

# **What Works in Youth Employment in the Balkans**

**By Cathryn L. Thorup, Ph.D.**

**Foreword by Maria Livanos Cattai**



Cathryn L. Thorup, Ph.D.

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### International Youth Foundation®

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) was established in 1990 to bring worldwide resources and attention to the many effective local efforts that are transforming young lives across the globe. Currently operating in nearly 60 countries and territories around the world, IYF is dedicated to improving the conditions and prospects of young people where they live, learn, work, and play. IYF's "What Works" series examines cutting edge issues in the field and aims to provide practitioners, policymakers, donors and others supporting youth initiatives with insights into effective practices and innovative approaches impacting young people worldwide.

IYF and a number of its partners have placed particular attention on the issue of youth employment. For example, the IYF/Nokia Make a Connection program in South Africa—run by IYF Partner the Youth Development Trust—combines three months of life skills, entrepreneurial skills and ICT training with internships and job placement. IYF has partnered with the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank to launch a \$25 million program—*entra 21*—to support training in information technology and job placement for youth in Latin America and the Caribbean. IT4Youth, a joint effort of IYF and the Welfare Association, is a skills training and employment program for Palestinian youth in the West Bank, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

### Balkan Children and Youth Foundation

Founded in 2000, the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (BCYF) is dedicated to improving the conditions and prospects for young people throughout the Balkan region. With regional operations headquartered in Skopje, Macedonia, BCYF's goal is to serve as a catalyst in strengthening the youth development sector throughout the region through a range of capacity-building supports, targeted grantmaking, and networking opportunities.

BCYF operates in 10 countries and territories in Southeast Europe. To date, BCYF has worked directly or indirectly with 400 youth and youth-serving NGOs in the region and has awarded 89 grants for a total of USD \$1,093,796.

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**While gaining job-related skills as well as employment opportunities is clearly a priority for the region's young people, they face a range of hurdles.**

Today, with high unemployment, slumping economies, and few job and training opportunities for young people, the Balkan region continues to face staggering challenges. Many Balkan youth are losing hope in the future, and contemplating leaving their country in search of greater personal and economic fulfillment. Yet this bleak picture is only part of the story. Increasingly, governments, NGOs, and businesses are investing in the region, including in its most precious resource, its youth. Today, social integration and economic progress, while slow, is taking hold in many of these communities.

Over the years, I've seen firsthand how public/private sector alliances can provide a powerful boost to economies and revitalize communities even in the most challenging regions of the world. Yes, it's a risky endeavor, and those involved in such partnerships are often pioneers in the field. But I have immense respect for those civil society, business and government leaders who are working collaboratively on the ground to make things happen, and address local needs in practical, sustainable ways. You will read about some of these innovative collaborations in the following pages of *What Works in Youth Employment in the Balkans*.

While gaining job-related skills as well as employment opportunities is clearly a priority for the region's young people, they face a range of hurdles. Many of their parents, for example, were employed by state governments, year after year. Today's Balkan youth need to be far more inventive and entrepreneurial, creating employment opportunities for themselves and for others. Yet many young people graduate ill-equipped to enter the job market, a condition further complicated by discrimination against certain groups – including young women, minority youth, and refugees. Breaking down some of those barriers and creating a more open and business friendly environment remains an urgent priority.

*What Works in Youth Employment in the Balkans* addresses many of these complex issues by providing concrete examples of how NGOs, businesses, governments and communities are working together to create new job and educational opportunities for young people. It offers insights into the challenges of creating such programs, and lessons learned as a result. You will learn about a program in Romania that helps high school students choose a career, prepare for the job interview process, and set up their own businesses. In Bulgaria, the local Junior Achievement program works to educate and equip youth with the skills necessary to compete and succeed in the market place. A program in Albania – ranked among the poorest countries in Europe – helps youth find a future in their own countries, by promoting professional training courses, networking with the business community, and assistance in securing jobs or establishing small businesses.

While NGOs tend to be the driving force in these programs, the local business community is often actively engaged, as it should be. For such programs to succeed, a close working relationship must be developed with the private sector – which is an invaluable resource for mentoring, internships, and job creation and placement.

In my experience, it is often the larger companies who have the capacity and the resources to think more broadly, to be more innovative, and to spread new ideas to other, smaller enterprises. So today's global corporations, I believe, have an especially critical responsibility to exercise leadership when it comes to making these kinds of social investments in a country and its people.

Bringing the different sectors together to maximize their impact on youth and the communities in which they live is a key strategy of the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (BCYF). Established in 2000 to promote positive youth development throughout the Balkans, BCYF has built an impressive array of multi-sector alliances across the region and around the world. While this publication highlights BCYF's focus on youth employment and youth entrepreneurship, the Foundation also promotes opportunities for young people in the area of technology, non-formal education, health promotion, and democracy building.

We are grateful to Cathryn L. Thorup, Ph.D., for providing us with such a clear, informative analysis of some of the best youth employment programs in the Balkans, while also keeping us aware of the challenges inherent in such endeavors. We are grateful as well to the BCYF staff and local program managers who assisted Dr. Thorup during her visits to the area, and who shared with her their insights and lessons learned. We also thank the U.S. Agency for International Development for its financial support of this publication, and for providing valuable funding for many of the programs now helping to revitalize the Balkans today, including critical investments in this region's youth.

I am hopeful that the programs highlighted in this book will encourage others, particularly those in government and in the corporate community, to work more closely with local NGOs to support effective employment and job creation activities for today's young people. We must all recognize that young people are not only key to this region's economic and social revitalization, but at the heart of efforts to build strong economies and democratic societies everywhere.

Maria Livanos Cattau  
Secretary General  
International Chamber of Commerce  
IYF Board Member

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The outbreak of violence in Kosovo in March 2004<sup>1</sup> was a grim reminder of the past's tenacious hold on the region. In many Balkan countries, fledgling institutions of democratic governance continue to compete with old hostilities and sagging economies. In a region dominated by political and economic uncertainty, many of the area's 21 million children and youth are forced to question their future prospects. For those about to graduate from high school and university, one subject surfaces repeatedly, "Will I be able to find a job?"

The international development community now recognizes that youth employment and youth entrepreneurship are critical components of economic development and political stability.<sup>2</sup> Youth employment helps to meet both the needs of the individual and those of the community at large, fostering social

<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the death of three Albanian children, violence erupted in the town of Mitrovica, Kosovo. Clashes between ethnic Albanians and Serbs left 28 dead, 600 injured and thousands homeless. More than 25 churches were burned, seven villages were set on fire and more than a 100 homes were destroyed.

