

The role of active labor market policies in increasing youth employment

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Abstract

One of the main problems facing Kosovo today is youth unemployment. The main purpose of this paper is to study the role of active labor market policies in increasing youth employment. Work data has been collected from various sources. For the theoretical part, data are obtained from academic literature related to active labor market policies that apply in all other countries of the world, while for the practical part the data are obtained from performance reports of the Public Employment Service, Surveys of Power Workers, published by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, as well as reports from other institutions that promote active labor market policies for the integration of young people into employment. The conclusion of the paper is that active labor market policies are the best mechanism for channeling and streamlining state intervention in the labor market with clear goals; Kosovo has created a few years of practice in implementing active labor market policies, but this practice should be strengthened to further develop.

Key words: *Kosovo, youth, active policy, labor market, unemployment*

Introduction

Active labor market policies are the key institutional mechanism of how the government can help youth employment or their integration into the labor market. The main hypothesis of this paper is that, *Kosovo needs to increase the annual budget for active labor*

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market policies targeting youth employment, develop a system of monitoring and evaluation of active policy quality, and to model a combined approach between the various active labor market policies.

This hypothesis contains a dependent variable and some independent variables. The dependent variable is: Youth employment. While independent variables are: increase the budget for active labor market measures, develop a system of monitoring and evaluation of active policy quality and a combined approach between the various active labor market policies. In this case, the dependent variables: youth employment, is directly dependent on independent variables, such as: Budget increase for active labor market measures, development of a system of monitoring and evaluation of active policy quality and a combined approach between different active labor market policies.

For the purpose of studying this topic we have conceived the paper in two main parts. In the first part, it includes theoretical and legal framework related to active labor market policies that are implemented in Kosovo. The theoretical and legal framework is elaborated by the logic of critical thinking in order to identify the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of active labor market policies. In the second part, we will present the findings of youth benefit from the active labor market policies that are implemented in Kosovo. These findings will be presented in tabular form and through charts.

Some methodological approaches have been used for this work. First, the data collected from the literature on active labor market policies. This data is used for the part of the theoretical and legal framework. Second, the data collected from reports, studies, analyzes and publications of various governmental and non-governmental institutions regarding the active market policies that are implemented in Kosovo and targeting youth employment. Within this section, we used data taken directly from the Labor

Market Information System that is managed and maintained by the Public Employment Service.

Theoretical and legal framework

Active labor market policies imply state intervention in the labor market in order to create employment opportunities for jobseekers. Active labor market policies defines more consistent policies and which can be distinguished by 'passive' interventions in the form of unemployment benefits⁶¹. Government policies aim to facilitate job search in different ways. One way is through state-run employment agencies or job centers that disseminate information about vacancies⁶². Another way is through public qualification schemes, which are aimed at facilitating the shift of workers from falling industries to growing ones and helping vulnerable groups to escape poverty. Some of the defenders of these policies believe that, they make the economy operate more efficiently by keeping the workforce more fully employed and reduce inseparable inequalities from a constantly changing market economy.

These thoughts have some exceptions. First, in a society where unemployment is not a problem, the state does not have to interfere in the labor market. Second, if necessary, state intervention in the labor market, then this intervention should be focused on creating opportunities for employment of vulnerable groups. Category of persons with disabilities, unskilled jobseekers for job market, jobseekers, especially women in remote rural

⁶¹ Thuy Phan, Ellen Hansen and David Price, *Public Employment Service in the Alternative Labor Market*, Supported by the International Labor Organization, Pristina, 2001. pg. 115.

⁶² N. Gregory Mankiw and Mark P. Taylor, *Economics, Macroeconomy*, UETpress, Tirana, 2012. pg-172.

settlements, young people who have no experience, etc. Are some of the social categories for which the state intervention in the labor market is necessary in order to create opportunities to their employment. Institutions, based on the concept of profiling jobseekers and unemployed give priority jobseekers with higher risk in the labor market⁶³. In countries that face a high degree of unemployment, and particularly with a high level of unqualified jobseekers, state intervention in the labor market in order to create employment opportunities is indispensable.

The active policies we will elaborate are: Public affairs, Practice at work, Training at work, Subsidizing salaries, Entrepreneurship and Professional training.

1. Public affairs

Public affairs are active policy in the labor market.

