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Examining the Challenges before Public Employment Service in Republic of Kosovo

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Abstract

Key words:
Kosovo, Public
Employment
Service, training,
labor market, job
seekers

The main purpose of this study was to analyze challenges in the activity of the Public Employment Service in Kosovo. Right at the outset, international regulations and standards for Public Employment Service were reviewed along with empirical studies. This helped in the design of the research instruments, an in-depth interview and a semi structured questionnaire. The participants of the study were all Heads of Employment Offices as well as the Heads of Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo. The major findings of this study included Public Employment Service should have a permanent internal training system; it should increase the awareness of staff about employment policies; active labor market programs should be more job-oriented; on-the-job training should be adopted as a policy for employment. There was a consensus about employment policies to support the employment of people with disabilities, rural women and other marginalized groups. It was also shared by the respondents that Public Employment Service must increase the level of coordination with the private sector and the Vocational Training Centers must provide trainings in line with labor market demands.

Introduction

The short- and medium-term impact of COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of workplaces globally and threatened to deepen socio-economic divisions. The unemployment rate in Kosovo was already very high even before COVID-19, which is likely to rise further under the effect of the current economic and health crisis. According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, out of the population of 1,795.66 million in 2020, over two-thirds, or 1,222,104 million Kosovars, are considered to be of working age, of whom approximately 608,885 are men and 613,219 are women (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020). Labor force participation in the labor market in Kosovo has always remained low. The working-age population is however expected to grow rapidly over the next decade as Kosovo is among countries with the youngest population in Europe. Only 38.3% of working-age Kosovars were economically active in 2020, 78% of the labor force consisted of men and 22% of women while 59.5% of the working-age population in 2019 was economically inactive (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019). Non-activity in the labor market had pronounced the gender difference: 44.0% of economically inactive persons were men, while 79.2% were women. The inactivity rate has increased from 59.5% in 2019 to 61.7% in 2020 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020).

The unemployment rate increased from 25.7% in 2019 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019) to 25.9% in 2020 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020). The increase of the unemployment rate is estimated to have come as a result of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the labor market in which a significant number of workers lost their jobs. The employment rate in 2020 was 28.4% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020), compared to the year 2019 employment rate of 30.1%, in which case Kosovo was considered to have

had a 1.7% decrease in employment which could have come as a result of the pandemic and its impact on the labor market (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019). A large gender differences was visible in the labor market during this time. 20.8% of working-age women were active in the labor market in 2020 (21.1% in 2019), compared to 56.0% of men (59.7% in 2019). In 2020, unemployment in women was higher than men (33.2% in women, 23.5% in men). In 2020, 53% of women were employed in the education, trade, and healthcare sectors, while 46.3% of men were employed in the construction, manufacturing, and trade sectors. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 also decreased from 49.4% in 2019 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2019) to 49.1% in 2020 (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020). About 37.4% of young people aged 15-19 were long-term unemployed (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020). Based on the 2020 Labor Force Survey, there was also gender differences among young people in terms of unemployment. Thus, among young men unemployment was 45.2%, while among women unemployment was 57.2%, i.e., with a difference of 12% (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2020). According to Labor Force Survey, about 67% of the registered unemployed were considered long-term unemployed, while the percentage of young people in the NEET category increased from 32.7% in 2019 to 33.6% in 2020 (33.2% among young women and 34.0% in men). The incompatibility of skills with the needs of the labor market remained a main obstacle. On the employer side, about 50% of companies reported that general education did not adequately prepare students for the job - either in terms of up-to-date knowledge or soft skills. A lack of basic business skills was also cited as an obvious obstacle to private sector development.

