



# National Report

Albania



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## Introduction

The EPIC project was structured in recognition of the transformative role Active Citizenship can play in society, laying the ground for citizen-led actions and initiatives to address social issues and challenges operating as a driver of change. Moreover, it perceives Social Entrepreneurship as a form of business operation that is interrelated with and an expression of Active citizenship. It thus mirrors and builds on the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation – EASI's (2020) view that “Social enterprise emergence is reinforced by the social and civic commitment of groups of citizens. Citizen-driven initiatives whereby groups of citizens have set up organisations, often as volunteers and with few resources at their disposal, to address new needs and societal challenges and/or integrate disadvantaged people”.

Fusing the principles and concepts of active citizenship and social entrepreneurship, the project will work towards setting the groundwork and empowering youth workers and youth in Western Balkans to promote a more active mindset that will encourage and support young people to identify social issues and structure ideas for social enterprises to address them.

EPIC project objectives are to:

- Empower youth workers, young people, youth organisations, and young entrepreneurs to develop their social entrepreneurial skills and competencies to develop social enterprises and boost civic participation and active citizenship
- Identify stressing social issues and challenges that require citizen and youth-led responses to be addressed

- Raise youth workers' understanding of key social issues and their conception of what social entrepreneurship is and the potential it has for meaningful, sustainable impact and civic participation. By integrating training, support, and advocacy, EPIC is dedicated to nurturing a new generation of socially conscious entrepreneurs, poised to make a lasting positive impact on their communities.

The EPIC project's research was guided by KMOP – Education and Innovation Hub and conducted by the partner countries in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosova. The research is based on a structured approach for the development of a comprehensive Training Programme to educate and elevate the conception and understanding of both Youth workers and youth on Active Citizenship and Social Entrepreneurship.

This methodology unfolds through desk and field research, reviewing existing literature, and using focus groups and surveys to capture youth workers and young people's insights into social entrepreneurship in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The results from the desk and field research are reflected in this national report.

The Desk Research involved the analysis of existing policies, practices, and reports on the field in Albania. After the desk search, a focus group was organised with youth workers which gave insights into the needs, challenges, and opportunities in youth social entrepreneurship. The participants shared their personal experiences and professional observations on the topic.

Additionally, two surveys were conducted in Albania, 1 survey with 25 youth workers and 1 survey with 29 young people. The survey unfolded a broad understanding of the challenges and needs related to social entrepreneurship among youth and youth workers.

## Summary of the legislative and institutional framework for social entrepreneurship

The first steps for drafting a legal framework on social entrepreneurship in Albania started in 2010 at the initiative of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities (now the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare). In 2016, the Albanian government approved Law 65/2016 "On Social Enterprises in the Republic of Albania".

Since 2016, the legal package was completed, respectively with the following decisions and directives:

- Decision No. 16/2017 "On determining the procedures for carrying out the control of the activity of the social enterprise";
- Decision No. 16/2018 "For the approval of the list of activities carried out by social enterprises";
- Decision No. 56/2018 "On the determination of concrete categories of disadvantage groups";
- Directive No. 607/2018 "On the procedures and documentation necessary for obtaining the status of social enterprise";
- Directive No. 677/2018 "On determining the forms, deadlines, and methods of periodic reporting, for the activities carried out and categories of persons employed by social enterprises";
- Decision No. 789/2018 "On the creation of the fund in support of social enterprises and forms of support through subsidies for social enterprises";
- Directive No. 636/2018 "On the approval of the standard regulation for the operation of enterprises social";

- Directive No. 2/2019 "On the creation of the register of social enterprises and the rules for keeping it".
- Directive No. 376/2020 "For the granting criteria and the monitoring mechanism of state aid to social enterprise"
- Decision No. 174/2023 "For determining the forms of support through subsidy for social enterprises, for the period 2023-2025"

According to the law, the status of social enterprise can be obtained only by non-profit organisations that provide goods and services in accordance with community needs in the sectors of: social services, health services, culture and education , promoting tourism and environmental protection, employment qualification mediation, and youth employment.

