

A DETAILED ANALYSIS
REGISTERED LONG-TERM
UNEMPLOYED JOBSEEKERS
IN ALBANIA





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This analysis report was carried out within the frames of “Supported Continuous Unemployed Learning” (SCUL) project, financed by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), implemented jointly by the National Agency for Employment and Skills and UNDP Albania

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Abbreviations

ADISA	Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services in Albania
ALMP	Active Labour Market Programme
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit / German Development Cooperation
INSTAT	National Institute of Statistics
LEED	Local Employment and Economic Development
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WAPES	World Association of Public Employment Services

1

Introduction

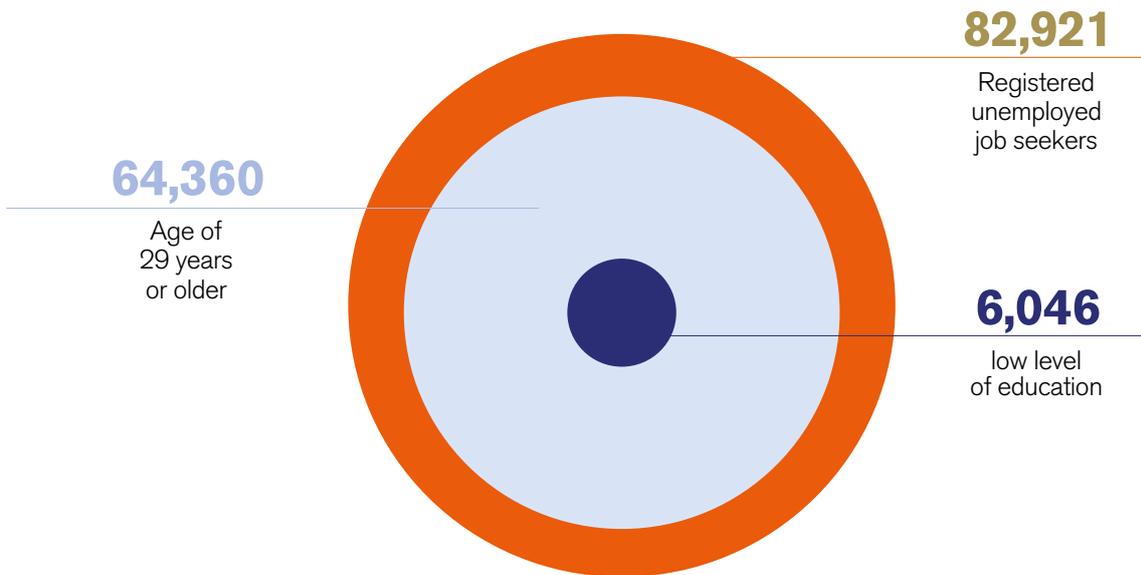
1. Introduction

Employment in general and, more specifically, employment of vulnerable groups including the long-term unemployed, have a significant impact upon poverty reduction and social protection. Although Albania has made considerable progress in terms of employment policies and active labour market measures, bringing them closer to European Union (EU) models, the group comprising adults 29 years of age and above who are long-term unemployed with low education persistently remains unintegrated into the labour market.

Consequently, such individuals may become overlooked and become stuck between social assistance and employment services, exceeding the five-year period for receipt of social assistance and remaining on the list of registered unemployed job seekers. Thus, there is much concern over increased vulnerabilities, exclusion from the labour market and such individuals falling into, or falling even deeper into, poverty. Therefore, a thorough analysis of this group and its characteristics is required in order to better identify their needs and constraints, and tailor employment policies addressing their needs for upskilling.

Data from the National Agency of Employment and Skills (NAES) show that in 2020 there was a total of 82,921 registered unemployed job seekers. Of these, 64,360 were 29 years or older, and 6,046 had a low level of education (less than primary 9-year education). The total number of long-term (> 1 year) registered unemployed job seekers was 37,788, and of these 26,633 were in receipt of economic aid. The latest data from NAES (April 2021) show that there was a total of 5,570 registered unemployed job seekers of age 29 years and above with education only of up to six years. Even those who have completed lower secondary education were reported to lack professional and technical, as well as soft, skills. These adult long-term unemployed with low education have the most difficulty in finding employment and are currently unsupported by Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) or targeted services.

Despite the existence of ALMPs, Albania offers limited targeted support to low-skilled unemployed people, and thus there is a need for capacity development at the institutional level. For this to be successful, an integrated approach is required, both in the analysis of the target group, the needs (educational and socio-economic) and service delivery. Employment services should be complemented with other social services and specific procedures developed to support the target group by creating a system of referral to other social institutions in charge of complementary services. This approach is expected to create bridges between different key actors in the provision of social services, with the long-term ambition of building



an integrated case management system. The goal is to establish a structure and enhance the capacities to address the specific needs of the target group, triggering systemic upskilling mechanisms in the long term, and progressively reduce the size of the group and facilitate its transition towards the labour market.

The purpose of the present report is to provide a detailed descriptive analysis through quantitative and qualitative analysis of the situation, size and social and demographic characteristics of adult long-term registered unemployed job seekers with low levels of education. The report uses data from NAES and focus groups held in three regions: Elbasan, Korca and Tirana. A complete analysis requires analysis of not only the group of registered long-term unemployed adults with low education, but also the characteristics of the labour market and of the legal framework and employment policies to address the existing gaps and venues of collaboration. Analysis of the labour market is essential to provide insights into the opportunities and prospects offered for the different groups, and the problems that arise. Analysis of the legal framework and labour market policies is also required to set the stage for the labour market and unveil the supportive policies and gaps in legislation and policies. In this regard, a multi-faceted analysis provides a deep understanding of the different aspects that influence employment and unemployment, including long-term unemployment. It also serves to show how different groups with a focus on the long-term unemployed may be supported through various services in order to be integrated into the labour market.

The structure of the present report is organised into the following sections: Section 2 provides the institutional and legal framework, Section 3, the methodological framework, Section 4, an analysis of the labour market, Section 5, quantitative analysis of the registered unemployed job seekers based on the NAES data, and Section 6, a qualitative analysis based on the conducted focus groups, while Section 7 discusses the limitations of the study, and Section 8 provides conclusions and recommendations.

Main sub-categories of the study

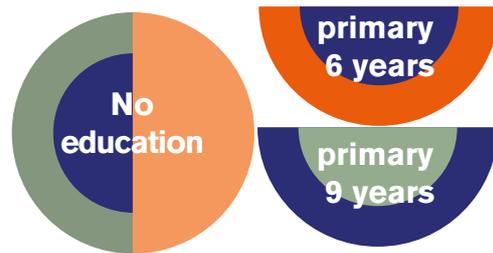
Registered unemployed jobseekers by age-group (in %) 29 + (vulnerability type)



Registered unemployed jobseekers by age-group (in %) 29 +



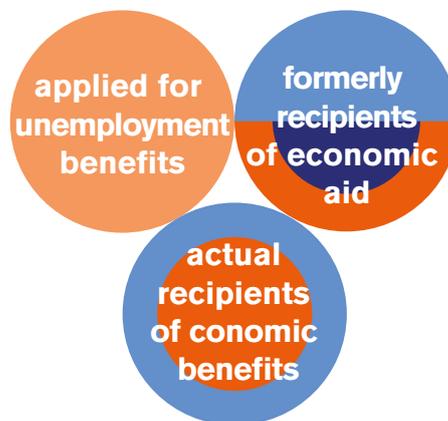
Education level of registered Unemployed Jobseekers (in %) 29 +



Registered unemployed jobseekers by age-group (in %) 29 + (unemployment duration)



Registered unemployed jobseekers 29 years and over, with education up to 6 and 9 years by category of benefits:



Roadmap of the project

Registered jobseekers (Detailed qualitative & quantitative study)

Low educated registered jobseekers represent the target group of intervention, being among the most difficult unemployed to activate and to



Develop an assessment tool

(assess literacy, numeracy and digital skills) and conduct with the identified target group.



Develop basic skills and education through tailored flexible curricula

literacy and numeracy
basic digital skills



Support for additional vocational education (VTCs)

The action offers support to acquire basic education, in order for them to later access vocational education or other specialized learning opportunities.



Facilitate the transition in the labour market

Establish capacities to progressively facilitate target group's transition towards the labour market





2

Institutional and legal framework

2. Institutional and legal framework

Albania's institutional and legal framework on employment is comprehensive. The National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2019–2022¹ sets the stage for the priorities and policy making. It aims at increasing the level of employment, enabling a gradual transition from passive unemployment policies to stimulating active employment, and places due emphasis on the development of the labour force in the country.

The employment and skills strategy focuses on four strategic objectives and addresses them through coherent policy actions and consideration of labour demand, supply and social integration gaps. It encompasses objectives that focus on vulnerable groups, including those with low levels of education and qualifications, quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) for young people and adults, promoting social inclusion and territorial cohesion, and strengthening the labour market governance and qualification systems.

Given the wide scope of NESS, the inclusion of long-term unemployed adults with low education levels and qualifications is fragmented among the different groups, and is not captured in its entirety. This group is partially captured in the group of disadvantaged persons in the labour market and which includes those with low levels of education and qualifications, and vulnerable groups including those living in remote areas, and partially captured in adults in need of VET. NESS 2019–2020 in one of its strategic objectives focuses upon promoting decent job opportunities through productive labour market policies that aim to improve employment prospects targeting those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market, especially individuals with low levels of education and qualification, women, youth, other vulnerable groups and persons living in areas not covered by employment services. Thus, it foresees the design of a new framework for employment promotion that ensures the use of more efficient policies for the labour market. This strategic priority focuses on achieving modernisation of the Public Employment Service, expansion of the range and outreach of services and ALMPs, and development and implementation of a monitoring model for ALMPs sensitive to gender issues.

Another important strategic objective of NESS 2019–2020 focuses on providing quality VET for young people and adults.² The aim is to increase the level of participation and to bridge the gap that exists in comparison to countries in the European Union (EU). During the

1. National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019–2022, approved by DCM no. 659, dated 10.10.2019, <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2019/144/c5038c34-622d-4cbc-a597-40e2dadf4eef;q=144%20tetor%202019>

2. Priority B in the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2019–2022.

academic year 2020–2021, the total number of students enrolled in secondary education was 107,989, of whom 88,965 (82.4 percent) were enrolled in general secondary education and 19,024 (17.6 percent) in Vocational Education (VE). Meanwhile, in the EU,³ 48 percent of all students at upper secondary levels were enrolled in VE. This target will be achieved by increasing the quality of results, preparing qualifications for priority economic sectors, improving the image of quality and of the importance of the education and vocational training system and anticipating the needs for skills. It also includes optimisation of the VET providers at the individual and network levels to ensure a qualitative and diverse offer, improving the VET information management system, providing VET based on the quality assurance framework in the system, strengthening connections between education and work, while aiming to facilitate the labour market transition, and professional development of VET staff.

The third strategic objective of NESS 2019–2020 is to promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion, recognising the need for reducing social and educational gaps for the poor and vulnerable and between urban and rural areas. This objective addresses existing gaps in these areas and aims to reduce the social exclusion of vulnerable groups, such as low-skilled individuals, long-term unemployed, women contributing to the family and young people living in urban and rural areas. This objective focuses on coordination of the social assistance programmes and active labour market measures through strategies based on a common system of obligations. As such, it aims to expand the coverage, inclusion and effectiveness of employment and education and vocational training services for young people and adults, including the population at risk of exclusion. To this end, several measures are to be taken, such as assessing the needs for employment and training services in uncovered areas, drafting a plan for the territorial extension of employment and VET services in uncovered areas, and implementing a service plan and VET for those areas.

Within this framework, substantial reforms regarding employment services and employment promotion programmes have taken place and been set in motion by Law no. 15/2019 'On the Promotion of Employment'. This law defines the objectives and functions of the public system of employment services, active and passive programmes of the labour market, vocational training and the institutions responsible for their management. The new law aims to introduce a new model of employment services that foster programmes for job creation and include a wider range of ALMPs than those provided in the previous law. These programmes aim to retain employees in the labour market, support unemployed job seekers to enter the market, increase productivity and income from work and improve the functioning of the labour market.⁴ A major breakthrough has been the focus on individual job seekers rather than on companies. Individual needs of the job seekers are identified through the individual employment plan. Registered job seekers are divided into three categories based on their level of employability classified as easily employable, moderately employable, and vulnerable, the hardest group to employ. This last category is required to attend a mandatory Start Smart two-week programme on job searching and soft skills offered by the VET centres operated by NAES. The new system enhances the matching process in finding the most suitable em-

3. Data refer to 2017: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20191014-1>

4. Law no. 15/2019 'On employment promotion', article 6.

ployer. It also increases the pool of partner employees, by putting a cap on the total number of job seekers placed with a single employer. It also diversifies the typology of employers including those from the private sector, non-public sector and NGOs, and provides additional benefits for compounding vulnerabilities and additional support for those who are left behind.

The redesigned ALMPs are more in line with those offered in the EU. A set of five ALMPs exists that are redesigned based on the previous versions and international best practices, and two additional ones as a result of COVID-19. ALMPs in Albania include: wage subsidy programme for vulnerable groups, on-the-job training programme, and internship programme for recent graduates (DCM no. 17, 2020),⁵ community employment programme for long-term unemployed (DCM no. 535, 2020),⁶ and the self-employment programme (DCM no. 348, 2020).⁷ In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a wage subsidy for formal workers and a formalisation subsidy for previously informal workers (DCM no. 608, 2020)⁸ were introduced in late 2020. Finally, short vocational training courses are offered by NAES through the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs).

Although the group of long-term unemployed adults with low education is not fully captured in any of the ALMPs, different segments of this group are mostly captured in the wage subsidy programme (DCM no. 17), which is designed to provide employment for unemployed job seekers who face issues in accessing the job market. Among the eligible beneficiaries⁹ into which long-term unemployed adults with low education may fall include long-term unemployed job seekers, job seekers over the age of 45 years, unqualified unemployed job seekers, and job seekers who receive economic assistance, prioritising the beneficiaries of economic assistance, who are expected to leave the economic assistance scheme in the

5. DCM no. 17, 15.01.2020, article 4/ç: 'For the procedures, criteria and rules for the implementation of the programmes that promote employment through employment, training in the work and the vocational practices': <http://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VKM-17-date-15012020.pdf>

6. DCM no. 535, 08.07.2020 'On the procedures, criteria and rules for implementation of the public work programme in the community,' <http://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VKM-Nr.535-date-08.07.2020.pdf>

7. DCM no. 348, 29.04.2020 'On the procedures, criteria and rules for implementation of employment promotion programmes through self-employment,' <http://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VKM-348-dt29042020.pdf>

8. DCM no. 608, 2020 'On the procedures, criteria and regulations for implementation of the employment promotion programmes, through the employment of unemployed persons as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,' <http://akpa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/VKM-608-e-C19.pdf>

9. The full list of eligible beneficiaries includes: young people under the age of 29, long-term unemployed job seekers, job seekers over the age of 45, unqualified unemployed job seekers, unemployed job seekers, returned from no more than two years of emigration, job seekers who receive economic assistance, prioritising the beneficiaries of economic assistance, who are expected to leave the economic assistance scheme in the respective year and following year, job seekers who receive unemployment benefits for more than three months, persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, victims of gender-based violence and of domestic violence, job seekers from the Roma and Egyptian communities, persons who have completed a vocational training course or training programme through work and are still unemployed six months after completing the course.

respective year and subsequent year, and job seekers from the Roma and Egyptian communities, among others. The programme lasts for one year and covers the social and health contributions (part of the employer's contribution), calculated on the basis of the national minimum wage, and salary financing to the amount of 100 percent of the minimum wage for three months for all participants in the programme, and six months for victims of trafficking, domestic violence or victims of gender-based violence, Roma and Egyptians, and twelve months for persons with disabilities.

The on-the-job training programme, which aims to train job seekers on the job, according to the needs of the profile required by the candidate but also tailored to the needs of the employer, does not offer any specific provisions for long-term unemployed adults with low education. However, eligible beneficiaries include unemployed and unskilled job seekers, where the adult long-term unemployed with low education may fall into the latter category. The duration of the subsidy offered by this programme is four months. An individual training plan is drafted by the employer and approved by the relevant structures of the institution responsible for attainment of employment and skills. The programme subsidises compulsory social and health contributions (part of the employer's contributions) calculated on the basis of the national minimum wage. The salary is financed to an amount of 100 percent of the minimum wage, and includes social and health contributions (part of the employer's contributions) for the following eight months in cases where, after completion of training through employment, the employer enters into an employment contract of at least eight months with the employee, and provides payment for the mentor.

The public work programme in the community (DCM no. 535) is another programme whose aim is the inclusion into the labour market of the long-term unemployed above 25 years of age through provision of training and part-time employment in activities focused on community work. The community work includes health and social care services, rehabilitation services for former drug users, community and environmental work and services, consulting and information services, sports, art, tourism, culture, among others. Community employment is designed to place the work experience offered in the labour market and in line with local employment opportunities, implemented in partnership with the community, NGOs and voluntary organisations. Thus, in this programme, employers, non-profit organisations, businesses and social enterprises are eligible to apply for grants.

Finally, in order to promote self-employment, the self-employment programme (DCM no. 348) offers training for entrepreneurship and development of business plans and grants to support the opening of new businesses. The beneficiaries of this programme are unemployed persons who have an eligible, viable and marketable business idea. The programme covers up to ALL 500,000. However, the eligibility does not include long-term unemployed adults with low education.

As a way to bridge social assistance with employment, the National Strategy for Social

Protection 2020–2023 and its Action Plan¹⁰ combines policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty. It does this by reducing households and individuals' exposure to risk and increasing their capacity to protect themselves from risks and lack of income. The strategy aims to integrate the economic assistance scheme into the social life of families and further addressing their needs through programmes such as employment promotion, labour market orientation through vocational training courses and similar programmes that have led to the inclusion in the labour market of active family members looking for work. The strategy focuses on three priority interventions such as poverty alleviation by providing better coverage for poor and extremely poor families, children and individuals, improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, and development of social care services.

