

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE PROJECT
2020-2-MK01-KA205-077976

CROSS-COUNTRY SURVEY



Short Survey Summary

December, 2020

The YEI project - Youth Employment Initiative
is managed by
Local Action Group AGRO LIDER, North Macedonia
in partnership with
Asociatia Tineri pentru Comunitate Bistrita - Romania
Associazione InCo – Molfetta, Italy

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FOREWORD

This survey was developed during the implementation of the first step of Youth Employment Initiative project and it is the result of a working methodology developed, shared and tested by the project partners in each area involved: Italy, North Macedonia and Romania.

A former desk research was carried out to understand how existing literature, past and present projects and good practices might offer a starting point to guide our work. A further research was done in each partner country through online questionnaire to young person aged between 15-29 years old.

The aim of the research was to identify the importance of supported employment services for young people as one of the most cost-effective mechanisms to link jobseekers to available work, followed by the importance of soft skills for entering into the job market.

As a preliminary step to conduct this research, it was necessary to define a common ground to set up a system of comparable data among the target countries, both on socio-economic context and existing experiences.

The survey was limited to young people aged between 15-29 years old, from Apulia region, Italy, Region of Blstrita, Romania and Region of Prilep and surrounding municipalities, N.Macedonia. It was conducted from November 2020 – December 2020. During this period one hundred and twenty five young people participated in the survey.

This survey summary consolidates the findings from youth surveys, and highlights the need of supported employment services for young people provided by youth coaches and importance for the young people to be equipped with soft skills that make them more competitive to the job market.

1. Supported Employment Services for young people

Employment services are designed to increase the promptness, efficiency, and quality of the match between jobseekers and available jobs. They are considered as the most cost-effective of the active labor market policies (ALMP), e.g., the cost per worker placed in a new job. Connecting young jobseekers to their first job and ensuring a quality of employment poses different challenges. Plenty of job matches happen, and should, without the intervention of an employment service; but impact evaluations have shown that well-run employment services can help jobseekers find a job faster, and often with better quality than if they looked on their own. This impact is understandably achieved in the short-term – a better job or job found more quickly -- while other interventions affect longer-term job prospects, such as education and skills training.

Ensuring access to employment services for everyone is the responsibility of Public Employment Services (PES). For the non-profit and non-governmental organization (NGO) sector is a growing practice to improve accessibility and responsiveness to the needs of diverse groups particularly young people in the labor market. Supported employment is a well-known service developed by the NGOs to improve the chances of young people to enter the labor market.

2. Soft skills

Skills are one of the four pillars of Competency. Competences can be defined as a set of inborn and acquired personal characteristics, attitudes, knowledge and skills leading to high-quality performance.

Hard skills are strictly job-specific, closely connected with knowledge, easily observed, measured and trained. They constitute the core occupational requirements of a job.

Soft skills are non-job specific, closely connected with personal attitudes which are intangible. This makes them more difficult to be quantified and developed.

The employability of a person is based on specific skills (hard skills, knowledge, experiences) but soft skills support it and they often make the difference. Being multi-skilled is undoubtedly an advantage for any jobseeker.. So soft skills, ranging from social skills to problem solving, taking decision, achieving results, etc. are extremely important to maintain a job or to find a new one. Therefore individuals should invest in their soft skill development, besides the hard ones, in order to improve their employability level.

In today's workplace the need for soft skills is widely considered as vital because of globalization, virtual offices, technology and increasing society diversity (in age, gender, education, ethnicity...). The technical competences and professional qualifications are important, but converting proficiency into economic output requires soft skills such as problem solving, motivation, flexibility, team working.

On labor market hard skills are considered as a pre-requisite to get a job interview, but jobseekers need soft skills to get (and then keep) the job because soft skills are the real field where candidates truly compete to acquire the position.

The role of the NGOs in providing soft skills development program is getting very important. Many NGOs have been initiated to cater to the soft skills training requirements of the youth community, through providing quality training of strengthening the soft skills and enhance the performance and employability of the young people.