There are two main goals of realizing public works. First, generating job vacancies for employment of jobseekers at a certain time (seasonal). Secondly, job vacancies to be generated in public spaces (park regulation, school regulation, cemeteries, rivers, etc.). So, by implementing a community project, generate job vacancies, in these vacancies to be hired jobseekers advertised in PA. Public affairs are active labor market policies aimed at creating additional jobs, usually of public benefit or social benefit, in order to provide participants with the opportunity to maintain their job status, improve their skills and increase their employability in general⁶⁴.

⁶³ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo, “*Manuali Operacional për Shërbimet e Punësimit*”, Pristina, november, 2015. pg. 17.

⁶⁴ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, “*Manuali Operacional për realizimin e skemës së praktikës në punë*”, Pristina, march, 2014. pg. 26.

Participants in public affairs are mainly long-term unemployed or people who are otherwise difficult to settle.

If the policy of public affairs is viewed from the logic of critical thinking, as an active labor market policy, then this policy has its own advantages and weaknesses. While generating new jobs on a seasonal basis for the purpose of hiring unskilled jobseekers, strengthening partnerships between local and international institutions, training for the job market unskilled jobseekers, etc.; On the other hand, public affairs have many shortcomings: the new jobs created are temporary (seasonal) non-long-term, are carried out at a very high cost, do not exactly address who should take care of regulated public spaces (those are not maintained), it is very difficult to monitor because they are usually carried away from urban areas, etc.. Only unskilled jobseekers can be included in public affairs and no other categories of jobseekers can be included and this is one of the main shortcomings. Likewise, women participate in a small number in the practice scheme because most of the work carried out under this scheme refers to construction where the interest of women to work is smaller.

2. Practice at work

Besides public affairs, another active labor market is work practice.

The essential idea of work practice is to help jobseekers who have graduated or have a craft, but have difficulty accessing into the labor market. Two are the main goals of the practice at work. First, to create the possibility of realizing the practice for jobseekers who have graduated or are trained in the job market. Secondly, it is intended that jobseekers who benefit from this scheme, after completing their internship, establish regular employment relationships with the employer where they have

realized the practice or with another employer. The term 'practice at work' or PAW means a labor market measure that aims to provide the opportunity to gain valuable work experience for participants seeking to enter a career field⁶⁵. PAW has a successful history where it has been proven that new graduates with PAW engagement have acquired new skills and have found a job. The main objective of the PAW is to increase employability and improve employment prospects for newly graduated persons. PAW is a measure of the labor market in order to give participants the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out a specific job. PNP supports newly graduates to have access to training opportunities and to have contact with employers in order to improve future employment opportunities and get a job⁶⁶.

The good side of the job practice is that it creates employment opportunities for newly graduated jobseekers or those who have just been trained in a job market, creates opportunities for networking and socializing jobseekers etc. But the main shortcoming of the practice at work, at least judging by Kosovo's experience, is the lack of clear addressing about how beneficiaries should be selected within this scheme. So there is no clear selection procedure.

Practice at work completes the gap from school to work. The main obstacle faced by young people after completing their studies is the demand for work experience in public and private sector vacancies. Many young people consider the requirement of work experience as discriminatory. Therefore, work practices and volunteer activities create opportunities for young people to gain knowledge and socialize with the labor market. While, employers are expected to recognize and accept work practices and volunteer

⁶⁵ Government of the Republic of Kosovoës, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, *Operational Manual for Implementation of the Practice Scheme at Work*, Pristina, march, 2014. pg. 49.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

youth activities as work experience to equip young people with another very important aspect of the recruitment process to establish regular employment relationships with employers. The role of employers in practicing work is very important. Employers receive unpaid workforce for a certain period of time. However, employers must appoint an employee of an enterprise or institution, usually the employee who knows the job process best is preferred, to mentor the candidate who is practically involved with the workplace system. The target group of work practice includes jobseekers who have received a qualification and excludes other jobseekers.

3. Training at work

Training at work is an active labor market policy.

The essential idea of on-the-job training is to mediate jobseekers in institutions or companies for a period of three months for the purpose of training and training for the labor market. Unlike work practice, workplace training has two key specifics. First, job training lasts 3 months, unlike work practices that can last up to 6 months. Second, during job training, jobseekers involved in the training scheme are evaluated by VTC trainers based on the training plan, whether they have been trained or not trained or qualified for that job where they are completing the training.