With the support of the World Bank, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection has developed an exit strategy that aims to link social protection programmes with other employment incentive schemes, creating the opportunity for market integration of work of families who have had about five years in the economic assistance scheme. The strategy aims to achieve this goal by combining the full legal package for establishment and operation of social enterprises with employment promotion and vocational training programmes and the inclusion of economic assistance beneficiaries in territorial development policies (such as rural development, infrastructure development or use of forests and pastures, among others). The most vulnerable segment of the group of long-term unemployed adults with low education that are in poor households would qualify for economic aid under social protection, and would also be part of the exit strategy if they were to exceed five years in the economic aid scheme.

The main law on social assistance, Law no. 57/2019 'On social assistance in the Republic of Albania' regulates the manner of providing social assistance as a means to guaranteeing social protection for all citizens. Social assistance includes, but is not limited to, economic assistance, disability payments, immediate economic assistance for new-borns and other benefits guaranteed by the law. Moreover, it also guarantees support for families and individuals in need who cannot provide for basic necessities due to limited socio-economic skills and opportunities. In addition to the economic assistance programme, this law aims to promote employment and inclusion of persons of active working age, by requiring participation in active labour market measures and vocational training programmes.

As part of the social protection scheme, Law no. 121/2016 'On Social Care Services' provides a clear scheme of social care services to be provided by public and non-public operators. People with disabilities, adults with social problems, victims of violence, victims of trafficking, with proven drug and alcohol addiction, juveniles in conflict with the law, who have completed the sentence period, pregnant girls or the sole parent of a child up to the age of one year are among the beneficiaries of social services. Provision of social services would complement employment services for job seekers in need of further support before

10. National Strategy for Social Protection 2020–2023 and Action Plan, approved by DCM no. 866, dated 24.12.2019, <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2019/184/6130d327-d5de-432d-9f88-9549a0e80f33;q=Strategjia%20Komb%C3%ABtare%20p%C3%ABr%20Mbrojtjen%20Sociale%202019-2022>

they may be ready for employment. The law also makes provisions for social care services¹¹ such as pre-social services,¹² community services,¹³ sheltered housing service,¹⁴ and the shelter service.¹⁵

As a way to further support vulnerable groups and provide them with employment opportunities, Law no. 65/2016 'On social enterprises in the Republic of Albania'¹⁶ aims at the establishment and functioning of social enterprises. Social enterprises are non-profit organisations supported by the state through subsidies to the enterprises or employees in these entities.¹⁷ Social enterprises are expected to operate in the field of social services, mediation for employment of disadvantaged people, youth employment, health services, education services, environmental protection, promotion of tourism, culture and cultural heritage, sports activities for entertainment and socialising and promotion of the development of local communities. They are also expected to allocate at least 30 percent of their workforce from vulnerable groups. Pursuant to this law, DCM no. 56¹⁸ determines the vulnerable groups, which include,¹⁹ among others, recipients of economic assistance, persons who have not attended compulsory education, and long-term unemployed.

In terms of the education framework, adult learning is not foreseen in pre-university education in Albania. Law no. 69/2012 'On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania', which sets out the basic principles for the structure, activity and governance of pre-university education puts a cap on the completion of full-time basic education²⁰ by the age of seventeen years. Full-time basic education is compulsory for all children who are Albanian citizens and residing in Albania from the age of six until the age of sixteen years. Students who have reached the age of sixteen and have not completed their education have the right to enrol in part-time basic education school.

11. In article 8 of Law no. 121/2016.

12. Information and counselling, family service, psycho-social support, early intervention.

13. Point 2b, DCM no. 518, dated 4.9.2018 'On community and residential social care services, criteria, procedures for their benefit and the amount of personal expenses for the beneficiaries of the organised service.' This includes family service, alternative, multi-functional, day and half-day, 72-hour emergency, and sheltered shelter for the homeless.

14. Point 10, DCM no. 518, dated 4.9.2018.

15. In article 16 of Law no. 121/2016.

16. Law no. 65/2016 'On social enterprises in the Republic of Albania,' http://partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Ligj-nr.-65_2016-date-9.6.2016-Per-ndermarrjet-sociale-ne-Republiken-e-Shqiperise.pdf

17. Article 26.

18. DCM no. 56, dated 31.01.2018 'On determining concrete categories of disadvantaged groups'.

19. The self-employed or workers of family farms in agriculture, women living in rural areas where the average unemployment rate exceeds 50 percent of the national average for at least two calendar years and where female unemployment is above 150 percent of the average male unemployment rate for at least two of the three last calendar years, migrant workers, persons belonging to national minorities, the homeless, women and girls victims and potential victims of trafficking, exploitation and domestic violence.

20. Law no. 69/2012 'On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania,' article 22.

Upper secondary education,²¹ which aims to further develop the competencies acquired during basic education, consolidating the individuality of each student, values and attitudes, expanding and deepening in certain areas of knowledge, preparing for upper-level education or the labour market, also puts a cap at the age of 22 years. Students not older than 18 years are admitted in the tenth grade of full-time upper secondary education. Up to the age of 21 years, the student is allowed to attend three-year upper secondary education, and up to the age of 22, upper four-year secondary education. Students who have reached the age of 21 years and who have not completed high school education are allowed to attend part-time or distance high school.

Lastly, VET is offered following the completion of tenth grade following Law no. 15/2017 'On Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania'.²² This law sets out the basic principles of providing, governing, financing and managing VET, and regulates the aspects of the system in accordance with the general education system and labour market. This means that long-term unemployed adults with low education cannot enter VET. But they have also exceeded the age at which they may attend basic education and are therefore caught in a vacuum.

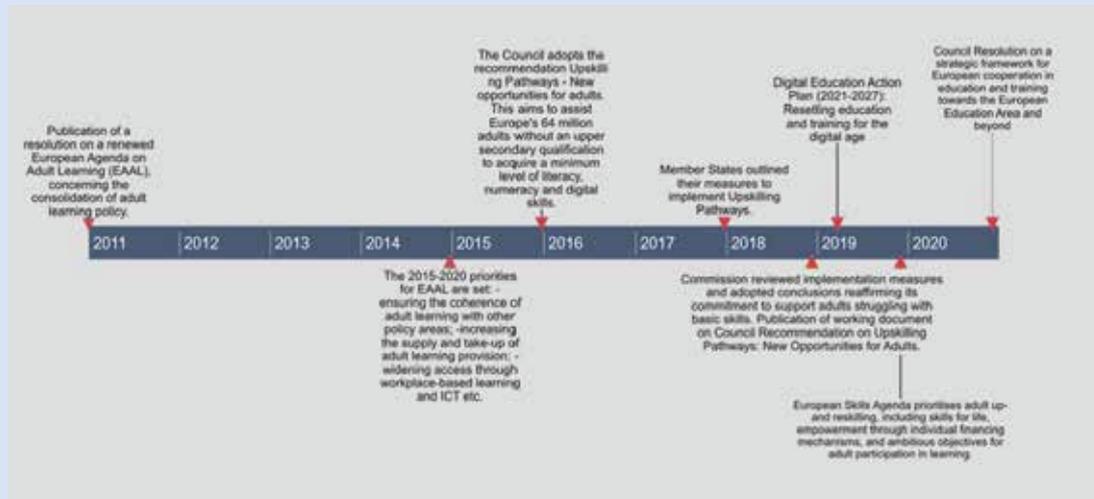
Efforts for adult learning and upskilling are scarce in Albania and are mainly left to the initiative of interested parties without offering a structured or organised institutional framework. In the EU,²³ various initiatives are taken to support adult learning and upskilling. In order to build a more robust and effective adult learning sector the European Commission (EC) has invested in an electronic platform for adult learning professionals. It has also invested in learning mobility for adult-learning staff, adult literacy that provides support for improving reading and writing, and the European Social Fund, which is the largest instrument to support employment and provides a culture of training and life-long-learning that help workers keep their skills and acquire new ones. The EC Working Group on Adult Learning has been focused on developing policies that increase the level of basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills, among others. The working group has also created a tool for adult learning policy analysis that brings together data from adult learning and VET to be used as a reference in order to better monitor and improve performance of adult learning. This tool also serves to measure the country's progress with adult learning and the changes brought about by effective policy making, as well as to identify areas for improvement. Lifelong learning, including VET and adult learning have been at the heart of the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) that promote learning for unemployed adults of age 25–64 years, with a primary focus on raising basic skills and re-employment of individuals with low levels of education. Figure 1 shows a timeline highlighting important policy initiatives of the EU in promoting adult learning over the past ten years.

21. Ibid., article 23.

22. Law no. 15/2017 'On Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania' <https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ligj-nr-15-dt-16-2-2017.pdf>

23. European Commission. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-in-the-eu/what-is-the-eu-role-in-adult-learning>

Figure 1. Policy interventions 2011–2021

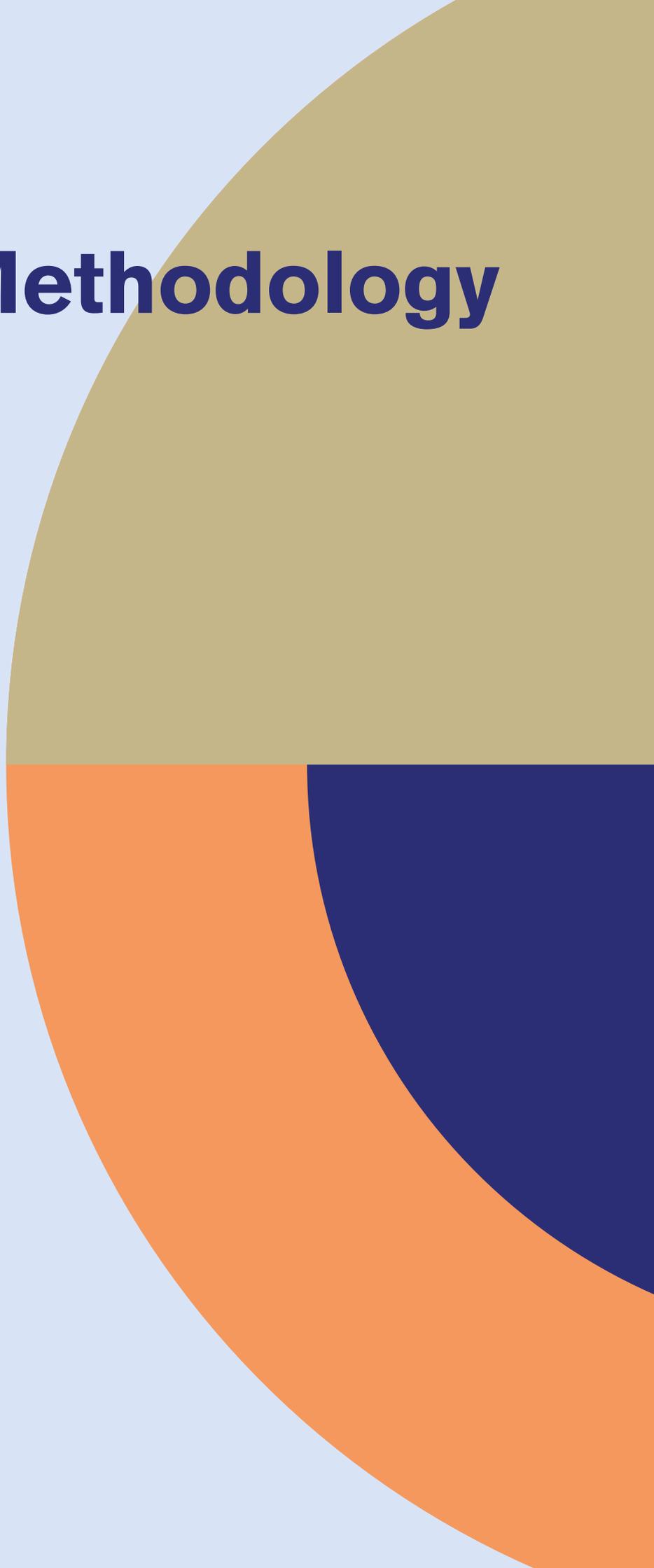


Note: Source of information, <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sq/policy-in-the-eu/what-is-the-eu-role-in-adult-learning>

Notably, the working paper on the project *Tackling long-term unemployment amongst vulnerable groups*, undertaken jointly by the OECD Local Employment and Economic Development (LEED) Programme and the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES) in 2012, reported on the diverse range of interventions and employment services that can be undertaken to address issues that hinder integration into the labour market. The survey undertaken by the WAPES members around the world tackled locally adapted labour market programmes as a response to long-term unemployment in various target groups. The groups most commonly targeted by more than 50 percent of WAPES members were older workers (50 years and older), the low-skilled, and young persons (up to age 24). Disability- and minority-based targeting was slightly less common, at 46 percent and 39 percent of WAPES members, respectively, while even less common was the targeting of women, single parents and ex-offenders. The project cases the importance of understanding the target group and delivering tailored services to them. Project recommendations exemplify, among others, the need for strategic leadership of programmes, sustainable and value-added programmes, individual-centred interventions, joined-up initiatives, and involvement of employers and workplace representatives, and financing mechanisms.

3

Methodology



3. Methodology

Analysis of the situation of long-term registered unemployed adult job seekers included the steps elaborated below.

3.1 Desk review of the relevant legal framework and labour market policies, including ALMPs

This analysis served to identify the opportunities and gaps in terms of policy making regarding employment in general, and employment of vulnerable groups such as the long-term unemployed in particular. It also served to identify the incentives, or disincentives, for registering with the employment services, and the services received by different groups of the job seekers, with a special focus on those that are long-term unemployed. It examined the provision of services in cooperation with other state structures and in accordance with the legal and institutional framework of social assistance and care. The desk review included a range of legislation and labour market policies, including the following:

- Law no. 15/2019 'On the promotion of employment'
- Law no. 69/2012 'On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania'
- Law no. 15/2017 'On Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania'
- ALMPs for:
 - o employment services
 - o employment promotion programmes
 - o vocational training programmes
- passive labour market programmes
- provision of employment services in cooperation with other institutions
- legal and institutional framework of social assistance and social care
- NESS 2019–2022
- National Strategy for Social Protection 2020–2023 and its Action Plan
- 'exit strategy' from economic aid.

3.2 Labour market analysis

Analysis of the labour market included determination of the rates of employment, labour force participation, unemployment and inactivity, among others. The analysis was conducted by gender and by age (focused on youth). In addition, some indicators from the demand side were also included, such as identification of the main economic sectors, enterprises by sector, distribution of enterprises by sector, and size of enterprises.

3.3 Quantitative analysis of long-term registered unemployed job seekers

Quantitative analysis of long-term registered unemployed job seekers was undertaken by examining various characteristics (depending on the availability of data) that included the following:

- regional distribution
- age
- gender
- education
- vulnerable groups
- occupation
- duration of unemployment
- time registered with the employment office
- types of services received at the employment office
- receipt of economic aid or other social assistance
- previous work experience.

In order to further understand the issues faced by the long-term unemployed, and to identify their constraints, this group was compared with the other registered unemployed job seekers and registered job seekers in employment promotion programmes. This comparison provided a fuller picture of the situation for registered job seekers and the long-term unemployed job seekers.

3.4 Qualitative analysis of long-term registered unemployed job seekers

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative methodologies permitted a more complete and synergistic analysis of the size and potential demographic and socio-economic characteristics of low educated, long-term registered unemployed job seekers. The quantitative frame of the target group size and the characteristics of the target group were further explored with qualitative focus groups aiming to:

- 1) better understand the personal experiences of the target group
- 2) evidence whether the quantitative findings were grounded in the experience of focus group participants representing the target group
- 3) strengthen and enrich the comprehensive analysis, findings and related recommendations.

This focus group study, which supplements the quantitative analysis, aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of the topic and unveil the constraints faced by the registered long-

term unemployed, which may not be identifiable from the data that were available. It was specifically designed to capture different backgrounds and profound insights into the difficulties and vulnerabilities that long-term unemployed job seekers persistently face, further increasing their vulnerability in employment issues and their remaining unintegrated into the labour market. In addition, the focus group study provided insights into how institutional programmes might be tailored to enhance employment and integration towards the labour market for the target group.

The focus group study entailed three focus group sets of interviews, held in three municipalities in Albania: Elbasan, Korca and Tirana. The attendees were asked to participate in the focus group interview and to answer structured and open-ended questions that promote discussion. The interviews were designed to take approximately 90 minutes. The objectives of the focus group interviews were threefold:

1. To uncover the underlying issues related to socio-economic, geographical and demographic factors that have affected education choices and unemployment outcomes of long-term registered job seekers.
2. To explore and generate insights into which unemployment factors and issues are most important for stakeholders within and across the vulnerabilities of the target group for tailoring institutional programmes that enhance employment.
3. To provide insights into potential profiles of long-term unemployed job seekers.

The focus group study mapped the ranking of essential topics to pursue and provided in-depth qualitative analysis of the various socio-economic, geographical and demographic factors affecting long-term unemployment of registered job seekers. In this regard, the outcomes of the focus group interviews were used to assess and report on challenges and barriers that the target group has encountered and to convey potential recommendations on how to improve employment practices, procedures and programmes.

3.4.1 Focus group study design

The focus group study comprised three sets of interviews with long-term unemployed job seekers registered in the employment offices in the municipalities of Elbasan, Korca and Tirana. This method is beneficial when the objective is to explore and arrive at an in-depth understanding of variation in opinions, arguments and interpretations, both within and among groups, on uncharted topics. Furthermore, the data generated through focus group interactions provided knowledge on how the representatives describe and ascribe personal experiences, attitudes and beliefs that other quantitative methods cannot replicate.

The importance of the study area is mirrored in the composition of the focus groups. The study design was discussed and further developed through collaboration with NAES, where the overall design was discussed, including particulars of the sampling strategy and selec-

tion, key interview topics, consent form, privacy policy, logistics and practicalities. A moderator conducted the focus group interviews in the three selected municipalities. Meanwhile, other detailed documents and templates were produced and applied, including a consent form for participants to sign (Appendix A-1), a script with likely topic questions and probing questions (Appendix A-2) and a list of potential issues and characteristics to be considered during the selection of the samples.