3. The survey methodology

The field survey was conducted between November and December 2020.

- a) Assessment Design and Methodology – The methodology for the assessment is based on quantitative approach. The survey was conducted in three districts in Italy, North Macedonia and Romania. A hundred and twenty five (125) youth respondents participated in the survey.
- b) Quality of Questionnaire – The questionnaire was designed to be simple, clear, easily understandable and as free of ambiguity as possible. A precise attention was paid to the words in order to avoid off-putting feelings and confusion. The questionnaires contain mostly closed-ended questions (the answer is fixed in advance) in order to ensure that answers could be reliably aggregated and make comparisons between sample national subgroups. For this reason the questionnaire results in a mix of dichotomous responses where the respondent has two options (Yes / No), and nominal-polytomous where the respondent has more than two unordered options.
- c) Length of the questionnaire: survey brevity is generally associated to an increasing response rate and the quality of response tend to degrade toward the end of long surveys. So a special attention was paid to avoid repetition of concepts and to ensure a reasonable time to answer the proposed questions.
- d) The survey questionnaire comprised of three main parts.
 - The first part covered general information about each individual youth and allowed to collect information on demographics, characteristics, locations, education status and employment status.
 - The second part covered specific questions for employing experience of young people (aged between 15-29) and allowed to collect information on the level of interest in joining different employed sector, and young people employment goals.
 - The third part covered general questions and allowed the collection of information on supported employment opportunities, variety of skills demanded and afforded the employers to rank both skills and certification.

e) Significance of particular questions for purposes of analysis

This section provides some details regarding the significance of particular questions. It is important that the survey implementation team review the questionnaires question by question and make the alterations that ensure that the questions 1) make sense in the cross-national context and 2) are sufficient to cover all areas of concern in the country. To aid such a review, this section highlights how certain questions can be linked to some of the areas likely to be of interest when analyzing results.

*Note that not all themes for analysis are covered here.

General characteristics - There are policy implications to notable gaps in transition experiences by sex, age, geographic location (urban or rural) and level of educational attainment. Therefore, disaggregation of data by at least these four variables, as called for in the majority of output tables is essential for the final analysis and subsequent policy recommendations. The following questions capture the essential information to allow disaggregation of results according to sex, age, location and level of education:

Early school leavers- Early school leavers can be identified by question 3 with the reason for leaving before completion in question 5.

It is interesting to compare the stated work preferences of the young respondents against the reality of the type of work that is available (as assessed from the results of the transition tabulations and the employers' survey). Youth are asked to state their ideal type of economic activity (start own business, work in the public sector, work in the private sector, do not wish to work, etc.).

History of economic activities- The survey question relating to the history of economic activities is intended to generate retrospective data – information on the full extent of activities of the youth over his/her productive lifetime.

Unemployment and job reservations- After testing to ensure that the young respondent is unemployed, the questions asked of the unemployed relate to the details of the job search (length and means) and the young person's perception for the supportive employment services.

Job search and recruitment methods- The labor market outcome of initial entry is not an automatic process and is significantly affected by the process of the job search and by the availability of jobs at the time of entry. While youth cannot strongly influence the availability of jobs or enterprising opportunities, the method of search and the effort that goes into it are self-determined. A focus on job search and recruitment methods, examination of which methods dominate, and speculations as to why different methods are used are all informative in shaping labor market policy interventions. In the attached questionnaire, the method(s) of job search is identified in question 14.

Soft Skill - The last questions (17 and 18) aim to establish or not the importance of soft skills of the young job applicant, and its impact on the employability.