In terms of economic criteria, the law envisages that social enterprises will constantly produce goods and/or provide services. In their second and third year, at least 20% and then 30% of their income has to be generated from economic activity, respectively. Besides the involvement of volunteers, a social enterprise should employ at least three full-time paid workers. Also related to the social criteria, the law imposes that 30% of the employees must come from marginalised groups (Article 9). According to the law, despite the fact that the social enterprise is obliged to use "the profit entirely for the development and expansion of its activity" (Article 17), also they must be taxed for the profit, according to the legislation in force on tax income.

Social enterprises are recognised in two of the Albanian government's policy documents: the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2023-2030 and the Investment and Business Strategy for 2021 - 2027. It acknowledges the need for social enterprise development and promotion, which are envisaged through the design and implementation of social entrepreneurship measures and the creation

of conditions that would foster employment in the third sector. The second policy document recognises that ongoing dialogue amongst all stakeholders is required to develop sustainable and inclusive business models and a broader range of business forms.

## Summary of the policy initiatives for youth on active citizenship and social entrepreneurship

Law No. 75/2019 and the National Youth Strategy 2022-2029 remain the main legal documents that promote an increase in youth participation. Law No. 75/2019 defines and recognises the mechanism of “structured dialogue” as a tool for youth participation. On the other hand, the National Youth Strategy 2022-2029 in its vision statement states as a priority the meaningful participation of young people in local and national decision-making, in youth organisations, and in community life.

The strategy has three main policy objectives, each with several specific objectives. Policy objective number one is focused on youth participation and states that: “young women and men actively participate in society and feel empowered to express themselves with their voice. Intersectional youth policies are co-ordinated, based on analysis, with well-funded mechanisms”.

The specific objectives 1.1 emphasises: “Young people are well-informed about opportunities to learn, to gain organisational and volunteering experience and to participate actively in civic, social and political life”<sup>1</sup>. The Authority responsible for the implementation of the strategy, The State Minister for Youth and Children, and the National

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<sup>1</sup> <https://riniafemijet.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Strategjia-Kombetare-e-Rinise-2022-2029-1.pdf> pg. 45

Youth Agency are the main authorities for the implementation of policy objective number one focusing on participation.

Under specific objective 2.1 in the Strategy is highlighted as a challenge - extended work for the spread of social enterprises based on the directives drawn up in relation to this form of business.

The Law on Youth in Albania (2019), which highlights the value of young participation in decision-making processes, is one example of a legal framework and regulation that has been created to facilitate youth participation. However, there is still work to be done in terms of how these rules and regulations will be put into practice and how they will affect how young people are empowered. Between urban and rural communities, where access to resources and opportunity might differ greatly, there are disparities in youth engagement as well. The Law on Youth 75/2019 encourages young people to engage in social and political life, but there are no specific articles on political representation.

Law 75/2019 stipulates the creation of local youth councils as well. The Local Youth Council serves as a liaison mechanism between the municipality and the youth community, to identify the problems and challenges faced by young people in the territory where they live, and also to increase their involvement in policy-making. Local Youth Councils are also important structures. They serve as a bridge between the municipality and young people, highlighting the problems and challenges faced by young people in the area where they live. The number of municipalities that have established Local Youth Councils is currently low.

Moreover, The National Youth Council in Albania is an advisory body that operates under the minister responsible for youth. It is composed of young people, representatives of youth-focused organisations and representatives from central and local institutions, including the

National Youth Agency, with the aim of consulting on youth policies and strategies.

Civic education is an integral part of the curriculum in Albanian schools. It aims to equip students with knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as skills for active participation in democratic processes. The legal framework in Albania provides the right to education for all children, regardless of their needs and special abilities. On the other hand, the youth sector has promoted and mainstreamed civic education through non-formal education and donor-funded projects. These efforts aim to foster an environment that encourages active participation in society and promotes lifelong learning among Albanian citizens.