3.4.2 Sampling methodology and sample selection

MUNICIPALITIES SELECTION

The study aimed to include and capture a range of characteristics of the target group, including size, educational level, age (≥ 29 years), and vulnerability. The qualitative analysis was focused on the municipalities of Elbasan, Korca and Tirana. The rationale for selecting these three municipalities was determined by the fact that, according to the NAES data reported on the registered unemployed job seekers, the regions of Elbasan and Tirana have the largest number of long-term unemployed registered job seekers. Of all registered unemployed job seekers in Albania, 15.5 percent and 12.87 percent reside in the municipalities of Tirana and Elbasan, respectively (Table 15). Also, the regions of Tirana and Elbasan have the largest percentages of long-term unemployed with less than primary education, respectively 5.48 percent and 5.97 percent (see Table 16), and the largest percentages of long-term unemployed 29 years and older, 16 percent and 14 percent respectively. Moreover, Tirana, Elbasan and Korca regions have the largest percentages of Roma and Egyptian registered unemployed job seekers: 26 percent, 21 percent, 12 percent, respectively, of Roma unemployed job seekers, and 12 percent, 32 percent and 12 percent, respectively, of Egyptian unemployed job seekers. Also, these three regions have the largest percentages of registered unemployed jobseeker with only primary education: 5.1 percent, 6.98 percent, and 6.93 percent, respectively (Table 16). Given that Elbasan, Korca and Tirana municipalities are the largest in their respective counties, it satisfies our assumption that the largest percentages by target group size, age (29+), low level of education and vulnerability are the most appropriate for the analysis.

SAMPLE SELECTION

Vulnerable, low-educated registered job seekers constitute the target group of the intervention, being among the most difficult among the unemployed to activate but who are currently unsupported by the ALMPs and targeted services.

Overall, the focus group study applied a purposeful sampling strategy intending to gather 'information-rich cases' (Patton, 1990)²⁴ based on the predefined criteria as outlined below. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study

24. Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, pp. 169–186. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the goal of the research. The focus group samples were selected utilising a “purposeful random sampling approach”. A small, purposeful random sample aims to increase the credibility of the cases selected for study. Nevertheless, such a sample still does not fully permit generalisations. This sampling technique permits identifying and documenting unique and diverse variations and important common patterns that cut across variations (Patton, 1990).

This sampling strategy was supplemented by a randomised approach where participants were chosen from the NAES database and then contacted by the respective employment office. The selection of the sample was employed by the employment offices in the respective municipalities based on the predetermined criteria. In qualitative studies, sample size adequacy, as in all aspects of research, is subject to judgment, study purpose and consensual validation (Patton, 1990). The optimal minimum size of a focus group to promote discussion and gain useful insights for this study comprised 7–12 participants.

The following selection criteria were employed, primarily to enhance representation, diversity and heterogeneity:

- The regional distribution of participants living in the city centre and those in suburban areas should be balanced.
- Registered adult (29+) job seekers represent a target group. All the age ranges of the long-term unemployed job seekers (following the NAES classification) should be represented in the focus group.
- The gender composition of the focus groups should be balanced.
- Low-educated registered job seekers constitute another target group. Illiterate registered job seekers, job seekers that have only completed primary education, and those that have completed lower secondary education should be represented in the focus groups.
- Long-term registered job seekers with different vulnerabilities (such as Roma and Egyptian representatives, orphans, victims of trafficking, and return migrants) should be represented in the focus groups.
- Long-term unemployed job seekers represent another target group, and representation among those with unemployment duration of 1–3 years and those above three years should be balanced.
- Long-term unemployed job seekers who are beneficiaries of economic aid or unemployment benefit should be represented in the focus groups.

3.4.3 Research questions: Pillars of analysis

The detailed analysis was designed to address the following three questions:

1. What is the general profile of the long-term unemployed job seeker?

This phase of analysis aimed to generate insights primarily from qualitative analysis. This research question is referred to in section *I. General information* in the focus group guide/script (Appendix A-2) and is intended to provide insights into the general characteristics and profile of long-term unemployed jobseekers (prior to considering in-depth unemployment issues and services they receive from the Employment Office), such as: level of education and the reasons for not continuing into higher education, place of residence and under what conditions, family composition, monthly family income.

2. What are the main characteristics or factors that have led to long-term unemployment?

This study pillar aimed to review the various factors leading to long-term unemployment amongst vulnerable groups. Based on the data available, the quantitative analysis examined various characteristics among the disadvantaged groups including, but not limited to, regional distribution, gender, education, vulnerabilities, unemployment duration, occupation, beneficiaries of economic aid. It allowed for aggregation, generalisation and comparisons to be made with the rest of the registered unemployed job seekers and with use of labour market indicators. Backed by the quantitative analysis, the qualitative study aimed to generate explanations for the identified patterns, saturating the knowledge, perception, and feelings for the examined factors. This research question is referred to in section *II. Unemployment information* in the focus group guide and transcript (Appendix A-2) and is intended to provide insights into the main socio-economic and demographic barriers, and geographical provenance that influence long-term unemployment.

3. How do the institutional services and programmes facilitate the transition of unemployed job seekers to the labour market?

This study pillar is referred to in section *III. Institutional services and programmes information* in the focus group guide and transcript (Appendix A-2) and delved into the services and programmes offered by the employment offices for the target group. Section III sheds some light on the aspects that stakeholders could prioritise to integrate even more the long-term unemployed job seekers in the active labour market.

The study pillars (research questions) and subtopics were paired or grouped as reported in Table 1. The overall rationale behind the questions for pairings or grouping was to bring together the most similar topics to supplement and inform each other as much as possible.

Table 1. Paired research questions and subtopics

Study pillars (research questions)	Main discussion topic	Subtopics
What is the general profile of the long-term unemployed jobseeker?	General characteristics and profile of long-term unemployed job seeker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ place of residence ▪ rented or own house ▪ education status ▪ reasons for not continuing into higher education ▪ parental education status ▪ family composition ▪ monthly family income ▪ daily routine
What are the main characteristics and factors that have led to long-term unemployment?	Socio-economic, demographic characteristics and factors, and geographical provenance that influence long-term unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unemployment duration ▪ previous work experiences ▪ factors that influenced unemployment ▪ active businesses operating near place of residence ▪ efforts to seek a job ▪ information channels on job vacancies ▪ professional skills (crafts) ▪ pursuing higher education or professional training ▪ most suitable job
How do the institutional services and programmes facilitate the transition of long-term unemployed job seekers toward the labour market?	Services and programmes offered by the employment offices for the target group, to integrate them into the active labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ registration in the employment office ▪ frequency of contacts and visits to the employment office ▪ frequency of job offers or opportunities provided by the employment office ▪ economic assistance scheme ▪ services provided by the employment office ▪ NAES programmes

4

Labour market analysis



4. Labour market analysis

Labour force participation rates show an upward trend from 2016 to 2019, with a slight decrease in 2020 (Table 2), when it decreased slightly, to 69.1 percent from 69.9 percent in 2019.

In 2018, the labour force participation rate increased to 68.3 percent, from 66.8 percent in 2017, and 66.2 percent in 2016. Labour force participation rates improved for both men and women between 2016 and 2019. However, there are quite large differences between the rates for men and women. In 2020, male labour force participation rate for the age group 15–64 years was 77.1 percent compared to 61.2 percent for women.

The labour force participation rate among youth was the lowest among all age groups. However, the rate for youths between the ages of 15–29 years has improved considerably, from 45.7 percent in 2016 to 52.1 percent in 2020, with the highest rate in 2019, at 52.5 percent. Young women have the lowest labour force participation rate within females and also compared to the other age groups. Young women's labour force participation rate in 2020 was 44.7 percent compared to 59.3 percent for young men. In 2016–2020, young women's labour force participation rates increased, from 38.8 percent to 44.7 percent, while that of young men increased from 51.7 to 59.3 percent.

Table 2. Labour force participation rate (%), by sex and age, 2016–2020

Age group	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total					
15–29	45.7	45.6	50.1	52.5	52.1
30–64	76.1	77.0	78.1	78.6	77.8
15–64	66.2	66.8	68.3	69.6	69.1
15+	57.5	58.3	59.4	60.4	59.5
Men					
15–29	51.7	52.8	58.2	59.2	59.3
30–64	85.8	87.8	87.5	87.6	86.6
15–64	74.1	75.8	76.9	77.6	77.1
15+	65.0	66.8	67.6	68.0	66.9
Women					
15–29	38.8	37.2	41.5	45.6	44.7
30–64	66.8	66.7	69.2	69.9	69.4
15–64	58.3	57.7	59.7	61.6	61.2
15+	49.9	49.8	51.4	53.0	52.3

Note: Source of information: Labour Force Surveys 2016–2020.

The differences in labour force participation rates are also apparent in the employment rates. Employment rates show the same patterns as labour force participation rates, following an upward trend during 2016–2019, with a slight decrease in 2020 and the highest levels achieved in 2019 (Table 3). Employment rates steadily increased, from 55.9 percent in 2016 to 61.2 percent in 2019, decreasing slightly to 60.6 percent in 2020. Employment rates are considerably higher for men in the age group 15–64 years at 67.8 percent in 2020, compared to 53.6 percent for women. Women reached their highest rates of employment in 2019, at 54.4 percent. Men’s employment rates approached 70 percent, while women’s just surpassed 50 percent.

Young women have by far the lowest levels of employment, at 35.3 percent in 2020, compared to 46.9 percent for young men. The overall youth employment rate in 2020 was 41.2 percent. Although employment rates have increased for both young women and young men during the period 2014–2019, they still lag behind the rest of the population. The lowest rate of employment among young women is 28 percent (recorded in 2016), considerably less than for young men (36.3%).

Table 3. Employment rates (%), by sex and age, 2016–2020

Age group	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total					
15–29	32.4	33.8	38.5	41.2	41.2
30–64	67.2	68.7	70.9	71.8	70.7
15–64	55.9	57.4	59.5	61.2	60.6
15+	48.7	50.3	52.1	53.4	52.5
Men					
15–29	36.3	38.5	44.7	46.6	46.9
30–64	75.4	77.9	79.3	79.9	78.9
15–64	61.9	64.3	66.7	68.2	67.8
15+	54.7	57.1	59.0	60.1	59.2
Women					
15–29	28.0	28.3	32.0	35.7	35.3
30–64	59.3	60.0	62.9	64.0	62.8
15–64	49.7	50.3	52.4	54.4	53.6
15+	42.8	43.5	45.3	46.9	46.1

Note: Source of information: Labour Force Surveys 2016–2020

The unemployment rates for the age group 15–64 years decreased between 2016 and 2019, from 15.6 percent to 12 percent (Table 4), increasing slightly in 2020 to 12.2 percent. Unemployment rates, as they stand with the current labour market definition, hide gender differences due to the large level of inactivity rates among women and unpaid family labour. Consequently, women’s unemployment rates appear lower than for men. As with the

other labour market indicators, youth unemployment rates are the highest in the population, even decreasing, from 28.9 percent in 2016 to 20.9 percent in 2020.

Table 4. Unemployment rates (%), by sex and age, 2016–2020

Age group (years)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total					
15–29	28.9	25.9	23.1	21.5	20.9
30–64	11.8	10.8	9.2	8.7	9.2
15–64	15.6	14.1	12.8	12.0	12.2
15+	15.2	13.7	12.3	11.5	11.7
Men					
15–29	29.7	27.0	23.1	21.3	20.8
30–64	12.2	11.3	9.4	8.8	8.8
15–64	16.4	15.1	13.2	12.2	12.0
15+	15.9	14.6	12.7	11.6	11.5
Women					
15–29	27.8	24.0	23.1	21.7	21.1
30–64	11.2	10.1	9.0	8.5	9.6
15–64	14.6	12.8	12.3	11.8	12.4
15+	14.4	12.6	11.9	11.4	11.9

Note: Source of information: Labour Force Surveys 2016–2020.

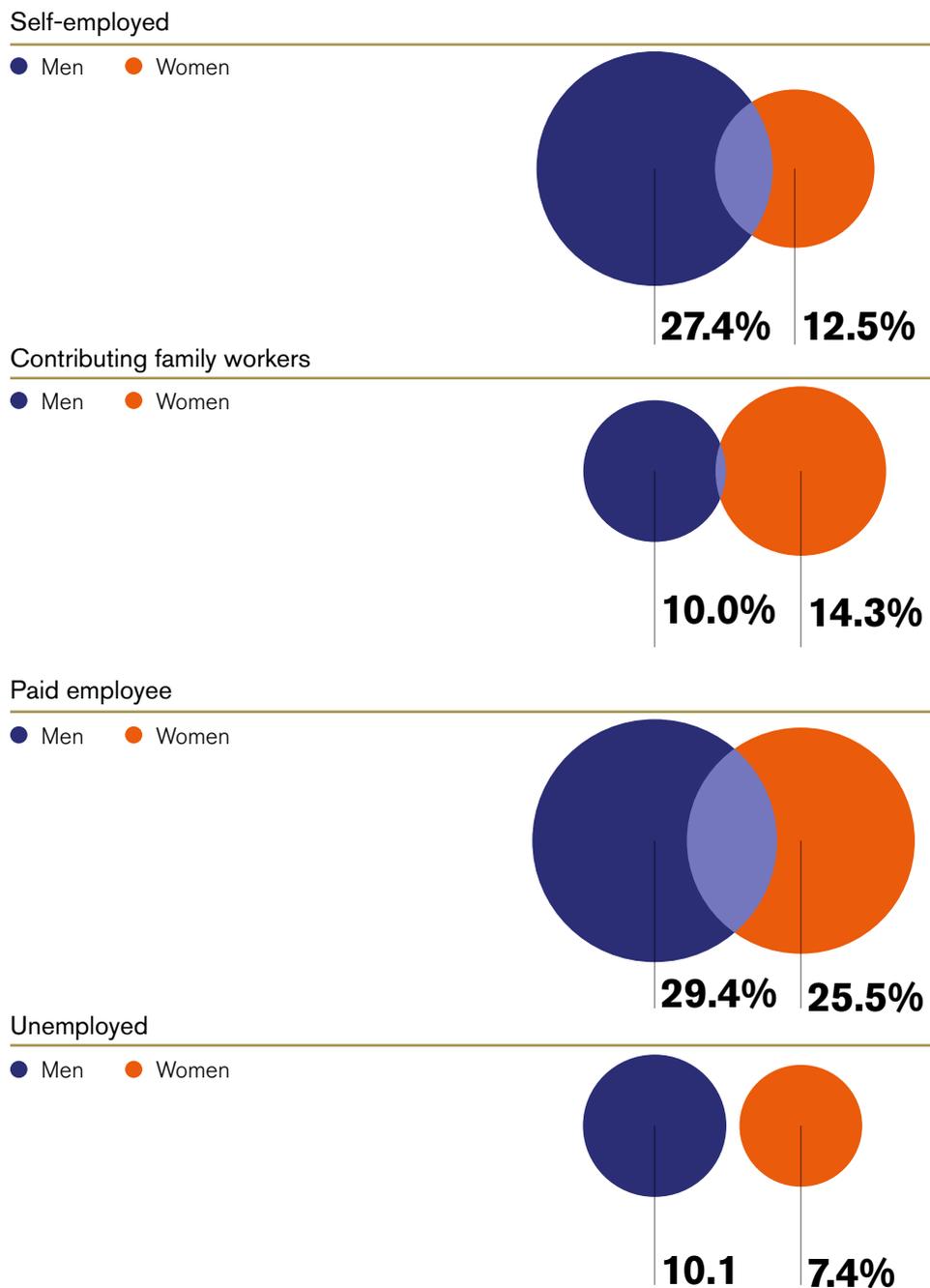
INSTAT data from the 2020 LFS show that labour force participation²⁵ and employment are positively correlated with level of education. The labour force participation rate of those with primary education (up to 8 or 9 years of education) was 62.5 percent, compared to 69.6 percent for those with secondary education, and 83.6 percent for those with higher education. Likewise, the employment rate of those with primary education was 55.9 percent, compared to 59.9 percent for those with secondary education, and 73 percent for those with higher education. The unemployment rate for those with primary education was 10.3 percent, 13.9 percent for those with secondary education, and 12.7 percent for those with higher education. As with the rest of the population lower unemployment rates for those with lower education may reflect the higher rates of family labour in agriculture.