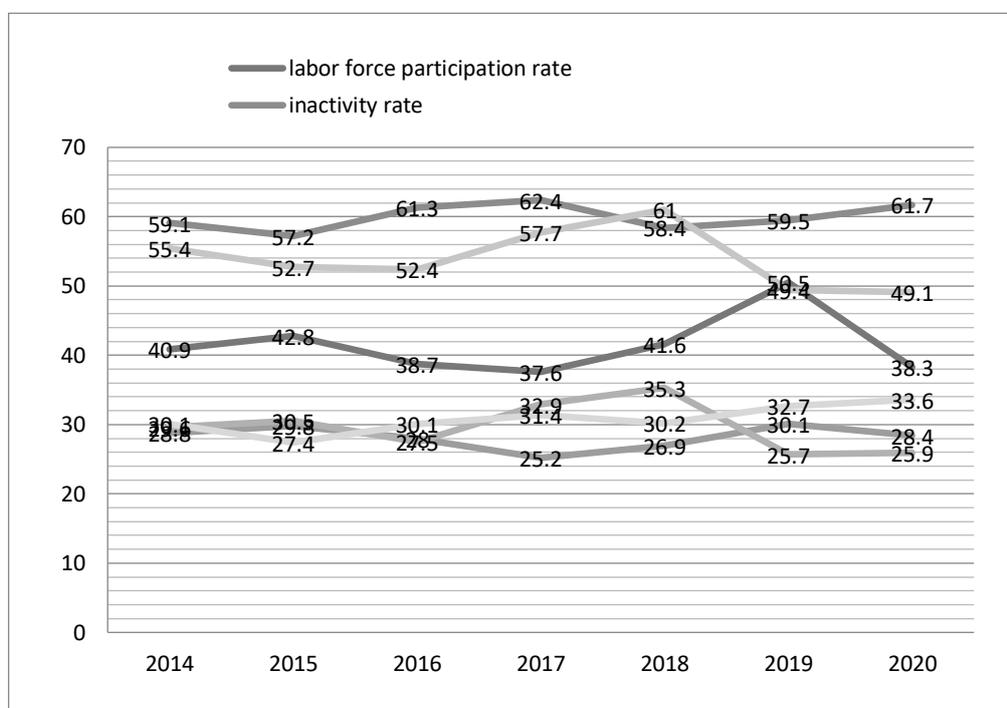


Figure 1: Key labor market indicators
Sources: (Aliu, Y. et.al 2021). Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2020). Labor

Force Surveys for 2020. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2019). Labor Force Surveys for 2019. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2018). Labor Force Surveys for 2018. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2017). Labor Force Surveys for 2017. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2016). Labor Force Surveys for 2016. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2015). Labor Force Surveys for 2015. Pristine: KAS; Kosovo Agency of Statistics. (2014). Labor Force Surveys for 2014. Pristine: KAS.

In the face of these high unemployment statistics, the institution responsible for labor market administration were the Employment Offices that provided employment services and active labor market measures and the Vocational Training Centers that provided vocational training and retraining services for the required profiles from the labor market. Therefore, this study analyzed the challenges of the Public Employment Service in Kosovo, which consisted of the evaluation of the efforts taken by Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo.

Literature Review

Employment Offices have four basic functions (ETF, 2015). The first function is employment mediation which refers to effective job matching, recruitment, and employment. The second function is the administration of labor market information by employment offices, which collect and administer labor market information and share it with public institutions, workers and employers' organizations, training providers, job seekers, and public in general. The third function is the implementation of labor market programs. All active labor market programs aim to address labor market gaps through specific interventions. The fourth function is the administration of unemployment insurance, administered by Employment Offices in states that implement such schemes (Thuy, Hansen, & Price, 2001).

According to the OECD, the Public Employment Service has five main functions (OECD, 2015). First, employment mediation by distributing vacancies in order to harmonize supply and demand in the labor market; second, providing labor market information by collecting data on job vacancies as well as jobseekers and the unemployed; third, implementation of active labor market policies in order to adjust supply and demand; fourth, managing unemployment benefits by providing income support to the unemployed, which included unemployment insurance (from our contributions) and unemployment assistance (from the state budget); finally, managing labor migration by coordinating geographical mobility for people who intend to use their work skills in other work environments. This is a new function of Public Employment Services and still some services hesitate to implement it.

The International Labor Organization (ILO), relying on the ILO Convention on Public Employment Services, stated that “The mandate of the Public

Employment Service is to facilitate compliance between job seekers who are looking for work and employers who are looking for workers” (ILO, 2016). Taking into consideration this mandate, two main clients of the Public Employment Service can be easily identified: employers and job seekers. The most critical concept in this mandate is the concept of ‘facilitation’ which refers to activities that make something possible to happen. In the context of the current mandate, the concept of facilitation i.e., services that makes it easier for job seekers to find work as well as for employers to find workers.