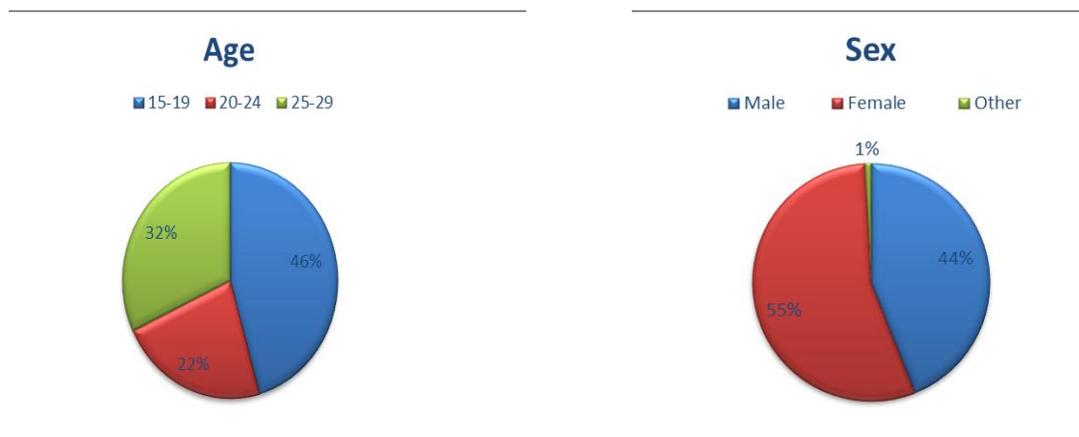
The questionnaires are appended to this report (see appendix I)

4. Data analysis and conclusion remarks of the survey

The survey was conducted between November and December 2020. A hundred and twenty five (125) youth respondents participated in the survey. Information collected focused on the need of supported employment services for youth employability, and the youth perception about soft skills importance during school and for work as well as.

The gender ratio of respondents was female 52% and male 48%. All respondents are of the 15-29 age group, from which 46% aged group 15-19, 22% aged group 20-14, and 32% aged group 25-29.

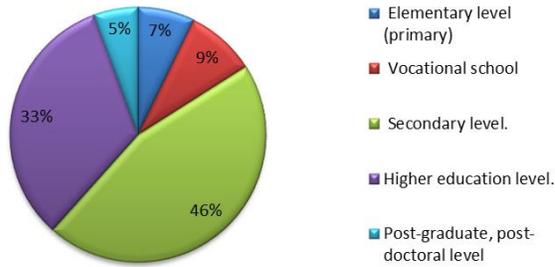
Related to the resident area, 50% of the respondent live in rural area, 25% in small town in rural area and 25% are living in a large city.



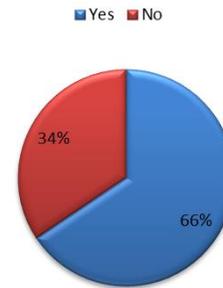
A few (8%) are left the education before the graduation, 21% of the respondents have been completed their education while 72% are currently studying in elementary school (6%), secondary school (22%), at vocation training (10%), at higher education (32%) or at post-graduate level (2%). The main reasons for stopping the education were – failed examinations, economic reasons, not allowance by the parents and respondents willingness to work.

About 7% have at least attended primary level education, 9% have attended vocational school, 46% at least attended secondary level of education, 33% have higher level of education and 5% post-graduate education.