Further disparities in the labour market are also evidenced by different rates of activity status and participation for men and women in different economic activities (Figure 2 and Table 5). Women have a much lower level of self-employment than do men, and a higher proportion of unpaid family workers: only 12.5 percent of employed women were self-employed,

25. Age 15–64 years.

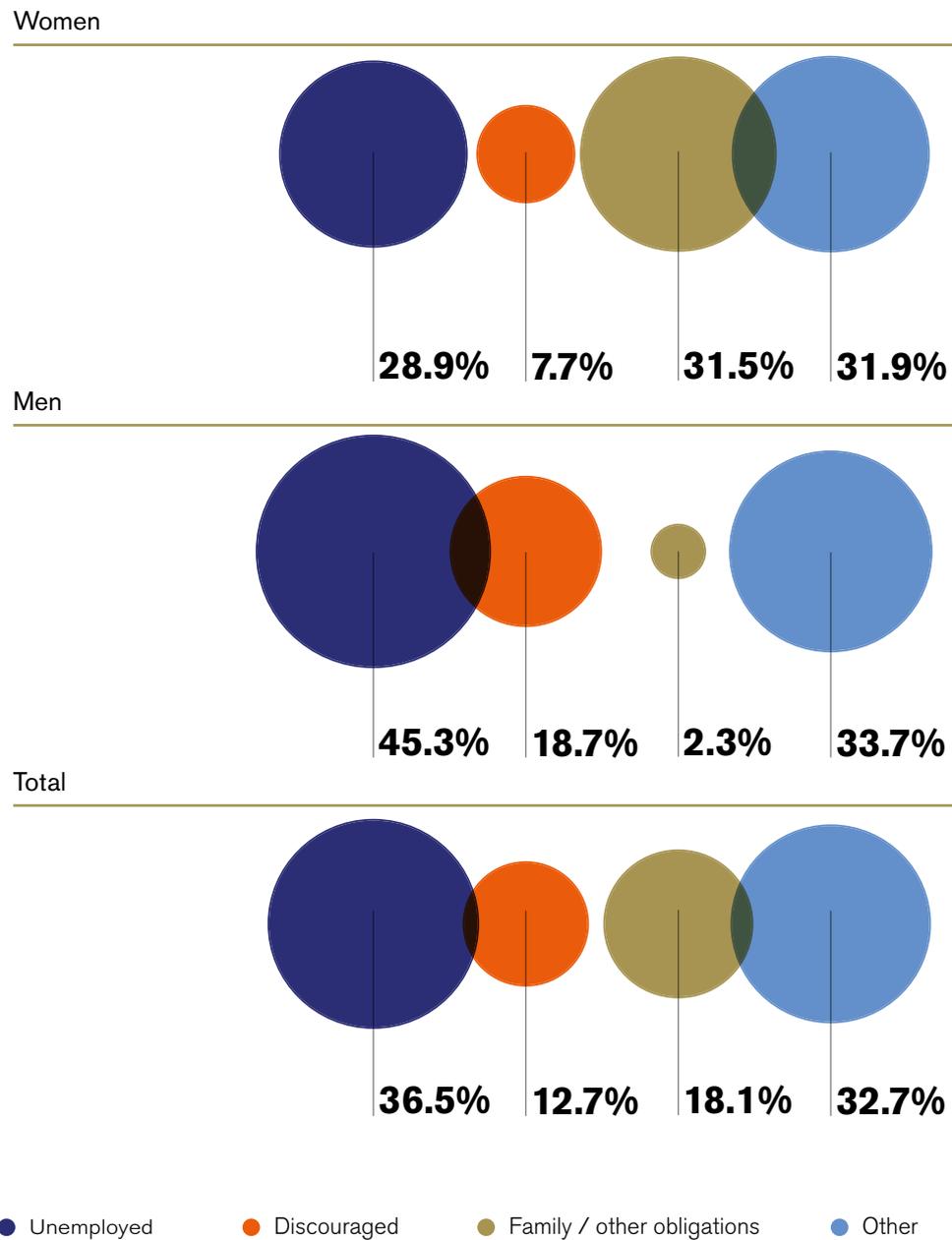
compared to 27.4 percent of men. Participation of employed women as contributing family workers was 14.3 percent compared to 10 percent for men. Data from 2019 show that men have a higher rate of discouraged workers (18.7% compared to 7.7% for women; Figure 3). However, women have much higher levels of family obligations (31.5% compared to 2.3% for men).

Figure 2. Activity status, by sex, 2018



Note: Source of information: Labour Force Survey, 2018.

Figure 3. Activity status, by sex, 2019



Note: Source of information: Labour Force Survey, 2019.

The majority of employed women are concentrated in agriculture (42.3% compared to 33.5% for men; Table 5). Women also occupy higher rates than men in the public administration (21.4% and 14% for men), and manufacturing (14.3% and 7.7% for men). A larger percentage of employed men work in construction (12.1% and only 0.5% for women), and trade and transportation (29.6% and 20.8% for women). Mining, electricity, gas and water supplies are also mainly occupied by men (3.3% compared to 0.8% for women). Men occupy the majority of occupations that are better paid, reflecting the gender pay gap.

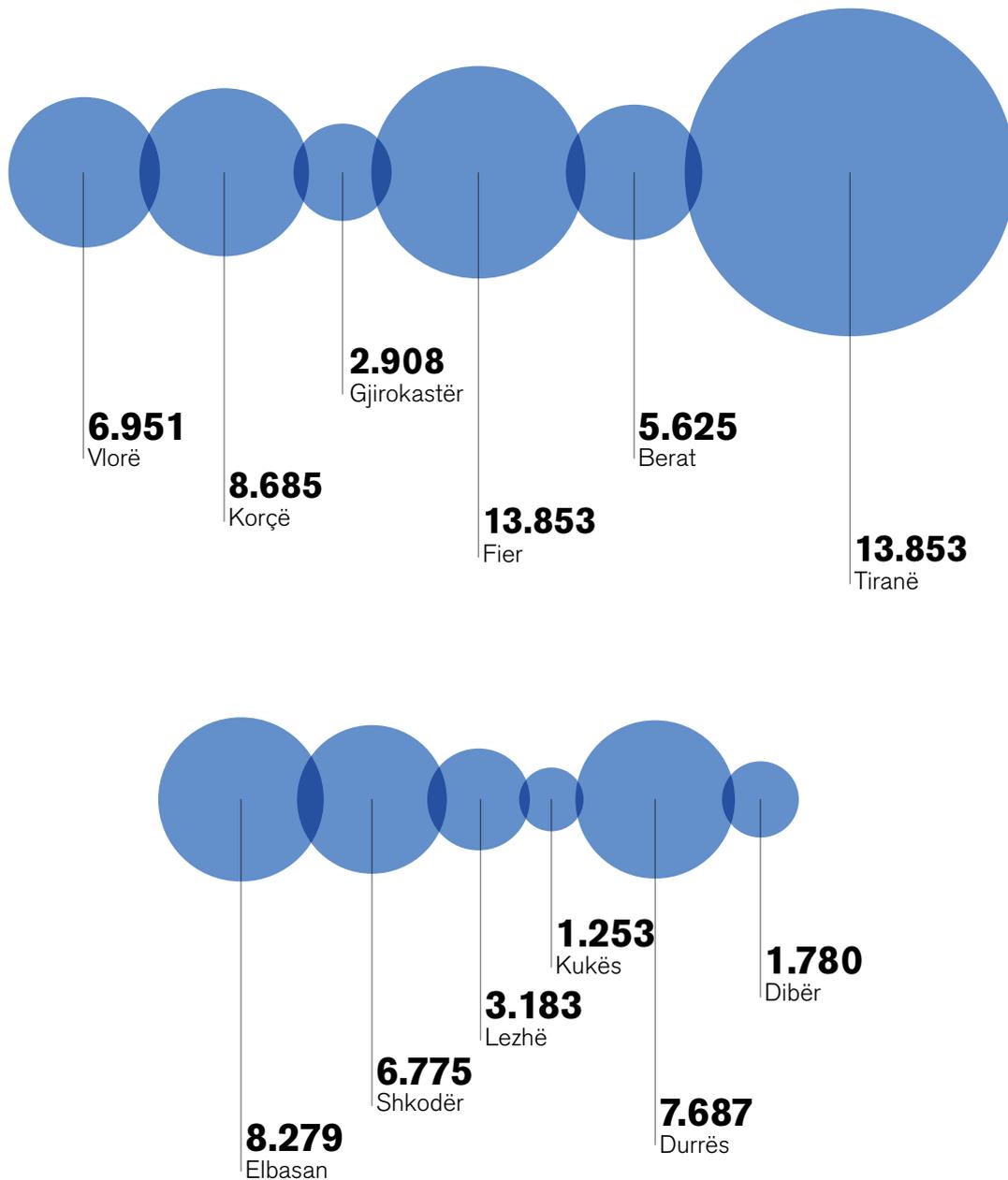
Table 5. Employment structure, by sex and economic activity (%)

Economic activity	Total	Men	Women
Agriculture	37.4	33.5	42.3
Manufacturing	10.6	7.7	14.3
Construction	7.0	12.1	0.5
mining and quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply	2.2	3.3	0.8
trade, transportation, accommodation, food, business and administrative services	25.7	29.6	20.8
public administration, community, social, other services and activities	17.2	14.0	21.4

Note: Source of information: Labour Force Survey, 2018.

The distribution of active enterprises in 2019 (Figure 4) show large regional differences between Tirana and the other counties: Tirana, 33.02 percent of active enterprises; followed by Fier (13.85%), Korca (8.68%), Elbasan (8.28%) and Durres (7.69%). The proportion in the other counties ranges from 6.95 percent in Vlore and 1.25 percent in Kukës (the lowest share), with Diber at 1.78 percent.

Figure 4. Distribution of active enterprises, by region, 2019

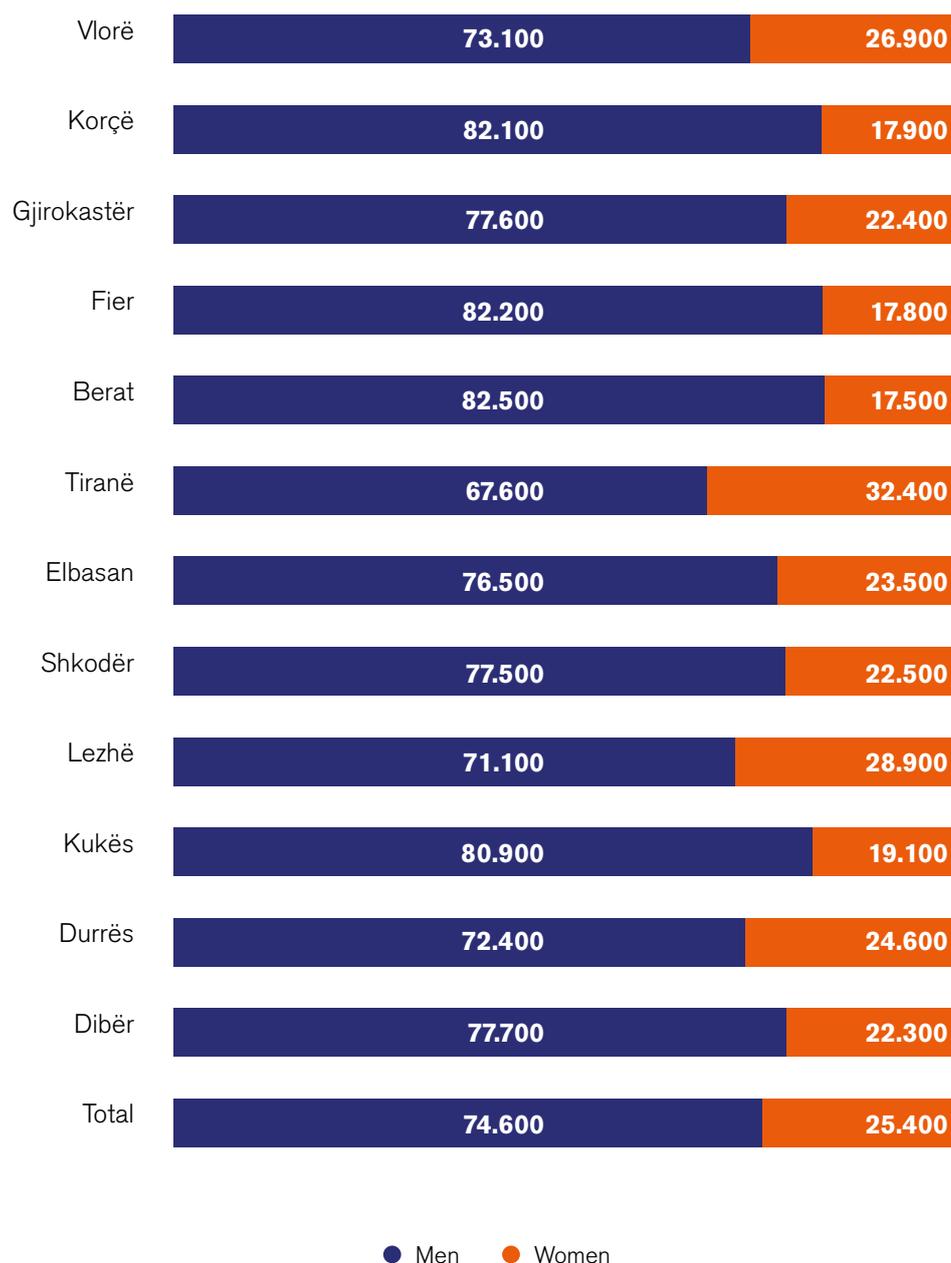


Source: INSTAT, Structural Enterprises Survey, 2019.

In 2019, in all counties of Albania, the percentage of active enterprises owned or administered by women was less than one-third of all active enterprises. Overall, only 25.4 percent of active enterprises were owned or administered by women, compared to 74.6 percent for men. Figure 5 shows that the largest difference is found in Berat, where women's owner-

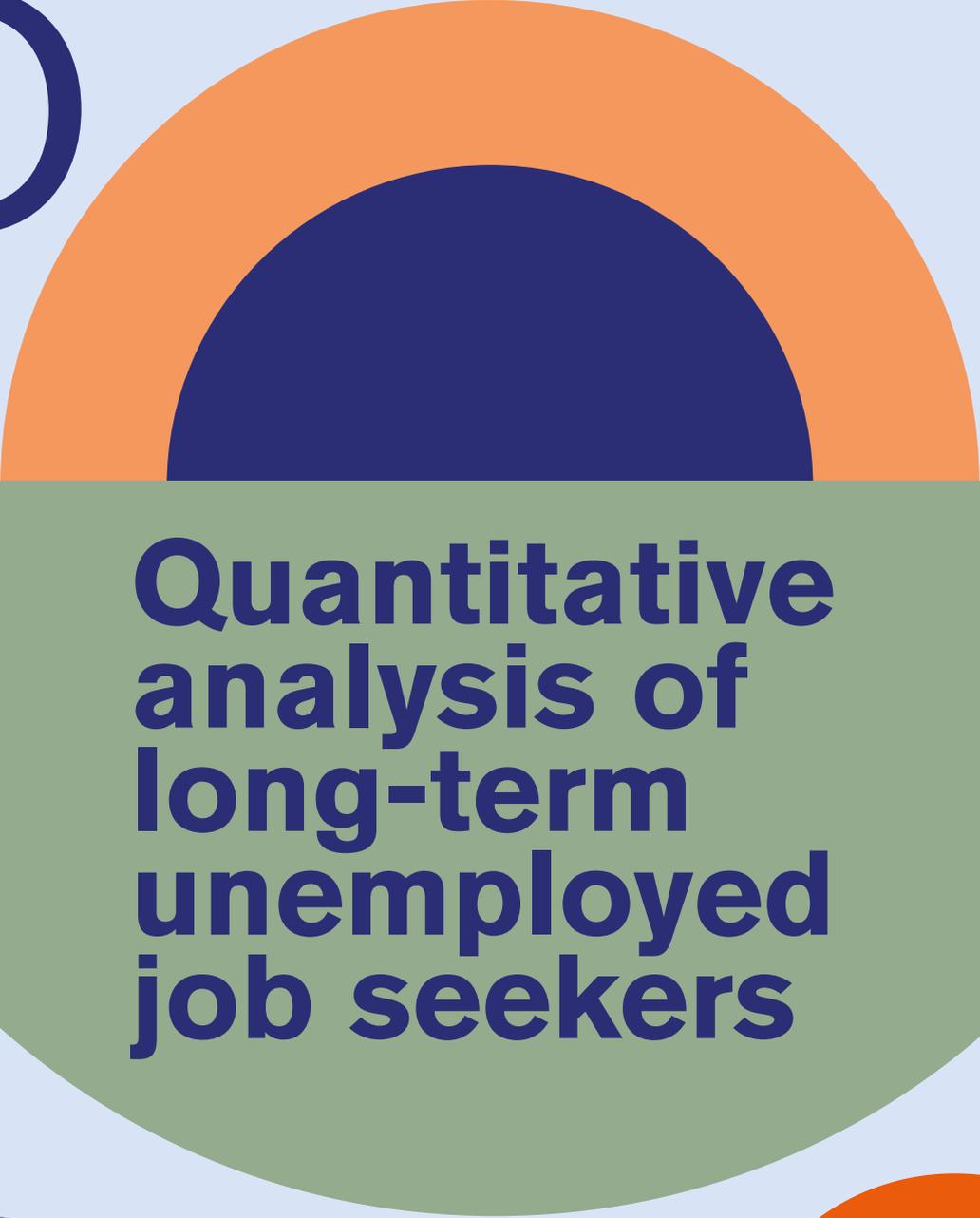
ship or administration of active enterprises was 17.5 percent versus 82.5 percent for men, followed by Fier, Korca and Kukes, where women’s ownership or administration was some 18–19 percent. Meanwhile, the smallest difference was found in Tirana, where women own 32.4 percent of active enterprises versus 67.6 percent for men.

Figure 5. Ownership of active enterprises, by region and sex of owner or administrator, 2019

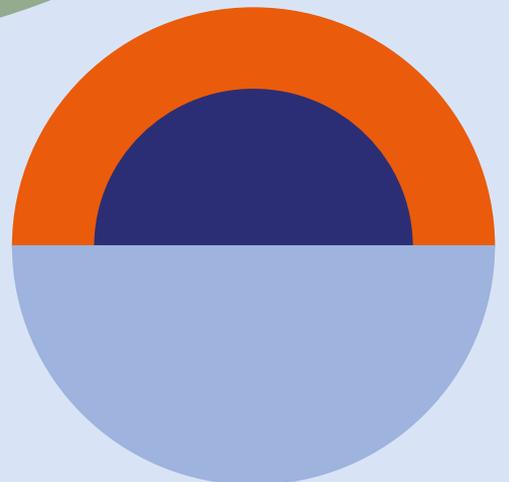
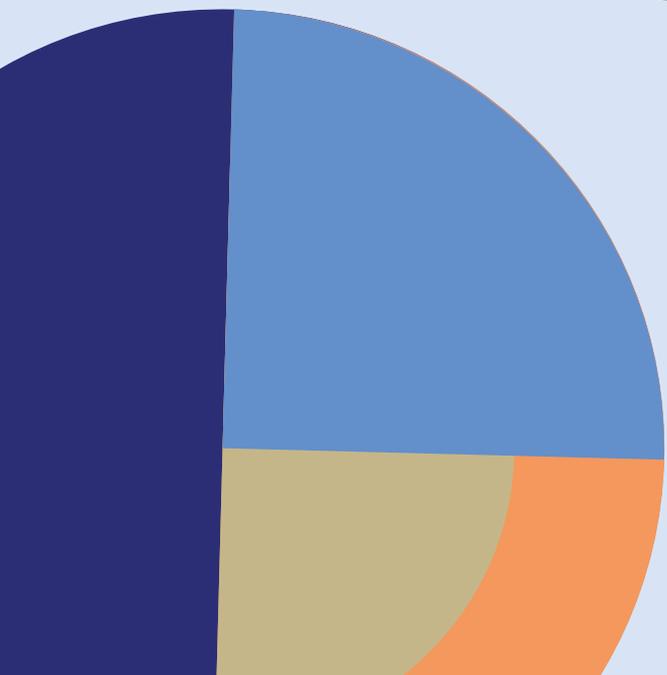


Source: INSTAT, Structural Enterprises Survey, 2019.

