



Bildung und Arbeitsmarkt

Good education policy for a successful economy

Positions of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation with facts, theses for a operational framework for designing a Future-oriented education and labor market policy in Kosovo

Education is the most important "raw material" of Kosovo

A future-oriented **education policy can not remain an isolated factor in politics** and must be seen as a **priority matter of public tasks**. Education policy has to fulfill a variety of expectations and tasks and, especially in countries such as Kosovo, is a key **element for the country's further development into a social welfare state based on the European model**. Therefore, it is important to use all the resources of the country as effectively as possible.

To the same extent as the **economy requires appropriately skilled labor at all levels of the workplace, all young people need to have the chances for their integration** into a functioning and effective work environment **according to their talents and possibilities**. A **one-sided prioritization** of certain educational programs and levels as well as an increasingly private-profit-oriented educational offer inevitably and evidently **leads to immense deficits in the labor market**. The consequences are, on the one hand, **extremely high levels of youth unemployment and little chance of (re-) entering the workplace for older people** who have lost their jobs, and on the other hand, a **growing shortage of skilled workers**, in both academic and non-academic economic sectors. In addition, there is a steadily **increasing urban-rural gap** with **increasing migration tendencies**.

This can only be counteracted with an **integral concept** that combines **education content and offerings** with the current and future needs of a **strategically oriented economic development**.

For this purpose a **redefinition of labor market policy** as a bridge between (vocational) education and the economy is needed, which with a **competent career guidance** and **targeted training programs** proactively ensures that the **offerings of qualifications** adapts to the **needs of a modern economy**.

Use of own economic potential

Kosovo has a number of natural resources. These must first and foremost be used and networked as effectively as possible. These resources include:

- **Renewable energies** (water, wind, sun): Here – depending on the circumstances – many opportunities for generating energy are given. This will enable Kosovo – step by step – to free itself from fossil energy and meet its own needs.
- **Agriculture:** Kosovo's agriculture has by no means exhausted all its potential. The yields could – with clever and competent organization, storage possibilities and certified further processing – be substantially higher and export-oriented.
- **Tourism:** Kosovo has a diverse nature in a small space. This wealth can – with ecological and sustainable tourism development – lead to a lasting and growing revenue.
- **Light industry:** The country has some traditions, e.g. in the leather and textile sector. Added to this are new investments that should be used for their own further development. Thus, with targeted investment, a successful and profitable economic factor can be created – also and especially in the craft sector and with the many existing micro and small businesses.
- **Valuable minerals:** The given deposits are used only insufficiently and with outdated means. With targeted investments for the modernization and a connection with the further processing higher yields are possible.

Overall concept for Kosovar development

In order to use the economic potential effectively, medium and long-term public investments and projects should be summarized in an overall concept. This overall concept could then be formulated as a vision "Kosovo 2025". Core elements of this vision would be:

- **Infrastructure expansion:** The expansion of the country's infrastructure is also a necessary cross-cutting measure for the development of the economic sectors. It is about energy supply, communication, supply and disposal of garbage, drinking water and sewage or the traffic.
- **Modern and job-oriented education:** education is not an open market object. The state should ensure a functioning and modern education system that meets social and economic requirements.
- **Social welfare:** as a future EU member state, Kosovo should have the minimum standards of social care and insurance. These include, among other things, a functioning offer of care for the elderly and nursing and a functioning health care system.

- **Customer and service-oriented services in the public and private sectors:** A modern business world thrives on functioning public administration services. In addition, services constitute a cross-sectoral sector that affects all sectors of the economy and, with appropriate qualifications, contributes significantly to economic growth.

Strategy for coordinated action

Together with all ministries and also the leading actors of the private economic sectors, the various tasks of an overall public concept for the development of Kosovo should be described with "road maps" for a realistic sequence of steps for the realization and review of the development.

- **Coordinate development:** None of these future areas can be developed independently of the others – their modernization and expansion are mutually dependent.
- **External experts as partners:** international cooperation partners with their specific experience in transition states should be involved in partnership from the outset in the realization of these projects.
- **Use of all given financial resources:** In addition, institutional capacity and individual technical and managerial skills should be rapidly built up, in order to be able to use all available EU funds fully and competently.

Close cooperation between state and private sector

In a modern economy, there is a need for meaningful cooperation between the state and the players in the economy. The private sector bears a great deal of responsibility for the development of a country. Therefore, it should be properly integrated at every place where only cooperation can bring progress. This is in the mutual interest.

- An essential field of necessary **cooperation** is vocational qualification – from basic education to specific continuing education and training.
- The **state should set the appropriate framework conditions**, for example in the education system, while the **economy should be responsible for the content and practical connection to the world of work**.
- To this should be added an **active labor market** policy that, through good advice and support (such as the intermediation of qualifying offerings) links the needs of the economy with the goals of those seeking education meaningfully and effectively.

Description of professions and job profiles

Human Resources: The working population of Kosovo is very young. Overall, however, there is a lack of broad-based specialist qualification at all levels of the economy. With good and targeted vocational education, the areas mentioned can be set up and expanded accordingly. This will sustainably ensure employment in ordered working conditions. A possible sequence of steps of a necessary cooperation between state, education and business for the development of a good supply of skilled workers in the academic and non-academic sector would be:

- **Key professions:** Joint identification and modern definition of the most important and necessary key professions in the most important future sectors of the Kosovo economy.
- **Practice-oriented curricula:** Joint development of vocational education content and curricula for an integrated school and practical vocational education.
- **Verification:** Shared monitoring – e.g. taking of exams – of the compliance with the agreed standards and contents.
- **Certification:** Joint creation of a qualified specialist potential with generally binding qualifications that can also meet international standards.