Highest level of completed education



Working experience



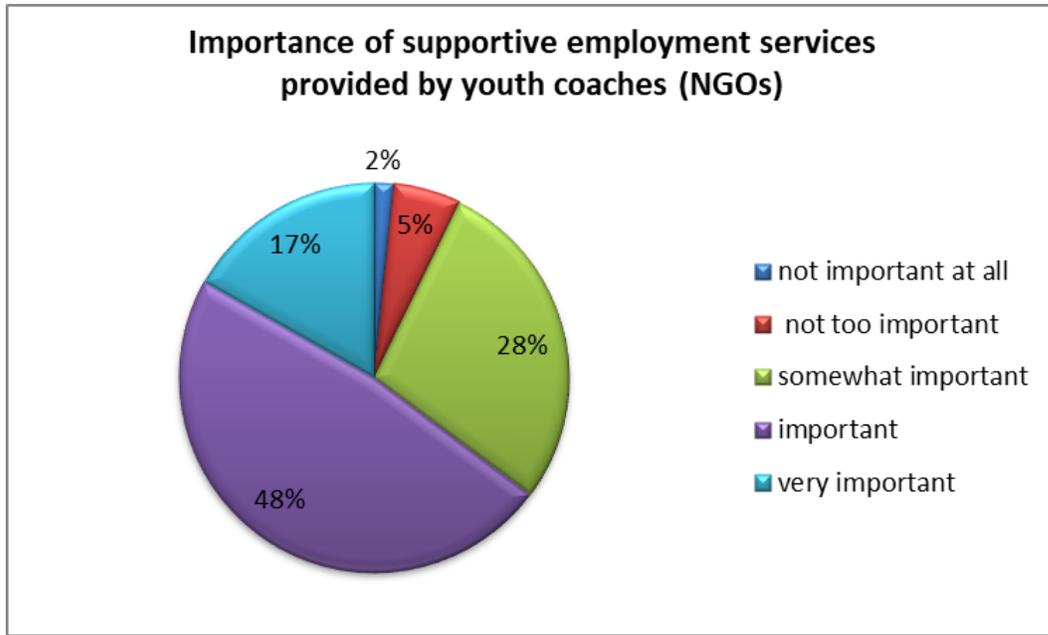
Thirty four percent (34%) have been never work, while 66% have working experience as: Internship/apprenticeship in private company (10%), Internship/apprenticeship in public sector (5%), Internship/apprenticeship in non-profit organization (4%), Work in family business (5%), Work on farm (3%), Work in private company (28%), Work in public sector (9%), Community volunteer work (17%) and Temporary Work -not registered (16%). A few (28%) are employed, while many (72%) are unemployed, and 42% have been unemployed for more than 6 months. Thirty eight percent (38%) of the unemployed respondents have been searching for the job.

Young job seekers tend to adopt at least three job search strategies with the most common being: applying in writing or in person to an employer for work, looking in newspapers, on the internet or notice boards, through education/training institutions, attending job fairs, answering an advertisement for a job, placing newspaper advertisement, or Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc.

While 25% are interested in starting own business, 22% are interested in working in public sector, 12% are interested in entering in multinational corporation, 17% prefer working for a private company, and 3% would like to work for non-governmental organization, or for family business (6%).

Young job seekers are likely to be registered at Public Employment Service, but they over tended to rely more on social networks and employment sites when looking for work. A few (29%) of the unemployed young person who are looking for a job, have been received an advice/assistance from the employment services as advice how to search for a job (7%), information of vacancies (8%), guidance on education and training opportunities (8%) an placement at education/training programs (11%), while 71% haven't receive any advice/ assistance/help from the employment services.

Almost all (93%) of the respondents share their opinion that it is important to have access to supportive employment services provided by youth coaches (CSOs) for a successful transition into employment.



The respondents have shared their opinion about importance of appropriate skills to enable them to be employed or be self-employed, and most 40% choose soft skills, 11% IT skills, 11% have choose scientific or technical qualifications, 4% have been choose good general education and 8% thought that it is important to have completed an apprenticeship or an appropriate training course.

The hereinafter tables A, B, show the degree of importance given by the 125 respondents to each one of the 7 soft skills groups identified within YEI project. Two indicators were used:

- the level of importance/significance of the skills during the education
- the level of importance/significance of the skills for work

As far as the skill significance is concerned, a quantitative five level scale was proposed to measure it, according to the following scheme:

Score assigned to the importance of the skill by the respondents	Level of importance assigned to the score
1	Not important at all
2	Not too important
3	somewhat important
4	important
5	very important