<sup>2</sup> According to Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labor Organization (ILO), "Without significantly expanding youth employment, the overall international development agenda will fail to eradicate poverty, build a healthy middle class and bring security and stability to families and communities." In Murray, Sarah. "A 'Catch 22' Problem Over Jobs Marketplace," *Financial Times*, Special Report, January 23, 2004, p. 4. It is estimated by the ILO that youth represent 41% (74 million) of the world's unemployed. Youth unemployment levels are two to three times higher than that of the population at large. Underemployment levels are even greater.

integration, a healthy economy and improved standard of living, and an engaged and contributing citizenry. On the other hand, says Andrew Fiddaman, Director of the International Business Leaders Forum, “Long periods of unemployment have a lasting [negative] impact on youth in terms of individual self-esteem, societal integration, cohesiveness and citizenship.”<sup>3</sup> The last five years have witnessed a significant increase in efforts by bilateral and multilateral donors, national and local governments, business and civil society organizations to develop comprehensive strategies and programs designed to expand the employment options available to young people.<sup>4</sup>

This report examines efforts spearheaded by nongovernmental groups in three Balkan countries—Romania, Bulgaria and Albania—to improve the employment prospects of their youth. It is based primarily on information gathered during site visits to these programs in September and October 2003, survey data provided by staff, and interviews with both staff and program participants (see Appendix). Additionally, it draws on the deliberations of the Working Group on Youth Employment during the Balkan Youth Forum 2003 held in Igalo, Montenegro in September 2003.

The Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (BCYF)<sup>5</sup>, a partner of the International Youth Foundation<sup>6</sup>, played a key role in the realization of this study.<sup>7</sup> Youth employment is one of five key programmatic areas<sup>8</sup> initially selected by BCYF for priority attention and one to which BCYF intends to devote growing attention in the coming years. As noted in a recent BCYF planning document, it is critical to address “the issues of youth employment and the promotion of economic expansion through job creation” in order “to improve the prospects and conditions of young people in the Balkans.”<sup>9</sup>

BCYF selected the three BCYF grantees profiled here as examples of promising

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<sup>3</sup> Fiddaman, Andrew. Director, International Business Leaders Forum. “Youth Employment: A Business Perspective,” panel presentation at the Balkan Youth Forum 2003: Building a Brighter Future, September 17, 2003, Igalo, Montenegro. In addition, unemployment early in life is linked to a decline in the long-term productive capacity and income-earning potential of youth.

<sup>4</sup> Two major initiatives in the area of youth employment include the UN Secretary General’s Youth Employment Network—a joint initiative of the World Bank, the United Nations and the International Labor Organization and the Youth Employment Summit (YES) campaign launched by the U.S.-based Education Development Center.

<sup>5</sup> Headquartered in Skopje, Macedonia, the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation was established in 2000 to strengthen the youth development sector throughout the Balkans through a new model of regional cooperation, tri-sectoral partnering, and inter-cultural learning. For more information, [www.balkanyouth.org](http://www.balkanyouth.org).

<sup>6</sup> Established in 1990, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) is dedicated to supporting programs that improve the conditions and prospects for young people. For further information, see [www.iyfnet.org](http://www.iyfnet.org).

<sup>7</sup> The author would like to express particular appreciation to the Executive Director of the BCYF, Agon Demjaha, for his insightful contributions to this study, to BCYF program officers Risto Karajkov and Lorita Constantinescu., and to local program managers.

<sup>8</sup> The five key programmatic areas supported by BCYF are: youth employment; technology; non-formal education; health promotion and prevention; and civic education and democracy building.

<sup>9</sup> “Strategy on Business Engagement for the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, 2003–2005,” discussion paper, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, December 2003, p. 1.

practice in the region. These programs include: “A Career Dream,”<sup>10</sup> Center Education 2000+ (CEDU) in Romania, Junior Achievement Bulgaria in Bulgaria, and the Gjirokastra Youth Center in Albania. Each of these three programs approaches the challenge of fostering youth employment and youth entrepreneurship differently. These variations stem in part from differences in the local context, such as the country’s level of economic development and the educational background of the participants.

The programs in Romania and Bulgaria take place for the most part within the public school system, while the program in Albania focuses more on out-of school youth. The program in Bulgaria has a strong international flavor with many of the participants later traveling overseas for additional study or work, while the program in Albania focuses in large measure on self-employment and on the development of both professional and vocational skills (including the revival of traditional handicrafts). In Romania, the emphasis is on the development of the skills necessary to choose and succeed in a career. The programs in Romania and Bulgaria are delivered in locations throughout the country, while the Albanian program addresses the needs of youth in one particular town and its surrounding area. Yet for all their differences, all three of these programs focus on the same critical need: fostering the development of the skills necessary for young people in the Balkans to support themselves and their families.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The name of the program in English is: “A Career Dream.” In Romania, the name “I Want a Career” is used.

<sup>11</sup>In all three cases, youth participation in the program is voluntary. This may be particularly attractive in former communist countries where such activities were highly regimented in the past. “I liked the fact that the course was not compulsory...if someone tells you that you have to do something it’s not the same, here you were making your own decisions.” Interview with students at the Liceul Dante Alighieri, Bucharest, Romania, September 23, 2003.





Faced with uncertainties at home, many Balkan youth contemplate exercising their newfound personal freedom by leaving the region in search of better educational and job opportunities abroad. To stem “youth flight,” these societies must provide their young people with opportunities at home for educational advancement (in both formal and informal settings)<sup>12</sup>, professional fulfillment and civic participation. This report focuses on one of these three priorities: youth employment.

All three of the programs profiled here offer skills and encouragement in terms of both employment and entrepreneurship.<sup>13</sup> The latter is particularly important in countries where economic conditions are precarious, unemployment and underemployment are both high, and where there are very few jobs available for anyone (and especially for young people). “As long as people see themselves as employment seekers and not job creators through developing small enterprises, we are indeed in trouble.”<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of factors that hamper efforts to foster youth employment in the Balkans. First, young people must overcome the frustration that some of them feel at not having jobs provided for them by the State, as was the case with their parents.<sup>15</sup> Preparing young people for the job market is not simply a question of providing them with the requisite technical skills; they must also develop attitudes appropriate to a new economic reality. Young people must come to realize that they cannot wait for someone (typically government) to offer them a job. They must take control of their own futures and create jobs for themselves and others. In essence, what is needed is the development of a culture of entrepreneurship.

Second, the difficult economic situation faced by many Balkan countries clearly limits the ability of governments and businesses to provide jobs.<sup>16</sup> “Poor performance of local economies; political instability; small market

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<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that in all three countries visited there is a general expectation on the part of young people that they will be attending university.

<sup>13</sup> The terms youth employment and youth entrepreneurship are used in this paper to distinguish between two different ways of earning a living. Others make a distinction between wage employment and self-employment or between youth employment and youth livelihoods. For the sake of brevity, the term youth employment is sometimes utilized in this text to refer both to securing employment as an employee and to creating one's own job.

