NATIONAL VOCATIONAL MATURITY BAROMETER 2021
An Analysis of XII Graders' Post-Graduation Plans
Results of this 2021 report are drawn from the “National Vocational Maturity Barometer” survey conducted with upper secondary schools and implemented by Kosovo Career Development Foundation.
The primary focus of KCDF is to support programs that benefit youth and bring them closer to the private sector. Among other initiatives, our organization conducts the vocational maturity barometer regularly in order to understand their career aspirations, level of confidence, plans, and needs of our youth as they prepare to transition to the job market and/or higher education. Findings from this study intend to inform decision- and policy-making for involved stakeholders, such as youth, parents, teachers, schools, businesses, municipalities, and respective ministries.

KCDF is happy to partner with World Learning in implementing this study and identifying opportunities to support youth education and skills development in compliance with private sector needs. World Learning is helping to build a better future for people around the world through their education and development programs and their support to our country is essential for further empowerment of our workforce and private sector.

Sovran Berisha,
Chief Executive Officer, KCDF

World Learning is pleased to support this important study of youth in Kosovo, their education and training experiences, and their career aspirations. Kosovo’s youth have significant talents to offer to their society and economy, and they are also fortunate to have committed public and private sector leadership to encourage their efforts. Yet more can be done to ensure that young people understand where the opportunities lie as they prepare to take up adult working roles, and the kinds of knowledge and skills they need to build in order to succeed in those vocations and careers. KCDF’s work connecting education agencies, government, and private sector actors together to encourage more comprehensive and effective career guidance is essential to the future of Kosovo. World Learning commends the efforts of those who are collaborating together towards this goal.

Catherine A. Honeyman,
Senior Youth Workforce Specialist, World Learning
Kosovo Career Development Foundation expresses its appreciation for their valuable contribution to all parties involved in the 2021 National Vocational Maturity Barometer, by supporting its implementation, dissemination of information ensuring a high response rate, and to students for completing the questionnaire.

Kosovo Career Development Foundation is also thankful to ICT teachers and school management, Career Clubs, and Career Centers of all public upper secondary schools in Kosovo for their cooperation in implementing the questionnaire. Moreover, the organization is honored with the support of World Learning in implementing the study and drafting this report, highlighting the main findings about youth vocational maturity.
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<td>ASSET Program</td>
<td>After School Support for Teens Program</td>
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<td>CDBE Program</td>
<td>Capacity Development in Basic Education Program</td>
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<td>DOTS Model</td>
<td>A career guidance model abbreviated for Decision, Opportunities, Transition, and Self</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communications Technology</td>
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<td>International Standard Classification of Education</td>
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<td>MEDs</td>
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<td>MESTI</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation</td>
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<td>MFLT</td>
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<td>TLP</td>
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This study attempts to understand the aspirations, level of vocational maturity, and confidence of upper secondary school graduates, as they prepare to transition to the labor market or to pursue higher education. The study was conducted through primary data collection from a sample of 1,874 grade XII students at VET schools and gymnasiums throughout the country. Findings from this study are representative at a national level, because the sample consists of students from every region and includes 98 upper secondary schools. The sample follows a very similar trend to official statistics on the population for this study, with VET school and female students being slightly overrepresented. This is also accounted for while presenting the findings on this study.

The report finds that 74% if the upper secondary school graduates from the sample plan to pursue higher education, while only 33% of them are determined about their education field. 11% of the graduate plan to transition to the labor market, either by searching for a job or starting their own businesses. Significant differences are noticed among VET school students who are a majority sharing such plans, as compared to gymnasium students. Next, 10% of the students plan to migrate and most of them are enrolled in a health-related profile in upper secondary school.

It is noticed that the focus of graduates is higher towards VET school profiles rather than gymnasiums, yet there are no major differences when analyzing their higher education plans. As far as this goes, the most preferred higher education fields are Health, Education, Arts, Informatics, and Economics. Only these five education fields represent 76% of students among the ones who reported to be planning pursuit of higher education.

The study also looks at the internship completion status among the students included in the sample and analyzes whether or not there is correlation between students who have conducted an internship and their knowledge for the job as well as their confidence about landing a job. Students who have attended upper secondary school in education fields such as Hotel and Tourism, Machinery, Textile, and Electrical Engineering show considerably higher internship completion rates. Yet 70% of the students have not had any internship experience during three years of upper secondary school. There is a significant difference between VET students (41%) and gymnasium students (only 12%) completion of internship. The study finds that around 60% of VET school students have a good understanding of their future occupation, while only 10% of gymnasium students share this opinion. This suggests a correlation between students with higher internship rates and their level of information about the world of work.

Gender stereotypes about various education fields show an improvement, yet more needs to be done in overcoming these stereotypes as well as improving the image of VET schools. Female students also show lower levels of confidence and security, when asked about their expectations to find a job in their industry and own municipality / region.

Last but not least, 61% of the students participating in the study report that family is the main source of advice and support regarding career orientation decisions. 42% of students have also used the platform Busulla.COM when identifying their career path. Such findings derive several important recommendations for stakeholders, which are discussed in this study.
Kosovo Career Development Foundation (KCDF)

Kosovo Career Development Foundation – KCDF is a nonprofit organization that promotes career education and guidance, entrepreneurship, and the alignment of the education system with the labor market. KCDF specializes in the field of education and training, entrepreneurship, and research. The organization works closely with stakeholders in the education sector, such as MESTI, MFLT, MCYS, MEDs, public schools, businesses, and business associations. By interacting with each of them, we are able to serve as a facilitating mechanism in coordinating interventions, strategies, and priorities in the field of education and employment.