## Opportunities for social entrepreneurship for youth

Entrepreneurship education is a recent field in Albania and is being developed to enhance students' entrepreneurial attitudes and skills. The goal is to support students to develop an independent and versatile approach by growing the spirit of entrepreneurship. Albania has adopted some European policies and frameworks regarding entrepreneurship education, such as the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp), which defines 15 competencies that make up the entrepreneurial mindset and behaviour.

Albania hosts many international organisations that aim to support the government and the market to improve youth employment and youth entrepreneurship. Some of the most prominent are as follows.

**EU for Innovation** – This is an initiative that aims to support the development of innovative businesses in Albania and offers a range of services, including training, mentoring, and funding opportunities for

young entrepreneurs. The website provides information about programmemes, events, and success stories.

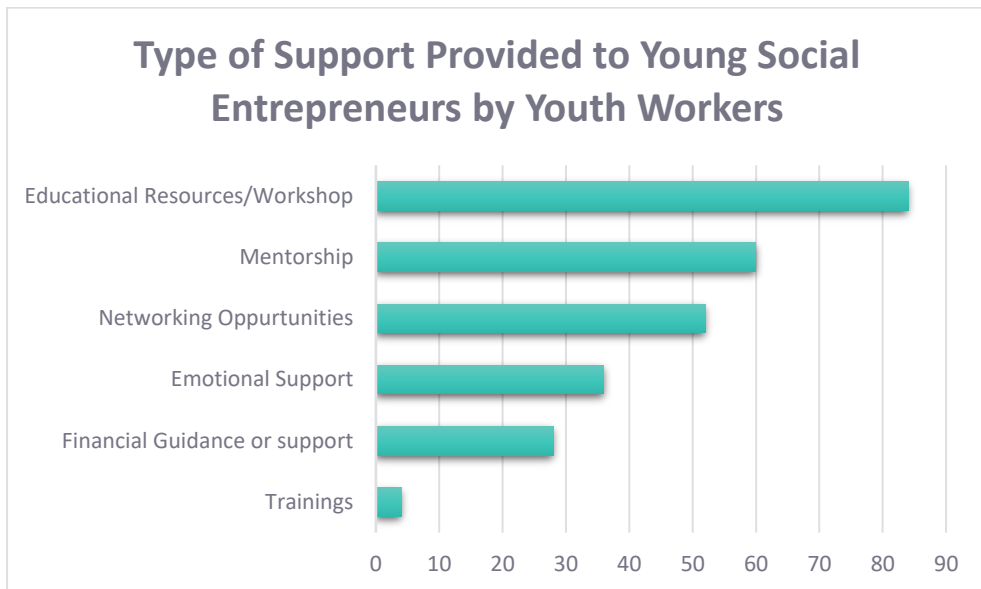
**Regional Start-up Ecosystem Development** – This page provides information on the regional start-up ecosystem development programmeme, which is designed to support the development of start-ups in the Western Balkans. The programmeme offers training, mentoring, and networking opportunities for young entrepreneurs, as well as access to funding and other resources.

**Albanian American Development Foundation** – This foundation provides support for young entrepreneurs in Albania through a range of programmemes, including business incubation, mentoring, and access to funding. The website provides information on their programmemes, success stories, and other resources for young entrepreneurs.

**GIZ** – This is a German development agency that provides support for young entrepreneurs in Albania and other countries. The website provides information on programmemes, success stories, and other resources for young entrepreneurs.