<sup>14</sup> Billy Selekan, Bise Powerzone Group, Johannesburg, South Africa, Make a Connection website. [www.makeaconnection.org/programs\\_southafrica\\_billy.html](http://www.makeaconnection.org/programs_southafrica_billy.html)

<sup>15</sup> Ana Coretchi, “Challenges of the Career Beginning: Some Considerations on the Youth Promotion Opportunities in the Post-Totalitarian Societies, Particularly in the Republic of Moldova,” Balkan Youth Forum 2003, Igalo, Montenegro. September 18, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Youth unemployment in Southeast Europe (SEE) is 2.5 times higher than in the EU. There are significant disparities within the region (ranging from Moldova at 16.2% to Kosovo at 69.2%). Youth unemployment was 38.4% in Bulgaria and 18.4% in Romania in 2003. Data reported in, Kolev, Alexandre. “Addressing the Problem of Unemployment in SEE: Evidence and Practices,” presentation at the Youth Employment Workshop, World Bank, Washington, D.C., June 2, 2003. In addition, 29.6% of the population in Albania lives below the poverty line; 29.6% live below the poverty line in Romania; and 12.6% live below the poverty line in Bulgaria. See [www.usaid.gov/country-reports](http://www.usaid.gov/country-reports). It should be noted that the lack of reliable data on youth unemployment and underemployment is an additional challenge in the region. In some countries there is no disaggregated data, in others the official rates are lower than the real rates of unemployment, and frequently there are disparities in the data when comparing figures from different data sources.

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segments with limited to very limited income in most countries; and unfavorable laws for private and foreign investment...” are obstacles to growth.<sup>17</sup> This unfavorable enabling environment is further exacerbated by the absence of a well-formed business class with a tradition of corporate social responsibility and philanthropic giving.

Third, deficits in the education sector affect the ability of students to compete successfully in the job market. For instance, many students graduate with skills ill-suited to the specific demands of the local job market.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the educational system emphasizes theoretical knowledge and pays very little attention to the development of practical skills.

Fourth, the overarching challenge of preparing young people for employment in the Balkans is further complicated by the discrimination that certain categories of youth face in the job market, including: young women, the disabled, minority youth (Roma and other), rural youth, migrants and refugees.<sup>19</sup>

The three programs profiled in the next section offer detailed examples of promising approaches to addressing these obstacles. Overarching lessons learned and next steps are examined in the final sections of this report.

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<sup>17</sup>“Strategy on Business Engagement for the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, 2003-2005,” op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> One possible solution to this problem is to encourage collaboration among business people, government providers, and educators to ensure that there is a compatibility of skills. In addition to ensuring that there is a good match between the skills of young graduates and the local job market, it is important that the jobs being prepared for are in fact the jobs of the future. It would be pointless, for example, to concentrate on preparing youth for jobs in manufacturing if a country’s future is tied to the high tech industry.

<sup>19</sup> Ajsa Hadzibegovic, “Youth Employment: Marginalized Youth,” presentation at the Balkan Youth Forum 2003, Igalo, Montenegro, September 18, 2003.





This section presents three very different approaches to youth employment. The programs discussed are based in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.

## Romania

### **“A Career Dream,” Center Education 2000+ (CEDU)**

**A** Career Dream” was launched in October 2001 following extensive discussions with Romanian youth, teachers, school counselors and parents. The program, which has been financed by BCYF from the outset, is operated by the Center Education 2000+ (CEDU), an organization established in 2000. Funded in part by the Open Society Foundation, CEDU concentrates on education policy, human resource development and training. “A Career Dream” is designed to prepare 10th and 11th graders from all economic levels for the workplace, and is offered in both rural and urban settings throughout Romania.

The initial impetus for the establishment of “A Career Dream” was the realization that upon graduation from high school and/or university many young people in Romania found themselves unemployed or employed in fields other than those for which they studied. In addition, both employers and those whose work brought them into regular contact with young people found that many high school graduates were in fact quite unprepared to find jobs. “A Career Dream” was designed<sup>20</sup> to assist these young people in choosing a career and preparing them for either the job interview process or the steps they would need to take in setting up their own businesses.<sup>21</sup>

The four primary components of the project include: an 8-hour training session centered on the publication, “My Career Guide;” peer counseling; a summer camp; and, an annual job fair. Through their work on the job fair, students build connections with prospective employers in their communities.

### **Country Context**

Unemployment (officially 7.8%)<sup>22</sup> and high levels of underemployment are major problems in Romania—a country in which “...the overall economic, political and social reform process has not been as robust as most transition countries in Central and South East Europe,” according to the United States Agency for International

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<sup>20</sup> The project was created at the initiative of school/career counselors and a team of psychologists from the Municipal Center for Psycho Pedagogical Assistance (MCPA) in Bucharest, Romania.

<sup>21</sup> The two project coordinators, Elena Salomia and Marcela Marcinschi, stated that this was exactly the sort of program that they wanted and needed when they were teenagers.

<sup>22</sup> Background Notes on Romania, U.S. Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3210.htm>, January 2004.

**The first step was a needs assessment. The goal was to ensure that the program responded to actual needs and opportunities in the country.**

Development (USAID).<sup>23</sup> Despite strong export levels and growth in construction and agriculture, poverty is still widespread. The last five years have seen progress, but public and private sector corruption and an aging infrastructure continue to act as a drag on the economy. Continued economic progress will require considerable investment in infrastructure and services. The situation has led many young Romanians to consider leaving their homes to study or find work overseas. Others are hopeful that if Romania joins the European Union (EU) as planned in 2007, that this would provide additional job opportunities.

### **Program Description**

According to the program coordinator at CEDU, Andra Daiana Andreianu, project coordinators Elena Salomia and Marcela Marcinschi identified a need for career counseling in Romanian high schools. Young people needed training to learn how to respond to constant changes in the labor market. They were not receiving any sort of career guidance in their classes and they needed to develop the practical skills necessary to prepare a cover letter, handle an interview and learn good professional work ethics and habits. The project designers wanted to complement students' academic work with information on how to select a career and the opportunity to meet prospective employers.

"A Career Dream" was designed to provide practical information to teenagers that would help them in this process. Substantial research was done prior to the development of the program. The first step was a needs assessment.<sup>24</sup> The goal was to ensure that the program responded to actual needs and opportunities in the country.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, project coordinators worked closely with teachers, students and parents in designing the program. This was followed by the development of training tools for career education and guidance, including the booklet, "My Career Guide."

Prior to launching the program, the project coordinators led training sessions for the teachers who would be managing the program in each high school.<sup>26</sup> A "learning package"—including the booklet "My Career Guide," a flyer, a CD with training materials, and a poster—was developed. In May and June 2002, six adult trainers were divided into three teams of two trainers each to work with students in seven-hour seminars based on "My Career Guide." Initially, the participants were

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<sup>23</sup>Country report on Romania, USAID website, [http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/countries/ro/](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/ro/).

<sup>24</sup>The needs analysis was based on a questionnaire administered in ten pilot high schools to 244 students. The assessment guided the program designers in the development of the principal text used in the seminar, "My Career Guide."

<sup>25</sup>This program was designed with the Romanian job market in mind. Project coordinators emphasize the importance of tailoring the program to local circumstances so that young people are prepared for the specific job market they will enter.