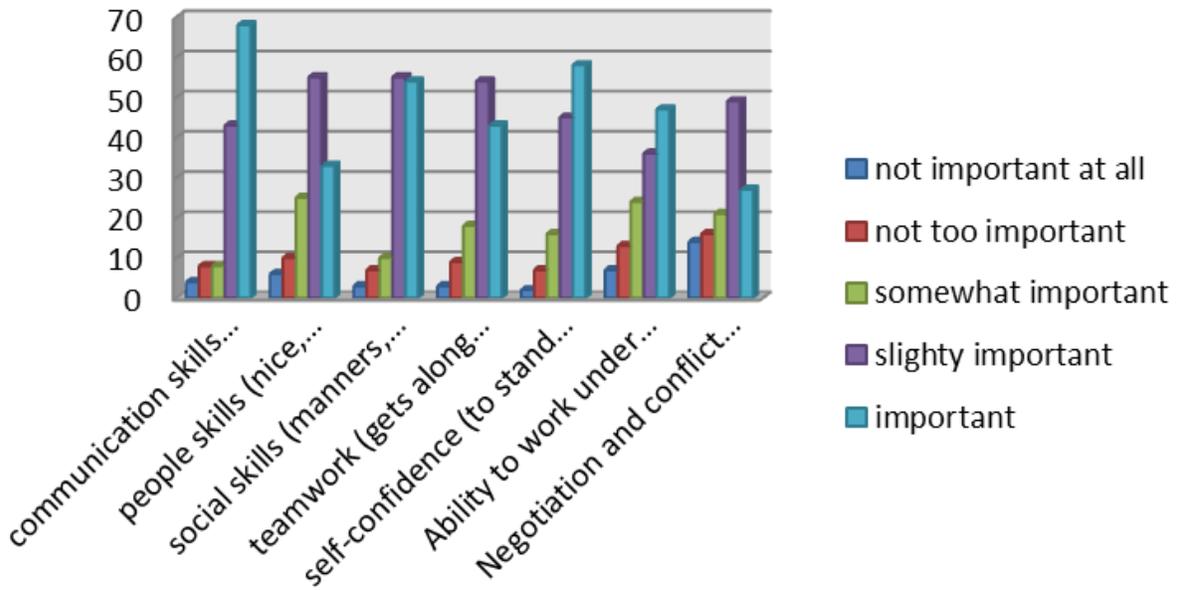
Both arithmetical means and mode were calculated in order to analyze the average choice and the most important one.

Soft skills during education/school	Mean score (1-5)	Significance level	Mode	Significance level
communication skills (oral, speaking capability, writing, presenting, listening)	4.24	important	5	Very important
people skills (nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic)	3,76	Somewhat important	4	important
social skills (manners, positive attitude, open-minded, optimistic, polite, self-control)	4.16	important	4	important
teamwork (gets along with others, cooperative, open-minded, supportive, collaborative, loyal)	3.94	Somewhat important	4	important
self-confidence (to stand up for yourself, to state an own opinion, to allow other view points)	4.17	important	5	very important
Ability to work under pressure and time management	3.81	Somewhat important	5	Very important
Negotiation and conflict resolution	3.46	Somewhat important	4	important