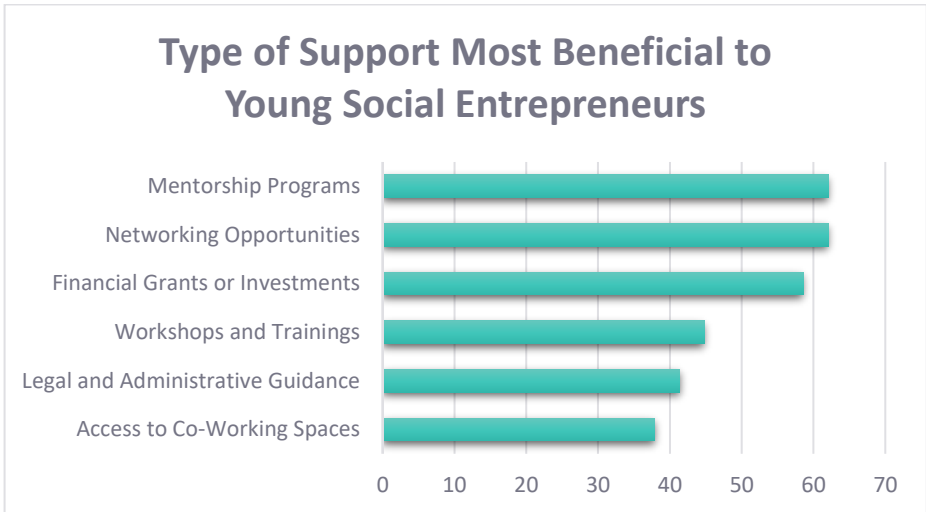
**Youth workers in the Focus Group highlighted some opportunities provided by various entities to help young people start social enterprises. Although, there are still only a few opportunities specifically dedicated to social ventures.** For example, the Partners Albania organisation offers confiscated properties from organised crime, to be used by social entrepreneurs, even though sometimes they encounter difficulties as the former owner’s relatives create pressure against the use of these facilities. Furthermore, there are other opportunities offered by other donors that support through startup competitions or other forms. For example, some embassies like the British Embassy offer opportunities to young people in rural areas to start entrepreneurship initiatives which could be even social ones. The

initiative has started as a way to stop migration in the areas involved. However, there is a lot to be done in order to inform young people about these opportunities and how to exploit them.



*Figure 1 Type of support provided to young social entrepreneurs by youth workers*

**Additional support to young social entrepreneurs is that coming from youth workers. According to the survey conducted with youth workers, 84% of them responded that they support young social entrepreneurs with educational resources/workshops, 60% with mentorship, 52 % with networking opportunities, and only 4% with training.**



*Figure 2 Type of support most beneficial to young social entrepreneurs*

On the other hand, young people responded that the most beneficial support to them are mentorship programmes and networking opportunities (62%), financial grants or investments (59%), and workshops or training (45%). There seems to be a communication gap between youth workers and young people, preventing youth from fully utilizing the support available to them.

## Challenges for social entrepreneurship for youth

While a significant step has been made by introducing a Law on Social Enterprises, the sector’s representatives are not pleased with its scope and have advocated amendments. But very few changes have been affected; the law remains largely the same. Furthermore, they stressed that current legislation overlaps two different types of activities such as social services and work integration. This approach excludes many social enterprises that either provide social services or integrate marginalised groups but conduct other economic activities. The state disregards the importance of economic aspects of social enterprises

that can strengthen their sustainability and capacity to meet social criteria. Another legal issue concerns entities that fulfil social enterprise criteria according to the EU definition but are not able to associate with the sector in Albania.

**Developing social entrepreneurship ventures by young people in Albania is notably challenging. Based on the input of youth workers involved in the focus group,** achieving the status of a social enterprise requires affiliation with an organisation. It becomes the responsibility of the organisation to register it and be taxed as a business with a VAT number. In this case, there is no benefit in having the status of a social entrepreneurship. If the organisation associates the name with the social enterprise, it makes the relationship with different donors more difficult. Having the status of being a social enterprise seems to have more limitations than benefits. It seems very unlikely to succeed, except when there is support from EU funds.