<sup>26</sup>The first schools to introduce the program were ones with which the project coordinators were already familiar. Given their prior work in these schools, they were confident that these were good candidates to pilot the program. By the second year of the program, school officials were contacting the program managers and asking if they would bring the program to their school.



**Since there was a higher level of interest among the students than there was space available in each seminar (25-30 spaces), a decision was reached to complement the course with ongoing peer counseling of a larger group of students by the seminar graduates.**

11th graders, targeted because they were about to graduate. Since there was a higher level of interest among the students than there was space available in each seminar (25-30 spaces), a decision was reached to complement the course with ongoing peer counseling of a larger group of students by the seminar graduates.

11th grade students from 21 Romanian high schools took part in the first year of the project. 10th grade students from another 21 high schools participated during its second year.<sup>27</sup> The high schools selected were based in 13 counties in different regions of the country and included both small villages and large cities.<sup>28</sup>

A key element of the “A Career Dream” program is the booklet entitled, “My Career Guide.” Seventy-two pages in length, the publication initially consisted of six chapters with exercises designed to build the skills young people need when preparing to enter the job market. The chapters are entitled: “I want to have self-confidence!”; “I want to communicate!”; “I want to solve conflicts!”; “I want to work as part of a team!”; “I want to make decisions!”; and, “I want a career!.” In a second edition published in 2003 (and in response to requests by

<sup>27</sup> A decision was made after the first year that it was important to initiate career discussions a year earlier in order to encourage students to begin thinking about these issues at an earlier age.

<sup>28</sup> These 22 sites included: Bucharest, Bihor (Oradea Bistrita (Bistrita – Nasaud and Teaca village), Constanta (Constanta and Eforie Sud), Cluj (Cluj Napoca), Galati (Galati and Tecuci), Hunedoara (Petrosani and Deva), Iasi (Iasi, Pașcani and Miroslava village), Maramures (Sighetu Marmatiei and Baia Mare), Sibiu (Sibiu), Satu Mare (Satu Mare), Salaj (Zalau and Jibou village), and Timis (Deta and Timisoara).

**Students from all over the country took part in practical sessions about career choices and—most importantly—learned to develop the skills they would need to serve as peer counselors once they returned to their schools.**

participants), a new chapter was added entitled, “I want to have a successful business!”<sup>29</sup> The booklet forms the basis of the now eight-hour “A Career Dream” seminar.

Peer counseling sessions make up the second key component of “A Career Dream” and complement the day-long program described above and extend its reach. Following completion of the first seminar, the two students with the greatest aptitude as peer counselors—a decision made in some cases by fellow students and in other cases by teachers—were selected from each program site to attend a special summer camp. There, students from all over the country took part in practical sessions about career choices and—most importantly—learned to develop the skills they would need to serve as peer counselors once they returned to their schools. After completing their summer training, the teenagers worked as part of a team with the initial trainers at each of their schools in counseling their peers. Most teams review “My Career Guide” with their fellow students during their one hour weekly peer counseling sessions in November and December of each school year, while a few do two, three, or four-hour workshops over the course of a weekend.

The summer camp mentioned above is the third key component of the Romanian program. Camp activities focus primarily on the development of the student’s peer counseling abilities. Students who take part in the camp make a commitment to offer ten hours of peer counseling to their fellow students during the following school year. In addition to taking part in sessions on peer counseling, they learn how to organize a job fair and establish a network among themselves.<sup>30</sup> An evaluation of the week-long summer camp is conducted at the end of the session and a videotape of camp activities is distributed to the participating schools.

Forty-two students from all over the country took part in the summer camp during its first year and 45 participated during the second year. The first year, camp sessions went from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. In response to complaints from students attending camp the first year about a lack of free time, during the second year students were encouraged to use their afternoons to break into smaller groups and take part in career-related clubs (media, radio, advertising, theatre, and television). They produced a magazine, a radio spot and newspaper articles. During the second year, organizers also arranged to have the students lodged with people who had developed their own businesses in rural tourism. This was an

<sup>29</sup>The project coordinators report that in a questionnaire they gave to students (as part of the program’s initial needs assessment), the majority responded favorably when asked if they would like to start their own business (83% of teenage boys and 66% of teenage girls). The type of business depends on the region, but might include: some type of small family business, rural tourism, translation services, a computer business, or a hair salon. Interview with Elena Salomia and Marcela Marcinschi, September 22, 2003.

<sup>30</sup>Not only do students have a chance to establish connections with peers from across the country, but also with students from previous summer camps. Four students from the first summer camp were selected based on an essay competition to take part in the second summer camp.



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**The organizers at each high school survey their peers to find out what sorts of businesses they would like to see take part in the job fair.**

added benefit in that discussions about the ingredients necessary for establishing a successful business out of one's home complemented what the students were learning in camp.

The final component of the "A Career Dream" program is the job fair. The fair offers an opportunity for students to interact directly with potential employers. Up until now, each high school has organized its own job fair. While the project coordinators provide technical assistance upon request, students are responsible for putting on the event, which helps them to develop their organizational, teamwork and communication skills. The students who attend the summer camp receive training in preparation for this task and they work for several months with the students they peer counsel to set it up. The organizers at each high school survey their peers to find out what sorts of businesses they would like to see take part in the job fair. They then make contact with the business and NGO professionals<sup>31</sup> and invite them to take part. Approximately 20 such people might participate in one of the job fairs. The students develop questions they would like the business people to address in their remarks.<sup>32</sup> Different sectors of the economy are represented depending upon the region of the country, such as the food industry, or mining.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>During the first year of the program, only business people were invited to take part. From the second year forward, NGO leaders were also invited to participate.

<sup>32</sup>Examples include, "Who is successful in their career and why?" and "What do you look for when you hire young people?"

<sup>33</sup>In Bucharest, for example, McDonald's discussed the types of employees they are looking for at all levels of their organization.

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**The approach emphasizes activities designed to build self-esteem, communication skills, conflict resolution techniques, teamwork, decision-making, personal marketing abilities and entrepreneurial know-how.**



### **Program Approach**

The analysis of the program activities described and interviews with participants and staff highlight the key elements of this particular approach to fostering youth employment. “A Career Dream” is an integrated, school-based approach that includes substantial up-front research, cooperation among a variety of stakeholders (students, teachers, and parents), and close follow-up and evaluation. The program is comprehensive in that it seeks to pair the development of practical job search skills with real opportunities for students to meet with prospective employers.

The initial needs assessment was critical in highlighting the key challenges this program would seek to address: 1) students graduating from high school or university in Romania were unfamiliar with potential job options; 2) students lacked insight into their own interests and talents; 3) school counselors and teachers lacked the tools they needed to prepare young people for the job market; 4) employers required two or more years of job experience and students found they needed to have already had a job in order to get a job; and, 5) students had no opportunity to meet and talk with prospective employers prior to going out into the job market.