KCDF is currently involved in implementing numerous projects both with public institutions, international and local organizations, as well as with the private sector. KCDF also administers the official career guidance information system of MESTI, Busulla.COM. This system was established to provide every public school with access to a comprehensive approach for educational and guidance services. Busulla.COM currently counts over 420,000 visiting students, for whom KCDF provides support as well as updated and accurate information.

To help the process of career education and workforce needs, KCDF also works closely with various local and international organizations and programs to empower youth and upskill them for the labor market. Through these joint initiatives of organizations and schools, the aim is to align education offers to the private sector needs.

World Learning

World Learning is a non-profit organization dedicated to sustainable development, international education, and exchange. With over 85 years of experience, we manage 92 active global development and exchange programs in 31 countries. As a trusted international development implementer, World Learning develops deep networks and relationships across civil society, government, and private sectors wherever we work.

World Learning’s engagement in Kosovo began in 2004 with participant training programs for civil society representatives, civil servants, and education system leaders, and has continued through support for higher education to prepare youth for the workforce. Under the USAID Transformational Leadership Program, for example, World Learning worked with the University of Prishtina (UP) to better support youth career guidance and entrepreneurship and engage with the private sector and other organizations in the community. World Learning helped UP create a Career Development Center, which includes an online portal for students and alumni to search a career database designed to connect potential employers with students and alumni. To ensure these changes would be sustainable, we helped establish the Kosovo Higher Education Roundtable (KHERT), which founded VentureUP, the first entrepreneurship incubator at the University of Prishtina. Throughout TLP, World Learning prioritized inclusion and 64% of the scholars supported identified with an underserved community.

Throughout our programming in Kosovo and abroad, we promote private sector leadership and align program activities with principles of Positive Youth Development, strengthening youth’s assets for engaging in their environment and ensuring that public and private sector actors develop an enabling environment to benefit from youth agency and contributions.
Alignment of the education system with the needs and requirements of the labor market is an important determinant towards youth prosperity. Lack of such alignment has become a burden for many youths in Kosovo, with a lot of qualification but inadequate level of competency and skillsets, according to employers’ needs. The National Vocational Maturity Barometer seeks to support schools, policy-making institutions, and the private sector by providing information on the aspirations and needs of Kosovo upper secondary school graduates regarding their career perspectives. More specifically, the study evaluates and reports on graduates’ plans related to further education and employment as well as their perception of schools and other factors contributing on preparing them for the labor market.

Findings from this study aim to inform relevant institutions involved in education and employment, such as the government organizations, schools, businesses, industry representatives, parents, etc. The study also aims to directly support participating students about career guidance by tailoring services to their needs.

This report consists of four main sections. While the introduction gives a broader context of the stakeholders involved, their aims and activities and the barometer study, the following sections dive into the 2021 findings and situation. The section on methods explains the methodology used in conducting this study, sample size and distribution across regions, questionnaire design, surveying procedures, and the analysis of data. Next, the results show by text and illustrations the main findings of the study, pertinent to the areas of research presented at the methodology section. Finally, the discussion and recommendation sections highlight the findings while also interpreting and offering suggestions for practice and further research.
Understanding the overall purpose of this study to identify career aspirations of upper secondary school graduates in Kosovo, including vocational schools and gymnasiums, their level of confidence about their skillset, and their post-graduation plans, a representative study methodology has been thoroughly planned. A questionnaire that explores the most pressing issues of career education has been designed and implemented. The questionnaire is self-reporting, given that results show students’ future plans and their perception of the skills acquired at school, as well as their perception on the role and support obtained by the school.

### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire contains a total of 10 questions, some of them including several statements within, and it adopts the branching technique. The types and order of questions varies depending on answers provided by students (e.g., students that reported to continue higher education obtained a different set of questions, when compared to students who reported transitioning to the labor market). Please refer to Appendix A to view survey questions.

The questionnaire covers the following areas:

- Student demographic information
- Post-graduation career plans
- Student Internship during upper secondary school and access to the labor market
- Support received regarding career education.

Most questions are close-ended, including categorical and Likert-scale types, such as: “What are your plans after graduating from upper secondary school (completing grade XII)?” and “School has helped me to understand the area of education to pursue further.”

### Surveying Procedure and Ethical Issues

The survey was conducted online via Google Forms. A link to the survey was sent out to ICT teachers, Career Clubs, Career Centers, and directly to students who had been involved in previous KCDF projects. The purpose of the study was explained in the questionnaire to inform the participating students and help them understand how the data will be processed. Student participation was completely voluntary and the possibility to terminate completion was provided after every question. Students’ consent for analyzing the data into an aggregated report was also obtained. The questionnaire was designed to take no longer than 10 minutes to answer. Given this method of disseminating the survey, a response rate cannot be estimated, since the survey was sent out in different channels, including email, social media, classroom announcements, etc. However, it is known that the total population (XII graders of the school year 2020 / 2021) is around 21,000 students. With 1,874 respondents, this study includes roughly 9% of the population size for a confidence level of 99% and a margin of error of +/- 3%.