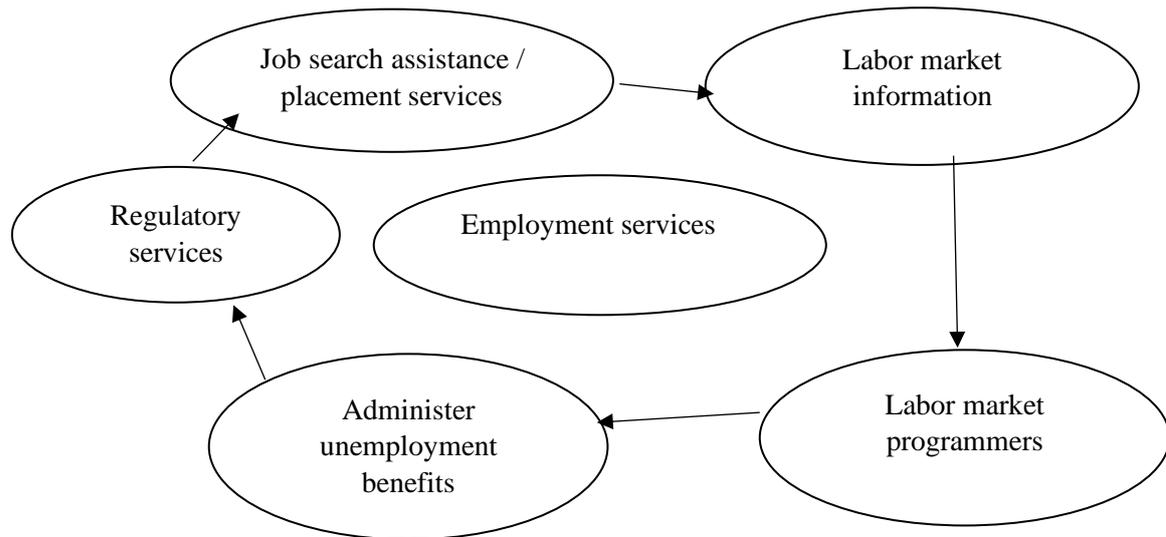


Figure 2: Core functions of Public Employment Services

For the global benefit, ILO approved a specific recommendation for vocational training and retraining for work, which applied to all training designed to qualify or re-qualify any person for initial or subsequent employment or promotion in any branch of economic activity including general, vocational, or technical education that may be required for employment purposes. The ILO convention required the member states to establish and maintain a network of institutions for training facilitation, in accordance with the requirements of the economy and employment opportunities at the national level, or, wherever possible, to adapt to the specifics of regional economies to provide vocational training for the residents of those countries. The network should be designed to facilitate the transfer from one type of training to another and access to successive stages and to different levels of training so that an individual is able to achieve the highest level of training within his or her capacity.

Several studies have emphasized and pursued the goal of achieving full employability of individuals as quickly and efficiently. The Public Employment Service in Germany, for example, entrusted two main tasks to its officials: hiring and supporting jobseekers with basic incomes (Dybala & Kraft, 2020). In addition to reintegration into employment, the task of the Public Employment Service was also to provide adequate financial support for jobseekers and the unemployed, a task which had been

neglected in studies on employment services. Globally, in almost every nation, the Public Employment Service is not the only institution for providing

employment services in the labor market. It is the institution that operates in a competitive environment with private employment agencies. Its standards of operation along with those of private employment agencies at the international level, have been defined by the Convention of the International Labor Organization approved in 1997. The purpose of the Convention was to enable the functioning of all private employment agencies and to ensure the protection of workers using their services within the scope of the Convention (ILO, 1997). Furthermore, the Convention in question actively encouraged cooperation between public and private employment services. According to the Convention, private employment agencies must treat all workers equally without discrimination on grounds of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national exclusion, or social origin.

These agencies, especially in Western countries, have gained tremendous ground by profiling particular clients. For example, in Germany, private employment agencies in 2015 arranged 961,000 temporary jobs. The number of private employment agencies in Germany has tripled in recent years. About 11,000 private employment agencies in Germany provided employment services to enterprises (Grund, Minten, & Toporova, 2017). Some other authors have argued that the flexibility of triangular employment relationships allowed employers to reduce labor and employment and the cost of training, while other researchers saw the work of private employment agencies associated with low wages, minimal labor benefits, and negligible job security or work, little training, and no job prospects (Mitlacher, 2008). However, despite the international legal framework that regulated the market and the functioning of private employment agencies, some studies have found the activity of these agencies insignificant to the resolution of unemployment problems. The International Labor Organization has also conducted research on the role and importance of private employment agencies (International Labor Organization, 2009).

In the last decade, the pressure for Public Employment Service (PES) increased due to the global economic crisis which led to a further increase in unemployment. Several nations were forced to develop measures to deal with the crisis. For example, Spain undertook labor market reforms with the aim to bring flexibility in the labor market, and strengthen the Public Employment Service (Suárez, Cueto, & Mayor, 2014). A few other studies suggested reforms like allowing private employment agencies to supplement PES action and providing individual counselling to jobseekers. The global economic crisis also influenced employers' behavior in planning labor force recruitment policies, as it was the case in the UK (Johnstone, 2019). The success of the PES in hiring jobseekers and the unemployed who advise depended on contacts and cooperation with employers. The case of PES in Switzerland best argued that contacts and cooperation between employees in the Employment Offices and employers influenced

the increase in job opportunities for the unemployed (Behncke, Frölich, & Lechner, 2007). Also, in the last twenty years there had been a great deal of pressure to reform PES in many countries (Dell'Aringa, Della Rocca, & Keller, 2001). This pressure was due to several key factors namely, first, privatization process and keeping the labor costs under control; second, new management practices and effectiveness and efficiency of public services; third, centralization vis-à-vis decentralization; and finally the role of trade unions and their response to increasing the need for flexibility, performance and quality in public services" (Dell'Aringa et al., 2001).

To sum up, this review provided a lot of information about agencies and their efforts towards resolving the issue of unemployment and about market in Kosovo. There are studies that referred to the World Public Employment Service Association, labor market challenges and trends, the impact of Public Employment Service efforts. These studies also identified demographic changes and changes caused due to globalization and technological growth. There were studies that discussed the role of Public Employment Services in encouraging lifelong learning, draw attention to market mismatches, labor states' capacity to changed circumstances and slow productivity growth, and income growth inequalities. It was found that Public Employment Service could be an important tool in improving the opportunities of disadvantaged groups to help reduce income inequality, labor market transition (Peromingo, Baptista, Lima, Rubin, & Froy, 2015).

