guide

The most important thing for young people is to be aware of the rapid changes in the business environment and to be ready to change themselves through lifelong learning and development, to learn how to think and make their own conclusions, those in the companies Vip mobile and Atlantic Group say. Both companies are members of the Serbian Association of Managers which hires experienced professionals from the industry to take part in a variety of educational programmes to support young people in finding employment or starting their own business.

**B**ased on the extensive experience we have of selecting candidates applying for jobs in our company, it is evident that the education system is not sufficiently aligned with the needs of the labour market. On the one hand, the market lacks specific educational profiles for which there is no formal training in Serbia, while at the same time, it is saturated with occupations that are not in demand", says Ivana Jocić from the Human Resources Department at Vip mobile. "In the telecommunications field we have not had problems finding suitable professionals so far, although we do occasionally encounter difficulties when we need experts with specific knowledge and experience. This happens for positions that require knowledge of systems specific to the activities conducted by mobile operators, which candidates from other fields do not have".

Through the "Be Vip" programme, and in cooperation with numerous higher education institutions and student organisations, Vip mobile is implementing several models of practical education and training for students that facilitate the development of young professionals and prepare them for future work roles. This experience confirms that the introduction of a larger number of required hours of practical education and training, as well as more frequent



**Ivana Jocić: Curricula in any field should reflect the latest trends in the world**

communication between the education system and the economy, would improve the quality of young personnel, says Ivana Jocić.

She believes that companies would be fully ready to improve co-operation with educational institutions if they were allowed to participate in the planning of the demand for educational profiles, as well as to develop specific profiles exclusively for their industries in individual educational institutions. "Involving companies in the drafting of the curricula, through the introduction of subjects that would help gain some specific or market-deficient knowledge, would significantly raise the competences of young people, and companies would be further encouraged to actively share knowledge with educational institutions".

Ivana Jocić says that if she personally had the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the curricula, she would particularly insist on computer literacy, which is essential in every profession, as well as on knowledge of specific programming languages that are used in the telecommunications field. "Curricula in any field should reflect the latest trends in the world, and this is particularly important in dynamic fields, such as telecommunications", underscores Ivana Jocić.

## The essence of practical education and training is understanding

"The world is changing and it is changing rapidly, and only those who not only keep pace with this development, but also develop faster can become and remain successful" says Elizabeta Mirčevska, Human Resources Manager at Atlantic Group for Serbia and Macedonia, with strong conviction. As a distributor, this multinational company, the Serbian members of which are Grand Prom, Soko Štark, Palanački kiseljak, Foodland and Atlantic Brands, does not wait for local regulations to change or for the economy to recover in order to try and find quality staff, says Mirčevska.

Atlantic Group takes particular care of the personal and career development of its employees through various educational programmes – from management skills to recognising young talents. "We are open to practical education and training programmes, as well as volunteering, and we give young people the chance to demonstrate their abilities and interests, which they can later develop





**Elizabeta Mirčevska: The essence of practical education and training is not to remain trapped in the mass of inapplicable definitions**

and improve within our educational programmes and through the exchange of experiences”, Mirčevska explains.

According to her, the harmonisation of economic and educational objectives is very complex and always an open issue for which there is no definite answer, but there are good examples. “The dual education system, which has a long tradition in Germany and Austria, is a good type of investment in youth. However, it is a very expensive system which needs to be adapted to our conditions, and this cannot be achieved in a couple of years. First, a long-term strategy for economic development needs to be created, and then this educational model has to be integrated with social and cultural values”.

Moreover, Mirčevska adds, the dual education system itself does not guarantee employment growth, but rather it increases the chances of young people to find jobs in an environment where certain educational profiles are needed. “In economic circumstances that are this fluctuating, it is necessary to take into account many different parameters so that the assessment of the appropriate education system is aligned with the actual needs of companies, the opportunities they offer for youth education and, finally, with the interests of the young themselves. Many modern jobs require qualifications that are positioned between high school graduation and university education, due to the accelerated development of technology and automation of production processes”.

In these changes, however, an important constant persists, which, according to Mirčevska, is the foundation of quality education for any industry. “It seems to me that young people primarily need to learn how to think, to come to their own conclusions, to observe processes, and only then is there fertile ground for the development and implementation of any knowledge and skills. The essence of practical education and training is, in effect, not to remain trapped in the mass of inapplicable definitions. Very often, young people are surprised at how some processes are easy to understand when they go through them in practice. The security they acquire this way gives them the opportunity to be more independent and, at the same time, more realistic in assessing their own work, which are steps towards more responsible decision-making”.