Due to the other purposes related to this survey (e.g., help students directly, conduct a follow-up tracer study, etc.), the questionnaire was not anonymized. However, data analysis is completely anonymous and does not refer to schools or any geographical attributes, rather it is a national level analysis.
Sample Characteristics

Participants of this survey were 1,874 upper secondary student graduates ($n_{male} = 663$ and $n_{female} = 1,211$) of the academic school year 2020 / 2021, enrolled in 98 upper secondary schools across 26 municipalities. Therefore, this sample size and distribution covers the seven regions of Kosovo and about 9% of the total graduate student population. The participants thus were targeted from all types of schools and school profiles, including gymnasiums, economic, medical, music, and technical schools. 37% of the participants of the survey were enrolled in a gymnasium, whereas 63% belonged to VET school profiles. As such, the VET sample covers the variety of VET profiles in Kosovo, presenting answers from students following different schools and tracks and allowing greater understanding of their experiences.

According to the official statistics of MESTI, 47% of grade X to XII students registered in upper secondary school during the school year 2018 / 2019 belonged to gymnasiums, while 53% belonged to VET schools. VET students are therefore somewhat overrepresented in our sample, which allows for a greater understanding of distinct experiences within the wide variety of VET fields of study.

The following figure shows the geographical distribution of the sample size:
The figure below illustrates education fields based on participating students' enrollment in XII grade, shown in percentage terms:

The education fields shown in this graph are derived from ISCED, which is the international standard adopted by our education system, in terms of classification of education programs (UNESCO, 2012). In other words, we do not refer to specific VET or gymnasium profiles, rather we refer to the education fields which usually represent a group of related profiles. We will refer to the same education fields throughout this study.

As the above figure presents, roughly 89% of the surveyed students belong to nine fields of study. After gymnasium students, Health, Informatics, Economics, and Machinery seem to have been dominant fields of education among the sampled upper secondary school graduates of 2020 / 2021 school year.

Analysis of the sample also shows that female students are overrepresented, compared to male students' participation in the national education system. 67% of the gymnasium sample are female students, while only 33% are male students, compared to 58% female within the national gymnasium system. 59% of the VET sample were female, compared to 41% female in the national VET system.
The following chart shows the official statistics of MESTI from school year 2018 / 2019 with regards to the type of school and gender concentration of students, as shown in the graph below. From the same graph we can understand that VET school enrollment is dominated by males while gymnasium enrollment is majority female overall:

**GENDER BALANCE OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KOSOVO (SOURCE: MESTI 2018/2019)**

![Gender Balance Chart]

The overrepresentation within this survey sample of VET students and female students, compared to the national education system, should be considered when interpreting the results that follow.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 28. The analyses conducted mostly involve descriptive and comparative analyses. Chi-square goodness-of-fit and independence test were performed to examine relation and preferences between categories. Significant and highly significant relations and group differences reported throughout the report involve significance level of less than 0.05 and 0.001 \((p \leq 0.05\) and \(p \leq 0.001\)), respectively. Most of the results with decimal points are rounded to whole values.
The results of the survey are presented into the pertinent four sections as follows:

- Field of study in comparison to labor market opportunities
- Post-graduation career plans
- Internship conducted
- Career guidance support and access to the labor market.

Field of Study in Comparison to Labor Market Opportunities

Many efforts for a better support to youth are geared towards a new approach of the education system, which looks closely at the needs of the labor market both for profiles and competences demanded. As a result, a substantial goal of this study is to understand the proportion of students enrolled in profiles that seem to be more demanded in the market as well as the gender aspect to students enrolled in those profiles.

The study shows that the majority of participants who filled out the questionnaire are female, within the two school types. From the total of 700 gymnasium students, 67% are female while only 33% are male students. Meanwhile VET school students show a more gender balanced participation. From the total of 1,161 VET student participants, 57% are male, while 43% are female students.

From the same graph we can understand that the VET school enrollment of students based on gender follows a different trend:

From our sample we have derived the figure presented below, which shows the concentration of students among different VET school profiles as well as the gender composition of the same. The vertical axis reports on the education field and the percentage of student enrollment, while each corresponding bar of the education field contains the gender comparisons. Education fields with less than 5% of participants are collapsed into “Other.” In a descending order, “Other” includes Law, Music, Social Sciences, Hotel and Tourism, Textile, Natural Sciences, Agriculture, and Physical Education.

Figure 4. Sample student enrollment in VET school and gymnasium by gender
Although there is limited official statistics regarding labor market needs and demands for certain profiles within these fields of education, it is widely known that Health and Informatics related job profiles are the most demanded in the market. Specifically, Informatics related profiles have become a great potential for youth and private businesses, including but not limited to programming, software design, computer engineering, etc. As the report reveals, a significant number of 2020/2021 upper secondary school graduates have chosen to pursue a career in this field. Furthermore, Arts is another important field of education demanded in the market. Within this field, the most demanded profiles in the private sector include graphic design, motion graphic design, 3D artist, fashion design, etc. The extent to which the curricular framework for such profiles is compatible to business needs is another important topic for discussion, given that feedback from businesses regarding workforce competency is highly unsatisfactory.