Curricula according to the dual principle for all professional levels

Future-oriented vocational training must be based on stronger cooperation between vocational schools and companies. Young people should be given the opportunity to get to know the world of work during their vocational education and thus prepare better for the job market. It is generally necessary to bring vocational education, further education and training into line with practice and to better integrate practice and theory. Thus, both the current requirements of the job market are taken into account and the foundations are laid that the employees are able to qualify further. In order to determine the respective requirements and vocational education profiles, close cooperation between education and business is inevitable:

- **Practical requirements:** The economy can best estimate which qualifications are absolutely essential for which professional
- **Integration:** This applies to both the theoretical and the practical vocational education content. And this should apply to lower, medium and higher qualification requirements.
- **Graded system:** Therefore, it is also necessary to provide training periods that are graduated over time and build up on each other (for example, ½ for basic qualifications, another 1 – 1 ½ years for medium qualifications, etc.) and to conclude with jointly recognized certificates.
- **International level:** The co-determining element of many vocational education profiles should also be the international requirements for many vocational qualifications (such as abilities to comply with internationally required standards, etc.).

Full-coverage system of multi-functional centers (MFC)

The qualification offerings for vocational education in Kosovo are far from being available in the same way nationwide. Too many, especially rural areas are far from offering good prospects especially for young people. In the long term, a Kosovo vocational education system should offer a good solution for the current core problems:

- **Multi-Functional Centers:** With their comprehensive offer at the various vocational qualification levels they offer the best possibility of a quick improvement of the qualifying offerings.
- **Opportunities for all:** All young people willing to get an education should be given the opportunity to receive a qualification. Even in remote areas at least a basic education must be offered on which can be built on. Good job-oriented education should not be a question of the financial resources of students and parents. For young people who are willing to learn, adequate boarding home possibilities etc. should be offered. This especially where there are no offers on site.

- **Fast qualifications:** For the necessary renewal of the economy and its sustainable development, well qualified workers should be available as soon as possible in the future industries. For this reason, short-term qualification measures in the appropriate multifunctional centers of vocational education must be considered in close cooperation with companies that are currently looking for specialists.

Career guidance as an element of active labor market policy

Representative surveys show that in Kosovo, especially the young people – and their parents – have little information about which career paths can be promising and meaningful for them. The information on the needs of the economy is almost unknown and are so far hardly communicated publicly. For this reason, close cooperation between the private sector and the state labor market policy will be necessary in future as well – in mutual interest. To remedy the defect, the following measures are conceivable in the short term:

- **Comprehensive and up-to-date exchange of information** between the private sector and the public employment services regarding current as well as future needs.
- **Information centers or information events** of the employment offices or their subordinate offices for parents and students already at the middle schools, so that they receive decision support for the further life planning of the young people.
- **Advisory system for undergraduate students** regarding their study decisions in close cooperation with universities and the private sector.
- Integration makes sense in the courses of **integrated internships** in order to correct or specify study decisions, if necessary.
- **Advice for unemployed workers** on meaningful retraining or further qualification to increase or facilitate their employment opportunities

Orientation of the entire education system for future-oriented economic growth

The previous education and vocational education policy from kindergarten to university suffered from various problems. These problems are also decisive for a malformation of education and vocational education in terms of their professional applicability. The most important solutions are:

- **Reduction of the urban-rural divide:** Education and vocational education offerings for rural areas has been greatly diminished, leading to growing misery also for the local economy. Many families move to cities or even to other countries because they want to offer their children better educational and career opportunities. This trend must be stopped because, on the one hand, cities can hardly offer the opportunities that internal migrants expect. On the other hand, rural areas need to become more connected to economic development.
- **Quality rather than quantity:** In favor of a rapid growth of education and vocational education opportunities – especially in the private education sector – often waived sufficient quality standards, or the quality requirements were subject only to insufficient review. The existing educational and vocational education institutions should now be checked for the necessary quality requirements. If they meet the requirements, they should be certified with the stipulation of a regular review of compliance with the standards.
- **Symmetrical development of academic and non-academic courses of study:** With a far-reaching fixation on a rapid increase in the number of study places, the impression among the population has been deepened that study is almost unavoidable for the professional career. This is causing a large number of wrong decisions for adolescents and their parents, which has led to a high level of disappointment and frustration – the same is true for the economy.
- In the future, work-related content should be integrated more in primary and secondary education – especially through meaningful experiences in the world of work. In addition, there must be a current information policy on career prospects at all levels.
- **Expansion of public educational offerings** alongside academic programs: In view of the clear focus on academic education, existing alternatives in the non-academic field were not adequately supported and hardly developed into a real alternative. This should now be started as soon as possible. Flanking public awareness campaigns are useful.
- **Process-oriented learning:** Given the rapidly changing world of work and the explosive growth of information, fixing on learning of facts is no longer sufficient. Rather, the educational content should aim at the ability to recognize and shape processes and to be able to cope with future requirements.
- **Learning and working in a team:** In view of the increasingly complex demands of the modern working world, team orientation and teamwork are an indispensable qualification for future employees and employers. These objectives should promptly replace education aimed at competition and isolation.
- **Self-responsibility and risk-taking** should become integrated education goals in vocational schools, high schools and universities. Especially in Kosovo with the given high density of micro and small businesses, the entrepreneurial learning and culture is a necessary building block of school education and, above all, of vocational education and further.



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