**Jelena Bulatović: We are working on connecting young professionals with the best companies**

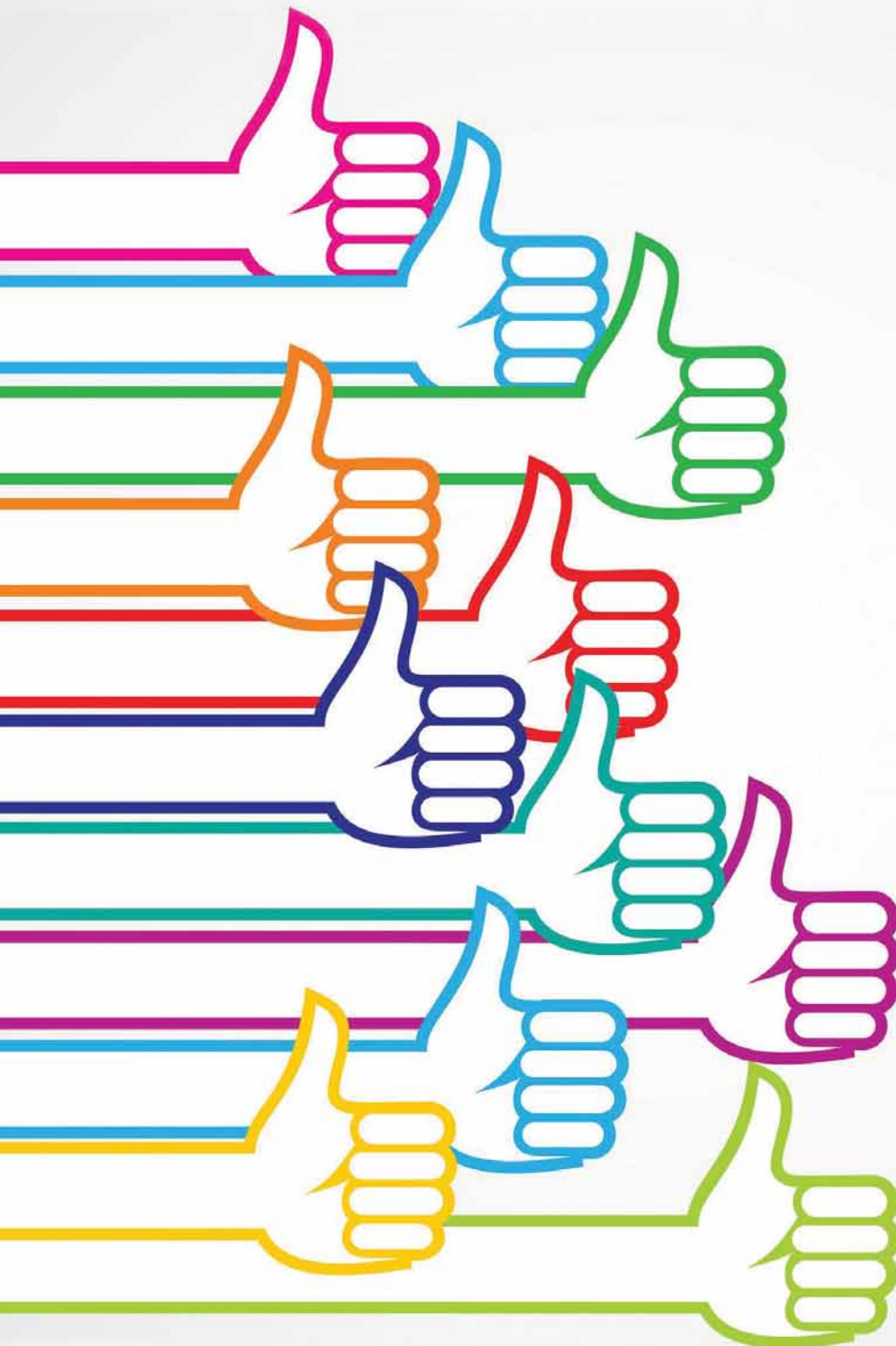
## Support for youth, Serbia's future

In response to the question of what from their business experience would they most like to transfer to the next generation as something particularly useful for their future careers, Ivana Jocić and Elizabeta Mirčevska are in complete agreement: the most important thing for a young person is to be aware of the rapid changes in the business environment and to be ready to change themselves – through lifelong learning and development. Jocić and Mirčevska also point out that supporting young people in this path is a very important segment of social responsibility of the companies in which they work, through individual programmes, but also through involvement in the Serbian Association of Managers (SAM) they are members of.

This business association, with the involvement of its members, experienced managers and experts from the industry, and through a variety of programmes, provides support for young people to gain specific knowledge that will increase their chances of finding employment or to start their own businesses, explains Jelena Bulatović, Executive Manager at SAM. “We are working on connecting the industry with educational institutions, as well as on connecting young staff with the best companies, where they can acquire their necessary first work experience through practical education and training programmes and joint work on projects. We cooperate particularly successfully with the Faculty of Organisational Sciences and the Faculty of Economics, Finance and Administration”.

The association is also involved in the ICT Hub project, initiated by Orion Telekom and DNA Communications. “Through this project we encourage young IT entrepreneurs to start their own businesses, providing them with modern working conditions and full mentoring and technical and infrastructure support to implement their ideas in the market”, says Jelena Bulatović. In addition to this, in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Serbian Association of Managers organised a practical education and training fair for the top 250 students, holders of scholarships of the Fund for Young Talents. The fair, which took place under the slogan “Support for Youth – Serbia's Future”, had more than 30 participant companies, members of the Association. “Our main objective was to provide practical education and training or work for the best students and thus increase their chances of staying in Serbia”, says Jelena Bulatović.

# Youth Employment: Experience in Practice



Schools and companies cooperating in the education and training of three-year technical profiles according to the cooperative model agree that the development of an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age is very important. At the same time, this is also the message of the young people looking for work, as well as their peers who have secured jobs for themselves on their own, even when their professional choices seemed to be an impossible mission. The experiences of young people who ventured into entrepreneurship outside their professions show that retraining to become your own employer requires great desire and courage to create something, but their stories also indicate that this path would have been easier had this started as early as when they were in school.



Cooperative education in practice

# Investing in knowledge is never expensive

Experience so far in the implementation of the three-year technical profiles according to the cooperative model shows that not only schools and companies, but also students are recognizing their benefits. In addition, it has been shown that the model should be applied in other industries, as well, so that young people can better prepare for their future professional life while still in school.

Until recently, studying in three-year crafts profiles had been at the bottom of the wish list of primary school leavers in Kragujevac. "Now, when it has become clear that these occupations are very much in-demand and that they provide fast employment – the situation has changed", says Siniša Kojić, headmaster of the Polytechnic Secondary School in Kragujevac, which has introduced the three-year educational profile locksmith-welder according to the cooperative education model. "In the first generation, we have 20 students enrolled who had the locksmith-welder occupation at the top of their wish lists, and it is noticeable that an increasing number of students with the highest average grade in primary school have been applying. This means that we will be training high-

er quality workers, who are genuinely interested in the job. We also have examples where grammar school students with excellent grades transferred to this course of study, which indicates a change in the attitudes of young people and their parents", Kojić remarks.

This year, the Polytechnic Secondary School in Kragujevac will have 60 students studying in the locksmith-welder profile in the first and second grades, with the support of 10 companies with which the school has contracts on the provision of practical education and training. Some of those companies are this school's traditional partners, such as Zastava, now Fiat. "But we have an increasing number of contracts with new companies, whose long-term plans have led to them assessing that there will be a lack of workers with these occupations and that they are ready to invest in their education", says Kojić.