Research Framework

After the observation review of international standards for Public Employment Service as well as some empirical studies, it was found that key functions of Public Employment Service were job placement, administration of the labor market information system, implementation of active market labor measures, as well as administration of unemployment benefits. These were the key functions of the Public Employment Service in almost all countries. These studies did not take into consideration the fact that many Public Employment Services in new states were facing many challenges in their activity which directly affected the non-provision of many employments' services. The economy of many countries was in transition which resulted in a high level of unemployment, limited professional staff capacity, and non-availability of many services.

In order to fill the research gap that reflected in the review of previous researches, this study aimed to present the challenges of the Public Employment Service in Kosovo from the perspective of the Heads of Employment Offices as well as the Heads of Vocational Training Centers. For this purpose, a few premises and propositions were stated to examine in the current study:

1. The average age of the leading staff of the Employment Offices is relatively very high.

2. Heads of Employment Offices do not have full knowledge of the employment policies implemented by these offices.
3. On-the-job training is the most successful active labor market policy in employing the unemployed and jobseekers.
4. People with disabilities are the marginalized group that should be supported the most through active labor market policies for their employment.
5. Cooperation of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers is not at a satisfactory level with employers and the private sector.
6. Leading staff of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo assume that they are the main providers of employment and vocational training services in the labor market.
7. The training offered by Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo are not in line with the demands of the labor market.

These research premises were based on the empirical findings. These premises acted as guidelines to conduct this study and build its framework as well.

Methodology

Research Design

This study was designed to analyze the challenges of the Public Employment Service in Kosovo. As the first step, this study analyzed the legal framework of the Public Employment Service in Kosovo in order to understand the duties and responsibilities of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers. As the second step, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with all Heads of Employment Services and Heads of Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo as informants. A questionnaire was also designed which contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This tool was utilized with the view to confirm the results of the interview as the questionnaire was filled by the informants who had participated in the interviews. The study was facilitated ideally by all concerned heads and authorities. This showed that a need was long felt to explore the challenges being faced by the Public Employment Service Centers. The Heads of local Employment Office and Vocational Training Centers also showed a great interest in sharing the information that was needed to understand their role in resolving the issues of unemployment.

Legal Framework for Public Employment Service in Kosovo

The Public Employment Services in Kosovo are governed by certain regulations, that restrict its operations within an Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo. The organization and functioning of such Employment Agencies are regulated by the Law on Employment Agency passed by the Republic of Kosovo. According to this law, the Kosovo Employment Agency is only a service provider of public services in the

labor market, which included services like administering the labor market, and implementing employment and vocational training policies. (Assemble Republic of Kosovo, 2015). Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers, too, operate within the jurisdiction of Employment Agency.

Employment Offices provide the following employment services: registration, record keeping, and updating of information for job seekers; career guidance and lifelong learning opportunities based on an assessment of their needs; preparation of Individual Employment plan for vulnerable groups; mediation of persons in employment; implementation of active tasks and measures in the labor market, consisting of: job search assistance; public job; professional training and retraining of the workforce. The Vocational Training Centers offered the following vocational training services: providing vocational training services; candidate evaluation and certification; knowledge of prior learning; monitoring of other training providers conducting training in agreement with the agency; monitoring, evaluation, and certification of candidates. The provision of employment services for employers, job seekers, and the unemployed was regulated by a special law (Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2016). Kosovo also had a regulation on active labor market programs ([Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, 2018](#)).

In Kosovo, in addition to the Public Employment Service, there are also a number of private employment agencies. Over the last decade, private employment agencies have developed steadily, providing various employment services to job seekers and employers. The market of private employment agencies also expanded from 3 units in 2012 to 15 units in 2015 (12 registered private businesses, 1 in the process of registration and 2 NGOs). Similarly, the number of private employment agencies registered and licensed by the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers, according to different categories of services, increased from zero in 2016 to 28 in 2019. The study also investigated and found out that the number of clients (job seekers and employers) who use these services had increased steadily. The agencies also managed to increase the number of their customers by 20 times during last 3-4 years.

Results

This section includes the presentation of data collected from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the Heads of Employment Offices as well as the Heads of Vocational Training Centers. A majority of the Heads of Employment Offices were relatively elderly, 18 of them belonged to the age of 55 to 64 years, out of the rest, 9 Heads were aged 45 to 54 years, 2 Heads were aged between 35 to 44 year and 1 Head in the 22-to-34-year group ([Table 1](#)).

[Figure 2](#) exhibits the knowledge and information level of the Heads of the Employment Offices who were informants in the semi structured interviews and also filed a questionnaire. It was found that 77% of them had full knowledge of the employment policies implemented by the Employment Offices, 20% of them stated that they had partial knowledge

and only 3% stated that they had no knowledge about employment policies.