The term 'training at work' or "TAW" means training by an employer who has been offered jobseekers to engage in productive work in a company in which they develop the knowledge or skills essential to performing a specific job with a more standard performance⁶⁷. TAW has a successful history where it has been

⁶⁷ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, "*Manuali Operacional për realizimin e skemës së trajnimit në punë*", Pristina, March, 2014. pg. 7.

proven that unemployed persons with engagement in the TAW have acquired new skills and have found a job. The main objective of the TAW is to increase prospects and abilities of the jobseekers for job. TNP is a labor market measure with the aim of giving the participants the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out a particular job within the workplace and the working environment. TNP supports jobseekers to have access to training opportunities and to contact employers in order to improve future employment opportunities and earn a job.

Otherwise, workplace training is defined as a labor market measure that aims to teach the participants the skills, knowledge and competencies that are required to carry out specific work within the workplace and the working environment⁶⁸. Training at work is offered mainly to low-skilled workers who are long-term unemployed⁶⁹.

Job training is attractive to the business community because it helps them directly by sending jobseekers or workers without the need for compensation from them. It is also attractive to jobseekers as they realize a monthly allowance during their time of accomplishment and are able to acquire knowledge and skills for the labor market. However, training at work has some shortcomings. First, the three-month duration in some cases is not enough for the candidates to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for the job they are performing the training. Thus, a combined approach which is not based on a fixed duration, but which determines the duration depending on where the training is conducted. Secondly, in the case of Kosovo, training at work is never realized with state funds. Third, there is no guarantee that candidates engaged in work-based training will establish regular employment relationships with employers where they carry out

⁶⁸ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, "Rregullorja e Masave Aktive të Tregut të Punës", Pristina, april, 2012..

⁶⁹ Ibid.

training. Fourthly, it is a policy which favors the engagement of young candidates, so those who are integrating into the labor market, and is unfavorable to the other part of society.

In addition to job training, other active labor market measures are subsidies for employment.

4. Employment subsidies

In general, subsidies for employment are targeted labor market measures to promote or provide employment for different groups of participants specified as job market priorities⁷⁰.

The term 'pay subsidy' or PS means 'a labor market measure aimed at creating employment opportunities for jobseekers by subsidizing employers wishing to recruit them in the long term'⁷¹. Participants in the PS scheme are expected to remain in jobs after the end of the subsidy period. This is a unique opportunity to support the gradual growth of Kosovo's enterprises. To benefit from wage subsidies, the employer must sign a 12-month employment contract with the employee, in accordance with applicable labor laws. The employer will benefit with a subsidy of 50% of the employee's salary. The amount of this subsidy cannot be higher than the minimum wage in Kosovo per month. WP support companies in identifying the best registered jobseekers, according to the specific needs of the employer.

In addition to supporting local companies by subsidizing employment, it helps the entire recruitment process for new vacancies. Given the difficulties faced by private companies in finding and engaging the necessary staff to expand their business

⁷⁰ Ibid. pg. 23.

⁷¹ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, "Manuali Operacional për realizimin e skemës së subvencionimit të pagave", Pristina, march, 2014. pg. 85.

activities, wage subsidies will use the expertise of EOs to adapt any vacancy with jobseekers. Appropriate, in accordance with the criteria set by the companies.

Wage subsidy will provide a 50% subsidy to employers for every newly unemployed person, the amount that cannot be higher than the minimum wage in Kosovo per month. In these cases, the workplace training will be implemented based on the specifications provided by the MLSW.

The employment subsidy policy has some shortcomings. First, wage subsidies are not very attractive to the business community. This is because businesses are reluctant to participate in subsidizing wages of candidates engaged within the scheme. Second, wage subsidies favor large businesses and are far less acceptable for small and medium-size businesses. Large businesses offer more employment opportunities for skilled jobseekers, while small and medium businesses operate on the basis of family and social employment. Thirdly, although the duration of the scheme is 12 months, construction businesses operating mainly in seasonal terms (summer season) are almost unable to benefit from the scheme. Fourthly, it does not provide assurance that the candidates, after the completion of the engagement, have no assurance that they will establish regular employment relationships with the employer they are engaged in.

5. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an active labor market policy.

Promoting of self-employment and entrepreneurship are labor market measures that encourage participants to start their own

business or become self-employed⁷². This policy is mainly offered to the unemployed and vulnerable jobseekers. Usually, the help of self-employment or entrepreneurship can take the form of direct and indirect aid.

Entrepreneurship is designed to support the creation of sustainable business operations or companies that are able to succeed in competitive markets. Entrepreneurship is implemented through a competitive process to obtain the highest possible return on investment. The process of selecting applicants aims to ensure fair transparency and support business ideas and business plans that are the best, the most unique and the most profitable, guaranteeing sustainable results.