**Siniša Kojić: We have an increasing number of contracts with new companies that are ready to invest in the training of scarce occupations**

### Encouraging initiatives for new ideas

Companies are required under contract to provide the trainees with scholarships or meal and transport allowances. According to Mr. Kojić, these are relatively small investments, when you consider that practical training enables students to perform specific work even during their studies, and companies can choose the best among them and thus ensure quality staff in the long term. The principal of the Polytechnic Secondary School underscores that when selecting the companies they make sure that they are operating successfully and have contracted work in the longer term. "This is important to us because of the employment prospects for our students later on. Nevertheless, this profile is scarce everywhere, particularly in our region, as we have not had training for locksmiths or welders for the last ten years".

Mr. Kojić stresses that the school had also previously sought to introduce the profiles that are scarce on the market, but failed to do so due to an inadequate enrolment policy and a lack of interest from students in technical occupations. "When GIZ began the modernization of technical profiles through the reform of vo-

cational education and training project - we gained momentum. Companies from Kragujevac became involved in the project from the very beginning, indicating the competences required in creating the locksmith-welder profile, and company mentors and educators showed enormous enthusiasm in preparing and carrying out training according to the new model".

The Polytechnic Secondary School in Kragujevac cooperates with companies from the region in the training for additional scarce mechanical engineering profiles. "Among our partners we have companies such as Unior components, Milanović inženjering, Zastava oružje, Fijat, Alfa tehniks, Sunce Marinković, Gorenje, Magneti Marelli. We follow the developments in the local market and we are planning to introduce more educational profiles in cooperation with companies. In addition to providing the opportunity for our students to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to quickly find employment and learn about the latest production technologies, we think it is extremely important, together with the companies, to develop their entrepreneurial spirit. The goal is not necessarily that they start their own business, since in mechanical engineering professions this requires initial investments in equipment of tens of thousands of euros, but rather that students develop responsibility for work, resourcefulness and initiative for new ideas that can improve business. With such workers we will have more successful companies, and thus ensure the conditions for overall economic and social progress", says Siniša Kojić.

### Responsibility of companies for responsible generations

This school year, 19 students enrolled in the locksmith-welder course of study at Nikola Tesla Secondary Technical School in Sremska Mitrovica, and in their first grade they will have in-school practical work, while in the second and third grades they will receive practical training in the company Vahali Production Services. The company's director, Kristina Anđelković, believes that only through intensive practical education and training of young people while still in school can there be personnel who will be able to engage in work immediately. "That is why we accepted the school's offer without hesitation to provide practical education and training in our shipyard for the students who will attend classes in this educational profile. Given that practical education and training starts in the company from year two, we are still elaborating the details of the cooperation. But what is certain is that investment in such a model with elements of dual education certainly pays off. Our company will be pleased to have a good candidate, trained for work according to its needs, and students who will acquire the knowledge and working standards that will give them an advantage when looking for employment, not only in our country, but in the labour market in general".

The director of Vahali Production Services underscores that education policy-makers ought to include companies in the designing of curricula, in order for them to be better aligned with the changes in the market and the needs of the economy in staff planning. "At Vahali we have particular difficulties in finding shipfitters and marine pipeworkers. The average age in these professions is increas-



**Kristina Anđelković: Practical training in companies is an opportunity for young people to better prepare for their future professional life**





Students of the Polytechnic Secondary School in Kragujevac having practical training

ing unfavourably, because no single school – not only in Sremska Mitrovica, but in the whole of Serbia – trains young people for these occupations any longer. So, starting in autumn, we plan to begin with internal training of junior shipfitter assistants, who are currently working with mechanics”, announces Anđelković.

On the other hand, bearing in mind that the circumstances on the global and local markets are rapidly changing, companies should back the cooperative education model, not only for the sake of current demand for certain professionals, but also because it is an important segment of corporate social responsibility. “Practical training in companies is an opportunity for young people to gain a more realistic picture of the career they want to pursue, of what is expected of them in the workplace and to better prepare for their future professional life”, says Kristina Anđelković.

## Personal skills determine the future worker

Investing in knowledge is never expensive, also believes Radica Eremić, head of the Professional Development Centre in the Novi Sad company Energotehnika-Južna Bačka. This company is co-



**Radica Eremić: By developing students’ entrepreneurial spirit, we are also creating generations responsible for their choices**

operating with Mihajlo Pupin Electrical Engineering Secondary School in training students who have opted for the modernised electrician educational profile. The profile was introduced last year in the national education system with the aim of providing students with broader competences compared to similar, highly specialised occupations, explains Eremić. Last year there were 18, and this year 24 students in this profile, and during the second and third grades these students will be provided with quality practical training by Energotehnika-Južna Bačka, and those who meet the company’s criteria will also get a job.

Eremić believes that, contrary to the needs of the labour market and despite the opportunities for rapid employment, the interest of young people in three-year technical profiles remains lacking. However, after GIZ, schools and companies involved in the cooperative education model got involved in the promotion of these profiles, there were noticeable improvements not only in the number of applicants, but also in the better ranking of these occupations among the students who had high average grades in primary school. At the same time, companies were given the opportunity to have much more influence over the creation of educational content, particularly during practical training in their plants.

“It is much more efficient and cost-effective for companies to engage in long-term planning of educational profiles, because this is a way to rejuvenate the workforce with young staff members who have high quality skills and able to immediately perform the tasks they are set”. At the same time, Eremić adds, it is extremely important that through cooperation between companies and schools a system of values is developed among young people that will enable them to learn throughout their lives. “For a young person it is very important that during their studies they improve their personal skills which will enable them to solve the problems and tasks at work, because it is precisely these skills that will determine the characteristics of the person as a worker, negotiator, team player, motivator and leader. By creating an entrepreneurial spirit in students, we are also creating generations responsible for their choices in their professional and social lives”, says Radica Eremić.