“A Career Dream” was designed to provide teenagers with the information, skills and strategies they needed in order to select a career direction. The approach emphasizes activities designed to build self-esteem, communication skills, conflict resolution techniques, teamwork, decision-making, personal marketing abilities and entrepreneurial know-how. The goal was to help young people take responsibility for their own futures and to offer them the skills and values they needed to become active, engaged citizens. In the process, the program would also promote the values of a free

market economy. Participants were encouraged to develop the sense of self and individual purpose they would need in their future personal and professional lives.

Considerable attention (the first five hours of the program) is focused on personal development, self-knowledge and personal marketing. Project managers feel that students must be knowledgeable about their own strengths and know how to convey those to a prospective employer. In addition, students learn interview techniques and take part in a simulated interview. They also learn how to develop a cover letter and a resume. According to program managers, this is the first time that Romanian students have been exposed to career guidance that is longer than one hour in duration. Other unique elements include training in the development of a business plan that would allow students to open a business before finishing college.

The program design emphasizes youth-to-youth knowledge and skills sharing. Peer learning is key to the success of the program and numerous activities are built around peer counseling. It is a practical, hands-on approach to career counseling that is highly interactive in nature.<sup>34</sup> The three main programmatic elements are: the creation of the “learning package” of tools for career education and guidance; training for students; and the opportunity for students to practice what they have learned. The four main activities are the 8-hour career seminar, peer counseling, the summer camp, and the job fair.

## **Program Impact**

Between October 2001 and October 2002, “A Career Dream” provided training in peer counseling for 345 teenagers. The trainers included six specialists (psychologists and school counselors). Teachers and parents also took part in these sessions. Forty-five teenagers and 20 teachers participated in the first summer camp. From September to November 2002, over 580 teenagers took part in peer counseling sessions as part of the program. Over 2500 teenagers and more than 115 companies participated in the job fairs that were held between October and December 2002. In June 2003, 478 teenagers were engaged in the training in peer counseling. Forty-five teenagers and 21 teachers took part in the second summer camp program in July of 2003. Preliminary data indicates 1029 teenagers have benefited from the peer counseling.

Project managers indicate that program participants have become noticeably more self-confident and have improved their ability to present their ideas in front of an audience. Community awareness of the program has increased as a result of local newspaper and radio coverage and as a result of the job fairs. As indicators of program success, program managers point to higher than expected participation levels during the first year and to the number of students who wanted to take part in future activities.

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**The program design emphasizes youth-to-youth knowledge and skills sharing. Peer learning is key to the success of the program and numerous activities are built around peer counseling.**

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<sup>34</sup>Students commented on the value of this sort of approach. “We like dialogue. We like to ask questions ourselves.”  
Student at Grupul Scolar Industrial Octav Onicescu, Bucharest, Romania, September 24, 2003.

**"I saw that my father was working on his resume. I told him that I could help. He laughed and said that he didn't need my help. I worked on it anyway and he ended up using all my suggestions."**

Additionally, there is a multiplier effect at work in the community. A few parents attended the day-long course and learned how to improve their own résumé. Several students also indicated that they had helped their parents with their résumés. One young girl from the Liceul Dante Alighieri in Bucharest said, "I saw that my father was working on his resume. I told him that I could help. He laughed and said that he didn't need my help. I worked on it anyway and he ended up using all my suggestions."<sup>35</sup>

Program managers are firm believers in the value of evaluation. In the short-term, the program managers request feedback on the effectiveness of activities and materials. They hold evaluation events at the end of the 8-hour session, at the end of summer camp, at the end of the peer counseling session, and they encourage students to obtain feedback from the participants at the job fairs (both students and employers).

Students have provided anecdotal evidence regarding the value of the project as well. Program managers have received e-mails notifying them that a student had secured a job for the summer or that the course had encouraged them to go for an interview.<sup>36</sup> One interesting indicator of success is that schools such as Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul, which received funding for the "A Career Dream" program during its first year, continued the program the next year even though they had to self-finance it.<sup>37</sup>

Over the long term, the effectiveness of the program will be measured by the number of students who find employment. Some have already found part-time work, but it is too early to have the type of data needed to determine whether students find jobs and keep them and/or start up their own businesses.

## **Voices of Romanian Youth**

Youth in Romania are well aware of the challenges of finding a job. Students at the Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul had the following comments: "It's hard to find a job here. You need to already have job experience in order to get a job." "There are not as many jobs for young people." "One problem is that we are studying humanities, while the jobs are in the informatics sector." "Do I do what I like or what brings in money?"<sup>38</sup>

Students were highly enthusiastic about the 8-hour course. "You learn how to build your image...how to present yourself."<sup>39</sup> Students at the Liceul Dante Alighieri said, "We had an opportunity to discover what we liked." "I like that you can talk to each other, make friends, and build self-confidence." A student at the Liceul Bilingv Miguel de Cervantes commented, "We learned to think about starting our own business. This

<sup>35</sup>Students at Liceul Dante Alighieri, September 23, 2003.

<sup>36</sup>One way to measure impact would be to compare the number of students who had part-time jobs or summer employment before the program was offered and after.

<sup>37</sup>The project coordinators continue to provide technical assistance to schools such as this. They believe this is important in order to ensure the quality of the program in schools that are self-sustaining.

<sup>38</sup>Students at Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul, Bucharest, Romania, September 23, 2003.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

was the best part.”<sup>40</sup> “I will do everything I can to make this a success in my school.”  
“There’s no other program like this.”<sup>41</sup>

Like the other two programs profiled here, “A Career Dream” opens new horizons to young people. Said two students: “It opens doors in real life and in your own mind”<sup>42</sup> and “You realize that you’re not the only one with a dream.”<sup>43</sup>

Although a few of the students are doing volunteer or part-time work in the nonprofit sector<sup>44</sup>, there was a strong preference among the youth interviewed for going into business. Several participants expressed disdain for the public sector due, in their opinion, to low pay, corruption, the amount of education needed to get a job, and the need for “connections” in order to secure a job.<sup>45</sup> A student at Liceul Dante Alighieri said, “Self-employment is risky, but once you get established it’s better,” while another noted: “You get a lot of respect as a successful business person.”

## Lessons Learned

Several interesting lessons learned emerge from this program: the effectiveness of peer-to-peer training when working with youth<sup>46</sup>; the enormous value that young people place on the process of self-discovery (getting to know who they are and what they are capable of)<sup>47</sup>; the utility of using an initial needs assessment to ensure that the program design accurately targets actual needs; the importance of interacting with the business community to ensure that the program takes advantage of the business perspective and in order to establish connections with potential employers; the value of involving youth themselves in the design and implementation of the program; and, the ways in which evaluation can help improve a program mid-stream (convincing the organizers to add a section on starting a business, changing the way in which the summer camp was organized, etc.).

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**Like the other two programs profiled here, “A Career Dream” opens new horizons to young people. Said two students: “It opens doors in real life and in your own mind” and “You realize that you’re not the only one with a dream.”**

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<sup>40</sup>Several others enthusiastically endorsed this view. Students at Bilingv Miguel de Cervantes, September 23, 2003.