5



**Quantitative
analysis of
long-term
unemployed
job seekers**



Quantitative analysis of long-term unemployed job seekers

In Albania in 2018, the literacy rate of adults 15 years of age and above was 98.14 percent.²⁶ The literacy rate among women was 97.76 percent, and among men, 98.14 percent.

That year,²⁷ there was a total of 44,114 illiterate adults, of whom 26,296 were women and 17,818, men. In 2019, the net enrolment rate in primary education was 93.6 percent, while in secondary education it was 85.7 percent, and 59.8 percent in tertiary education. Women have a slightly higher net enrolment rate in secondary education than do men (88.7% and 83.1%, respectively), but in tertiary education, the percentage is heavily skewed towards women (73.3% and 46.9%, respectively). The effective transition rate from primary to lower secondary general education was 97.3 percent, with similar percentages for men and women. Furthermore, in terms of life-long-learning,²⁸ 9.2 percent of the adult population 25–64 years of age have participated in formal or non-formal education, whereas 67.8 percent have participated in informal learning. In terms of gender differences, 9.5 percent of adult females have participated in formal or non-formal education compared to 8.8 percent of adult males, and 66.1 percent of adult females have participated in informal learning compared to 69.4 percent of adult males. Only two percent of those with low education have participated in both formal and informal learning, compared to seven percent of those with secondary education and 32.3 percent of those with higher education. Some 57.8 percent of adults with low education have participated in informal learning, compared to 71.4 percent of those with secondary education, and 87.3 percent of those with tertiary education.

Data from the NAES show that in 2020, 32.12 percent of registered unemployed job seekers were in receipt of economic aid (Table 6), 5.72 percent were receiving unemployment benefits and 3.96 percent were former recipients of economic aid. The remaining 58.2 percent do not belong to any of those categories. More than half of registered unemployed job seekers in receipt of unemployment benefits, or receive economic aid or were formerly on economic aid are women. Fewer than half were heads of household, with the exception of those formerly receiving economic aid (52.78%).

The overwhelming majority of registered unemployed job seekers have been unemployed

26. World Bank data as of 2018, the latest year for which data are available, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=AL>

27. UNESCO data, <http://uis.unesco.org/country/AL>

28. INSTAT (2017). Survey of Adult Learning, <http://instat.gov.al/media/3991/rezultatet-e-anketes-se-arsim-it-te-te-rriturve-2017.pdf>

for longer than six months, and those unemployed for more than three years make up a considerable proportion of the total. More specifically, 33.99 percent have been unemployed for 0–6 months, 25.77 percent for 1–3 years, 20.44 percent for 6–12 months, and 19.8 percent for more than three years. The special groups comprise a small proportion of the total number of registered unemployed job seekers: only 5.04 percent are from the Egyptian community, 4.09 percent from the Roma community, and the others—orphans, victims of trafficking, with disability and return migrants—comprise less than one percent. Women form half of registered job seekers in the Roma community and more than 96 percent of the victims of trafficking, and only 28.61 percent of return migrants.

Table 6. Percentage of women registered unemployed job seekers and household head, by group and unemployment duration

Unemployed job seeker category		Women	Head of household	Total
Group	receiving unemployment benefits	54.71	42.79	5.72
	receiving economic aid	50.82	45.91	32.12
	formerly receiving economic aid	54.95	52.78	3.96
	Other	53.28	36.23	58.20
Duration	0–6 months	51.94	36.35	33.99
	6–12 months	50.69	37.97	20.44
	1–3 years	54.01	42.12	25.77
	> 3 years	54.04	47.45	19.80
Special group	Roma community	50.56	45.63	4.09
	Egyptian community	48.83	47.87	5.04
	Orphans	42.76	56.55	0.13
	victims of trafficking	96.48	24.12	0.02
	with disability	46.11	42.86	0.73
	return migrants	28.61	45.67	0.69
Total		52.64	40.37	

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

Within each group of registered unemployed job seekers the vast majority are over the age of 50 years (Table 7): for those in receipt of unemployment benefits, 44.38 percent; for those in receipt of economic aid, 33.1 percent; and those who have formerly received economic aid, 50.87 percent. The younger age categories (15–19 years and 20–24 years) have the lowest percentage, ranging from 0.18 percent to 11.08 percent, with the other age categories more evenly distributed (10–13%). Those of age 29 years and older make up more than 90 percent of all registered unemployed job seekers.

A similar pattern holds for duration of unemployment: with increasing duration of unemploy-

ment, the percentage of unemployed 50 years and above increases, reaching 52.43 percent for those unemployed for more than three years and 29.37 percent for those unemployed for 0–6 months. Those of age 29 years and older make up more than 80 percent for each duration period of unemployment. Those older than 50 years comprise 22.86 percent of unemployed job seekers from the Roma community, 30.02 percent for those from the Egyptian community, and 35.52 percent for those with disability. Victims of trafficking are much younger, with 36.18 percent 15–19 years of age and 30.65 percent 30–34 years old. Orphans and return migrants are of age 20–29 years.

Table 7. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers in different age groups, by group and unemployment duration

Unemployed job seeker category		Age group (years)							
		15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–50	> 50
Group	receiving unemployment benefits	0.18	3.10	8.38	10.23	10.14	10.48	13.12	44.38
	receiving economic aid	1.99	7.71	8.99	9.76	11.67	13.27	13.51	33.10
	formerly receiving economic aid	0.89	4.86	7.11	6.62	7.79	9.06	12.80	50.87
	Other	4.34	11.08	10.71	8.96	8.30	8.70	10.01	37.90
Duration	0–6 months	4.95	12.18	12.07	10.52	10.10	10.10	10.72	29.37
	6–12 months	4.96	11.70	11.33	10.19	9.81	9.85	10.44	31.72
	1–3 years	1.53	8.22	9.13	8.57	9.37	10.89	11.93	40.35
	> 3 years	0.59	3.26	5.60	6.72	8.15	10.27	12.98	52.43
Special group	Roma community	3.24	11.56	12.79	14.23	13.15	11.90	10.27	22.86
	Egyptian community	2.80	8.85	11.14	11.77	11.92	11.18	12.32	30.02
	Orphans	4.42	17.89	17.43	12.47	12.55	12.01	10.38	12.86
	victims of trafficking	36.18	6.53	11.56	30.65	9.55	5.53	0.00	0.00
	with disability	1.56	9.21	8.84	8.48	10.00	12.10	14.31	35.52
	return migrants	3.07	11.40	16.60	15.65	12.49	14.98	11.12	14.69
Total		3.21	9.30	9.88	9.20	9.47	10.28	11.42	37.24

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

A substantial proportion of registered unemployed job seekers have had 9-year primary and high school education, with the exception of members of the Roma community and Egyptian community (Table 8). The percentage of registered unemployed job seekers with an education level lower than primary education is least among those receiving unemployment benefit (0.32%) and most among those receiving economic aid (6.86%). These two groups also have the highest and the lowest proportion with a university degree, at 17.17 percent and 2.21 percent, respectively. More than half of those receiving economic aid (59.26%) and those who formerly received economic aid (55.98%) have only primary 9-year education.

Overall, as the duration of unemployment increases so does the proportion of those with less than primary education, while the proportion of those with a university degree decreases. Among registered unemployed job seekers with unemployment duration of 0–6 months, 2.37 percent have less than primary education, compared to 5.1 percent for those with unemployment duration of more than three years. Likewise, 46.04 percent of those who have been unemployed for 0–6 months have primary 9-year education, compared to 54.24 percent of those with unemployment duration of more than three years. Some 11.23 percent of those with unemployment duration of 0–6 months have a university degree compared to only 3.53 percent of those unemployed for more than three years.

Among special groups, 45.28 percent of the Roma community and 13.9 percent of the Egyptian community have less than primary education, while 20.72 percent of the Roma community and 22.03 percent of the Egyptian community have primary education. In the Roma community, 28.89 percent have primary 9-year education, compared with 54.91 percent of the Egyptian community. Levels of high school attendance, especially professional high school, are very low for these communities. Only 0.94 percent of Roma community have attended professional high school, and 3.86 percent, general high school. Likewise, only 1.91 percent of the Egyptian community have attended professional high school, and 6.35 percent, general high school. The proportion of those with university education are very low: 0.3 percent among the Roma community and 0.9 percent among the Egyptian community. Although the Egyptian community appears to have overall higher levels of education than the Roma community, there is little difference at the higher levels of education of high school and university.

Table 8. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers with different levels of education, by group and duration of unemployment

Unemployed job seeker	Education level						
	< primary	primary	primary 9 years*	general high school	professional high school	University	
Group	receiving unemployment benefits	0.32	0.88	34.97	34.16	12.50	17.17
	receiving economic aid	6.86	7.08	59.26	19.96	4.63	2.21
	formerly receiving economic aid	3.87	4.72	55.98	23.91	8.92	2.60
	Other	1.73	2.40	43.71	30.76	10.60	10.79
Duration	0–6 months	2.37	2.81	46.04	29.93	7.60	11.23
	6–12 months	2.58	3.07	45.20	30.06	8.98	10.12
	1–3 years	4.03	4.40	50.68	25.90	9.19	5.80
	> 3 years	5.10	6.01	54.24	21.34	9.79	3.53

Special groups	Roma community	45.28	20.72	28.89	3.86	0.94	0.30
	Egyptian community	13.90	22.03	54.91	6.35	1.91	0.90
	Orphans	8.29	13.87	40.98	20.91	9.30	6.66
	victims of trafficking	0.00	26.63	55.28	18.09	0.00	0.00
	with disability	6.95	7.68	46.49	23.76	9.09	6.03
	return migrants	2.77	3.45	44.48	33.84	9.43	6.03
Total		3.38	3.91	48.69	27.22	8.73	8.08

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade).

Among registered unemployed job seekers those of age 29 years and above have the highest levels of receipt of economic aid (Table 9). The percentage increases with age, from 34.07 percent to 41.45 percent for the age groups 30–34 years and 40–44 years, respectively. The rate decreases slightly for the age group 45–50 years, to 37.99 percent, and further, to 28.55 percent, for those 50 years or older. The proportion of registered unemployed job seekers receiving unemployment benefit also increases with age, with those older than 29 years having the highest rates.

Table 9. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers receiving support, by age group and type of support

Age group (years)	Receiving unemployment benefits	Receiving economic aid	Formerly receiving economic aid	Other
15–19	0.32	19.93	1.09	78.66
20–24	1.91	26.65	2.07	69.37
25–29	4.85	29.23	2.85	63.07
30–34	6.37	34.07	2.85	56.72
35–39	6.13	39.58	3.26	51.04
40–44	5.83	41.45	3.49	49.24
45–50	6.57	37.99	4.44	51.00
> 50	6.82	28.55	5.41	59.23

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

Duration of unemployment increases with age (Table 10). Those of age 40–44 years and of 50 years and above have the highest rates of duration of unemployment of more than three years (22.49% and 27.87%, respectively). However, within each age group, the highest pro-

portions are for unemployment duration of 0–6 months. These levels are higher for younger age groups: 52.43 percent for 15–19 year-olds, 44.54 percent for 20–24 year-olds, and 41.52 percent for 25–29 year-olds. These levels fall to 38.89 percent for 30–34 year-olds and to 26.8 percent for 50 year-olds and above. The age group 29 years and above has the highest proportion of unemployment duration of 1–3 years, from 24.02 percent for 30–34 year-olds to 27.92 percent for 50 year-olds and above.

Table 10. Unemployment duration of registered unemployed job seekers, by age group (%)

Age group (years)	Unemployment duration			
	0–6 months	6–12 months	1–3 years	> 3 years
15–19	52.43	31.61	12.32	3.64
20–24	44.54	25.72	22.79	6.95
25–29	41.52	23.43	23.82	11.23
30–34	38.89	22.64	24.02	14.46
35–39	36.25	21.18	25.52	17.05
40–44	33.37	19.58	27.29	19.77
45–50	31.90	18.68	26.92	22.49
> 50	26.80	17.41	27.92	27.87

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

The proportions of registered unemployed job seekers from special groups in the Roma and Egyptian communities (Table 11) are highest among 30–34 year-olds (6.33% for Roma and 6.45% for Egyptians), less for 35–39 year-old Roma (5.68%) and less still for 50-year-old and older Roma (2.51%), with a similar decrease among the Egyptians (6.34% for 35–39 year-olds and 4.06% for 50 years and older). These reductions with age may indicate a potential exclusion of older individuals from these communities.

Table 11. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers in special groups, by age group

Age group (years)	Unemployment group						
	Roma community	Egyptian community	orphan	victims of trafficking	with disability	return migrants	Other
15–19	4.14	4.40	0.18	0.23	0.35	0.66	90.05
20–24	5.09	4.80	0.25	0.01	0.72	0.85	88.28
25–29	5.30	5.68	0.23	0.02	0.65	1.16	86.96
30–34	6.33	6.45	0.18	0.07	0.67	1.17	85.13
35–39	5.68	6.34	0.17	0.02	0.77	0.91	86.11
40–44	4.74	5.48	0.15	0.01	0.86	1.00	87.76
45–50	3.68	5.43	0.12	0.00	0.91	0.67	89.19
> 50	2.51	4.06	0.04	0.00	0.69	0.27	92.42

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

Nearly two-thirds (65.18%) of registered unemployed job seekers in receipt of economic aid have less than primary education (Table 12). Percentages of this group decrease with increasing level of education: 58.15 percent among those with primary education, 39.09 percent for those with nine years of primary education, 23.56 percent for general high school education, 17.03 percent for professional high school and 8.8 percent among those with a university degree. Conversely, the higher the level of education of the registered unemployed job seekers the higher the percentage of those in receipt of unemployment benefit. This may also be linked to the longer duration of unemployment (Table 13). Among registered unemployed job seekers with less than primary education, only 0.54 percent receive unemployment benefit compared to 12.16 percent among those with a university degree.

Table 12. Education level of registered unemployed job seekers, by unemployment group (%)

Education level	Unemployment group			
	job seekers receiving unemployment benefits	job seekers receiving economic aid	job seekers formerly receiving economic aid	Other
< primary	0.54	65.18	4.52	29.75
primary	1.29	58.15	4.78	35.78
primary 9 years*	4.11	39.09	4.55	52.25
general high school	7.18	23.56	3.48	65.78
professional high school	8.20	17.03	4.05	70.73
university	12.16	8.80	1.28	77.77

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade).

More than half of registered unemployed job seekers with less than primary education have been unemployed for longer than one year (Table 13): 30.72 percent for 1–3 years and 29.83 percent for more than three years. Fewer than one quarter (23.85%) have been unemployed for 0–6 months and 15.58 percent for 6–12 months. Nearly one-third (30.45%) of registered unemployed job seekers with primary education have been unemployed for more than three years, with slightly fewer (29.03%) for 1–3 years, one-quarter (24.48%) for 0–6 months and one-sixth (16.04%) for 6–12 months. One-third (32.14%) of registered unemployed job seekers with primary 9-year education have had unemployment duration of 0–6 months, slightly less than those with high school or university education (37.38% and 47.26%, respectively). Unsurprisingly, as the level of education increases, the duration of unemployment decreases. Only 8.65 percent of those with a university degree have endured unemployment for three years or more.

Table 13. Education level of registered unemployed job seekers, by unemployment duration (%)

Education level	Unemployment duration			
	0–6 months	6–12 months	1–3 years	> 3 years
< primary	23.85	15.58	30.72	29.83
primary	24.48	16.04	29.03	30.45
primary 9 years*	32.14	18.97	26.83	22.05
general high school	37.38	22.57	24.52	15.52
professional high school	29.63	21.02	27.14	22.21
university	47.26	25.60	18.50	8.65

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade).

Among the special groups the Roma community has the highest percentage of registered unemployed job seekers with less than primary education, at 54.79 percent (Table 14), followed by the Egyptian community, with 20.69 percent. Of registered unemployed job seekers with primary education, 28.38 percent are from the Egyptian community, 21.7 percent from the Roma community, and 47.28 percent do not belong to a special group. The proportion of registered unemployed job seekers from the Roma and Egyptian community with higher levels of education is very small with the highest proportion barely exceeding one percent. More than 90 percent of registered unemployed job seekers with primary 9-year, high school or university education do not come from the special groups.

Table 14. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers from special groups with different levels of education

Education level	Unemployment group						
	Roma community	Egyptian community	orphan	victims of trafficking	with disability	return migrants	Other
less than primary	54.79	20.69	0.32	0.00	1.49	0.56	22.14
primary	21.70	28.38	0.46	0.14	1.43	0.61	47.28
primary 9 years*	2.43	5.68	0.11	0.02	0.69	0.63	90.44
general high school	0.58	1.17	0.10	0.01	0.64	0.86	96.64
professional high school	0.44	1.10	0.14	0.00	0.76	0.75	96.81
university	0.15	0.56	0.11	0.00	0.54	0.52	98.12

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade).

Most registered unemployed job seekers live in (in decreasing order; Table 15) Tirana, Elbasan and Fier (15.5%, 12.87% and 12.57%, respectively), followed by Shkoder (8.5%), Durres (8.41%), Kukes (7.9%), Korca (7.39%) and Vlore (7.2%). Berat has the lowest percentage (3.29%), followed by Lezhe (5.12%), Gjirokaster (5.45%) and Diber (5.98%). Women comprise more than half (55.54%) of registered unemployed job seekers in Tirana followed by slightly smaller proportions in (in decreasing order) Lezhe, Fier, Durres, Diber, Elbasan, Shkoder and Vlore. In the other four regions, women comprise less than fifty percent of registered unemployed job seekers, with Berat having the lowest percentage (46.59%). Registered unemployed job seeker heads of household range from 48.66 percent in Berat (the highest percentage) to 36.1 percent in Fier (the lowest percentage).