Experiences of students who attended practical training at the company “Robert Bosch d.o.o”

# Secondary school students in a world-class factory

What does it look like when classes move from classroom to a modern, world-class factory? These are the “first-hand” experiences of three secondary school students, two of whom, in their spare time, are chess players and football players, and the third one is on the national junior kickboxing team. What they have in common is the decision to pursue a career as industrial mechanics.

**A**s of last year, students of the Technical School Milenko Verkić Neša in Pećinci can attend the three-year educational profile Industrial Mechanic, which is implemented in cooperation with the company “Robert Bosch d.o.o”. With the support

of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* this company financed the equipping of the school workshop in which first-year students will acquire basic working skills from now on, developing them further through practical training in the company’s factory.

Spomenka Rakić, the school’s headmistress, says that prospective students have shown great interest in the new profile, because it is attractive, and the occupation is scarce. Around thirty first-year students from other mechanical engineering profiles applied for the new profile and only top 10 managed to enrol. Last year, during their second year of schooling, they spent just under seven months in the classroom, and had three months of practical training at Bosch. Next year they will spend two three-month periods in this company.

## Classes on the machine

Among the students who attended practical training in the company are Miloš Đurđević (16), Miloš Tatić (17) and Petar Jovanović (16), who have just completed their second year of education in the Industrial Mechanic profile. Đurđević and Jovanović opted for this profession “because it is respected and it is easy to find a job afterwards” while Tatić was motivated by the fact that at Bosch they work on cutting-edge machines.

“When I chose this profile, my parents were very happy and my friends who failed to enrol were a bit jealous”, Miloš Đurđević says honestly.

His two classmates tell a similar story. They wish to land a job at Bosch, and they will if they perform well in the practical training and on the final exam, after which they should work on repairing and maintaining machines.

They did not find their three months of work at the factory difficult; what’s more, they found it interesting. “At school, they taught us the basics of this job, but only when we entered the factory did we realise what we would really be doing in the future. And none of us have ever regretted enrolling in the Industrial Mechanic profile”, says Petar Jovanović. According to him, they have not only developed work habits in their practical training, but communication and teamwork skills as well. “Every day we would go to the factory, put on our work uniforms, service the machines in groups together with our mentors, and then meet for breakfast and exchange experiences. We worked for six hours.”

Miloš Tatić adds that through practical training in the company they realised how following work discipline, including the requirement to put the tools back in their places after finishing the work, makes work safer and easier. “During our practical training in the company we switched places at different machines, so we learned how to operate almost every one of them – from lathes and milling machines to modern 3D or CNC machines. I found working in the measuring room and incoming shi-

## Student initiative

During the practical training at Bosch, one of the students from Milenko Verkić Neša School, proposed a solution to his mentors, engineers working at this company, on how to further improve the functioning of the production line. The proposal was very quickly taken on board, and the student was awarded, which is, say the students, an extra incentive for everyone to continue thinking in such an entrepreneurial way in the future.



Miloš Đurđević, Miloš Tatić and Petar Jovanović

plants warehouse particularly interesting, and other students were also able to get an idea of what suits them best", says Tatić.

## A fair employer

The company provided the students with meal and transport allowances, and also training allowance. In addition

## Growing interest among young people and companies

Spomenka Rakić says that an increasing number of young people are interested in the Industrial Mechanic profile and emphasises with particular pleasure that thanks to the GIZ campaign for the promotion of gender equality when choosing an occupation, girls are also showing interest. She points out that more and more companies are recognising the benefits of this type of cooperation with educational institutions, so the Pećinci Technical School has been negotiating with several companies about the introduction of new profiles.

to this, the students particularly liked how the employers treated them fairly, like they do with their employees, which gave them extra motivation to work hard towards landing a job at Bosch after completing their education. Miloš Đurđević and Miloš Tatić are planning to sit several supplemental secondary education exams and then enrol in the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering since, as Tatić explains, "at Bosch they told me that, if I wanted, I could work and study at the same time". Petar, however, wants to get a job straight away after finishing school.

Miloš Đurđević is certain that even if he fails to enrol at a university, he still has a future. According to him, he could get a job at Bosch or other factories across the country or abroad, because this profession is scarce everywhere and also because practical training enables students to immediately apply the knowledge they have acquired.

Juggling school and work is not too difficult, say these young people, who, in addition to attending classes in school and practical training at the Bosch factory, have time for many hobbies. Miloš Đurđević and Petar Jovanović practice football and chess, while Miloš Tatić is on the national junior kickboxing team.





Jobs in occupations which are not scarce

# I know I will always find a solution

Choosing an occupation that is currently in demand does not guarantee employment if the young person does not find the occupations actually suits him or her personally. On the other hand, choosing an occupation which employers are not scrambling for does not necessarily mean a failure. A major failing of young people is due to the attitude that someone is required to provide them with a job. This is what four of their peers have experienced who, thanks to a different way of thinking, provide themselves with a living. They succeeded despite the feeling that their life choices were rated as mission impossible.

ANA ANIĆ

**When you accept uncertainty,  
you start thinking differently**



Ana Anić signed up for medicine with the idea of starting to work immediately, because she believes one learns much more in real life situations than from textbooks. Her off-the-beaten-path enthusiasm was not shared by either her faculty or family, so she started volunteering in the oncology department as social support for children with leukaemia. "On the one hand, this kept me close to the faculty, but on the other, it separated me from it, as I had entered the field of psychological support and education. What I informally learned may have been

more decisive for my current job than the knowledge I acquired at university".

Ana replaced her white coat with mentoring students on work placement at Inventiva Centar – in the professional orientation project; she worked on setting up career info centres, and now she is involved in a project carried out by an international humanitarian organisation. "The experience I gained at Inventiva put me in the position to get that opportunity. I learned how to tackle new situations and how to learn continually, and it seems that this is what most young people don't have – understanding that a lot of things work outside the set boundaries. When you learn that, it is easier for you to find a job. Another important thing is learning that it will be difficult to be good at something we don't like and in which we do not feel at home".