If we look at the logic of critical thinking, then some issues arise for discussion. First, candidates who benefit from the entrepreneurship scheme are unable to benefit from financial resources depending on their business needs; but receive a fixed support that does not differ much from the type of economic activity. This does not allow them to make long-term planning for business development, but usually these businesses function as much as support is planned. At the end of the support, the majority of the businesses that are created will be extinguished. Secondly, although training and potential trainings are being made with potential beneficiaries of the entrepreneurship grant schemes, these trainings are insufficient to build human capacity to a sufficient level to manage the enterprise. On the other hand, this scheme usually targets jobseekers with limited opportunities in the labor market, including unqualified jobseekers, and this is a factor that affects the success or failure of the enterprise's economic activity because owners haven't the necessary knowledge for management. Thirdly, in most cases, it is

⁷² Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, "Rregullorja e Masave Aktive të Tregut të Punës", Pristina, april, 2012. pg. 28.

impossible to create a favorable environment for enterprises created through the supporting of grant schemes to jobseekers because they operate in a competitive environment in the free market economy.

6. Professional training

Professional training is an active measure of the labor market.

Vocational training is a labor market measure consisting of activities designed to provide participants with the skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes required for employment in the particular profession or in the group of relevant professions, in any economic activity field⁷³. Professional training is mainly provided to improve the employability of registered unemployed and vulnerable jobseekers.

Professional training can be organized on the basis of several criteria:

Current and future needs of the labor market;

Individual Employment Plan agreed and signed by the participant and the EO;

Training courses are organized and offered according to the procedures established by the applicable law;

The duration of the training course should be up to 6 months;

Participants may receive a monthly allowance of up to 75% of the monthly minimum wage set by the Government;

When it is reasonable, persons with disabilities may receive a supplement to the monthly allowance for living up to 50% of their living allowance;

⁷³ Government of the Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, “*Rregullorja e Masave Aktive të Tregut të Punës*”, Pristina, april, 2012. pg. 13.

All living allowance payments and, where appropriate, extensions, will be made by the Ministry via electronic means in the participant's bank accounts;

The participant may only take part in professional training once during the twelve-month uninterrupted period registered as unemployed;

Vocational training is provided by VTC networks of the Ministry or in special circumstances by other public or private providers of public contracted services; and,

The Ministry can give priority to vocational training of long-term unemployed, women and unemployed under 25 or over 50.

Some of the main deficiencies of MLSW's approach to developing a vocational training measure are. First, the training courses offered at the VTC are unchanged courses offered since the time the VTCs were established and do not reflect in relation to the labor market requirements. Second, the equipment used in the VTCs is old. Maintaining and purchasing new equipment is expensive. Usually the devices are used for a certain period of time and then come out of use. New equipment is required. For example, the training course for electricians operates with the equipment that are used 15 years ago, while there are many private operators who have the most modern equipment. Much more convenient for MLSW would be to outsource this service to private providers than to open this course at VTC.

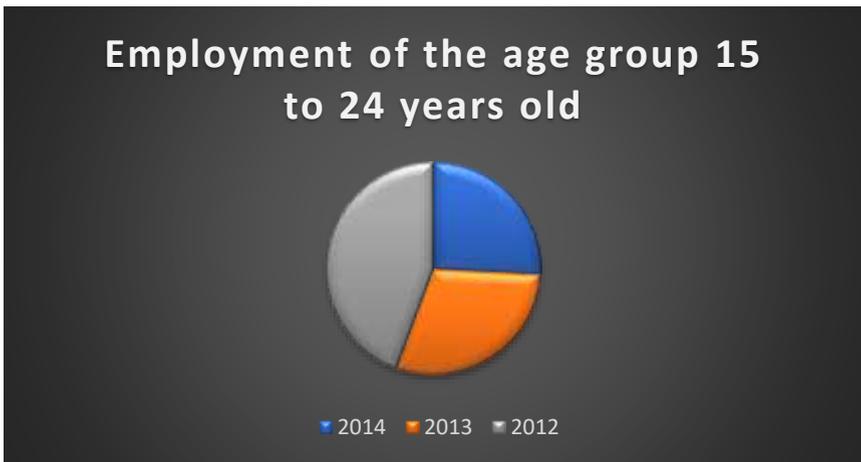
After reviewing active labor market policies, we continue the work with the review of labor market governance.

Practical Findings

Practical findings refer to the number of jobseekers and young unemployed who have benefited from active labor market policies implemented in Kosovo during 2015. The data were obtained from

the database of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. Also part of these findings is the number of young jobseekers who have benefited from active labor market policies implemented in 2016.