Based on the legal framework, social enterprises must have at least 30 percent of the staff from vulnerable groups amongst their employees. However, there is a gap in the law because there is no way to prove that a person belongs to certain vulnerable groups because it is based on self-declaration. For example, if someone is unemployed, he/she is consequently registered at the labour office. But, for some other categories, it is difficult to have a confirmation document.

On the other hand, the legal framework is not clear and there are no tax reductions for social enterprises. Social enterprises are treated as regular businesses which also have penalties if they don't comply with law articles. For these reasons, organisations hesitate to apply to get the status of a social enterprise.

Moreover, to obtain the status of a social enterprise, you must apply to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. This Ministry has declared in 2019 to give an annual amount of 150 million ALL to be distributed to

social ventures. But there has never been transparency in this aspect and there are no public announcements about where these funds go .

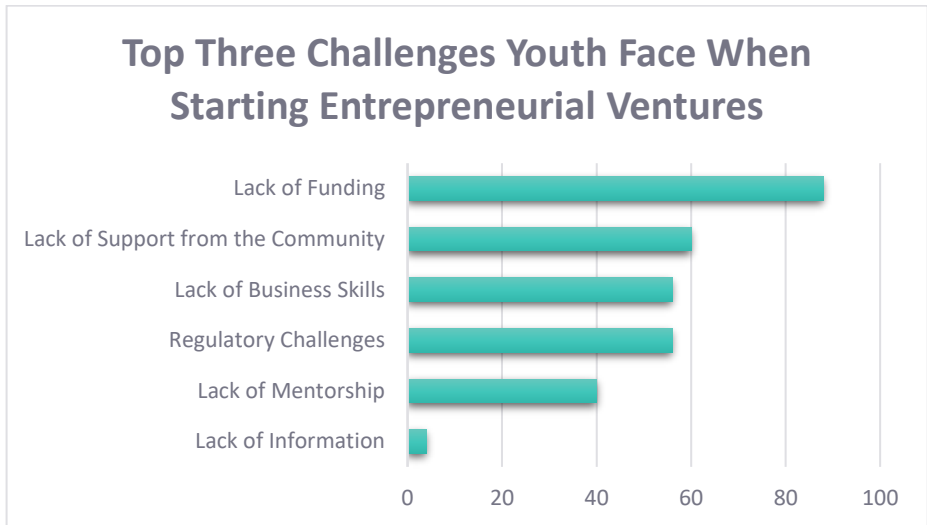
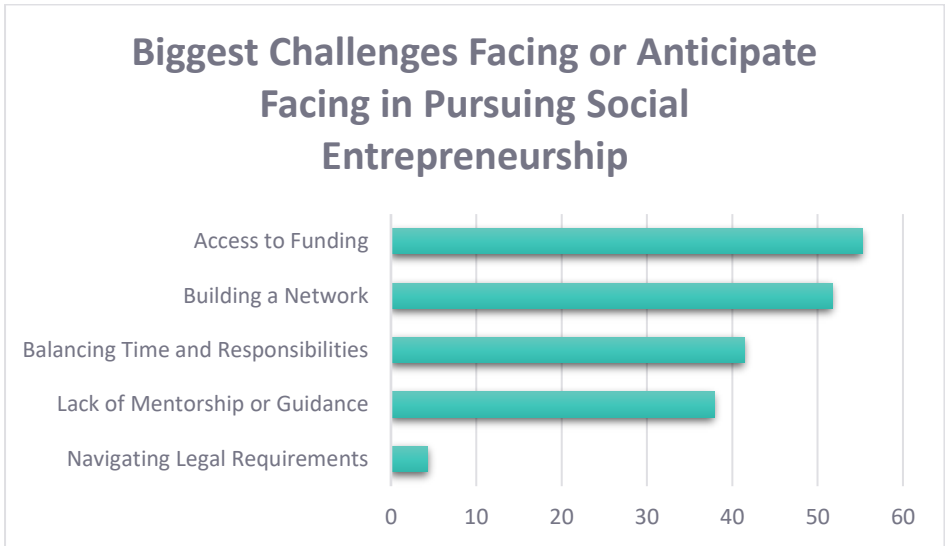


Figure 3: Challenges youth face when starting entrepreneurial ventures

The survey evidenced other challenges faced by young social entrepreneurs in Albania. According to youth workers, lack of funding (88%), lack of support from the community (60%), and lack of business skills and regulatory challenges (56%) are the main challenges faced by young social entrepreneurs.