Table 15. Regional distribution of registered unemployed job seekers, by sex and household head (%), in decreasing order of overall percentage

County	Women	Head of household	Total
Tirana	55.54	42.37	15.50
Elbasan	53.15	43.68	12.87
Fier	54.51	36.15	12.57
Shkoder	53.32	37.01	8.50
Durres	54.04	37.51	8.41
Kukes	49.96	37.72	7.90
Korca	47.96	43.33	7.39
Vlore	51.51	41.04	7.20
Diber	53.16	40.12	5.98
Gjirokaster	48.23	38.54	5.45

Lezhe	54.90	42.41	5.12
Berat	46.59	48.66	3.29
Total	52.64	40.37	100.00

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

Elbasan has the highest proportion (5.97%) of registered unemployed job seekers (Table 16) with less than primary education, followed by Tirana (5.48%), Gjirokaster (4.38%), Fier and Korca, with Kukës, Shkoder and Diber having the lowest rates (0.47%, 1.02% and 1.4%, respectively). More than half of registered unemployed job seekers in Diber, Lezhe, Shkoder and Elbasan have primary 9-year education, with Gjirokaster and Korca having the lowest levels (45.15% and 45.21%, respectively). Kukës, Gjirokaster and Korca have the highest proportions of registered unemployed job seekers with general education, just above 30 percent, while Elbasan has the lowest rates (20.08%). Berat and Fier have the highest rates of registered unemployed job seekers with professional high school education (18.47% and 11.99%, respectively), while Kukës and Gjirokaster have the lowest rates (5.6% and 5.86%, respectively). Vlore, Tirana and Durres have the highest proportions of registered unemployed job seekers with a university degree (10–11%), and Diber, the lowest rate (4.92%).

Table 16. Regional distribution of registered unemployed job seekers, by education level (%)

County	Education level					
	< primary	primary	primary 9 years*	general high school	professional high school	University
Berat	2.12	3.65	46.80	21.65	18.47	7.30
Diber	1.47	2.83	56.67	27.14	6.97	4.92
Durres	2.81	2.94	47.61	26.86	9.51	10.26
Elbasan	5.97	6.98	50.94	20.08	9.77	6.26
Fier	3.62	2.25	48.90	26.92	11.99	6.32
Gjirokaster	4.38	2.73	45.15	32.98	5.86	8.91
Korca	3.21	6.93	45.21	30.27	7.20	7.18
Kukës	0.47	1.47	48.90	34.42	5.60	9.15
Lezhe	2.76	3.39	52.49	29.72	6.08	5.57
Shkoder	1.02	2.65	52.50	28.16	8.37	7.31
Tirana	5.48	5.10	44.90	25.37	8.43	10.73
Vlore	2.48	3.22	46.72	29.24	7.33	11.01
Total	3.38	3.91	48.69	27.22	8.73	8.08

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade)

The majority of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and above have primary 9-year education or high school education (Table 17). More than half of them (54.41%) have primary 9-year education, with women having a higher percentage than men (56.21% and 52.23%, respectively). The proportions with vocational training are less than with general high school (8.19% and 24.21%, respectively). Women have lower rates than men have for both these levels of education. However, women have slightly higher proportions with bachelor degrees and master degrees (6.26% compared with 5.05% for men). The proportion of registered unemployed job seekers with no education of age 29 years and above is 3.32 percent (3.09% for women and 3.6% for men). The proportion with primary 6-year education is 3.91 percent overall (3.62% for women and 4.27% for men).

Table 17. Education level of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and over (%)

Education level	Total	Women	Men
None	3.32	3.09	3.60
primary 6 years	3.91	3.62	4.27
primary 9 years*	54.41	56.21	52.23
general high school	24.21	23.77	24.74
vocational training	8.19	6.82	9.85
BA or BSc	2.50	2.71	2.24
Professional Master	1.86	2.07	1.6
MSc	1.36	1.48	1.21
n/a	0.24	0.23	0.24
no. of observations	77,002	42,077	34,925

Source: NAES Data, 2020.

* Lower secondary (6th–9th grade).

A considerable percentage (41.57%) of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and above with education up to 9 years are in receipt of economic aid (Table 18), with men having a higher percentage than women (45.11% and 38.77%, respectively). The rates for those receiving unemployment benefit are low (overall, 5.61%, women, 6.92; men, 3.95%).

Table 18. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and above with education up to 9 years, by category

Category	Total	Women	Men
applied for unemployment benefit	0.26	0.34	0.16
formerly on economic aid	3.65	3.83	3.42
recipient of economic aid	41.57	38.77	45.11
recipient of unemployment benefit	5.61	6.92	3.95
other	48.71	49.95	47.13
n/a	0.2	0.18	0.22
no. of observations	47,464	26,474	20,991

Source: NAES Data of Registered Unemployed Jobseekers April 21, 2021.

Note: 29 years and over with education up to 9 years.

The percentage of those in receipt of economic aid decreases with level of education. Thus, for those with up to primary 6-year education, 62.05 percent are in receipt of economic aid (41.57% for 9-year education), with 60.31 percent for women and 63.83 percent for men (Table 19). The percentage on unemployment benefit falls to 1.11 percent (1.67% for women and 0.55% for men).

Table 19. Percentage of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and over with education up to 6 years, by category

Category	Total	Women	Men
applied for unemployment benefit	0.05	0.11	0
formerly on economic aid	3.72	3.86	3.57
recipient of economic aid	62.05	60.31	63.83
recipient of unemployment benefit	1.11	1.67	0.55
other	32.84	33.84	31.8
n/a	0.23	0.21	0.25
no. of observations	5,570	2,822	2,748

Source: NAES Data of Registered Unemployed Jobseekers April 21, 2021

Note: 29 years and over with education up to 6 years

One-quarter (25.49%) of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and above with up to primary 9-year education declared they have no desired profession (Table 20). The profession with the highest declared percentage is manual worker (21.43%), followed by manual farm worker (4.22%), worker in other services (4%), manual construction worker (2.44%), driver (1.34%) and manual maintenance worker (1.01%).

Table 20. Desired professions of registered unemployed job seekers 29 years and over (%)

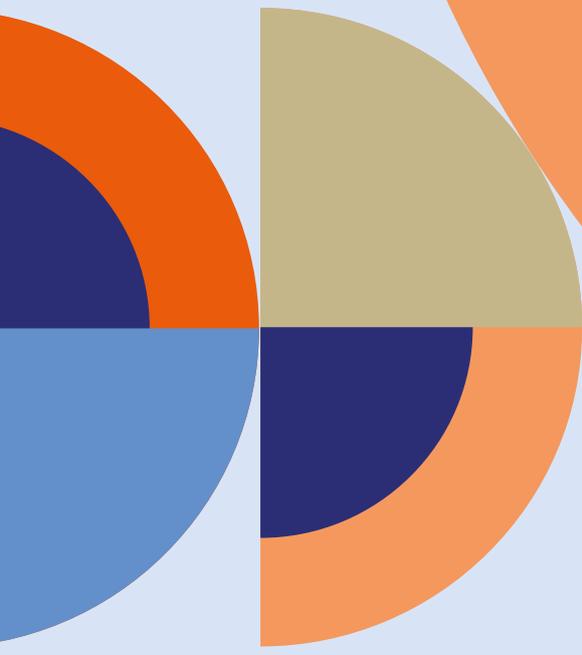
Desired profession	%
no profession	25.49
manual worker	21.43
manual farm worker	4.22
worker other services	4.00
manual construction worker	2.44
Driver	1.34
manual maintenance worker	1.01
Other	40.07

Source: NAES Data of Registered Unemployed Jobseekers April 21, 2021.

Note: 29 years and over with education up to 9 years.

6

Qualitative analysis of long-term unemployed job seekers



Qualitative analysis of long-term unemployed job seekers

For undertaking the qualitative analysis, interviews were carried out face-to-face in Albanian language. A few introductions were made (to overcome any linguistic and comprehension difficulties) to ensure that the purpose of the study and the content of the consent form were clearly understood. Some focus group rules and tips were also conveyed, aiming for smooth facilitation of the interviews, which were all audio-recorded and transcribed (anonymously) in alignment with the legal framework in force for personal data protection.

Participants were provided with a written consent form, which included a description of the project's overall aim, the specific aim of the focus group study and statements for the participant's consent. In addition, written consents to the focus group voluntarily participation, audio recording and transcription of disclosed information, and data processing and transferring to be used in the reports and published findings were given by the participants prior to each focus group interview. The participants were also informed of the confidentiality matters in the consent form. By signing the consent form (Appendix A-1), the participants agreed to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants during the focus group session.

Table 21 reports the locations of the focus group sessions with long-term unemployed job seekers, along with the date, duration and number of participants.

Municipality	No. participants	Date	Place	Duration
Tirana	8	4 June 2021	Vocational training centre no. 4	1 hour 20 minutes
Elbasan	6	14 June 2021	Imperial Hotel	59 minutes
Korca	12	17 June 2021	Park Plaza Hotel	1 hour 17 minutes

Selection of participants centred upon the main established criteria: age, gender, educational level, unemployment duration, beneficiaries of economic aid and different vulnerabilities. The focus groups composition is reported in Table 22.

Table 22. Focus groups composition

Municipality	Tirana	Elbasan	Korca
Gender			
Women	7	5	8
Men	1	1	4
Education			
Illiterate	-	2	1
primary (1 st –5 th grade)	1	1	1
lower secondary (6 th –9 th grade)	-	3	6
Other	7	-	4
Vulnerabilities			
Roma and Egyptian communities	-	6	4
single parents	2	-	2
Disability	1	-	-
Homeless	1	-	2
Duration of unemployment*			
0–6 months	-	-	-
6–12 months	-	-	-
1–3 years	5	-	2
> 3 years**	3	6	10

* Classification was based on participants' statements with regard to their last formal job. Short-term employment (1–2 months duration) was not taken into consideration.

** Also includes unemployed job seekers that have never had a formal job (3, 1 and 5 in the municipalities of Tirana, Elbasan and Korca, respectively).

6.1 Coding procedures

The three focus group interviews were hand coded (common technique in qualitative analysis; Creswell, 2009).²⁹ Given the scale of the study, three focus groups were held, including 26 participants, with hand coding of qualitative transcripts employed to generate themes and categories that appear as headings for the significant findings and multiple perspectives from the participants. A range of quotes support the findings section.

29. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.

6.2 Key observations from focus group interviews

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PROFILES OF LONG-TERM REGISTERED JOB SEEKERS

The interviewees attached high relevance to this section. The focus of the discussions was on obtaining a general profile of the long-term registered job seekers, their living conditions, educational level, family composition and monthly family income.

In Tirana Municipality, a common or shared picture of the participants' living conditions was observed: the residence was in an urban administrative unit of the capital city (with 1 participant living in a rural administrative unit), the majority live in rented properties with minimal living conditions, and the majority had completed upper secondary education, with only one participant having completed primary education (4th grade). The low-level educated participant stated that the poor economic conditions of her family had not allowed her to continue into further education.

The family composition varied from two to five members. Two participants were single parents due to death of the other parent or divorce. Family income consisted of economic aid and rent support granted by the government in one case, while the other unemployed participant did not yet benefit from the economic aid scheme. Three of the participants suffered from chronic disease, two were beneficiaries of economic aid, and one from disability assistance (amounting to ALL 9,200 per month). Two other participants stated that their monthly family income consisted of the spouse's minimum wage (minimum wage according to government criteria), and one benefitted from economic aid given that she has two minor children. On being asked about their daily routine now that they were unemployed, the participants stated that they engage in household cleaning, home maintenance, and child care.

In the focus group session held in Elbasan, half of the focus group participants stated that they live in a suburban area, some 20–30 minutes away from the city centre, two in rented houses and one in her own private house. The other half of the participants live near the city centre, two in their own house and one in a rented apartment. Most of the participants had completed basic education (primary and lower secondary). However, two participants were illiterate, barely able to write their name and surname. Among the reasons they gave for not attending school or continuing into further education, they mentioned their difficult economic conditions, family composition of eleven people, early marriage, and fear that accompanied the 1990s period of transition. Their parents' education level seemed to be the same: low (up to 8th grade) or none at all.

Family composition of the participants varied from three to eleven members, and a picture of their living conditions and family income was shared. Two participants (spouses) live in a large family of eleven members, including children and grandchildren. The only family income is economic aid of ALL 2,500 and street sales income not exceeding ALL 10,000 per month. Other participants stated that their spouse was also unemployed, and that their monthly family income consisted of economic aid and what they generate from occasional informal

work. The smallest family consisted of three members, and the participant and her husband had been unemployed for 30 years. All participants stated that their living costs were very high, including costs of medicines for chronic disease (diabetes, cancer), utilities bills, and children's education costs. The long-term unemployed participants engaged themselves by taking care of their children, grandchildren, house or street sales. One participant stated that: "Our daily routine is stressful."

Five of the participants from the focus group held in Korca Municipality lived in peripheral areas of the city, mainly in their own house. The family composition varied from three to nine persons. The family of one comprised eight members, living on a monthly income of in-laws' pension and six percent³⁰ economic aid (referred to as block assistance) granted by the municipality. Even for the family of another participant consisting of nine people, the only income was economic aid and what they can earn from occasional informal work. Altogether, the total did not exceed ALL 10,000 per month. The other three families living in the city of Korca consisted of three or four people, whose monthly family income consisted of economic assistance, or disability assistance of the spouse in one case. One participant stated that she received a modest amount of money and food packages from the pastoral church monthly.

Two participants live in Drenova, a small village near Korca, in their own house and with their spouse (also unemployed) and children. Their monthly family income consisted of economic aid only. Three participants live in Maliq, a small town near Korca, mostly in a rented house. Two participants were single divorced parents who took care of their children alone with the help of six percent economic aid and any sporadic informal work. The two remaining participants live in Bilisht, a small town near Korca on the border with Greece. Their monthly family income consisted of occasional informal work or disability assistance of one spouse amounting to ALL 10,000, 70 percent of which went to purchase medicines, in one case.

Six participants had attended lower secondary education (1st–7th grade), and the rest up to 8th grade, one, primary education (4th grade), and one was illiterate. The remaining four had completed upper secondary education (high school). Among the reasons they gave for preventing them from attending further education, the female participants highlighted the difficult economic conditions, mentality and the tendency or trend to attend school until 8th grade during the period of communism. Male participants emphasised that they had not attended further education due to the difficult economic conditions and migration.

30. For applicant families, which have not been declared beneficiaries of the economic assistance from the scoring system, based on the socio-economic assessment conducted by the social administrator, the Municipal Council has the right to approve up to 6% economic assistance.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT

The interviewees assigned high relevance to the factors that had led to their long-term unemployment and further hampered their inclusion in the labour market, highlighting also the psychological consequences of being unemployed. The focus of the discussion was on understanding more in-depth common patterns and factors that had affected and further prolonged the unemployment of the target group.

The first point of discussion touched upon the duration of unemployment and any work experience the participants might have had, whether formal or informal. More than half of the participants in the Tirana focus group had been unemployed for a year and a half due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak or childbirth. Three participants stated that they had never worked, mainly due to health or social issues. Participants who reported previous work experiences stated that they had worked as a saleswoman or cashier in a supermarket, or as a cook or babysitter (informal work).

The length of unemployment appears to be greater for the participants in the Elbasan focus group. There, three participants mentioned that they had been unemployed for four years; previously, they had worked in local factories, formally. Two other participants had been unemployed for ten and 30 years, and one participant had never found formal work and had gained income from begging and informal street sales.

In the focus group interview conducted in Korca, the number of job seekers who had never had a formal job was higher than in Elbasan or Tirana. Three female participants stated that they had never worked as a result of raising children. Three male participants stated that they had never worked formally. Occasional, informal work and short-term emigration had been the only solutions to financial hardships and poverty. Duration of unemployment varied among the other participants. Three female participants stated that they had been unemployed for 1–3 years and had previously worked for one year in local factories. Two female participants had been unemployed for 6–7 years, having gained informal work previously as a saleswoman or formal employment as a sanitary worker.

Inevitably, the common picture shows that long-term unemployed job seekers tend to work in the informal sector despite the consequences: lack of job security, odd working hours, exclusion from pension and insurances scheme, and lack of protection by the labour law, further disadvantaging their position.

The second discussion point touched upon the different factors that had led to long-term unemployment and further hampered and prolonged their inclusion in the active labour market. Top of the diverse factors mentioned by the participants in the three focus group sessions was health: disability or chronic disease (asthma, allergies, heart problems, pneumonia, diabetes, rheumatism, vertebral problems) had led to long-term unemployment, temporary employment, or rejection of some employment opportunities. Carrying heavy weights, the humidity and the high level of work required had further aggravated their physical and health condition.

Another barrier to work that seemed to be shared among female participants was the lack of help or assistance for taking care of their children and long working hours requested by the private business that did not fit with public kindergarten or school schedules. Such reasons led to an inability to look for, or even accept, a job position. One participant in the Tirana focus group said: *“In addition to the Covid-19 situation, I also have health problems, diagnoses that have not allowed me to be active. Also, the difficulties of raising three children, various other difficulties in my family and the political climate, in all its versions that the state has gone through, have affected my current situation. I am engaged in raising my children. Having three children requires commitment and good care for them. I am their caretaker and teacher at the same time. There are great aids and support for mothers with more than two children in Western countries, especially when mothers are sick; there is a range of economic aid. I do not have such.”*

On being asked about specific job claims that might have influenced their long-term unemployment, the participants shared the same answer that they had never had any job claims or preference. Nevertheless, they pointed to various conditions that had prevented them from finding a job or accepting one, such as the long working hours, especially in the private sector, that did not fit with the kindergarten or school schedules. Moreover, based on past experiences, they highlighted the fact that the private sector does not respect or guarantee their rights as workers in the workplace, referring to the employer’s specific requirement (employing women with no children or some other commitment), poor working conditions, high working rate required, non-compliance with the minimum wage by the private sector, and short-term employment (for 1–2 months) during which social insurances are not paid, further drawing them away from looking for a job. Participants did not perceive these as specific claims for a job position, but such conditions made it impossible for them to work. Two participants in the Tirana focus group said: *“I need a job that suits the kindergarten schedules. Also, Sundays and Saturdays are days off in the public sector, but not always in the private sector. Plus, the private sector does not compensate for official holidays. Besides, the obstacles that the long working hours in the private sector create, the private sector must consider the minimum wage set by the government.”*

Another female participant in the Korca focus group stated: *“I have had some job opportunities, specifically in a supermarket and a bakery. The answer I always get is: ‘You do not meet the requirements. We are looking for someone without commitments. Also, we do not accept medical reports.’”* [Implying that if someone were to be ill and submit a medical report on their return, the working day would not be paid.]