<sup>41</sup>Students at Liceul Dante Alighieri, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Such work experience can be quite valuable. “Many young people around the world are getting a great deal of their youth employment experience through community and nongovernmental organizations. Work in the non-profit/charitable sector typically introduces young people to a broad range of skills and responsibilities...” Regelbrugge, Laurie. *What Works in Youth Employment: The Impact of New Information Technologies*, part of the “What Works” Series, International Youth Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland, c2001, p. 33.

<sup>45</sup>Students at Liceul Dante Alighieri, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup>When asked what makes this program successful, one student at Liceul Bilingv Miguel de Cervantes responded, “Because we are the ones doing the teaching, not the adults or the professors.” Interview, September 23, 2003. A student at Grupul Scolar Industrial Octav Onicescu made a similar statement saying, “The program works because it is youth teaching each other...there are things we can learn from adults, but we know each other, what we want, and what we are interested in.” op. cit.

<sup>47</sup>A consistent theme among the young people interviewed was the “need to find your place.” “You need to find where you fit in...where your talents fit.” Student at the Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul, op. cit. When asked (prior to taking part in the “A Career Dream” program) what they most needed in order to improve their career prospects, 40% of the students surveyed said greater self-esteem. The next highest category was information on preparing a CV and interviewing for a job (18%). “The Study Concerning Teenagers Needs for Their Careers,” survey conducted by “A Career Dream,” 2001, p. 5.

**Project coordinators placed enormous emphasis on consultation with their stakeholders both prior to initiating the program (with the needs assessment and consultations with students, teachers and trainers) and during the program through different types of evaluations.**

While the students stated that the 8-hour course is sufficiently comprehensive to make a difference in their lives (particularly when combined with the peer counseling that takes place subsequently), the project coordinators would like to add more hours. Also, they point out, the skills developed are ones that the students should start to work on as early as elementary school.<sup>48</sup>

As noted above, project coordinators placed enormous emphasis on consultation with their stakeholders both prior to initiating the program (with the needs assessment and consultations with students, teachers and trainers) and during the program through different types of evaluations. The one aspect of the design process that they would in retrospect alter would have been to have had more consultations with the private sector prior to initiating the program in order to ensure that the program would be certain to address the gaps that business people had identified in the preparation of young people for the Romanian job market.

### **Where Next With “A Career Dream”**

Project staff have a number of ideas that they would like to explore in the future. They would like, for example, to expand their interactions with the business sector in Romania to incorporate a discussion of new trends in corporate social responsibility. This might in turn encourage greater participation in the program and possible support for the program on the part of the business community.

Other elements under consideration include: incorporating an opportunity for “job shadowing” into the program; providing youth with an opportunity to actually gain experience in starting their own businesses (similar to the types of programs run by Junior Achievement); adding a chapter to “A Career Dream” that discusses careers in the non-profit sector<sup>49</sup>; and adding a greater variety of career types to the job fair (including more participants from the non-profit sector and some from state companies). Another change which will be implemented is that 3 or 4 high schools at a time will now be encouraged to pool their resources and work together on one larger job fair (rather than each doing their own).

The next big challenge for the program is that of scaling up this high quality program in order to reach a broader target population. The program lends itself well to incorporation into the core curriculum of Romanian high

<sup>48</sup>This is one reason that the project coordinators decided to do the program in 10th grade the second year. Prior to this, training took place among 11th graders and the peer counseling was done with 12th graders.

<sup>49</sup>Students in both Romania and Bulgaria have insufficient information about the role of the nongovernmental sector and job opportunities in that sector.

schools. Schools themselves are interested and, according to staff, the Ministry of Education is moving in this direction. If this fails to materialize, CEDU might take advantage of its broad network at both the national and international level to market the program materials to schools and/or on the web.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Lorita Constantinescu, Program Officer, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, September 24, 2003.



# Bulgaria

## Junior Achievement Bulgaria

Junior Achievement Bulgaria, established in 1997, is a member of a well-recognized global network, Junior Achievement International. Founded in 1919, Junior Achievement is the world's oldest, largest and fastest-growing non-profit economic education organization. Teaching economics and business through hands-on programs, JA International develops and serves Junior Achievement and Young Enterprise programs in over 112 nations.<sup>51</sup>

First run as a pilot Peace Corps program in 1996, JA Bulgaria today operates in 40 cities and towns throughout the country, receiving 40% of its funding from the corporate sector and 60% from grant-giving organizations. A member of JA-YE Europe, the regional entity, JA Bulgaria also partners with numerous multinational companies in Bulgaria, and is a member of the American Chamber of Commerce, the Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum, and the Bulgarian International Business Association. It also works with grassroots, not-for-profit and grant-giving organizations.

Placing great emphasis on self-employment, the goals of JA Bulgaria are to:

- educate young Bulgarians to value free enterprise, understand business and economics, develop ethical leadership, and be workforce ready
- promote and expand the JA business programs throughout Bulgarian schools and universities
- approach potential Bulgarian and international investors for funds and program volunteers
- recruit Bulgarians at the levels of General Manager, CEO, President, and Vice President as Board members

## Country Context

Since 1989, Bulgaria's economy has seen numerous ups and downs, including a deep economic crisis in 1996.<sup>52</sup> Of Bulgaria's 7.3 million inhabitants, 14.5% are between the ages of 15-24. The unemployment rate among these youth is 19.9% and rising, as is the illiteracy rate. By 2007, it has been theorized that because of outdated materials and methodologies, no less than 14% will be illiterate; some

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**First run as a pilot Peace Corps program in 1996, JA Bulgaria today operates in 40 cities and towns throughout the country.**

<sup>51</sup> Junior Achievement programs involve close to 6 million young people around the world annually. JA has developed economic and business programs for students in grades K-12. It has also recently developed the One Page Business Plan web-based program that is meant to serve 1st and 2nd year university students. For more information, see [www.jaintl.org](http://www.jaintl.org).

<sup>52</sup> "...while macroeconomic data reveal private sector growth, a double-digit increase in exports and imports and higher foreign investment, incomes remain low and the government still needs to act on its pledges for securing higher living standards." Background Notes on Bulgaria, U.S. Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3236.htm>, March 2004.

**An alarming number of youth have left or intend to leave Bulgaria due to the lack of adequate, available, and desirable careers.**



will never have gone to schools, and others will drop out before the 4th grade. Additionally, an alarming number of youth have left or intend to leave Bulgaria due to the lack of adequate, available, and desirable careers.<sup>53</sup>

General unemployment levels in Bulgaria vary greatly from region to region with Sofia (5.17%) and Targovishte (33.55%) at the two extremes.<sup>54</sup> Junior Achievement Bulgaria, with its unique partnership between education and business, pays particular attention to youth in regions of high unemployment and underemployment, in the hopes of reducing these rates, improving the local economies, and raising the general quality of life.