Table 1: Age Group of Employment Offices Leaders

Number	Age	Results
1	15 - 21	
2	22 - 34	1
3	35 - 44	2
4	45 - 54	9
5	55 - 64	18
6	65 +	
In total		30

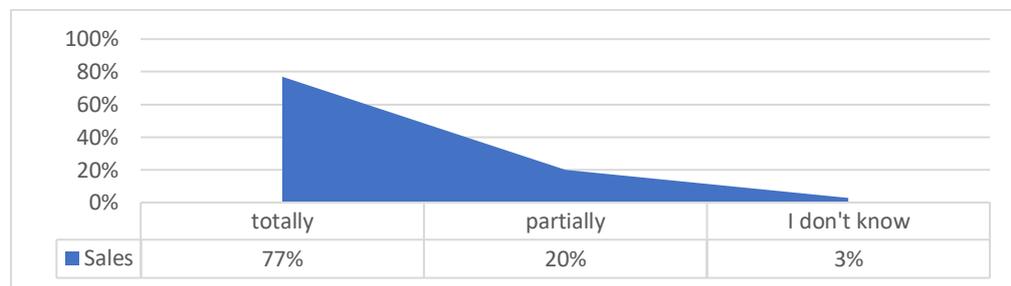


Figure 3: How much do you know about the employment policies implemented by the Employment Offices in Kosovo?

The informants were asked whether they knew which labor market policies implemented by the Employment Offices had been most successful in Kosovo. A total of 28 Heads of Employment Offices considered 'on the job training' as the most successful active policy implemented by the Employment Offices. It was followed by 'Public Works' (26 Heads) and 'Vocational Training' and 'Working practices' (14 Heads each) and 'Wage subsidy' by 6 Heads. [Table 2](#) presents the multiplicity of their awareness.

Table 2: What active labor market policies implemented by the Employment Offices have been most successful in Kosovo?

Alternatives	Answers
Public work	26
Working practices	14
Job training	28
Wage subsidy	6
Entrepreneurship	-
Vocational training	14
Other policies	-

100% of Heads of the Employment Offices leaders think, 'Active labor market policies should be geared towards supporting marginalized groups in the labor market'.

Table 3: Should actively labor market policies be geared towards supporting marginalized groups in the labor market

Opinion about active labor market policies and their supporting role towards marginalized groups	
Alternatives	Answers
Yes	100%
No	0%

In the fifth question, Heads of the Employment Offices were asked, 'Which marginalized groups should be supported through active labor market policies?' In their response, the Heads of the Employment Offices, were permitted to enumerate up to three marginalized groups that should be supported through active labor market policies. [Table 4](#) illustrates that 'People with disabilities' was the marginalized group which was most preferred (22 responses) to be supported through active labor market policies. Next was the group of 'Family Supporting Women' (18 responses followed by 'Social Assistance Beneficiaries (10 responses). Besides these groups, EO Heads also cited groups like 'Unemployed above 50.' Minorities' and 'Long-term unemployed' as other marginalized groups that should also be supported through active market policies. The last two marginalized groups recommended for the support through active labor market policies included 'Rural Unemployed' and 'Extreme Poverty Unemployed.

Table 4: Which marginalized groups should be supported through active labor market policies?

Alternatives	Answers
Persons with disabilities	22
Family Supporting Women (Head of Household)	18
Beneficiaries of social assistance	10
Unemployed people over 50 years of age	9
Minorities	6
Long-term unemployed on record	6
Rural Unemployed	4
The unemployed in extreme poverty	4

On the question of collaboration with the employer, a majority of Heads of the Employment Offices (60%) agreed this collaboration with employers as 'Satisfactory' while 30% founded this collaboration as 'Slightly satisfactory' and a very small 7% found the collaboration with the employers as 'Fully Satisfactory', and 3% voted as 'Not Satisfactory' at all ([Figure 4](#)).

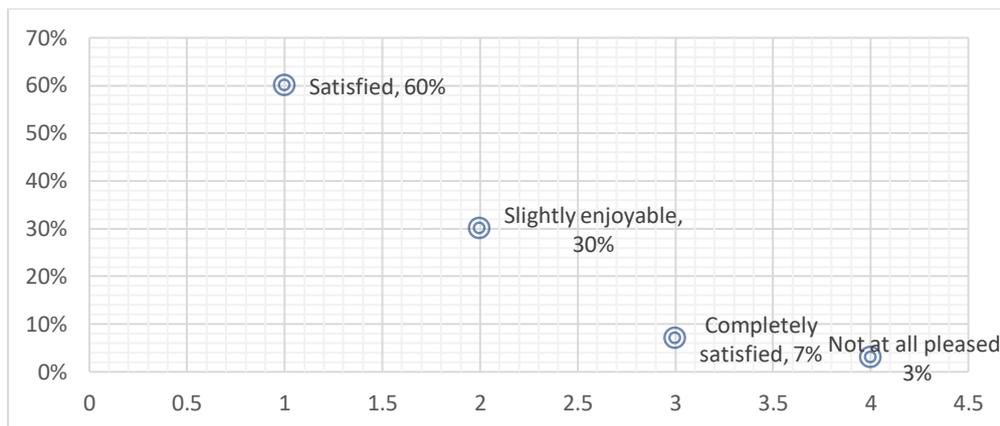


Figure 4: At what level will you categorize collaboration with the employer sector?