*Figure 4 Challenges facing or anticipate facing in pursuing social entrepreneurship*

From young people's point of view, access to funding (55%), building a network (52%), and balancing time and responsibilities (41%) are the main challenges when it comes to undertaking such initiatives.

## The role of local government and educational institutions in supporting youth social entrepreneurship

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is the main institution responsible for drafting policies for the promotion and development of social enterprises.

The State Social Service is an institution subordinate to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, responsible for implementing the policies of the ministry.

An important role that the local government units have:

1. Local government units support and implement social enterprise development policies in the territory within their jurisdiction.
2. Local government units enhance social enterprises' involvement in public procurement procedures, according to the conditions of the legislation in power

**Although the roles and functions of each public institution may seem clear and beneficial to young entrepreneurs, youth workers share a different opinion. They emphasised in the focus group that very little is done on this topic by the government.**

They cited that the government should organise consultation and take into account the suggestions given, not as they did in 2015- 2016 when the law was about to be established. Local governments could provide rent-free facilities to start social enterprises or expand their activities to the existing ones. Another way could be to have social enterprises in the public buildings which would be a huge support. Or, cover health insurance and social contributions for a certain period of time and even pay first salaries till the venture progresses.

The government should promote social enterprises by changing the legal framework which lacks even the definition of a social enterprise and encourage social enterprises through supporting policies. Local government could search for best practices and apply them to our local situation.

Furthermore, the documentation required for the application to obtain the status is problematic. The instructions are evasive and there is a lack of transparency. A dedicated transparent institution should be created to fully help social enterprises and support them through their progress. Even though public entities have the role of helping and guiding social entrepreneurs, there have been cases of individuals who have judged people leading these enterprises or have created different

stereotypes about the purpose of these businesses. In this case, training and consultation is necessary even for civil servants on the topic.

**Young people were very clear in the survey according to this issue.**

They emphasised the importance of local government fulfilling their role through:

- Financial support through grants or other mechanism
- Policy Development and mentorship
- Curricula update in schools/universities on social entrepreneurship
- Legal framework change to support young entrepreneurs
- Tax exclusion
- Low-interest loans
- Creating a network and mapping of social entrepreneurship
- Access to resources like co-working spaces and technology
- Simplified regulatory processes, along with offering awards, support through competitions, and public recognition
- Involvement in decision-making processes

**Regarding the educational institutions,** they cited the need to be helpful through:

- Mentorship and guidance programmes, trainings, boot camps, workshops
- Spreading information and knowledge
- Creating networking opportunities
- Youth exchanges to share best practices
- Raising awareness and advocating for better support
- Specialised courses and other activities focused on social entrepreneurship. It is also important to teach entrepreneurship at a young age in order for the youth to create that

entrepreneurial mindset. It could be organised with incubation programmes and run Hackathons so that the young people can pitch their socially impactful ideas.

Through this support, young social entrepreneurs may be inspired and motivated to pursue their ventures.

## **Recommendations for support mechanisms and educational/training resources for young people to get involved in social entrepreneurship**

**During the focus group, youth workers highlighted various recommendations for fostering social entrepreneurship among young people.**

One of their recommendations was for local government and public institutions to raise the capacities of their staff in regards to application for funds on EU programmes and later on to distribute it to young social entrepreneurs in order to initiate and progress their ideas.

Most importantly, there should be a change in legislation to encourage young people to undertake such initiatives.