A study conducted by ALLED II finds out that employment rate is the highest among profiles related to services, engineering, teacher training and education services, and administration and clerical to list a few areas of education broadly categorized. The same study also identifies sectors which are most common in declaring vacancies that are difficult to fill due to skills gaps. Professions most challenging in this regard appear to be engineering, database and network professionals, software and application developers, telecommunication and broadcasting, agricultural technicians, manufacturing supervisors, etc. For most of these professions, 100% of businesses declare difficulties in filling the positions due to skills gaps among professionals (2019).

Rather than continuing to register students in fields of education, which the labor market is already saturated with, it is very strategic to provide more support to youth about the aforementioned fields and profiles. We can see that there are many education fields registering large numbers of students, while the demand in the market is very limited. For example, Economics has a large number of students enrolled. This field consists of job profiles such as accounting, banking, finance, sales and marketing, shipping and logistics, etc. The Kosovan economy already has a surplus of people with such backgrounds. Therefore, fewer jobs will be available for students graduating in these profiles, and thus, lower chances of landing a job in own field.
Post-Graduation Career Plans

Firstly, students were asked to select one of the given options of what their post-graduation plans were, at the time surveyed. The majority of students (74%) responded that they plan to pursue higher education, while only 11% of the respondents – the vast majority being VET school students – state that they plan to start a career either by seeking employment or starting a business on their own.

10% of students responded that they want to migrate from Kosovo, while 5% have chosen “Other” as an option amongst the given categories. However, no explanation regarding a specific plan has been provided.

Results show highly significant differences on gymnasium and VET school students future plans, albeit they both show a similar trend. In general, VET students appear slightly more likely to plan on searching for a job or starting their own business after graduation, rather than pursuing higher education. The graph below illustrates the frequency of each option, calculated based on the total of each school type.

In terms of gender, the results show significant differences wherein a greater number of female students (84%) plan on continuing their studies than male ones (56%) whose more frequent answers are migrating (16%) and searching for a job (14%).

Students who plan to pursue higher education have also reported their level of determination about chosen fields of education. Roughly 65% of the participants are highly certain about their higher education field. On the other end, 33% of the students are certain only to a moderate degree, while 2% have reported a low determination. These results show significant differences in terms of school types. 39% of VET school students are highly certain of their education field as compared to 27% for gymnasium students.
Students pursuing higher education have also stated the education field they plan to enroll in. Their preferences vary across 14 out of the total 19 education fields. Health is the predominant education field chosen by the largest number of participants (30%). The following top education fields include Education (11%), ICT (10%), Arts (10%), and Economics (6%). At the other end, the least chosen education fields are Journalism, media, and communication (2%) and Agriculture and veterinary (1%).

As we reflect on the students declared career paths in comparison to the labor market demands, it is evident that they are focused on education fields with job profiles likely to generate more jobs and better career opportunities. Health, ICT, and Arts are specifically promising career paths for youth in Kosovo. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, whether or not they obtain the skills, knowledge, and competences demanded by future employers, is another topic to be addressed by education and policy-making institutions. Yet it is very encouraging to observe the increasing importance of VET education among youth, which was a reverse trend in the past.

VET school and gymnasium students in general follow similar trends when declaring their future fields of study, yet there are significant differences across the two groups. Comparatively, as expected, gymnasiums students are more oriented towards Education, Social Sciences, and Linguistics compared to VET school students who are more leaned towards Arts and Design, Informatics, and Engineering fields of study. The following diagram shows the chosen education fields by participants from both types of schools.

**PLEASE INDICATE THE ARE OF STUDY YOU HAVE CHOSEN**

![Diagram showing education field choices](image)

Highly significant differences are found in terms of gender. The group percentages are presented below, based on the totals for each gender.
The correlation between the current and chosen future field of study has also been analysed. In general, there seems to be a variance in the planned education field for students when compared to their current education field. While some have an underlying logic, others seem to be making a shift because of the rising interest for a different field or due to inadequate upper secondary school profile choice (reasons may be many, such as uninformed decision, lack of support by school, etc.).

Gymnasium students, however, plan to study a number of education field for which VET schools have a more specialized programme, such as Economics, Law and Construction and Architecture. These relations between upper secondary school and higher education are illustrated below.

Figure 9 presents the education fields gymnasium students plan on pursuing. Each line represents dodged points, wherein each point represents one student answer. The length of the lines is based on the frequency of answers by students. In other words, the longer the line, the higher is the percentage of students having declared the same field of study, therefore, a greater match between current enrollment and future plans of students.
As the figure depicts, the highest consistency can be noticed for upper secondary school graduates who are pursuing studies in the Health, Education, ICT, and Arts, while there is less consistency in education fields such as Law, Agriculture and Veterinary, Engineering, etc. There seems to be a clear correlation of consistency for education fields that consist of job profiles demanded in the labor market.