Initially, through a general graph we will see the number of jobseekers aged 15 to 24 who have benefited from active labor market policies, but also employment mediations in general from 2012, 2013 and 2014.



Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Annual Performance Report of the Department of Labor and Employment, Pristina, K.G.T. 2012; Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Annual Performance Report of the Department of Labor and Employment, Pristina, K.G.T. 2013; Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Annual Performance Report of the Department of Labor and Employment, Prishtinë, K.G.T. 2014.

The number of jobseekers who have benefited from public works is 503 jobseekers and unemployed. The age group 15 to 24 years is the second age group by the number of people engaged in public affairs. The first age group is the age group 25 to 39 years old.

Figure 1: The number of jobseekers and unemployed people who have benefited from the mass of public works in 2015

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15 - 24	503	26	477
25 - 39	685	36	649
40 - 54	482	21	461
55+	105	1	104
Total	1775	84	1691

Source: Labor Market Information System

Similar to both public affairs and work practices, the age group 15 to 24 years is the second age group by the number of engaged within this active labor market policy. The first age group is the age group 25 to 39 years old.

Figure 2: The number of jobseekers and unemployed who have benefited from the practice measure in work in 2015

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15 - 24	48	26	22
25 - 39	113	53	60
40 - 54	26	10	16
55+	1	0	1
Total	188	89	99

Source: Labor Market Information System

Unlike public works and work practices on the training at work the situation is different because the largest number of beneficiaries are from the age group 15 - 24.

Figure 3: The number of jobseekers and unemployed who have benefited from the training at work in 2015

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15 - 24	127	57	70
25 - 39	96	40	56
40 - 54	25	9	16
55+	2	0	2
Total	250	106	144

Source: Labor Market Information System

The situation is still changing in the active wage subsidies policy since the largest number of beneficiaries of this policy are from the age group 25-39, while the participants from the age group 15 to 24 are the second group of beneficiaries.

Figure 4: Number of jobseekers and unemployed who have benefited from the salary subsidy measure in 2015

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15 - 24	155	68	87
25 - 39	243	104	139
40 - 54	81	49	32
55+	5	1	4
Total	484	222	262

Source: Labor Market Information System

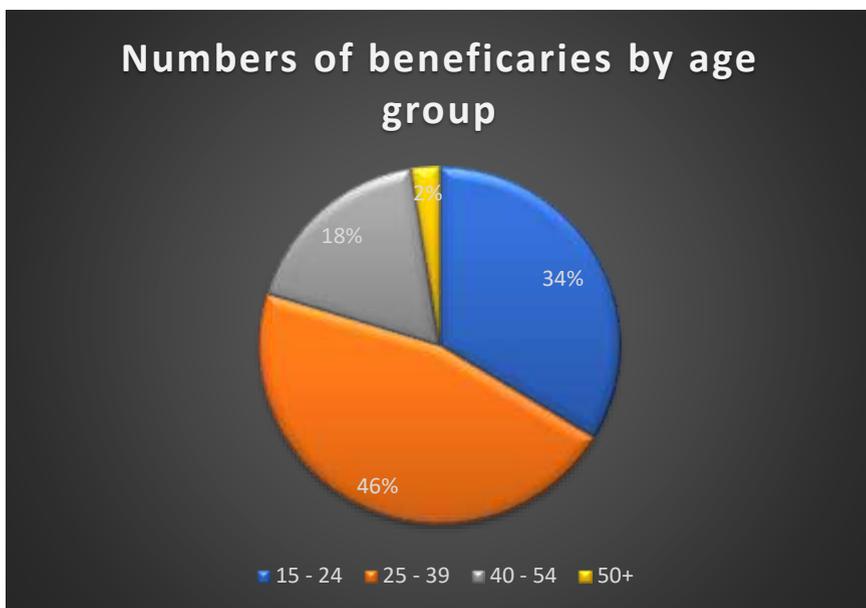
And at the end of self-employment, the large number of beneficiaries belong to the group aged 25-39.

Figure 5: The number of jobseekers and unemployed who have benefited from the entrepreneurship measure in 2015.

Age group	Total	Female	Male
15 - 24	9	4	5
25 - 39	23	11	12
40 - 54	15	5	10
55+	2	0	2
Total	49	20	29

Source: Labor Market Information System

While the number of beneficiaries in the framework of active labor market policies by age group 15 to 24 for 2016 was 34%. While the age group 2 to 39 years old has the largest share of beneficiaries with 46%.