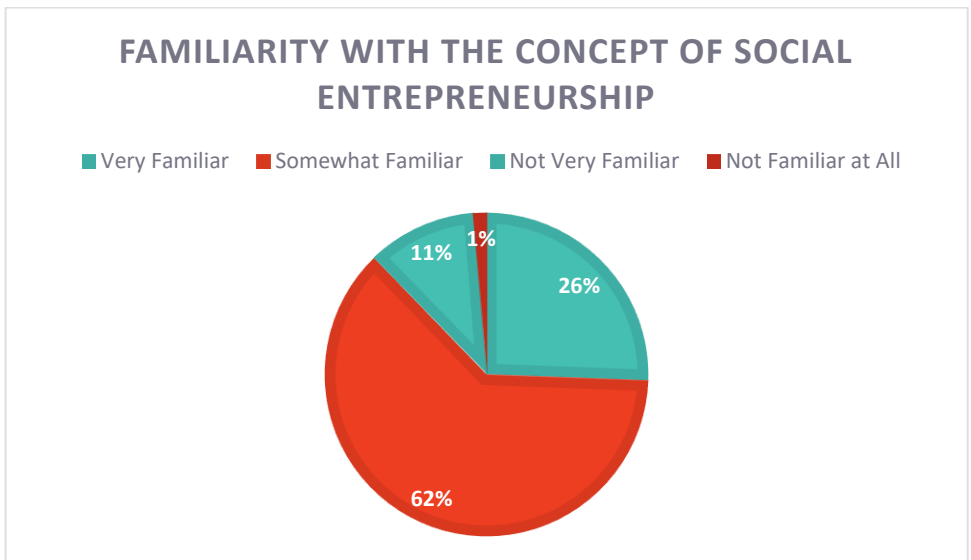
Moreover, the mentality about the mission of social enterprises and the work they do should change as well. Awareness raising campaigns, workshops, training are a must to support social ventures.

Also, it is of great importance to incorporate the development of social enterprises and voluntary work in the school curriculum. It could be added to the subject career orientation that is already established. Additionally, administrative staff, teachers, and parents have to be trained on the topic.

**According to the survey findings, youth workers recommended the following actions:**

- Form a union or association which fosters new social entrepreneurship ventures
- Better legal instruments in their support
- Community positive pressure to consume products or get services offered by social enterprises
- Conducting meetings with different stakeholders such as policymakers, business actors, youth workers, NGOs, and young people to support new and the progress of such initiatives
- Establishing youth-focused funds and offering microfinancing options
- Building a community through incubators, accelerators, and peer networks can facilitate collaboration and shared learning.
- Simplified registration processes and tax incentives
- Providing access to technology and innovation hubs will help young entrepreneurs develop and test their ideas.
- Enhancing visibility through media exposure, awards, and public awareness campaigns could give recognition for their efforts.

## Conclusions



*Figure 5 Challenges facing or anticipate facing in pursuing social entrepreneurship*

Based on the survey conducted, only 26 % of the young people were very familiar with the concept of social entrepreneurship, 62% were somewhat familiar and 11 % were not very familiar. 76% were not involved in social entrepreneurship ventures.

48% of youth workers as the survey indicates were not very familiar with this concept.

According to these data, there is an urge to raise the capacities through training, workshops, or courses regarding social entrepreneurship ventures. The respondent also emphasised the importance of network creation. Tailored educational resources would enhance their effectiveness in fostering social entrepreneurship among youth.

On the other hand, young people require to be supported through mentorship and guidance to develop their skills and initiate such ventures.

Government and public institutions should elaborate the policies, be more transparent on funds dedicated to social entrepreneurship, and have consultation with stakeholders to enhance social entrepreneurship initiatives. Yet, there should be changes in the legislation to enhance the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Mapping social entrepreneurship ventures and promoting success stories will have a great impact on young social entrepreneurs and encourage another approach among them.