Similar to the previous graph, the following figure shows the relationship between the aspirational HE education field (the vertical axis) and the current VET study field of students (horizontal axis). Each point represents one student answer wherein more frequent answers show off as bolder and lines. For example, students who are studying health during their upper secondary school show the most consistency, planning to continue the same education field at the university. Yet a number of them have declared plans to study degrees that are not related to health studies, such as Law and Economics, for which there are also upper secondary school profiles available. Students studying Arts show a similar trend. Nevertheless, in general, there seems no outstanding preferences or consistency between education fields at the upper secondary and higher education level, indicating that a significant percentage of students have changed their career preferences away from their secondary school specialty towards a different field of study for higher education. This suggests inefficiencies in Kosovo’s education system that likely need to be addressed through earlier age career guidance, among other strategies.
Students have also reported about the universities where they plan to pursue their studies. While the majority of the students plan to study in Kosovo, there are a few cases that involve neighboring countries such as Albania or North Macedonia. Around 51% of the students plan to enroll in public universities, while the remaining 49% will turn to private colleges for higher education. No major preferences can be noticed about specific education fields on public or private universities. There are a few cases though where students have declared both a public and a private university as their choice of study. Given the assumption that private universities are often a fallback if unable to register at a public university, such cases were assigned to the public university group.
The graph below shows the universities and colleges most students are interested in. Universities and colleges with less than 5% of the students have been grouped into “Other” category. These mostly involve public universities across regions of the country, such as the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti”, the University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani”, the University of Peja “Haxhi Zeka”, and the private college Heimerer.

As can be seen from the graph above, the University Prishtina is considerably the most frequently chosen higher education institution among youth. The intersection between top education field preferences – and the majority of other education fields - and top universities follows a similar trend. University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” is preferred for Health and Welfare (42%), Education (35%), Economics (37%) among students who have declared this institution. While students interested in Arts and Design share a similar interest for AAB College and the University of Prishtina. In addition, most of the students interested in studying ICT plan to attend UBT College (33%) and the University of Prishtina (28%). It is worth mentioning that 11% of students planning to study ICT have indicated uncertainty about the higher education institution to attend.

University of Prishtina as a higher education possibility predominates within the group of students interested to study Engineering (70%). Students interested in studying for Security Services seem to be less informed about their studying opportunities. Only 10% of these students have written the Security Service Academy, while the others have either declared that they do not know, or they have listed education institutions that do not offer this education field.

Student Internship Experiences

Another important component of this study was to understand how common it is for students to engage in internship opportunities during upper secondary school. They were asked about their internship during the upper secondary school, including the number of hours and quality of an internship experience in terms of their professional development. An internship is a position a student holds within an organization or business in order to gain work experience and to learn by performing job tasks and duties, in order to reinforce classroom learning.
Results show that 30% of students reported having completed an internship, from the total of 1,812 students who responded to this question. Highly significant differences are shown between students identified as belonging to a VET school and gymnasium. The following graph shows the percentages of students having completed an internship or not, shown by the total of each school type.

41% of the VET school students sampled have completed an internship. This percentage is significantly lower for gymnasium students, only 11% of whom have completed an internship during their studies. While the rate of internships in the gymnasiums is very low, it is also notable that VET programs are not offering their students internship opportunities despite this being an expected part of practical work-oriented learning. The following graph shows VET school students’ answers regarding internship involvement for each upper secondary education field. Almost all of the students enrolled in the Hotel and Tourism field report having completed an internship, being the profile with the highest number of students having completed an internship.
Students have reported their cumulative number of internship hours during the three years of upper secondary school, by choosing between four ranges of hours. Significantly more students report a higher number of hours during grade XII. For grade XII, 22% of students report 1 to 20 hours of internship and 24% of them report 21 to 60 hours. The largest group which consists of 33% of students report 61 to 100 hours of internship, while 21% of the students report above 100 hours.

Students have also reported whether the internship has helped them to have a better understanding of and preparation for their prospective job. Likewise, 62% of students strongly agree, 18% agree, while 14% feel neutral when asked about the impact of an internship. No significant differences are found between VET school and gymnasium students about this statement and students of both type of schools show a similar trend in answers. The following graph shows the respondents' results.

Intership and professional practices have helped me to better understand and learn my future job.

Figure 13. VET school students’ internship completion by education field

Figure 14. Participants’ perception of the internship conducted
Participants were asked about their perceptions on the opportunities for employment within their own municipalities in respective profiles. 60% of them reported of finding it difficult to land a job of their interest in their hometown, 24% responded as neutral, while only 26% of participants agree and strongly agree that it is easy to find a job in their preferred industry in their hometown.

Figure 16 shows students’ perception based on the “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” scale provided in the questionnaire. However, it is important to note that these results show no statistical significance levels on students’ post-graduation plans.

Access to the Labor Market

Participants were asked about their perceptions on the opportunities for employment within their own municipalities. 60% of them reported finding it difficult to land a job of their interest in their hometown, 24% responded as neutral, while only 26% of participants agree and strongly agree that it is easy to find a job in their preferred industry in their hometown.

Figure 16 shows students’ perception based on the “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” scale provided in the questionnaire. However, it is important to note that these results show no statistical significance levels on students’ post-graduation plans.

What are your plans after graduating from upper secondary school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>VET (%)</th>
<th>Gymnasium (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will take time off (n=8)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will start my own business (n=47)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will search a job (n=148)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will migrate (n=182)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will pursue higher education (n=1361)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is easy to find a job in my preferred industry within my hometown/municipality.

- **Strongly Agree**
- **Agree**
- **Neutral**
- **Disagree**
- **Strongly disagree**

Figure 15. Participants’ perception of internship conducted by school type

Figure 16. Participants’ confidence on finding a job
The results highly reveal significance levels of this perception depending on gender, geographical region, type of school and whether a student has conducted an internship. Female students, gymnasium students and students who have not had an internship expect it to be harder to find a job in their own municipality. The graph also shows that youth who planning to migrate are the most in number to think that it is not easy to find a job in their preferred industry within their hometown. Likewise, we can see that this number declines as we get to youth who declared to be planning to start their own business, to search for a job, and / or to take some time off. Some could argue that it is the low level of confidence among youth to develop a career in the country, that pushes them to migrate for better opportunities.