Ana did not have major crises, even when she was jobless. "And there were such situations. But when you accept uncertainty, you start thinking differently and you look for different solutions – you don't become a slave to one idea, but you look for other things to do depending on the situation. At that point, I looked for volunteering opportunities, because this is also a way for others to recognise value in you. It is important not to get stuck, to look for solutions at the risk of failure. You learn a lot from failure. Without experiencing it, there is no real self-confidence. I think that the most defeating thing for young people is believing that somebody should give them something and they should get that something without any effort on their part".

On the other hand, those with whom a young person may share their beliefs are a huge support. "When I became part of a circle of people who think alike, who are enthusiastic about continually learning and who know to recognise a young person ready for the same things – I found this micro-world to be a huge encouragement to make those steps you might not have the courage to make on your own". Ana says she does not fear the future, because she believes in her experience so far and she knows that she will always be able to find a solution. "I get energy from what we have managed to do in supporting youth, and I am encouraged by the idea of how much can be done for them to un-





derstand how big their individual potentials are and how much strength they actually have”.

**BRANISLAV ĐORĐEVIĆ**

## I decided to take my career into my own hands



In choosing his profession, Branislav Đorđević immediately faced two paradoxes: Firstly, in a time when everybody is complaining that young people are not interested in anything, he had so many interests that he finished high school without an answer to the question – what next? After talking to the school counsellor, who was in charge of professional orientation, they arrived at the conclusion that his interests could be best combined in psychology. Additionally, in the early 2000s, the future in Serbia looked promising, and so did the prospects of a future psychologist. “They said that psychologists were needed everywhere and many more candidates applied than the faculties could admit”. This is where Branislav came up against the second paradox. “Although the forecasts about the mass employment of psychologists did not prove right, my counsellor’s assessment of this being the right calling for me did”.

Branislav studied psychology in Niš, and his bachelor’s thesis – on the psychology of music and musicians – ensured him the possibility of embarking on an academic career. That was a sure and proven path, but... “Simultaneously, I was also involved in practitioner training and attended various seminars regarding the workshop approach to work, as well as training for group psychotherapy”. Then came the decision to move to Belgrade, due to personal reasons called love, and soon after to choose the path of practitioner and educator in his profession.

By attending various educational trainings and working as a volunteer and trainer, he joined the professional orientation pro-

ject at the Inventiva Centar, where today he works as coordinator of the Centre for Personal Development. He also cooperates with E8 Centre, where he runs trainings for the prevention of violence, and is also involved in psychotherapy through psychodrama, as a therapist in supervision. When all these activities are translated into the language of money, it means that Branislav provides for himself by doing consulting work on projects.

The price of such a choice is financial insecurity, “so you always have to be doing several jobs, because that’s the only way to survive. Nevertheless, from the very beginning I wanted to fight for my career on my own, so with or without support, I had no other choice but to persevere. The perceptions that prevail in our country do not favour this approach, since support is almost always thought to imply someone finding you a job by pulling some strings. To me, this was the biggest motivation to keep trying, despite such a value system”. Branislav is certain that the quality of the programmes which the Inventiva Centar creates will ensure the additional expansion of activities and plans to develop his own psychotherapeutic practice within the Centre. “This is my first love, the career I was born to do and I intend to work in this field for the rest of my life”.

**DRAGANA ZMIJANAC**

## Goodbye journalism, hello entrepreneurship



Dragana Zmijanac recently embarked on the most responsible entrepreneurial venture of all: parenthood. She is currently training to gain skills that each new parent need – how to effectively deal with bottles, diapers, sleepless nights and conflicting medical advice; however, she has a different type of entrepreneurial experience be-



hind, one that is very important for use in the future upbringing of her child. She found a job on her own. Dragana is a partner at the organisation Startit, which deals with the development of technological entrepreneurship in Serbia and supporting youth training and employment in the information technology industry.

At first glance, this job is miles away from journalism which she studied at the Faculty of Political Sciences. Well, not entirely. Although she was involved in journalism for a short period of time, as a volunteer at a TV station while she was in university, she says that the knowledge she gained about how society and the state operate in the era of information and communication, is very useful for her in her current activities – business management and development. She does not regret obtaining a degree in journalism. “When I enrolled in university, I had no idea where and how I would look for a job. I was led by the interests I had at the time, believing that it was just the first of the steps in my career”.

The next one was a bit more difficult to overcome. “I got my first paid job after finishing my advanced undergraduate studies at the Belgrade Open School, by literally ‘digging’ for ways to start working there. I found reasons to go there more often, opportunities to show what I knew and to ask the right questions, and soon I was offered a job. That’s where it all started”.

Let alone the step she is on right now. “The hardest thing to do is to make a business or association viable. For years we worked for what we believed in, without thinking whether one day we would be able to live just from doing that. The organisation only became truly viable after more than five years of volunteer work alongside the full-time jobs we lived from”.

The greatest support and motivation came from mentors, “from people who had just enough more experience than us and were able to see our situation from a different perspective and encourage us”. Was there, even with that, any reconsideration, crises, thinking about giving up? “There was. Sometimes it happened that we would be completely exhausted wondering if any of it had any meaning. However, in such moments, there were the young people whom we did it all for, whose faces and words made it perfectly clear to us just how much our support meant for their independence”.

### MARIJA SREČKOVIĆ

## I did not wait for a job, I made one myself

Marija Srećković began dealing with her business fortunes while she was still in university. Nevertheless, the way she chose what to study, she says, did not indicate a person who, only a few years later, would successfully face reality instead of running away from it. She first eliminated the profitable natural sciences. Then, with a heavy heart, she ruled out art history under the onslaught of horror stories about the fate that awaited her in Serbia with that profession. Neither did psychology make the list, this time because of her teenage promise to herself to study something that was completely different from everything else, at any cost. And it paid off. “When I announced that I would be studying andragogy, nobody around me knew what it was”.