Other obstacles mentioned were (perceived) discrimination due to physical appearance, low educational level and requirements for previous work experience or high school qualification for a modest job position such as a saleswoman or cleaning worker. According to the Elbasan focus group participants, at the forefront of factors causing long-term unemployment was overt racial discrimination against members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. In contrast, the participants in the Korca focus group (from the Roma and Egyptian commu-

nities) stated that they have not faced, or at least perceived, any overt racial discrimination while looking for a job. Moreover, the participants touched upon Albania's political, social and economic climate further aggravated by the pandemic outbreak.

Concerning the channels for being informed of job vacancies, and efforts to seek a job, the focus group participants' perceptions were divided. Most of the Tirana focus group participants used or searched in the social media, on various web pages, newspapers and magazines for vacant job positions. Some others relied on announcements in their neighbourhood, references from their relatives and friends, or even calling in on a business near their residence. The majority of female participants stated that despite their know-how in the use of different channels, they did not apply for vacancies given their health condition or lack of assistance or help with their child care while they were at work. One participant stated: *"I can use all the information channels. However, I have no help in raising my children. Otherwise, I would not find it difficult to find a job. My children are in 2nd and 5th grade of primary education, and I cannot leave them alone."*

In contrast, participants in the Elbasan and Korca focus groups highlighted the employment office and informal channels, such as word-of-mouth, as main information channels. They barely used newspapers or social media, or the Internet, due to lack of digital skills. Some highlighted personal visits to the local businesses (mainly local factories) and other institutions or walking around the city to find any possible job announcements. Participants agreed that, despite their efforts, they still faced being unemployed for a very long time. Since they live in small neighbourhoods, family businesses near their residence—markets and small bars—rarely look for employees. In addition, the participants pointed out that although some factories operate in their city, there are still no jobs available, or a very few work opportunities but with harsh working conditions.

On being asked about the different skills (crafts) they have and how these skills could be utilised for their inclusion in the labour market, only one participant in the Tirana focus group had practised handcrafting (mostly sewing) after losing her job. However, the demand for such crafts was not enough for them to take on handcrafting as a profession.

Three female participants from Elbasan and one from the Korca focus group stated that they were good at sewing and cooking. All three possessed certificates due to the professional training that they received from the employment offices. The female participants highlighted that if they had the proper tools or monetary support to promote their work, they could be self-employed, tailoring or handcrafting from home. Three male participants stated that they could make things skilfully by hand, such as weaving umbrellas, tables, baskets, and cans with birch sticks, characteristic of Roma communities. On being asked how this skill could help them find a job, two participants stated: *"The demand is high for products made of birch sticks, especially during the summer. However, I find it impossible, as it requires a licence and permission to collect such sticks. If they [forest police] find you gathering birch sticks in the woods, they will fine or send you to jail. I do not have a licence."* (Elbasan focus group.)

“There are many of us that have such skills. Therefore, a very good means for creating jobs is the foundation of a centre or enterprise with proper support from the municipality and government, where all those who possess this craft and skill can work.” (Korca focus group.)

On a more practical level, for female participants in the Tirana focus group, the most suitable job would be one in which they had previous experience or some know-how, such as babysitting, cooking or hairdressing. For the low-educated participant, the most suitable job would be cleaning. The majority of the Elbasan focus group participants thought that the most suitable job would be as a kitchen assistant, tailor or craftsman, given that they possess the appropriate skills or certifications, or both, though the others thought any job related to cleaning or manual work would be suitable.

One of the most commonly preferred jobs for the female participants in the Korca focus group was sanitary worker, given their educational level, preferably in a state institution, highlighting that the private sector does not guarantee their rights as workers and does not provide decent working conditions. Further suitable job positions for them included work as saleswomen or tailor. In contrast, male participants emphasised that they could do any manual work, including road and garden cleaning.

On being asked what they would want to change or develop further to facilitate their transition into the active labour market, the vast majority of participants were reluctant, to some extent even refusing, to continue in education and learning. Only one participant in the Elbasan focus group saw the continuation of higher education as a solution to entering the labour market, given that, in her view, every job position required at least a high school certificate. The vast majority believed that a higher educational level would not be helpful given their age (45 years or above). They were pessimistic, stressing that despite a certificate of undertaking a professional course or possessing skills, they have been unable to find a job. Female participants in the Korca focus group stated reluctantly that vocational training would provide a good opportunity, but expressed no enthusiasm or desire to pursue it. Meanwhile, male participants did not think that higher education or vocational training would help them gain employment.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

The topic Institutional services and programmes focused on existing services and employment programmes on offer and whether the participants were aware of such programmes. The topic was covered in-depth with regard to the benefits these programmes could provide to the target group, and some suggestions were brought into the discussion by the participants.

The first point of discussion concerned when the participants had registered with the employment office and the frequency of subsequent contact with the office about employment opportunities. The duration of registration at the employment office varied from two months

to seven years. The majority of participants in the Elbasan focus group had been registered for 10–14 years but had deregistered for short periods (several months) due to emigration or temporary employment. The majority of participants stated that the contacts and visits to the employment office were monthly or quarterly when they had to fill a socio-economic declaration verifying the social and economic situation of the family in need. For two of the participants in the Tirana focus group, the employment office had, during the time they had been registered, suggested some job offers and opportunities, but the individuals had refused due to a health condition.

The contact of the participants with the employment office in the Elbasan focus group had a different set of experiences concerning employment opportunities. Some had not received notice of any job opportunities from the employment office, though others stated that the employment office had suggested some job opportunities, but nevertheless the result was that they all remained unemployed. One participant said: *“The employment office helped us as much as they could. However, it is the private business that does not employ us or keep us at work. Private businesses force people away from work; it is not that we do not want to work. Prolonged working hours, exploitation, not giving leave when our children are ill, and even non-payment of salary all push us away from work.”*

One issue that was highlighted by the Elbasan focus group participants was that the employment office kept suggesting the same jobs: in the factories operating in Elbasan (e.g. a fish processing factory), even though the job seekers had tried it and stated that they find it difficult or impossible to work at this factory.

The Korca focus group participants unanimously stated that they were satisfied with the services provided by the employment office. The opportunities referred by the employment office were frequent. They had been contacted by the office at least once or twice a year over various employment opportunities. The participants stated that despite the help and support of the office, the private sector had excluded them (due to their age or low education), did not employ them, or employed them for a short period, of 2–3 months. Such short-term employment has negative consequences as it leads to exclusion from the economic aid scheme, and the individuals have to wait six months before re-applying.

The Tirana focus group participants were unaware of the NAES programmes aiming at the transition of the unemployed to the labour market. They had not been informed by the employment office, nor by other channels. Two participants stated that they were informed about vocational training through a range of channels. There was a shared perception amongst the participants of the benefits of the programme that would help them become active in the labour market, and a shared willingness to attend professional training, especially for sewing, handcrafting, cooking, hairdressing and graphic design.

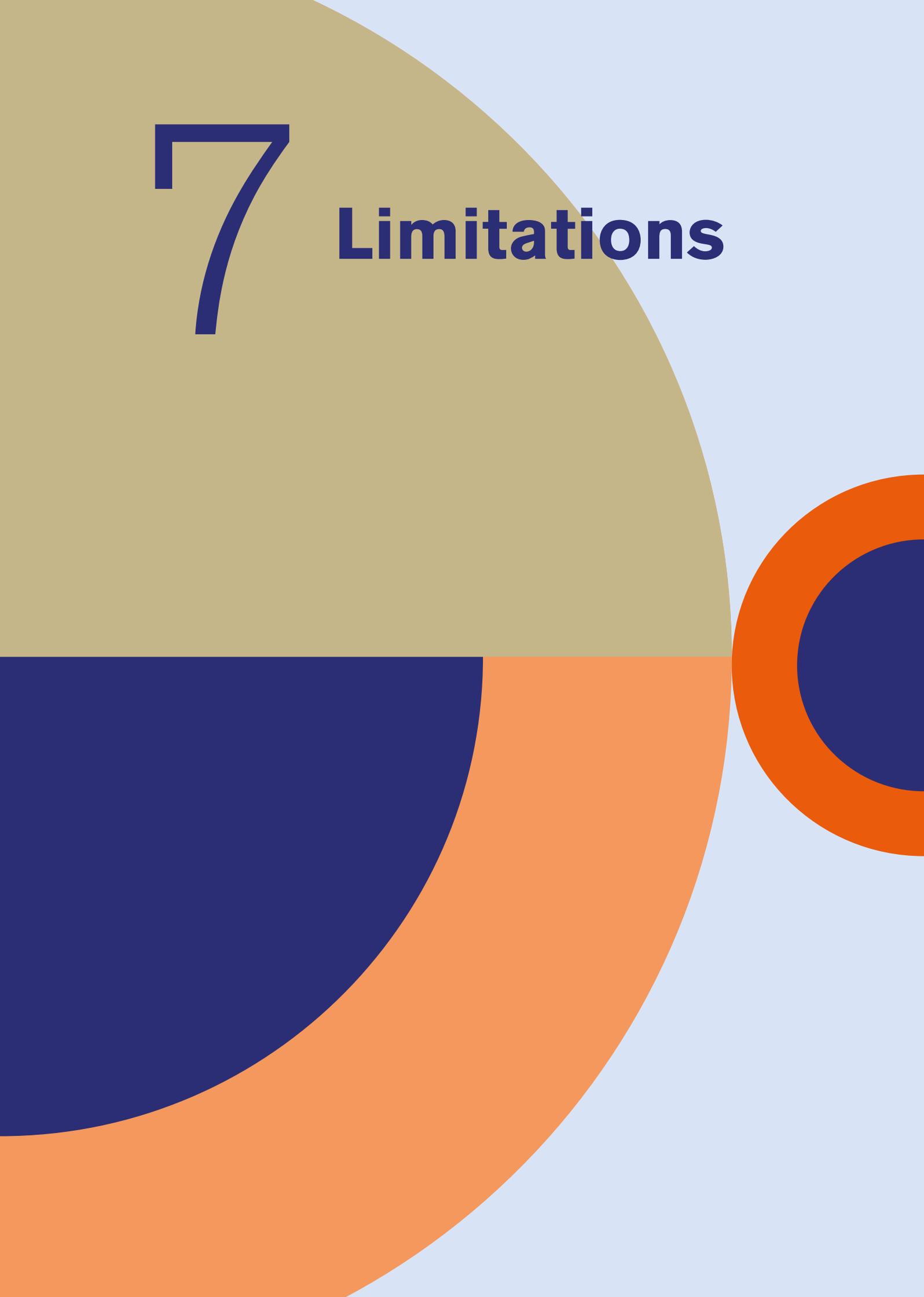
Interestingly, the Tirana focus group participants brought into discussion opportunities offered by other institutions and organisations. One participant said: *“The National Chamber of Crafts is located next to this building. It offers a range of theoretical and practical training, and in the end, you are provided with a certificate. Many businesses offer qualifications or*

paid internships. Let's not just look at the negative side. If you try, you will find something... Also, GIZ, through the IDEA project, offers lectures and interactive training to foster entrepreneurial initiatives."

Almost all the Elbasan focus group participants were informed by the employment office only about vocational training courses. Two participants had attended these courses (for kitchen assistant and tailor) and been certified. In contrast, two had refused to participate in the professional courses due to family (lack of child care) and health issues. The participants reluctantly appreciated this professional training, but still had to face the fact that they remained unemployed for a long time despite the certificate. The participants expressed their readiness to attend an educational or professional programme of relatively short duration, particularly vocational training, if this opportunity would guarantee them a job.

As part of the aspects of long-term unemployment, the focus group participants addressed the psychological consequences of being unemployed. They had experienced stress, anxiety and depression. Interestingly, these issues promoted discussion, advice and motivation among the Tirana focus group participants. One participant emphasised the importance of the availability of a social counsellor or advisor for both job seekers and the administration, given the psychological barriers put up between themselves and the employment offices, stating: *"To live longer, give courage to our children and care for our spouses, we must be calm because we have responsibilities not only to ourselves but also for those we bring into life. Human communication is critical in resolving problems. Communication aids the resolution of social issues. Women who are constantly stressed are unable to respond appropriately to their children nor, in the meantime, to a job opportunity. Employers prefer calm employees. No one will hire someone who is psychologically upset.*

"Psychological barriers present a real problem for job seekers and the administration. When job seekers visit, they have the perception that they will be offered an ordinary job, but find the situation hopeless. On the other hand, the employment officer perceive that the job seeker does not want to work."



7

Limitations

Limitations

This analysis has some limitations. For the quantitative analysis, the data did not allow for cross-tabulation across the different groups and, therefore, limited the amount of analysis that could be conducted on the target group of adult long-term unemployed with low education. The main analysis could only be conducted for separate groups such as adults, low educated, vulnerable, and long-term unemployed without allowing for cross-tabulation across the groups. This limitation impacted the scope of the study and the analysis of the target group. The micro-data on registered unemployed job seekers provides a snap shot of them in April 2021. Meanwhile, the limited number of variables limited the analysis that was conducted.

With regard to the qualitative analysis, the sampling criteria were not fully employed during the selection of the participants. Specifically, the gender composition of the focus groups was not balanced, and male long-term registered job seekers were only slightly represented (e.g., one male jobseeker in eight participants, and one male jobseeker in six participants were present during the focus group sessions in the municipalities of Tirana and Elbasan, respectively). Additionally, not all age groups were represented among the three focus groups to gain an understanding of any association between age group and long-term unemployment across the different regions. Also, some sub-categories of vulnerability were under-represented, while participants with a high education level were present during the focus group interviews.

Occasional cancellation by participants was experienced in the three municipalities, resulting in the number of participants being less than the set threshold of ten participants per session.

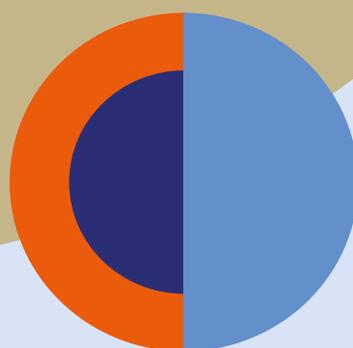
Moreover, a lack of motivation and hope among focus group participants was noted in how this study and project implications could help change their situation, affecting their willingness to answer specific questions, and occasionally diverting the discussion.

The scale and scope of the focus group study permits some general observations to be drawn from the three focus group interviews. However, three interviews and 26 participants provide only a relatively small sample for extending more generalised results to the whole population of vulnerable, long-term registered job seekers. Thus, the authors do not claim to provide a generalisation of the social-economic, demographic and geographical characteristics that affect the long-term unemployment of the target group population.

The primary objective was to provide an in-depth understanding of the characteristics and vulnerabilities reported above regarding their impact on the long-term unemployment experienced by the target group. And the present exploration points to other issues that need to be considered, such as the necessity of systematic upskilling pathways and mechanisms, and tailored essential learning and training provisions in subsequent analysis and studies that could expand upon the insights provided herein.

8

Conclusions and recommendations



Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of the present report was to provide a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis on the adult long-term unemployed job seekers with low education using NAES data and focus group discussions in the regions of Elbasan, Korca and Tirana. The analysis focused on the overall labour market situation in Albania and the characteristics of the unemployed job seekers registered with NAES.

The analysis shows that more than half of registered unemployed job seekers are women. The vast majority of job seekers have been unemployed for longer than six months. Special groups make up an insignificant percentage of registered job seekers. Women make up more than 96 percent of registered unemployed job seekers who are victims of trafficking. The vast majority of job seekers across groups and unemployment duration are 50 years of age or older, and the age group 29 years and above comprise about 80–90 percent. Registered unemployed job seekers, victims of trafficking, orphans and return migrants are younger, with victims of trafficking being the youngest.

The levels of education are very low for registered unemployed job seekers from the Roma and Egyptian communities. These have the highest levels of less than primary education. Registered unemployed job seekers in receipt of economic aid, apart from the Roma and Egyptian communities, have the highest rates of less than primary education, while those receiving unemployment benefits have the lowest rates. As unemployment duration increases so does the level of less than primary education possessed by the job seeker, and the level with university education decreases substantially. The proportion of registered unemployed job seekers receiving economic aid is highest in the age group 29 years and above. Meanwhile, duration of unemployment increases as the age groups increases, with 29-year-olds and older having the highest levels of more than three years and 1–3 years. The oldest age group have the lowest rates among Roma and Egyptian communities, with the lowest rates for the age group 50 years and above.

There is a high percentage of registered unemployed job seekers with a low level of education in receipt of economic aid. As education level increases the percentage of individuals receiving economic aid decreases. Fewer of those with high school or professional high school education are in receipt of economic aid compared to those with general high school education. The higher the level of education the higher the percentage of registered unemployed job seekers receiving unemployment benefit. This situation may be linked to shorter

duration of unemployment for these groups. Registered unemployed job seekers with lower levels of education mainly belong to the groups with higher duration of unemployment extending beyond three years. Higher levels of education overall are associated with shorter duration of unemployment. The majority of registered unemployed job seekers with less than primary education and primary education are from the Roma and Egyptian communities. These communities have insignificant levels of higher education, e.g. high school or university. Almost all with university degrees are among registered unemployed job seekers that are not in the special groups.