On the question of comparing Employment Offices in relation to private employment services, 99% of Heads of the Employment Offices thought that the public Employment Offices had a superiority over the private ones whereas only 1% of them thought that 'private employment services' have more advantages than the public Employment Offices (Table 5).

Table 5: How do you evaluate the role of Employment Offices in relation to private employment services?

Alternatives	Answers
Employment offices have advantages over private employment services	99%
Private employment services take precedence over relationship with the Employment Offices.	1%

On the question whether active labor market policies were implemented every year in line with the number of new jobseekers entering the labor market, 50% of Heads of the Employment Offices stated, 'I don't know' 36% of the Heads opted 'Agree'; 7% said that they did not fully disagree 'Not at all disagree', while only 3% stated 'I do not agree'. And, only 4% opted for the choice 'Completely agree'. (Figure 5)

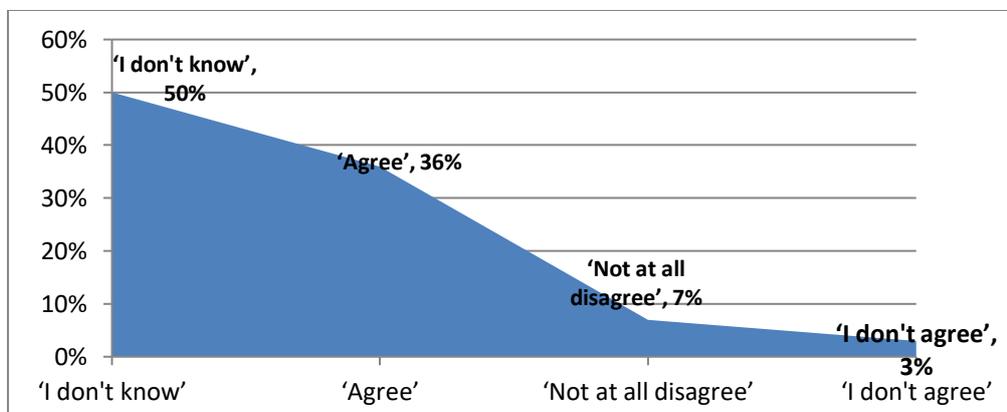


Figure 5: Are active labor market policies implemented every year in line with the number of new jobseekers entering the labor market?

The responses to the ninth and the last question are presented in [Table 7](#). The Heads of the Employment Offices were given an open-ended question, if they had anything else to add. It was not a mandatory question and was answered by only those respondents who felt the need to add anything other than what had been covered in the previous questions. There were 4 respondents who answered this question and mentioned issues like evaluating active labor market policies, devising necessary administrative and logistical tools, making sure that EOs perform their duties and obligations efficiently, and so on.

Table 6: At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had anything else to add.

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had anything else to add?	
Respondent 1	In the implementation of active labor market policies such criteria as gender, age, and waiting time as unemployed should be considered, which have so far not been respected and being discriminatory.
Respondent 2	The active labor market programs implemented so far have assisted and supported the unemployed and those with difficulties in the labor market in gaining work experience, training and training.
Respondent 3	I think that the implementation and expansion of active labor market policies in the field of employment should continue, and I believe that a greater commitment of the staff of the Employment Offices is needed in implementing these policies.
Respondent 4	-----

The VTC Heads were also a part of this research. The Employment Agency managed seven (7) VTCs covering the whole territory of the country. The research with VTC leaders was conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire. The main purpose of this research was to see how VTC Heads viewed vocational training policies, how well the VTC trainings were in line with the needs of the labor market, at what level should there be cooperation with the VTC businesses, which profile was most and least required in the labor market, and the issues considered most essential for VTC support.

To the first question, 'To what extent are the training provided in the VTCs compatible with the needs of the labor market?', different answers were provided by VTC leaders. [Figure 6](#) shows that 28% of the respondents answered 'I don't know'; 43% of the VTC Leaders responded 'Agree' and another 29% responded 'Completely Agree'. Thus, it can generally be concluded that VTC Leaders felt that 'to some extent' the training provided to VTCs was in line with the labor market needs. This finding enabled us to

make the direct assessment of VTC Leaders in terms of matching training with labor market needs.

To the second question, 'What is the level of cooperation with the business community?', [Figure 7](#) presents the findings. It shows that 57% of VTC Leaders stated 'Satisfactory'; 14% of them stated that cooperation was 'Not at all satisfactory', and 29% preferred 'I don't know'.