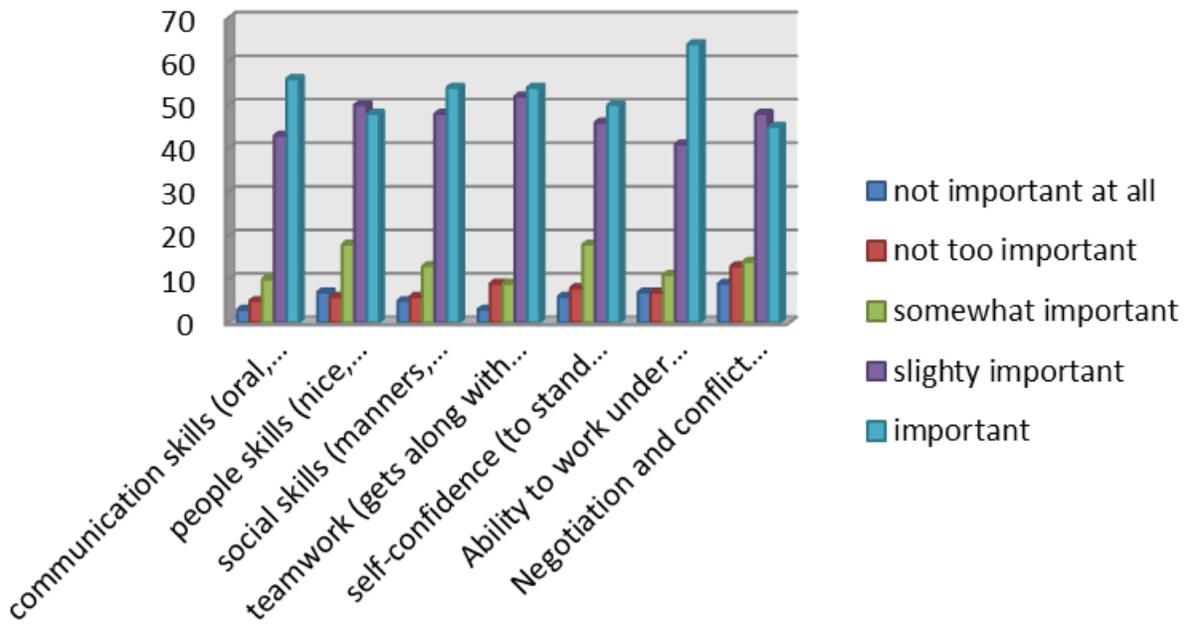
Soft skills during education/school	Mean score (1-5)	Significance level	Mode	Significance level
communication skills (oral, speaking capability, writing, presenting, listening)	3.80	Somewhat important	5	Very important
people skills (nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic)	3,97	Somewhat important	4	important
social skills (manners, positive attitude, open-minded, optimistic, polite, self-control)	3.71	Somewhat important	5	Very important
teamwork (gets along with others, cooperative, open-minded, supportive, collaborative, loyal)	3.75	Somewhat important	5	Very important
self-confidence (to stand up for yourself, to state an own opinion, to allow other view points)	3.60	Somewhat important	5	very important
Ability to work under pressure and time management	4.13	important	5	Very important
Negotiation and conflict resolution	3.67	Somewhat important	4	important

Hereinafter the graphics shows in detailed the answers given to each skill split up by its importance for school/education or for work/life.

Importance of soft skills during education



Importance of soft skills for work



Considering the data gathered, young people consider supported employment services provided by youth coaches (NGOs) important for connecting young jobseekers to their job.

Taking into consideration that ensuring the right of access to decent work, self-employment, and opportunities for training -- especially for young people -- are one of the main challenges governments and societies face given the important economic and social costs that unemployment and inactivity entail, establishing supported employment services for young people is necessary for ease transitions into decent work and self-employment for jobseekers, that lead to decreasing youth unemployment rate.

According to the respondents, the soft skills are important during the school and also for work/life. The lack of soft skills may be a big obstacle for young job seekers, and also for successful education/training of young people. So providing non-formal educational program focus to strengthen the young people soft skills can make young people to be more competitive to the job market while having more opportunity to find a job if they are multi-skilled and endowed with a wide range of soft skills.

Appendix I

Youth Employment Initiative
Contract number: 2020-2-MK01-KA205-077976
Erasmus+, Exchange of good practices

Thank you for participating in our initial questionnaire for our European project „Youth Employment Initiative” funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership program of the European Union. You are providing us very valuable information and help us in improving our work and gaining our aims and goals. Your data of course remains anonymous and is only used for the further development of the project.

- 1) Age
a) 15-19
b) 20-24
c) 25-29

- 2) Sex
Male
Female
Other

- 3) Current residence
a) rural area
b) small town in rural area
c) large city

- 4) Most recent educational activity
- a) I have never studied
 - b) I left before graduation
 - c) I have completed my education GO TO 6
 - d) I am currently studying at elementary level (primary) GO TO 6
 - e) at vocational school GO TO 6
 - f) at secondary level GO TO 6
 - g) at higher education level GO TO 6
 - h) at post-graduate, post-doctoral level GO TO 6

5) What was the main reason for stopping your education?