### **Program Description**

According to staff, Junior Achievement Bulgaria is designed to educate and equip Bulgarian youth, its next generation workforce, with the skills necessary to compete and succeed in the market place. Not only do its economic programs foster entrepreneurship in its students and, in time, produce business ventures started by its students, but they also underscore the importance of understanding how the free-market system works, its rewards and its risks.<sup>55</sup>

To this end, Junior Achievement develops and implements economic education programs for young people through a partnership between business and education. These programs help young people gain an understanding of:

- the importance of market-driven economies
- the role of business in a global economy
- the commitment of business to the environment and to social issues
- the commitment of business to act in an ethical manner
- the relevance of education in the workplace
- the impact of economics on their future

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<sup>53</sup>Program survey, JA Bulgaria.

<sup>54</sup>Op. cit.

<sup>55</sup>Op. cit.

Junior Achievement Bulgaria has three main sets of activities:

1. Training, advising, and certification of teachers and business consultants to teach classes (approved by the Ministry of Education and Science) in economics and business education for general and vocational high schools in the country; program development and the introduction of new Junior Achievement programs; and, the printing and publishing of educational materials (i.e. textbooks, guides, software simulations, etc.). Where necessary, JA Bulgaria translates and adapts materials from other settings to the local context in Bulgaria.
2. Organization, administration, and facilitation of national and international student events and competitions, such as student company trade fairs, impromptu speaking competitions, student conferences, internet-based contests such as EuroMESE<sup>56</sup> and the Hewlett-Packard Global Business Challenge (HPGBC), summer camp,<sup>57</sup> and short internship programs such as Junior Achievement Job Shadow Day, and supervision of and cooperation with the Junior Achievement Bulgaria Alumni Business Club.
3. Fundraising and securing grants to fund the above activities, as well as program materials provided free of charge to schools, students, and teachers. Developing and nurturing partnerships with the business community for funding purposes, as well as the recruitment of volunteer business consultants and advisers to secure hands-on experience, are key components of Junior Achievement programs throughout the world.

The JA Bulgaria program is usually taught within the school system.<sup>58</sup> Schools vary in the way in which they organize the schedule, but typically activities are offered both during the regular school day and at an after-school club. Students taking part in the student company, for example, spend 72 to 108 hours in the classroom and about the same amount of time after school. The JA Bulgaria program is offered in grades 8-12, but is not mandatory. Students might enroll in a one-year macroeconomics course or a 2-year economics course and take part in a student company. They can take part in an on-line travel and tourism course or a business simulation course. In the 4th year, students can take part in the JA Connections program that includes teambuilding, leadership, and career development activities.<sup>59</sup>

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**Students taking part in the student company, for example, spend 72 to 108 hours in the classroom and about the same amount of time after school.**

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<sup>56</sup>MESE is the acronym for JA's computer simulation exercise known as the Management and Economic Simulation Exercise. It takes place on the local, national and international levels. EuroMESE is the European level competition and HPGBC is the international competition.

<sup>57</sup>The JA Bulgaria summer camp is an annual event organized within the Outward Bound structure. About 20 top JA Bulgaria students attend the three- to-four day camp where they learn principles of team building, self-esteem, self-reliance and concern for others. Participation is a reward for winners of various JA Bulgaria contests and competitions throughout the year. JA Bulgaria has conducted five summer camps with Outward Bound Bulgaria.

<sup>58</sup>In Plovdiv, Bulgaria, however, it is part of an after school program that is taught at a local youth center to students from 3 different high schools.

<sup>59</sup>JA Connections includes two one-semester programs for high school students in Leadership and Success Skills.

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The student company is one of the most popular JA Bulgaria activities as it gives students hands-on experience in managing their own enterprises.

The student company is one of the most popular JA Bulgaria activities as it gives students hands-on experience in managing their own enterprises. They are paid a salary and receive dividends, with a portion of the profits going to the school and a portion to a community organization. Students might make and market notecards, t-shirts, and/or pens, or offer travel, computer or other consulting services.

Another well-regarded program is “Manager for a Day,” where young people have an opportunity to shadow a professional as that person goes about his or her workday. To participate in the program, students submit their résumés along with a letter of interest. JA Bulgaria attempts to match their interests with someone willing to be shadowed for a day. In addition to business people, students have shadowed government officials, Peace Corps and Red Cross staff and—for one student interested in a diplomatic career—a representative at the American Embassy.

Another important component of the program is Junior Achievement’s Management and Economic Simulation Exercise (MESE). This is a computer simulation competition that pits student teams against one another. “In the simulation, students assume the roles of corporate managers and make weekly decisions on price, production, marketing, research and development, and plant capacity. They analyze industry reports, balance sheets, profit and loss statements and market conditions before making their decisions for the next quarter. The competition is based on a software program that is offered in 12 languages (including Bulgarian) in over 80 countries.”<sup>60</sup>

### Program Approach

JA Bulgaria’s approach has several critical elements.

- ***A strong emphasis on youth entrepreneurship*** The focus is on self-employment through the establishment of a small- or medium-sized business. “JA Bulgaria focuses on the promotion of small- and medium-sized enterprises as an engine of development,” says Risto Karajkov, Program Officer at the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation. “It is less about how to integrate with the labor market and more about what you need to do to start your own business.”
- ***A hands-on approach*** The approach is one of learning by doing.<sup>61</sup> Students have an opportunity, for example, to try out their skills by starting their own

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<sup>60</sup>[www.jabulgaria.org](http://www.jabulgaria.org)

<sup>61</sup>A teacher says the program works because “it gives the students skills, not just knowledge.” Teacher at the 151st school, Sofia, Bulgaria, September 26, 2003.



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**"You gain confidence. Whereas before you might have felt helpless when starting your own business, now you know you've done it before."**

companies. The idea is that students learn from their mistakes and successes. As one JA Bulgaria staff person put it, "You gain confidence. Whereas before you might have felt helpless when starting your own business, now you know you've done it before. You've already been scorched." Another said: "It's one thing to talk about youth employment or to teach business, it's something else to go through it."

■ ***Learning to work as part of a team*** The students decide, for example, who is going to occupy which roles within the company structure. The student company experience provides youth the opportunity to learn how to work with others, while at the same time developing their personal leadership skills.

■ ***Peer-to-peer learning*** Students teach one another in some activities (e.g., student company) and—after graduation—alumni return to work with students enrolled in the program to strengthen their skills for the competitions.

■ ***Competition and development of a competitive spirit*** As noted above, the development of team skills is critical, but individual excellence receives significant attention. National and international competitions among students participating in some of the on-line business simulations are a key component of the program. Entry into some of

**Business people provide financial support, technical support, and training. They also teach in the classroom and take part in programs such as “Manager for a Day.”**

the program activities themselves is also competitive. There are many students who would like to take part in the student companies, for example, but the number of companies that can be created is limited by the availability of teachers to oversee the process.