To the third question, 'Which profile (profession) was most needed in the labor market?' respondents believed that the profiles (professions) in most demand in the labor market were: welding, cooking and construction. The least demanding occupations were waterproofing, air conditioning, heating, waiter, hairdresser, administrative assistant, baker, and pastry chef. ([Table 7](#))

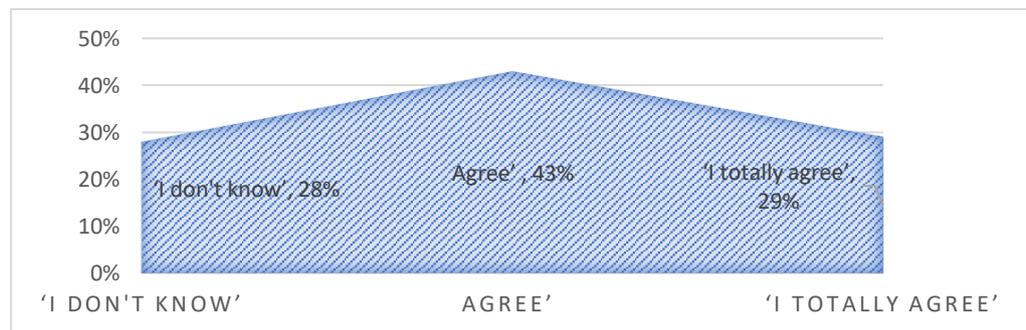


Figure 6: To what extent are the training provided at Vocational Training Centres in line with the needs of the labor market?

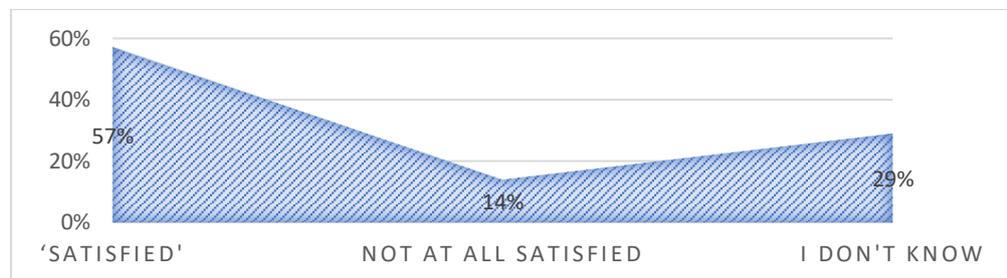


Figure 7: At what level is the collaboration with the business community?

Table 7: Which profile is most needed in the labor market?

Respondents	Which profile is most needed in the labor market?
Respondent 1	All profiles
Respondent 2	Construction, plumbing, air conditioning, heating, welding
Respondent 3	Welding
Respondent 4	Chef, waitress and hairdresser
Respondent 6	Administrative assistant, baker, pastry chef
Respondent 6	Kitchen and construction
Respondent 7	welding

To the fourth question, 'Which profile (profession) was required least in the labor market?', the respondents provided different answers. No

respondents gave the same answer to this question and two of them were unable to name any profile. The profiles (professions) listed as less demanding in the labor market included: entrepreneurship, hydraulic, pneumatic, auto electronics, textiles and woodwork. The reason for such varied answers was that VTCs differed in type of professional training profiles they offered. Consequently, in the absence of the same profiles (professions) offered throughout the country, it was difficult to reach at any consensus over this question (Table 8).

To the fifth question, 'What do you think is most needed for the VTCs', the respondents provided different answers. Looking at the data it was easy to understand that 'Collaboration' with the business community was voted as the most needed activity for VTCs by 6 out of 7 respondents. Besides collaborating with the business community, other activities mentioned were 'cabinet equipment', physical infrastructure, new vocational training modules, and like as much needed elements in providing vocational training to jobseekers and the unemployed.

Table 8: Which profile is least required in the labor market?

Respondents	Which profile is least required in the labor market?
Respondent 1	-----
Respondent 2	Entrepreneurship
Respondent 3	Required to a certain extent
Respondent 4	Hydraulic and pneumatic
Respondent 5	Auto-electrics
Respondent 6	Textile and woodwork
Respondent 7	-----

Table 9: What do you think is needed at Vocational Training Centers?

Respondents	What do you think is needed at Vocational Training Centers?
Respondent 1	Collaboration with the business community
Respondent 2	Physical infrastructure and equipment of cabinets
Respondent 3	Collaboration with the shopping community
Respondent 4	Collaboration with the business community
Respondent 5	Equipping cabinets and collaborating with business community
Respondent 6	Physical infrastructure, new training modules, and equipment of cabinets
Respondent 7	Physical infrastructure, equipping cabinets and collaborating with the business community

Discussion

This study examined the perspectives of Heads of Employment Offices and the Heads of Vocational Training Centers with regard to challenges faced by job seekers and unemployed in Public Employment Services in Kosovo.