The following graphs indicates the differences between female and male youth when asked the same question.

Female upper secondary school graduates seem to be less confident about finding a job in their own industry within their hometown / municipality, when compared to male students. An explanation to this could be the social context of the society in Kosovo, wherein historically the work environment was more dominated by men who have been expected to get to the labor market and be the main provider for the family, while women less so. Gender stereotypes are especially prevalent for STEM profiles and related occupations.
When comparing the level of confidence among students from different regions regarding finding a job, the study finds that youth from the region of Mitrovica, Gjilan, and Ferizaj feel less optimistic. While youth from Peja and Prizren feel more optimistic about the opportunity of landing a job in their preferred industry. Various regions of the country are characterized with various economic activities, which can be a contributing factor for youth to feel pessimistic about finding jobs in their own region, if their preferred industry does not match the dominant industry of the region. Furthermore, this may be an indicator that VET school profiles are not well-aligned to the dominant economic activities of respective regions. Last but not least, such a high rate of disagreement among youth can also signal lack of information about opportunities in the labor market.

The graph below shows participants answers based on their school profile. While gymnasium students show higher levels of disagreement with the statement, VET school students dominate at the other end, showing higher levels of finding the statement to be true.
There is consistently higher level of confidence about finding a job in their industry within own hometown by VET school students, compared to gymnasium students. This may be an indicator about the improved image and reduced stereotypes about VET education fields, which this report discusses further in the discussion section.

Besides studying a VET education field, the following graph illustrates the underpinning findings that completing an internship is also a significant factor to students perceiving there are more job opportunities.
In other words, there is a strong correlation between students who have conducted an internship and their high level of confidence in finding a job, compared to students who have not completed an internship.

Figure below shows the change in attitude of youth regarding the opportunity for employment, depending on their current education field. Those who studied in the fields of hotel and tourism, architecture and construction, textile, machinery, and electrical engineering are most confident about finding a job in their preferred industry within their hometowns. In contrast, those who studied physical education, food technology, natural sciences, health, music, and in gymnasiums are the least confident about their ability to find a job in their preferred industry in their hometowns.

If we look at the plans of students within the strongly agree (n=282) or just agree (n=204) with the statement that it is easy to find a job, the majority of them plan pursuing further education and studying the top education fields, viz. Health and Welfare, Education, ICT, Arts and design and Economics.

**Career Education**

This section involves questions about the source of career support and the school’s role in supporting students to identify their career path and to prepare for this transition. The main source of support in career decision-making is reported students’ family.
As expected, parents and family are important influencing factors for youth in Kosovo. However, this is an indicator that more needs to be done to raise awareness among parents and family about their important role in encouraging youth to explore their own affinities and the world of work before they decide about their career path.

Yet although school was reported only by 15% of students as being their primary source of support, in general students reported of being satisfied with the role of their school in helping them understand their next steps in their career, as it will be further discussed in the page below.

As introduced in the graph below, when students were asked whether or not school has helped them to understand their future career, 72% declared to agree and strongly agree. In addition, 60% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that school has offered sufficient support for them to understand the area of education to further pursue. The same percentage of students agree and strongly agree that school has upskilled them for their future career. Last but not least, 56% of the students feel that school has provided needed skillsets for employment.

As introduced in the graph below, when students were asked whether or not school has helped them to understand their future career, 72% declared to agree and strongly agree. In addition, 60% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that school has offered sufficient support for them to understand the area of education to further pursue. The same percentage of students agree and strongly agree that school has upskilled them for the chosen future career. Last but not least, 56% of the students feel that school has provided needed skillsets for employment.
Significant differences are found in the aforementioned statements between VET school and gymnasium students. While the former mostly agree or strongly agree with the statements (70%), the latter do not show such convincing statements, with only 43% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Figures 24 to 27 shown below illustrate the results of the four statements as shown in the graph above for VET school students and gymnasium students.
Fewer participants are highly confident of the role of their school in helping students to prepare a job application, although more than half of the participants agree that they can prepare a CV and motivation letter. Furthermore, 24% of participants are neutral, while 34% disagree and strongly disagree that school has helped when it comes to preparing them to apply for a job.
Significant differences between VET school and gymnasium students are only found when analyzing the role of schools in helping students to obtain job application related skills, as indicated below.

Figure 28. Participants’ agreement with the statements on job application components

Figure 29. Participants’ agreement with the statement by school type

School has helped me to understand the area of education to pursue further.
Additionally, given that Busulla.COM is the national career guidance information system, serving as a one-stop platform for career guidance services, students were asked if they regularly used it for career guidance and career choice purposes. The study finds that 42% of students declare to have used the platform when identifying their career path.

**Figure 30. Participants’ usage of Busulla.COM**

Finally, students expressed a high level of interest for receiving information regarding studying opportunities and procedures, based on their current plans.