Source: Labor Market Information System

Data Analysis

Judging from the data collected from the theoretical and legal framework as well as the practical findings, we have the following conclusions:

Active labor market policies play an important role in integrating young people into the labor market. Especially in countries like Kosovo is facing a high unemployment rate among young people and also with a high unemployment rate of young people who are not in education, vocational training or looking for a job. Thus, "Among people aged 15 to 24 and in the workforce, 52.7% were unemployed"⁷⁴. Also, "Almost one third (29.8%) of the persons from 15 to 24 year olds in Kosovo were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This figure is 34.1% for young women compared to 25.9% for young men"⁷⁵.

The government needs to allocate more budgetary resources to implement active labor market policies. Because there is a direct link between the budget and the number of beneficiaries from active labor market policies. Consequently, the more budget available for the implementation of active labor market policies, the more beneficiary there may be. The current budget is not enough. Thus, the general budget for the category of subsidies and transfers, including the active policy budget, was € 1, 8 million per year (this budget includes all categories of jobseekers of all ages); although in 2017 there was an increase⁷⁶.

Consequently, this number of young people who are job seekers and unemployed who benefit from active labor market policies within a year is small compared to the number of those

⁷⁴ Kosovo Agency of Statistics, "Anketa e fuqisë punëtore TM3", Pristina. 2016. pg. 10-11.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ministry of Finance, "Korniza afatmesme e shpenzimeve 2016 – 2018", April, Pristina, 2015.

entering the labor market each year. So if every year 20,000,000 unemployed and unempoyed young people enter the labor market each year, and in the best case, they benefit 2,000.00, then it is still a small figure compared to the job offer. However, some of them continue their studies and they may temporarily till they end up studying stay outside of the active labor market.

The high percentage in the category of unemployed young people NEET (see above), therefore young people who are not in employment, also in education or vocational training, imposes the need for investment in vocational training policies in order to increase their qualifications of young people for the labor market. By building human and infrastructure capacities in the vocational training policy, state institutions can increase the probability of youth integration in the labor market by training these young people for profiles that are required by the labor market. Currently, the number of young people attending training courses organized by Vocational Training Centers is small compared to the number of unskilled young people in the labor market. In 2016, by the total number of those who received training in the Vocational Training Centers, only "2461 were from the group - aged 15 to 24 years old"⁷⁷.

Institutions should also promote the promotion of employment services, and in particular the promotion of active labor market measures. Out of the total number of 101, 773 jobseekers and active unemployed registered at Employment Offices, only "16,452 belong to the age group 15 to 24"⁷⁸. This figure is very small compared to "52. 7% "is estimated to be the total unemployment of this age group. Consequently, more active labor market services and policies should be promoted targeting young people aged 15

⁷⁷ Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, "*Raporti vjetor i performancës i Departamentit të Punës dhe Punësimit*", Pristina, K.G.T. 2016. pg. 38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pg. 18.

to 24 in order to increase the number of young people in these services and policies.

Workplace training, self-employment and vocational training are active policies that are best suited to young people and investment needs to be directed towards advancing these policies. By sending unskilled young people to companies and enterprises to qualify for a specific occupation with a coverage of food and travel expenses, by giving business grants, and mentoring and monitoring young people who have attractive business ideas, sending them for professional training in cabinets are some of the ways in which institutions can help to integrate youth into the labor market. If we look at age-group statistics of beneficiaries for 2015 for each active labor market policy, then it is easy to notice that job training, self-employment, and vocational training are the most appropriate active youth policies.

Practice at work is very helpful for graduated young people or those who have a vocational training certificate and helps them to fill the work experience that is one of the special conditions most employers require. One of the main problems faced by young people is work experience; Employers constantly set the job experience criterion. Article 16 of the Labor Law regulates work practice as a process, but there are shortcomings.

Conclusion

Unemployment in Kosovo in general remains one of the main problems facing Kosovo society today. But unemployment among young people is much more pronounced and Kosovo's losses as a society from this long-term unemployment will have a very high cost. We currently have a new population, but access to the resources of this youth and the exploitation of this potential in the function of the country's economic development remains a

challenge. A new population in itself is not just an asset if there are no adequate institutional mechanisms to increase the competitiveness of this youth in the labor market and adequate system in companies and enterprises in function of the country's economic development. Active labor market policies are the best mechanism for channeling and rationalizing state intervention in the labor market with clear goals. Kosovo has created a few years of practice in implementing active labor market policies, but this practice should be strengthened to further develop.

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