Marija herself knew little more, all the way until her final year of studies, when she realised that she should look at her future profession from a slightly different, wider perspective than some of her colleagues. “Unfortunately, many of them have been unemployed for many years because of the restrictions they set themselves, because their view of what they could do is very narrow and they do not look at other options”. They just wait for a miracle to happen and someone to offer them a job.

“I created my career path and the job I have today on my own because I did not wait”. Marija joined the professional orientation programme during her studies as a volunteer, where she worked as a trainer and mentor, then as a consultant on that project. Afterwards, along with several colleagues, she founded the Inventiva Centar association, where she now works as coordinator of the Career Centre. “When I finished university, I was aware that my strongest weapon was my enthusiasm and desire to learn, because despite my broad education, I had no practical skills for any job. The greatest support I received in my professional development came from my experienced colleagues, who appreciated my willingness to learn and develop”.

Today, Marija finds work for herself by herself, due to her ability to get donors interested in her projects. “I do not have a secure salary, nobody offers me work on a silver platter; I have to fight for it by myself amongst huge competition”. Since this is different from the prevailing opinion on the way one should make a living, many see her as unemployed, despite the fact that she has a huge amount of work. However, it is not at easy when negative responses come one after another, when she falls asleep not knowing what tomorrow will bring, let alone five years. However, she is determined to create the conditions to remain in this line of work because: “What I do fulfils me, it gives me energy and a sense of purpose when I see that I have been able to encourage young people to create their own futures”.



Young people in search of work

## Poor welcome for gaining independence

Bojana and Dušica were born in different cities, opted for different professions and studied different curricula. In search of work, the experience they share is that the welcome they received for gaining independence was much poorer than what it seemed it would be when they started their studies. Both are convinced that young people need long-term support, which would better prepare them during their entire education for the labour market, encourage them to take initiative and give them guidance on how to develop their entrepreneurial venture into a stable job.





### STORY 1

## Modesty used to be a virtue, but has become an obstacle

Bojana, a twenty-six year old girl from Belgrade, says she would happily learn all the languages in the world, because she believes that the greatest wealth comes from meeting as many different cultures and people as possible. "I wanted to have an occupation that would allow me to do that, so I enrolled in the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management at Singidunum University". During her studies, she went through her mandatory practical training by working in a family-run hostel. "Working with people was the most interesting thing of all, and especially the opportunity to meet foreigners and learn about their way of living and thinking".

The practical training, as well as various casual jobs, which she had to do in order to bring in the money she needed for living, working as promoter and hostess in bars and restaurants, strengthened some of her views, and changed others. "In my third year of studies I opted for tourism, but in the meantime I recognised more opportunities for professional development in hotel management. At the same time, I realised that in both activities the most important thing was good communication. Working is an opportunity to try different situations with different people, to see how you should react when something unexpected happens, amongst other things. That's not something you can learn from textbooks".

With an economic degree in hotel management and tourism, Bojana can formally apply for various jobs in both industries. "In three years I applied for around thirty jobs. In hotels, I mostly applied to work at the front desk, in order to start from the beginning and to be able to gain knowledge in practice. In several hotels they called me to an interview, but I did not get any feedback afterwards. As time went on, I also started applying for jobs that are not closely related to my profession, but where I felt that I could fit in, however, without success".

Realising that the world welcomes independence poorly, she began to think about how to draw the world's attention to herself. "Last year I tried to start my own travel agency that would offer foreign tourists various types of amenities in Belgrade - from accommodation, food, recreation and entertainment, to historical tours and cultural events, all in one place. However, in order to be able to properly organise and promote what I was offering online, I would need to begin with three to four thousand euros. I cannot earn that money from casual jobs".

She says that the commercial theory and quantitative methods she studied while at university were not of great help to her in market research, either for starting her own business, or for better collecting information about companies in which she could – even without intermediary agencies – apply for practical training, volunteering or work. Bojana adds that another thing that is also not entirely clear

to her are the employers' criteria which dominate application procedures for young professionals. "How realistic is it for a person under thirty to gain all the knowledge and skills in one's profession and outside of it and also have years of working experience?"

Aware that prolonged unemployment status undermines confidence, she decided to invest in further education, especially in developing her language skills, according to her financial possibilities. She believes that her greatest strengths are good communication, her ability to work in a team and her willingness to learn from mistakes, but it is hard for her to see that modesty is less and less seen as a virtue, in this era of blatant boasting.

She believes that the greatest support for her would be if companies in this industry were open to the various options that would give beginners a chance to make contacts more easily and gain work experience. If she were in a position to implement measures that would facilitate youth employment, she would choose those which would support their development in the long term. "In addition to applicable knowledge in the curricula, professional orientation and

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more practical education and training should be introduced at all levels of education, so young people can become aware of market trends in a timely manner”.

## STORY 2

### What young people need most is encouragement

Dušica is 34 and believes that everyone has their own path in life on which they need to persist. She has a degree in psychology from the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, which she obtained before the Bologna Process. During her studies, she only had practical training in the field of clinical psychology, and also went through mandatory two-week practical training before the graduation exam. She performed this training at the Mechanical Engineering Technical High School. “I was not able to find practical training on my own during my studies, because companies were almost not working, public institutions – with the exception of the Social Welfare Centre – did not take on volunteers at the time, and there

were no non-governmental organisations, or any other type of support of non-formal education”.

In the meantime, believes Dušica, a lot has changed. “Today, students have more opportunities to become acquainted with practical work in both formal and non-formal education. Information on this is more accessible, thanks to specialised websites and social networks”. She volunteered at the Social Welfare Centre in Niš for two years, which was an invaluable experience for her. Then in 2012 she enrolled in training on family psychotherapy at the Belgrade Institute of Mental Health and joined the Professional Orientation in Serbia project, implemented by GIZ. At the moment she works as a volunteer at the Family Support Centre in Niš. “I have a certificate in counselling, but practising therapy requires a license, which requires further, additional education. Nevertheless, it is worth it in the end”.

When she was a university student, she did not have a clear idea of what it was like to work as a psychologist in different places. “During my studies I gained theoretical knowledge, but it was not until I started working that I got to know what real work was all about. It was then that I realised what it was that I had learned and what needed to be supplemented, so I continued with non-formal education”.