**Figure 31. Participants’ interest on receiving career education information**

Such a high level of students seeking assistance suggests that more needs to be done by our education system to facilitate all career orientation steps, from self-recognition, exploration of opportunities, decision-making, and most importantly transitioning to the next step.
Discussion and Recommendations

This survey report provides a national level overview of the main topics regarding career education and access to the labour market for upper secondary school graduates. The findings of this study aim to inform decision- and policy-making at all levels, such as teachers, school management, the local and national level of government, civil society, and researchers. This study also aims to incite further research in terms of undertaking activities that will best suit student as well as the economic and social context.

Career education is a multifaceted process, while an individual’s career – education, occupations, and jobs – takes a key role in one’s self-actualization and wellbeing. Personal and social development go hand in hand, thus creating the conditions for youth to strive towards a career that aligns with their values, interests, talents, and skills. This is fulfilling at an individual level and beneficial in the long run for the society.

Provision of adequate career education services requires different stakeholders to coordinate their priorities, interventions, and practices. Career education in Kosovo is a relatively new subject and only lately coming to be understood and planned more comprehensively, in contrast to the previously fragmented and sometimes redundant initiatives.

The majority of students, regardless of graduating from a gymnasium or VET school, plan to pursue higher education, while few report to be planning to seek employment or start their own business. There is a considerable number of students (10%) that plan to migrate from Kosovo. Slightly more than half of the participants believe that it is difficult to find a job in their municipality and preferred industry. Not surprisingly, those who plan on migration are less likely to see it as easy to find a job locally (only 30% agree or strongly agree), compared to those who plan on seeking employment after secondary school (45% agree or strongly agree). Those planning on pursuing higher education are even more unlikely to say it is easy to find a job locally (only 24% agree or strongly agree). Overall, 60% of students reported finding it difficult to land a job of their interest in their hometown, 24% responded as neutral, while only 26% of participants agree and strongly agree that it is easy to find a job in their preferred industry in their hometown.

The education fields that most of the students plan to study are Health and Welfare, Education, ICT, Arts and Design, and Economics. Health and Welfare appears to be a predominant field of interest by students who agree and strongly agree that it is easy to find a job within their municipality, but also the most frequent one within the group of students who plan to migrate.

We believe that findings on students’ perception of employment should be first and foremost addressed. If this perception holds true – that it is very difficult to find a job locally within the industry that students are specializing, especially within VET school profiles – then there should be a stronger focus on aligning the education system with the private sector.

If this perception does not hold true, students need to be more informed about various employment possibilities.

Schools and the private sector can cooperate in conducting and promoting activities pertaining to employment opportunities.

Being aware of the employment opportunities will help students in making an informed decision regarding their future plans in terms of whether they will start working or pursuing further education.
Although the general confidence of youth about finding a job is not very strong, there are significant differences between gymnasium and VET school students, wherein the latter show significantly higher degrees of confidence in finding jobs relevant to their upper secondary education field. This offers a window to bolster and promote the potential of VET education fields.

The results of this study also revealed that student internship is a significant factor on students’ career education. Students who have conducted an internship report agreeing to a greater extent that it is easy to find a job and that the internship has helped them to better understand and prepare of their prospective jobs. Student internship further develops students’ skills as well as introduces them to prospective industry and job opportunities.

Gender and type of school are other variables that shape students’ perception of the possibility for employment.

As more female students report of expecting difficulties to find a job, it is important to combat gender stereotypes attached to professions and hiring.

Significant gender differences are also found when analyzing current and future education fields and future plans of youth. Fields as ICT and Engineering are dominated by male students, while Health and Welfare, and Education by female ones. Thus, it is equally important to work on incentivizing students of both genders to enroll into upper secondary school or higher education fields or even to transition to the labor market based on reasons and factors that are free of stereotypes and patriarchal influence.

Decision-making, nevertheless, should involve various points of views and information. 61% of students report that their main source of support in their career choices is their family. While family support is outstanding, professionals’ objective insights alongside family opinions are necessary for an informed and accurate decisions.

More intentional public awareness and behavior change communications campaigns may be necessary to better inform the influential advice that parents are giving to their children.

Findings also indicate that more focus should be given to career education in gymnasiums where students report to be less certain about their study field, having far less experience of an internship – only 12% of gymnasium students have reported of having completed an internship – and that the school has not helped them as much to understand their career opportunities and to develop their skills accordingly.

A total of 33% of the graduates are certain only to a moderate degree about their education field and 70% of students do not have any internship experience. Results also suggest that schools ought to put more focus on how students can apply for a job.
Therefore, following the widely known DOTS model for career education, this study finds that more needs to be done on the transition (T) phase, to allow for a smooth transition from education to employment. More context about this model is provided below:

![DOTS Model Diagram]

Emphasizing once again that completing an internship turns out to be a significant factor contributing towards a better understanding and preparation for the future job, it is critical to promote and encourage current and future students to pursue internship opportunities.

**This also brings a take-away for the relevant institutions to design an internship framework that is appealing and encouraging for students to attend.**

Roughly 42% of the students plan to study at the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”, while vast majority of the remaining students list private education institutions as their first choice. Most frequently declared private colleges of higher education are AAB and UBT.