Tirana, Elbasan and Fier have the highest percentages of registered unemployed job seekers, and Berat, the lowest. Women make up more than half of registered unemployed job seekers, with Tirana having the highest level, and Berat the lowest. Heads of household make up less than half of registered unemployed job seekers, with Berat having the highest proportion. Elbasan, Tirana and Gjirokaster have the highest proportions of registered unemployed job seekers with less than primary education, and Kukes, the lowest. About half of registered unemployed job seekers in each region have undergone primary 9-year education, with Diber having the highest level and Gjirokaster and Korca, the lowest. The rates for general high school education range between 20 and 35 percent, with Berat having the highest level for professional high school, and Kukes, the lowest. Lastly, Vlore, Tirana, and Elbasan have the highest percentages of registered unemployed job seekers with a university degree, and Diber and Lezhe, the lowest.

The majority of registered unemployed job seekers of age 29 years or above have primary 9-year education and high school education. More women than men job seekers have a bachelor or master degree. Meanwhile, one-quarter of registered unemployed job seekers of 29 years and above with up to primary 9-year education declared no preferred profession, another quarter preferred manual work and the rest, mainly other manual professions including farm worker, maintenance or driver.

In conclusion, the general profile of the long-term registered unemployed job seekers that emerges from the quantitative analysis is that more than half of the target group in receipt of unemployment benefit or economic aid are women. Additionally, the age group 30 years or above makes up about 80–90 percent of all registered unemployed job seekers. The highest percentages with less than primary education or primary education are from the Roma and Egyptian communities. Moreover, the majority of registered unemployed job seekers in receipt of economic aid are from the age group 30 years and above, have less than primary or primary education and are mostly men. The age group 40 years and older has the highest percentage of duration of unemployment of 1–3 years and above three years with less than primary or primary education. Also, the regional distribution of registered unemployed job seekers by education level shows that Tirana, Elbasan, Korca and Gjirokaster have the highest rates of individuals with less than primary or primary education. Men have the highest percentages of low education (less than primary or primary education) compared to women. The vast majority of long-term registered unemployed job seekers declare manual work as their preferred profession.

The qualitative study revealed some insight into the general profile of long-term unemployed job seekers, factors leading to unemployment and benefits from institutional employment programmes and services. The participants (long-term unemployed job seekers) described their earnings as “extremely small,” “on the verge of surviving” or “insufficient to make a decent living.” Most do not have stable housing and live in rented apartments. Only one or none of their family members work. Economic aid, income from sporadic informal work and a family member’s minimum wage make up a family’s monthly income. In each of the three regions, the level of education varies and differs. In their daily lives, the unemployed are mainly engaged in child care, domestic chores or street selling. Difficult economic conditions, mentality, early marriage and migration are among the factors preventing these people from continuing with further education. Adverse effects of long-term unemployment further increase the risks of poverty and earnings inequality, as well as limit access to education for the unemployed job seekers’ children. Lacking access to education creates a vicious circle, and the low-educated and illiterate youth risk falling into a larger and entrenched unemployment trap.

Health and social issues, various forms of perceived discrimination, educational level, bad working conditions and a private sector that does not respect or guarantee fundamental rights at the workplace are among the main reasons for continued long-term unemployment. It should be noted that although long-term unemployed job seekers may not declare low education as a main barrier to accessing the labour market, as they may not be aware of it, qualitative analysis indirectly reveals that, from the perspective of the workplace provider or employer, it is a hinderance.

In contrast to the situation in Korca, disadvantaged minorities in Elbasan, such as Roma and Egyptians, perceive they are disproportionately affected.

Although sporadic, informal work is present in all three municipalities as a desperate response to poverty and discrimination. With regard to information channels on potential job vacancies, the vast majority of job seekers rely on informal channels (relatives’ recommendations or word-of-mouth) due to a lack of digital skills, which tend to disadvantage them and further increase the associated costs, along with a lack of coverage of potential employers and ineffectiveness in identifying suitable jobs.

In terms of the most suitable jobs, the picture shared reveals that the participants prefer to work in jobs for which they have skills and certification (kitchen assistant, tailor) or any other manual work (sanitary worker, garden or road cleaner, etc.), further supported by the quantitative analysis, which reveals that at least one-quarter of the target group declare manual work including farm worker, maintenance and driver as preferred.

The unemployed, exposed to negative labour demands, highlighted psychological and emotional damage, as well as impaired mental health, such as depression, anxiety, stress, hopelessness and feelings of uselessness, as further affecting their opportunities and willingness to learn, look for a job or gain employment.

The job seekers in the three municipalities have different experiences and contacts with the employment office over suggestions and references for potential job vacancies. Job offers are generally present, but health, working conditions for the job on offer and their previous bad experiences from the private sector, which does not guarantee their rights as workers at the workplace, are the main reasons for their refusing a job or short-term employment. Concerning understanding of the various institutional programmes available to assist in labour market integration, the long-term unemployed were mostly aware of only vocational training. The participants were unaware of the reframed active labour market programmes. The long-term registered job seekers differed in their readiness, attitude and opinion on attending these programmes. Some expressed an interest in pursuing vocational training, agreeing with the significant benefits for job seekers with low educational attainment. The majority were sceptical, even objected to it, claiming that vocational training did not aid in reintegration, further highlighting the difficulties in engaging them in such programmes, most probably due to the fact that they are not fully aware of the barriers resulting from being unskilled.

Based on the literature review, overall data analysis and analysis of the target group, as well as the qualitative analysis from the focus groups, the following recommendations are made:

- There is a need for more detailed data on the target group of adult long-term unemployed with low education. The collected data should contain individual and household level characteristics on their skills, income level, previous work experiences, sectors in which they have worked, occupations, previous trainings, adult learning, household size, marital status, number of children, and health problems and condition, among others. These data should be systematically analysed in order to assess the level of skills, needs for training and adult learning, socio-economic situation, and the changes over time. General statistics provided in the current format, which provide an overview of separate groups without providing data on cross-tabulation between groups or different characteristics within one do not allow for a clear in-depth understanding on the target group or any of the included groups. More detailed data would increase the accuracy of profiling through a better understanding of the skills and pathways needed to achieve those skills, and better placement in employment programmes and the labour market. In the meantime, careful initial assessment of individual characteristics, needs, skills and aptitudes would enable the prioritisation of the most vulnerable and distant groups from the labour market and offering of real, suitable job opportunities. The programme may serve to raise awareness with the designated structures responsible to commit to such data collection and to support them in their needs to achieve such results.
- The reframed active labour market programmes provide the basis for implementation of back-to-work interventions, encapsulating tailored support for the unemployed lacking sufficient and proper education and skills. The skilling mechanisms, starting from skills validation, by recognising skills gained through prior learning, informal and formal training or professional experience, upskilling and reskilling mechanisms

and skills matching approaches, lie at the root of a successful implementation of the broad package of supportive measures.

- The qualitative analysis highlights the need for long-term unemployed training in their rights as employees in the workplace, in terms of employment relations, working conditions, and safety and health at work, in a simple way and with an understandable language. At the core of the recommendation is the upskilling approaches in offering basic skills in reading and writing so that this target group becomes able to collect or read information on workplace rights, employment relations and employment contracts, among others. Also, training with appropriate digital skills makes the target group able to use reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms when faced with violations of employment relations.
- Even though employment programmes provide information through platforms such as websites, social media, press, etc., the results of the qualitative analysis show that the target group is not widely informed about the reframed employment programmes. Given the level of education and the lack of digital skills, it is recommended that the visibility of these programmes is increased in a more visual, embracing and popular way, such as through information from employment offices or public service centres (such as ADISA). Hence, an awareness campaign to increase public visibility and boost information on these programmes and their importance to ensure access to the labour market is essential. Despite the importance of outreach, supportive counselling and personalised and motivational guidance from the employment offices is essential in reducing job seekers' reluctance towards these programmes.
- Being among the least educated long-term unemployed job seekers and with no formal qualifications whatsoever, the Roma and Egyptian communities experience entrenched barriers and challenges to social and labour market inclusion. Therefore, this particular group that stands as the most disadvantaged should be prioritised. The following recommendations are made:
 - ✓ Inclusion in basic education, which aids in developing educational and social skills, is crucial to improving the conditions and opportunities afforded to these communities.
 - ✓ Inclusion in vocational establishments, which aids in developing practical qualifications as a means of access to employment.
 - ✓ Reshaping implementation of the employment and vocational training programmes to explore and focus on technical skills (such as characteristic crafting skills of the Roma and Egyptian community), in addition to generic ones.
- Given the void in provision of basic education to adults, and the inability to follow VET without basic education, a platform for upskilling should be created in order to offer basic writing, reading and digital skills that would allow long-term unemployed adults

with low education to complete basic jobs or enter on-the-job training. In this regard, the multi-functional centres and mobile centres may play a very important role, especially for the latter, in reaching the target group. Moreover, given that job seekers rely on informal channels to be informed about job vacancies, digital skills will further increase their exposure to a wider range of job opportunities. This should be coupled with soft skills, as well as additional services that may be needed for specific needs and backgrounds. In this respect, there is also a need for an efficient system of case referencing between employment services and social services to effectively provide them with the needed services in order to reduce the risk of getting stuck in one segment of the system.

- Little is known about the informing, the readiness and the involvement of employers in these employment programmes. LEED work reveals that employment initiatives in a particular community without significant employer involvement are often ineffective (Froy and Pyne, 2011).³¹ Employment programmes seek to integrate and present their offer among local actors. Therefore, continuous engagement with employers and workplace representatives is necessary to encourage and support them in embedding disadvantaged groups into their workforce. Further analysis could examine more in-depth the employer involvement and support in upskilling the workforce, and evaluate the success of these programmes.

31. Froy, F. and L. Pyne (2011). Ensuring Labour Market Success for Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Youth, OECD LEED Working Papers, No. 2011/09, OECD Publishing. doi: 10.1787/5kg8g210547b-en

Appendices

Appendix A-1

CONSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPATION IN FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Project title: Support to Continuous Unemployed Learning (SCUL)

Municipality: _____

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Employment issues in general, and more specifically, employment of vulnerable groups, provide fundamental indicators of social and economic development. Although Albania has made considerable progress in employment policies and active labour market mechanisms, long-term unemployed job seekers persistently remain unintegrated into the labour market, increasing their vulnerability in employment issues. With an understanding of the multi-faceted vulnerability of this target group, this intervention is undertaken to establish a structure and upskilling mechanism in the longer term, progressively reducing the group's size and facilitating its transition towards the labour market.

LEGAL BASIS

According to Law no. 9887 dated 10.03.2008, 'On the protection of personal data', article 6 point 1 letter a) states that "Personal data are processed only: a) if the personal data subject has given consent."

PURPOSE OF THE FOCUS GROUPS INTERVIEWS

This study investigates the long-term unemployed job seekers' opinions on socio-economic, demographic characteristics, and geographical provenance that influence their long-term unemployment. As part of this study, the attendees will be asked to participate in a focus group and answer structured and open-ended questions. This study will take approximately 90 minutes.

STATEMENTS AND CONSENT OF THE PARTICIPANT

By signing this consent form, I declare and guarantee with my full and free will that I agree with the following:

- I have read and understood the purpose of the project and focus group interview.
- I agree to participate in the focus group interview to aid with the research of aspects and socio-economic and demographic characteristics that influence my long-term unemployment with the understanding that the declared data will be processed in accordance with the legal framework in force for the protection of personal data.
- I authorise and give consent to the audio recordings and transcription of the focus group interview.
- I authorise and give consent to have my verbal responses audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way.
- I give my full consent to the processing and transfer of any data that the researcher extracts from the focus group to be used in reports or published findings but it will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying personal information.
- I will maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group interview.
- I understand that I may skip any questions that I do not wish to answer.
- I may choose to withdraw at any time from the interview.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary and agree to participate under the conditions stated above.

Name and Surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix A-2

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCRIPT

I. General information

1. Please describe your place of residence (suburban area, city centre) and accommodation (rented house or own property).
1. What is your education? If it is low education, are you able to read and write having learned to do so on your own without attending school?
1. What are the reasons for not continuing compulsory or upper secondary education (e.g., distance from home, economic reasons)?
1. What are the education levels (and professions) of your parents and members of the family you grew up in?
1. What is your family composition (to understand whether he/she is the head of the household), and are there other unemployed members in your family?
1. How do you consider your (monthly) family income: very low, low, or average?
1. e.g., very low (minimum consumer budget), low (minimum wage ALL 30,000), and average (> ALL 30,000)?
1. What is your daily routine now that you are unemployed?

II. Unemployment information

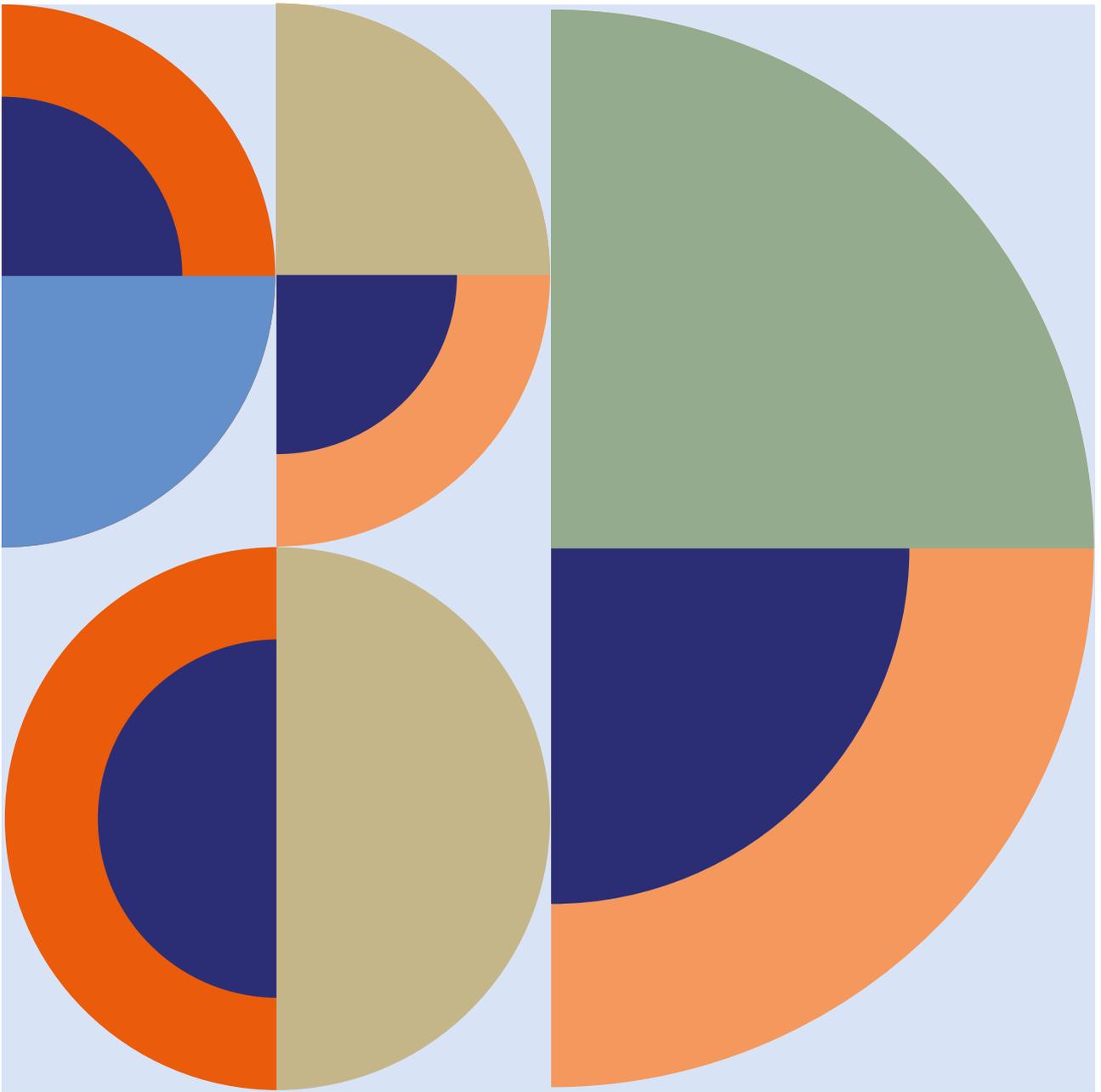
1. How long have you been unemployed? Have these months or years of unemployment been consecutive?
1. Did you have any work experience beforehand, and what was it? Was it formal or informal work (include salary: minimum wage, less or more)?
1. Have specific job preferences or claims influenced your long-term unemployment? And if so, how did they impact you?
1. What other factors have influenced your unemployment (e.g. the area where you live, age, gender, education, health issues such as disability or illness, social issues such as single parent, alcohol or substance abuse, victims of trafficking or domestic violence, member of Roma and Egyptian communities, returning from emigration, type of religion)?
1. Do you have information on whether active businesses operate in the area where you live (or nearby)? If so, what is their business activity?
1. Did you make any efforts to inquire or ask about a position in these businesses or other institutions operating nearby?
1. What other efforts have you made to seek a job?
1. How are you informed of possible job vacancies in the area where you live?
1. If you have any professional skills (crafts), how might this help you gain employment?

and integrate into the labour market?

1. If you were given the possibility to enter higher education or take a professional course or training, what would you like to do? What would you like to change or develop (e.g., education, professional training) to enter the job market?
1. Which kind of job is more suitable for you?

III. Institutional services and programmes information

1. For how long you have been registered in the employment office?
2. How frequent are the contacts or visits with the employment office near your place of residence?
3. How frequent have the job offers or opportunities provided by the employment office been?
4. Are you part of any economic assistance or unemployment benefit scheme?
5. If you have had continuous contacts with the employment office on employment opportunities, what are the reasons for you being unemployed today (refusal to work and for what reasons; short-term employment with a company or institution, and for what reasons; sufficiency of the economic assistance or aid)?
6. What other services have you had from the employment office?
7. Are you aware of NAES programmes assisting in tackling your unemployment and integrating you into the labour market?
8. If so, where did you get this information (e.g., from the employment office itself, or word-of-mouth)?
9. And if so, which programme have you benefited from, and how?
10. If you have been in constant contact with employment offices, and if you were informed of the existence of such a programme, what were the reasons for refusing to participate in it?
11. If you were given the opportunity to attend an educational or professional programme of relatively short duration, which would help you in employment, would you be willing to attend it?



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