In the meantime, Dušica applied for work in public and private schools, as well as government institutions across Serbia. She received several invitations for testing at the National Employment Service, but never got the chance to talk with employers. She even considered changing careers. “Nevertheless, all the experience I have gained so far has strengthened my conviction that psychology is the right occupation for me, that it is what I can do the best”.

Dušica thinks that her greatest advantages are her love of psychology and her studious and responsible approach to work. “Psychology can be applied in different industries, so I am willing to learn new things in areas that are not related to my profession, as well as to inquire about anything I might not understand, to admit my mistakes and learn from them”. Her impression is that employers in foreign companies consider such traits as more important than work experience, and professional and personal growth helped her gain confidence for some new business opportunities. “I thought about the option of starting a private business – marital and premarital counselling, parenting support, and perhaps to also develop in the field of human resources and offer career counselling services to companies”.

The support she needs in this path is for there to be more opportunities for training in her local area – from writing projects and professional development in human resources to acquiring the most important entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. “If I could create measures to support young people, I would particularly insist on training in entrepreneurship, which would make them take initiative and encourage them. Short-term training is not the solution, rather continuous education that would monitor their development – because even when they start working – young people need support until they get on their feet”.



Why it is important to have an entrepreneurial mindset as early as in school

# The creators of their own success

The development of entrepreneurial mindset as early as in school should be one of our country's priorities, believe Dragana Pilipović and Ivana Bojović-Šević, two brave young women who ventured into entrepreneurship outside their professions and "retrained" to become their own employers.

**D**ragana Pilipović is the owner of Tabanica, a brand of uniquely designed, comfortable leather sandals. She did not enter into entrepreneurship out of necessity, rather she did so in order to fulfil her longtime desire – to make sandals in which those who wear them feel as if they are barefoot, while their feet are still well protected. Although she lived abroad for a long time she started this endeavour right here in Serbia.

She spent her childhood in China, where she attended a Russian school. She then moved to Russia and earned a degree in Russian and English. She worked as a translator for five years, then in tourism where she organised individual trips around the world – business, luxury, adventure, thematic and for the purpose of education or medical treatment, among others. This job fulfilled her very much, but she realised that she had had "temporary" residence in Russia for two decades, and that it was time to return to Serbia.

Here she worked for more than three years in a large and well-known company. However, since, in her own words, working in corporations is not for her, she became jobless at the end of 2014. After such a long period with many commitments, she could now finally give more thought to her long-time idea of making sandals; and she was quick to take steps to make it happen.

## Desire is crucial

Entrepreneurship takes courage and a great desire to create something, Dragana underscores. "Of course, you can't go

without proper knowledge about the job that you will engage in, and you also need start-up capital, but what is crucial here is the desire. When you have desire, you can easily overcome any obstacle. What also helped me was the fact that I studied in Russia, where I acquired a habit of constantly developing and working on myself. The main streak in their mentality is striving for success, however not solely for material wealth, but rather for personal development and progress."

So she began learning about the shoemaker business, materials, as well as about how to run a company, a successful marketing campaign, etc. She learned via the Internet, but also at numerous meetings with people from the industry. This is how she met the shoemaker who was able to realize her idea and she began producing sandals of particular shape, in different colours. In the beginning she was faced with a shortage of quality materials, but she managed to find them abroad. And she learned a lesson from this – where there's a will there's a way.

Tabanica premiered on the market in early June at Mikser Festival, and then she was presented to the public at the young designers exhibition at Mikser (Savamala Design Expo). "There was a huge interest, and it gave me the incentive to work even more,



**Dragana Pilipović: Entrepreneurship takes courage and a great desire to create something //**

**Sandals "Tabanica"**





**Ivana Bojović-Šević: I alone am responsible for my business decisions, either good or bad**



because in the beginning I had doubts and thought that this form of shoes was my *idée fixe* that, perhaps, others would not like. I turned out to be wrong", says Dragana. She is currently working on preparing new products under her brand and plans to create a website in order to offer her sandals to foreign markets as well, and to bring in not only a larger, but also a more stable income, especially during the winter season when interest for summer footwear drops in Serbia.

It has been going well for her so far. The aggravating circumstance of starting a business in Serbia are the levies and taxes which are very high for small businesses, says the owner of Tabanica, but she adds that with persistence, vision and good associates, success is possible. "On the other hand, the benefit of my occupation is that there is a great number of good craftsmen and it is possible to organise quality production. It is harder to ensure product placement, because that requires specific marketing knowledge and adequate financial resources, and in Serbia we have little available information about the various national and European self-employment assistance programs. I think, therefore, that we as a society should work on acquiring various entrepreneurial skills from a very early age – in schools", says Dragana Pilipović with certainty.

## A painter in pastry business

Ivana Bojović-Šević is a professional painter and she worked as a professor of drawing and painting and as an fine arts teacher in a school. When she became jobless, she decided to support herself and her family financially by doing what she loves, and she has made a living out of it for four years now. The difference is that instead of on canvas, she now creates her works of art on a plate, in her own manufacturing shop where she makes sweets called Fini.

She started her cake production in a small kitchen in the apartment where she lived, promoting it through Facebook. "When I

embarked on this venture, I knew that it would succeed – the love I have for this job and the hard work always give results in the end."