### Barometer Studies Over the Years

Over years of being in constant communication and cooperation with the education system, youth, and policy-making institutions, we are thrilled to observe the generally shifting trends of youth towards the labor market. For example, in the 2019 Barometer study, KCDF found that very few female students were enrolled in Informatics and Engineering fields of education. Profiles within these fields were male-student dominated by above 90%. On the flipside of it, several profiles related to the education fields of Textile, Hotel and Tourism, etc., were female dominant, with oftentimes 100% of the students. In contrast, in this 2021 study, we can understand that students enrolled in VET profiles report greater levels of confidence about their employability. Furthermore, the gender balance is significantly improved among all profiles of VET education, suggesting that there are no male or female student dominated fields of education.

The proportion of students enrolling in gymnasiums as opposed to VET schools has been changing recently. While VET schools used to be a second choice for students who could not enroll in gymnasiums, nowadays it is clearly stated that VET school is a first choice for many students; VET enrollment is also higher than that of gymnasiums as indicated in the beginning of this study.
Although more needs to be done in terms of raising awareness about the advantages of pursuing education in VET related fields, there seems to be a general understanding by youth and the community that labor market demands job profiles provided through VET education. This has also had a positive impact in overcoming gender stereotypes for education fields at VET as well as it has helped to improve the image of VET schools.

While a few years ago VET schools were perceived as a second choice and oftentimes as unsafe places for students, today they are considered as a faster and more effective way of obtaining the right skills and transitioning from learning to earning.

Last but not least, the trend of students planning to migrate for better opportunities has been constant over years. Previous versions and the current barometer find out a relatively similar number of students planning to pursue their careers abroad. This together with the previous concerns identified should attract the attention of education institutions as well as the private sector. Better education offers and better working conditions are an effective way to motivate youth to pursue their career path in the country.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Replications of the Study

This report offers key findings related to key topics on career education, confidence levels, and aspirations of youth as they prepare for higher education and / or employment. The self-report nature of this survey constitutes both an advantage and limitation of the study. A limitation of self-reporting answers is lack of reality check (e.g., testing of students’ skills in preparing a job application, CV, motivation letter, etc.). Survey nonresponse bias may be another limitation of this study. However, this survey has the advantage of providing direct insight into how students perceive support provided by their schools in career education, access to the labour market, and needed skills as they search for jobs.

The National Vocational Maturity Barometer 2021 is an essential starting point as we shed light to the policy-making processes regarding career education, entrepreneurship services, and youth needs. Replication of this study in the future should plan for a stratified sample to reach representative numbers of male and female students in each study program. Further, tracer studies of these same graduates as they pursue higher education, seek employment, and start their businesses would enable a reality check and comparison of students plans to the actual progress as they pursue such plans.

We strongly recommend public and private sector stakeholders in Kosovo to study and reflect upon these findings of the 2021 Barometer and jointly seek ways to improve early career guidance, internship, and other work-based learning experiences, and provide greater support in employability skills, so that more Kosovar youth can achieve their aspirations.
References


National Vocational Maturity Barometer 2021

This survey aims to understand plans, priorities, and needs of the Class of 2021 XII graders as they graduate from upper secondary school and continue their career path.

Your cooperation will help us to identify your priorities and needs, so that we can provide customized services and support for their achievement.

This survey will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance!

Student’s information:
First Name: ___________________________  School: ___________________________
Last Name: ___________________________  Class: ___________________________
Email: _______________________________  Concentration: _______________________
Telephone: ___________________________  Municipality: _______________________

Question 1: What are your plans after graduating from upper secondary school (completing grade XII)?
☐ I will pursue higher education
☐ I will search for a job
☐ I will start my own business
☐ I will take time off
☐ I will migrate
☐ I have not decided yet
☐ Other: ___________________________

Question 2: To what level are you determined about the desired area of study?
☐ Low
☐ Moderate
☐ High

Question 3: Please indicate the area of study you have chosen (choose only one option).
☐ Education
☐ Arts and designs
☐ Linguistics
☐ Social Sciences
☐ Mathematical - Natural Science
☐ Economics
☐ ICT
☐ Other: ___________________________
☐ Engineering
☐ Agriculture and Veterinary
☐ Journalism, Media, and Communication
☐ Health and Welfare
☐ Security Services (Policy, Army, etc.)
☐ Construction and Architecture
☐ Law

Question 4: Please provide the name of the college / university where you plan to pursue higher education.
☐ ___________________________

Question 5: Do you wish to be informed about college admission procedures, scholarship opportunities, study offers, etc.?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Question 6: Have you conducted an internship during upper secondary school?
☐ Yes  ☐ No
**Question 7:** What is the total number of internship hours you have completed during upper secondary school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>0 hours</th>
<th>1-20 hours</th>
<th>21-60 hours</th>
<th>61 – 100 hours</th>
<th>Above 100 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade XI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade XII</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 8:** Please refer to the following table to show whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship and professional practices have helped me to better understand and learn my future job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills and knowledge gained during upper secondary school have prepared me for employment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has helped me to understand how to apply for a job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has helped me to understand my future career.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has upskilled me for my future career.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to find a job in my preferred industry within my hometown / municipality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has helped me to understand the area of education to pursue further.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can prepare a CV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can prepare a motivation letter.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 9:** Please indicate the main source which you have received support for your career choice process.

- [ ] Teachers
- [ ] Parents and family
- [ ] Busulla.COM
- [ ] Career Centers
- [ ] Friends and relatives
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Other: __________________________

**Question 10:** Have you used Busulla.COM during upper secondary school?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

- [ ] I agree to have KCDF team process the information provided above.