- a) Finished course
- b) Failed examinations
- c) Did not enjoy schooling
- d) Wanted to start working
- e) To get married
- f) Parents did not want you to continue schooling
- g) Economic reasons (could not afford/too poor/needed to earn money to support family)
- h) Other

6) What is your highest level of completed education?

- a) Elementary level (primary)
- b) Vocational school
- c) Secondary level.
- d) Higher education level.
- e) Post-graduate, post-doctoral level

7) Did you ever work?

- a) Yes
- b) No GO TO 9

8) Please describe your work experience

- a) Internship/apprenticeship in private company
- b) Internship/apprenticeship in public sector
- c) Internship/apprenticeship in non-profit organization
- d) Work in family business
- e) Work on farm
- f) Work in private company
- g) Work in public sector
- i) Community volunteer work
- h) Temporary Work (not registered)
- j) Other

9) Which of the following qualities do you think is the most useful in finding a job?

- a) Information technology skills
- b) Scientific or technical qualifications
- c) Command of languages
- d) Communication skills
- e) Teamwork skills
- f) Good general education
- g) Good appearance

h)Ambition

i)Having completed an apprenticeship or an appropriate training course .

j) Other

10) Ideally, which of the following type of work would you prefer?

- a) Start your own business
- b) Work for the government/public sector
- c) Work for a multinational corporation
- d) Work for a private company
- e) Work for a non-profit organization
- f) Work for own/family farm
- g) Work for family business
- h) Not sure
- i) Do not wish to work
- j) Other

11) Do you have a job?

- a) Yes
- b) No

12) Are you looking for work?

- a) Yes
- b) No GO TO 16

13) How long have you been available for work and actively looking for a job?

- a) Less than a week
- b) 1-4 weeks
- c) 1-2 months
- d) 3-6 months
- e) 6 months-1 year
- f) More than 1 year

14) How are you looking for a job?

- a) Through education/training institution
- b) Attending job fairs
- c) Registration at a public employment office
- d) Registration at a private employment office
- e) Direct application for employers, participation in a competition
- f) Checking at worksites, farms, factory gates, markets or other assembly places
- g) Placing newspaper advertisements

- h) Answering advertisements (newspaper, internet, etc.)
- i) Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc.
- j) Other

15) Have you received any advice/help/assistance from the employment services? (multiple choice)

- a) None
- b) Advice on how to search for job
- c) Information on vacancies
- d) Guidance on education and training opportunities
- e) Placement at education/training programmes
- f) Other

16) In your opinion, how important is it for you to have access to supportive employment services provided by youth coaches (CSOs)?

- a) not important at all
- b) not too important
- c) somewhat important
- d) important
- e) very important

17) In your opinion, how important is it for you to have good soft skills (as self-esteem, language skills, self-confidence, etc) during training/education?

Please rate between: 1 = not important at all 2 = not too important
 3 = somewhat important 4 = important 5 = very important

- a) communication skills (oral, speaking capability, writing, presenting, listening)
- b) people skills (nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic)
- c) social skills (manners, positive attitude, open-minded, optimistic, polite, self-control)
- d) teamwork (gets along with others, cooperative, open-minded, supportive)
- e) self-confidence (to stand up for yourself, to state an own opinion)
- f) Ability to work under pressure and time management
- g) Negotiation and conflict resolution

18) In your opinion, how important is it for you to have good soft skills for work?

Please rate between: 1 = not important at all 2 = not too important
 3 = somewhat important 4 = important 5 = very important

- a) communication skills (oral, speaking capability, writing, presenting, listening)
- b) people skills (nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic)
- c) social skills (manners, positive attitude, open-minded, optimistic, polite, self-control)

- d) teamwork (gets along with others, cooperative, open-minded, supportive)
- e) self-confidence (to stand up for yourself, to state an own opinion)
- f) Ability to work under pressure and time management
- g) Negotiation and conflict resolution

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