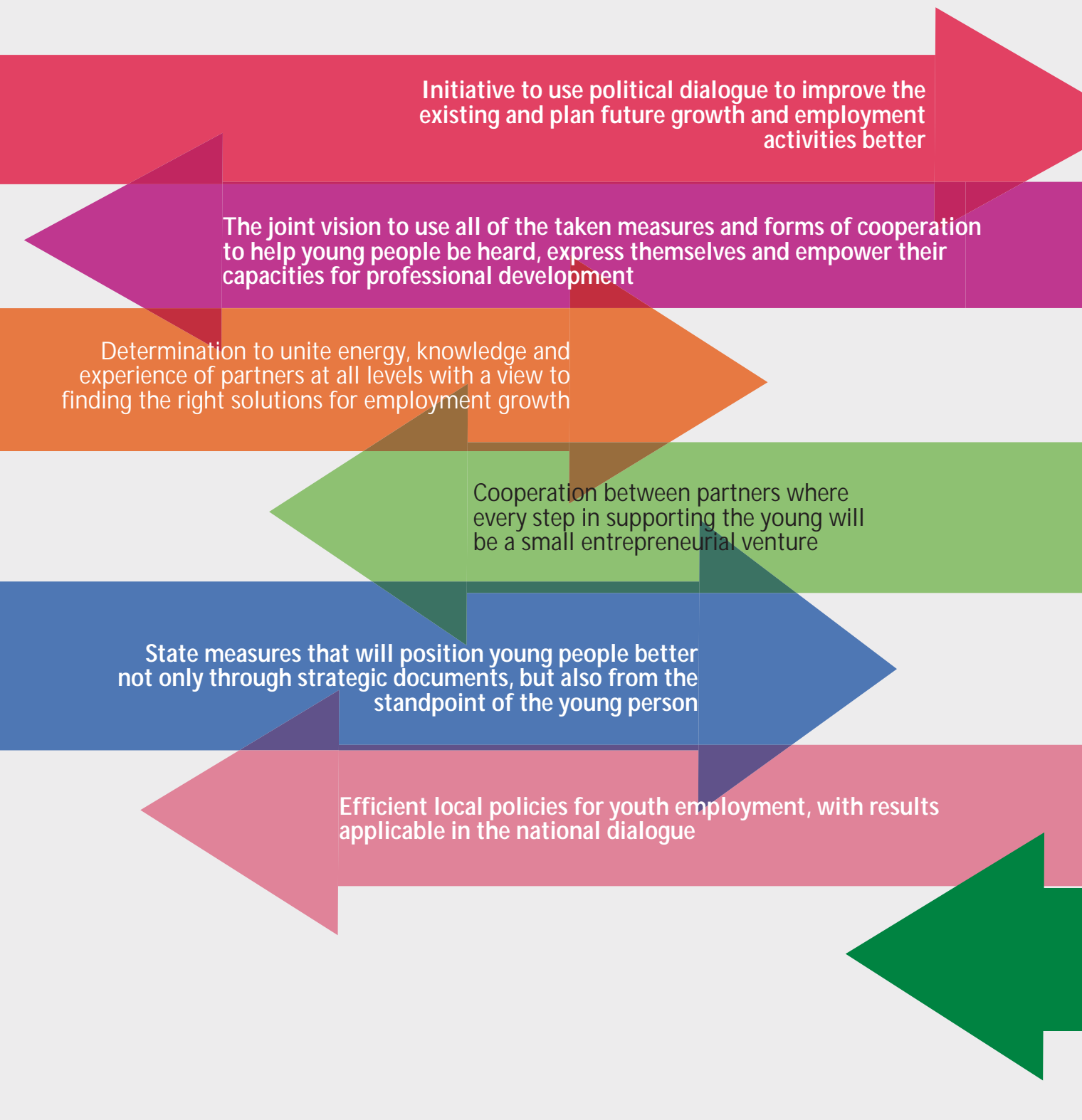
"In the beginning, I didn't have a clear and worked out business plan, but I knew that this had to succeed. A quality product is the best advert – that is what I firmly believe. Marketing is important, but it must not be empty talk. The most important is the quality of your product, and then presentation and packaging", Ivana believes.

The owner of the Fini manufacturing shop has been acquiring knowledge about this job "since forever", learning from her grandmother, mother, neighbours, etc. When you are really interested in something, there are plenty resources – there are books and the Internet, but also trying and experimenting". In an attempt to offer something different, Ivana decided to specialise in particular types of cakes, mastering their production and seeking the highest quality ingredients. Thus, for example, her filling for cream cakes is made from a special type of vanilla with an intense, sweet taste and aroma, which comes from Réunion Island. However, despite this interesting ingredient for cream cakes, the most sought-after cakes remain the multi-coloured French macarons, which are a challenge for many pastry chefs.

And she's not short of customers, be it individual cake lovers or companies that organise celebrations. As the business develops, Ivana continues to invest in the tools, equipment and packaging, but she does not forget that it is important to constantly invest in education to improve quality. A former school teacher, and now an entrepreneur, she believes that the most important thing for young people is that they understand that the time of the degree guaranteeing a job has passed. "An impoverished country certainly does not have a lot to offer, so it is important that through all aspects of education we develop the entrepreneurial mindset". And once you step into entrepreneurial waters, you should not just "do" the job, but work hard with a lot of love and enthusiasm, says Ivana Bojović-Šević.

# GROWTH AND

KEY MESSAGES OF INSTITUTIONS, COMPANIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON WHAT AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET IS WITH REGARD TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT



Initiative to use political dialogue to improve the existing and plan future growth and employment activities better

The joint vision to use all of the taken measures and forms of cooperation to help young people be heard, express themselves and empower their capacities for professional development

Determination to unite energy, knowledge and experience of partners at all levels with a view to finding the right solutions for employment growth

Cooperation between partners where every step in supporting the young will be a small entrepreneurial venture

State measures that will position young people better not only through strategic documents, but also from the standpoint of the young person

Efficient local policies for youth employment, with results applicable in the national dialogue

# EMPLOYMENT



Education that will enable young people to take initiative and assume responsibility for their life and professional choices

Willingness of companies to share responsibility with other partners to prepare better the young for the transition to the world of work

Initiative and courage to propose an idea to improve the business of the company where you are on the practical training

Spotting an opportunity to show what you can do and ask the right questions

Ability to perceive every change as an opportunity for development, innovation and success

Persistence in the stance to build your own career, despite assurances from the majority that it is only possible "by pulling strings"

Great desire to create something, courage to take responsibility for your own decisions





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(Figures as at 31 December 2014)

A large, abstract graphic on the left side of the page consists of several concentric, slightly offset circles in shades of white and light gray, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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