The study first examined the legal framework of Employment Offices in Kosovo and found that a few main functions of the Employment Offices are not applicable in the case of Kosovo. For instance, the Employment Offices do not administer the unemployment benefit fund, therefore, such a fund did not exist. The lack of such a fund meant that the unemployed be seen straying in the labor market looking for job or attending vocational training and retraining courses, in order to upgrade their skills.

The average age of the leading staff of the Employment Offices is a relatively old age. From the data presented in the first table it was seen that more than half of the Heads of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers belonged to the age of 55-64 years. among these old staff, a lot of them needed to upskill themselves for new techniques and advanced ideas. A need is therefore felt to develop an internal permanent training system within the Employment Agency in order to increase the capacity of the management staff to implement latest knowledge and reforms in

Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers. For instance, providing employment services through electronic platforms and electronic databases are two of the daily activities of Employment Offices, which require an internal system of permanent training in order to continuously enhance the skills for new products as well as for quality provision of employment services. It was observed that Employment Agencies did not have any established internal training system, therefore the staff in the relatively advanced age found transacting their jobs as a challenge.

The findings also revealed that the Heads of Employment Offices had a partial knowledge of the employment policies implemented by these offices. While a few said that they had full knowledge of the employment policies implemented by these offices, others stated that had partial, little or no knowledge at all. The main reason behind the lack of knowledge about employment policies was that the respondents thought that the position of manager meant a position that carried only managerial responsibilities and very few professional responsibilities. Therefore, according to their arguments, they lacked the professional knowledge but not the managerial or organizational skills. Such data was challenging for several reasons. First, the staff of the Employment Offices was relatively small in number (varied from 3 employees from the local Employment Offices and 10 employees from the Regional Employment Offices). Hence, it could be suggested that since managerial responsibilities take less time, the remaining time of the Leaders of the Employment Offices should be used for professional tasks. The Heads of Employment Offices can also be engaged in increasing cooperation with employers in order to identify new jobs.

On-the-job training was found to be the most successful active labor market policy in employing the unemployed and jobseekers. The data obtained from the Heads of Employment Offices showed that on-the-job training was ranked the most successful active labor market policy compared to all other policies related to the employment of the unemployed and job seekers. On-the-job training meant an active labor

market policy that aimed to provide job seekers and the unemployed with the knowledge, skills, and competencies that were needed to perform specific jobs within the work environment. On-the-job training was provided to enhance the prospects of the registered unemployed for employment by gaining basic knowledge and skills for performing a job while engaging in productive work. The success or failure of active labor market policy was evaluated in terms of the extent to which candidates involved in these policies and found a sustainable job after completing this scheme. It was found that candidates who completed 'Work Training' succeeded in securing the employment.

People with disabilities were found to be the 'marginalized' group that should be supported the most through active labor market policies for their employment. The data showed that all Heads of Employment Offices fully agreed that the marginalized groups should be supported and given priority in employment. Marginalized groups are those social groups that have very limited opportunities than the rest of society. Hence, it was right for the respondents to recommend that marginalized groups should be in the focus of state policies and they must be supported. People with disabilities also fall in the marginalized group, hence they should also be supported for employment through active labor market policies. The respondents also voted for women from remote rural areas, who were caretakers of families, as to be given priority in giving social assistance social assistance in employment.

The coordination of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers with employers in both public and private sectors was not holistically satisfactory. A few Heads of Employment Offices and Heads of Vocational Training Centers stated that the coordination with employers from the private sector was unsatisfactory. These findings indicate that the EO leaders and VTC Heads should not think that they are major labor market institutions that provide employment and vocational training services; therefore, they could ignore the role of private sector. The cooperation from the private sector plays a key role in the process of new employment as there are usually more vacancies than the public sector companies. Hence, it is good for the unemployed and jobseekers to expect jobs from the private sector. However, this situation is really alarming that a significant number of Heads of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers found the current level of coordination with the private sector as not satisfactory.

Another finding is related to the perception of most Heads of Employment Offices and Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo. Almost 99% assumed that they were the main providers of employment and vocational training services in the labor market, thus showing their disregard for the private employment agencies. Such findings were alarming because private employment agencies did play a significant role in the labor market, topped the list of employment mediation, especially among young people. Moreover, the number of private employment agencies operating in the labor market had steadily increased showing their significance.

Last, but not the least, about half of the Leaders of Vocational Training Centers admitted that training offered by Vocational Training Centers in Kosovo were not in line with the demands of the labor market. It was because the training provided by these centers was insufficient and not compatible to the needs of the labor market. A few VTC Heads, on the basis of their experience and interaction with the business community, identified the welding profession as the most demanding occupation in the labor market. Consequently, VTCs should be oriented towards providing training of welding to the unemployed youth. For this purpose, it was also felt to equip their cabinets where such training would be provided. These cabinets should be equipped with tools and equipment needed to provide training. More competent and qualified staff should be recruited who should be capable of providing training to all the unemployed and job seekers.

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