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## Annexe

### *Best practices and initiatives in active citizenship and social entrepreneurship among youth*

Name:	New York Tirana Bagels
Country:	Albania
Implemented/promoted by:	Centre Different and Equal,
Time frame/duration of the best practice:	Ongoing
The implementers of the best practice are:	Limited liability company under its NPO founder
Level of Geographical Implementation:	Local
Description of the best practice:	New York Tirana Bagels is a social enterprise established by the centre Different and Equal, whose mission is to support vulnerable women and children in Albania. New York Tirana Bagels is registered as a limited liability company under its NPO founder. This is the first bagel shop in Albania that offers authentic American bagels, sandwiches, cookies, and other confectionary, besides functioning as a coffee shop. It provides a delivery service

	<p>and catering for different receptions, including business lunches, and is listed on Baboon, an Albanian food ordering and delivery app. The company currently operates in Tirana only. Target customers are businesses, civil society organisations, embassies, and families. New York Tirana Bagels appreciates the collaboration of different businesses and organisations that are loyal customers aware of its social mission. The company employs five full-time workers and three volunteers during the end-of-year holidays. Employees are people from marginalised groups such as unemployed women, female victims of violence, and returned im migrants. The company’s initial investment was around 25,000 EUR, which was raised through a fundraising campaign.</p>
<p>Impact and added value to the community:</p>	<p>The majority of profits help support female victims of violence and children in need, which is also the company’s social mission, while the remainder is reinvested in the company.</p>

	<p>Decisions are made by the limited liability company's administrator and Different and Equal's members. The asset lock clause is explicitly defined in the limited liability company's founding documents. According to the company's administrator, the Law On Social Enterprises has several restrictions. A major concern reflects the fact that social enterprises set up as limited liability companies are not legally acknowledged as such. New York Tirana Bagels would like to be supported by the state with concrete financial incentives and soft loans to increase its chances of surviving in the marketplace.</p>
<p>Website (if any):</p>	<p><a href="http://newyorktiranabagels.com/">http://newyorktiranabagels.com/</a></p>
<p>Annexes (project photos, anecdotal short stories, short quotes about the project impact.):</p>	

<p>Name:</p>	<p>"Ke Buono" Confectionery</p>
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Country:	Albania
Implemented/ Promoted by:	ENGIM and Qendra Sociale Murialdo
Time frame/duration of the best practice:	2018 - Ongoing
The implementers of the best practice are:	Social Enterprise
Level of Geographical Implementation:	Local, Fier, Albania
Description of the best practice:	<p>The first Albanian example of an asset confiscated by criminal groups and reused for social purposes. The enterprise was created by civil society organisations "Engim" and "Social Center Murialdo", on a property confiscated by organised crime in Fier. KeBuono! was established within the project "C.A.U.S.E - Use of Confiscated Properties for Social Enterprise", implemented by Partners Albania, and funded by European Union. In the past, this space hosted a disco and a nightclub . Today it is a meeting place that hosts a professional pastry workshop. «KeBuono» organises training courses in basic</p>

	<p>pastry-making techniques. The course lasts 200 hours, 75% of which takes place in the pastry laboratory with the aim of giving all the possible tools to gain confidence in this profession and facilitate the path into the world of work.</p>
Impact and added value to the community:	<p>“KeBuono” transforms cooking and baking into opportunities to promote social inclusion for people in need, enabling them to gain employment and regain their dignity and role within society. The enterprise supports and strengthens self-confidence by offering a job and helping young people at risk of crime, those serving probation as well as women who are victims of violence, divorced or married to abusive men, and sentenced to prison.</p> <p>Engim, in collaboration with the Social Center Murialdo and the San Zeno Foundation at the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, awards scholarships to women in socio-economic difficulty. For those who have benefited from a scholarship, there is also a five-month work grant in a</p>

	bakery or pastry shop in the city of Fier.
Website (if any):	N/A
Annexes (project photos, anecdotal short stories, short quotes about the project impact.):	