■ ***Widespread use of cutting-edge technologies*** Several activities depend upon the development of a high level of computer skills on the part of the students. Much of this high tech program is delivered on line and some learning is carried out through on-line games.

■ ***Academic excellence*** The program fits well with the emphasis placed on academic excellence on the part of many Bulgarian families.<sup>62</sup> It is expected that young people will attend university and for many this includes the expectation of attending a foreign university.

■ ***Active participation on the part of the local business community*** Business people provide financial support, technical support, and training. They also teach in the classroom and take part in programs such as “Manager for a Day.” Business participation also opens doors to future job placement opportunities for JA alumni.

■ ***The value of role models*** JA Bulgaria staff believe that it is particularly important for young people in transitional economies to have good role models to follow. “We’re very selective about who we partner with in this regard. These must be leaders in the community who are socially responsible, successful, and well-respected and who (if they are business people) run businesses that are transparent in their operations.”<sup>63</sup>

■ ***Interactive teaching methods*** Teachers are trained in the use of interactive teaching methods. In some cases, this may be the first time these techniques have been introduced into a school.

■ ***An active alumni network*** Any student who has completed one year of the program is encouraged to join the Alumni Business Club. Participation in this network is important both in terms of supporting ongoing program operations and to furthering the knowledge and experience of the participants. Staff emphasize that they are very open and transparent in allowing alumni access to the JA Bulgaria office and files and that the students are very appreciative of this sign of respect. Alumni volunteer their time to assist JA Bulgaria staff in a variety of tasks.<sup>64</sup> The first website for JA Bulgaria was designed by alumni who gave up their Sundays to complete the assignment.

■ ***Corporate social responsibility*** CSR is important to the JA Bulgaria program in two regards. Staff work with business leaders on this issue and students are taught ethics as

<sup>62</sup>There are 40 institutions of higher education for fewer than 8 million inhabitants and 60-70% of youth attend university. Staff, JA Bulgaria

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Active participation in Alumni volunteer activities stands in contrast to a general disregard for volunteerism on the part of many young people in Bulgaria (an attitude typical in many former communist countries where “volunteerism” was forced). One student interviewed said simply, “I want to continue with JA.” Interview with participants in the Alumni Business Club, Sofia, Bulgaria, September 26, 2003.

part of their JA Bulgaria training. JA Bulgaria is a member of the Bulgarian Business Leaders Forum which places a premium on CSR.

■ ***Changes in mindset*** “The Bulgarian education system does not teach you to take the initiative. These young people did not, for the most part, grow up under communism, but they still tend to be passive.”<sup>65</sup> The JA Bulgaria program fosters self-reliance, a proactive mindset, and entrepreneurship.

■ ***The value of overseas study and/or work experience*** The JA program shares the concerns about “youth flight” of the other two programs profiled here. Nevertheless, there is also a belief that freedom brings with it the opportunity to make the choice to pursue educational and work options overseas.<sup>66</sup> The hope is that these students will return to Bulgaria even better prepared than when they left. “Some may not have the confidence to start their own companies,” says one JA Bulgaria staff member, “but if they go overseas and come back they may have it.” Additionally, staff indicate that international companies give priority to those who have a degree from outside the country. To many, it is a symbol of success.

■ ***Fostering a positive enabling environment*** JA Bulgaria is part of a larger effort to improve the enabling environment for business. Bulgaria’s business environment is not yet optimal for the development and growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME’s). By fostering a growing appreciation for SME’s through Junior Achievement Bulgaria’s programs, staff believe that the economy will grow, the business environment will be strengthened, and the sector will thrive.<sup>67</sup>

■ ***Beyond business*** While the primary focus of the JA Bulgaria program is preparing young people for employment in the business sector, it is by no means an exclusive focus. Employment in the public sector and in the nongovernmental sector is discussed and encouraged.<sup>68</sup> Activities such as Manager for a Day include representatives of all three sectors. “JA Bulgaria is not just building the next generation of business leaders in Bulgaria, it is building the next generation of leaders in all sectors.”<sup>69</sup>

■ ***Inter-sectoral partnering, networks and scaling up*** The JA Bulgaria program provides a good example of the value of partnering among a nongovernmental organization such as JA Bulgaria, the public sector (including, but not limited to, education authorities),<sup>70</sup> and the business community. This strategy has enabled the program to reach an extremely broad array of Bulgarian youth enrolled in public high schools throughout the country. Additionally, JA Bulgaria benefits

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**“The Bulgarian education system does not teach you to take initiative. These young people did not, for the most part, grow up under communism, but they still tend to be passive.”**

<sup>65</sup>James F. Borger, consultant to JA Bulgaria, September 26, 2003. This is further reinforced by traditional (non-interactive) modes of teaching in the schools.

<sup>66</sup>Milena Stoycheva, Executive Director, JA Bulgaria, September 25–27, 2003. At the same time, she says, “We talk with them about coming back...about the opportunities here.”

<sup>67</sup>Staff, op.cit.

<sup>68</sup>Interviews with youth indicate that there are widespread misperceptions about the role of the nongovernmental sector and a fundamental lack of information about the types of jobs available in that sector. Students from 151st school, Sofia, Bulgaria, September 26, 2003.

<sup>69</sup>Milena Stoycheva, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup>The JA program has strong support from various national government ministries and parliamentary commissions.

significantly from its association with broader JA networks such as JA International and JA-YE Europe.

### Program Impact

**According to staff, students have a greater understanding of the role of the small- and medium-sized enterprises in the national and global economy and a better appreciation of the work of the nongovernmental sector in strengthening civil society and fostering youth employment.**

In terms of output, Junior Achievement is being offered in 115 high schools in 40 cities and small towns throughout the country in 2003–2004. In total, close to 17,000<sup>71</sup> Bulgarian youth have been given the opportunity to participate during the 1997/1998 – 2003/2004 academic years.<sup>72</sup> One hundred sixty JA student companies have operated throughout the country and over 650 students have taken part in the Manager For A Day initiative. In the 2003–2004 school year alone, 6,000 students will have access to entrepreneurial and business programs; 150 students are taking part in Manager for a Day, 40 student companies are operating, and 600 teams have taken part in the Virtual Enterprise internet-based competition.<sup>73</sup>

Junior Achievement Bulgaria has conducted 8 major five-day teacher training seminars and 7 refresher and 15 regional seminars for teachers and business consultants. Sites for the seminars include Sofia, Borovetz, Nessebar, Sevlievo, Veliko Turnovo, Kazanluk, Bankya. Over 300 teachers and business consultants have been trained to teach the Junior Achievement economics and business programs. Key to the latter activity has been the translation into Bulgarian and the publication of numerous economics and business textbooks and guides by JA Bulgaria. The Ministry of Education and Science has officially approved these materials.

What has been the impact of these activities and achievements? According to staff, students have a greater understanding of the role of the small- and medium-sized enterprises in the national and global economy and a better appreciation of the work of the nongovernmental sector in strengthening civil society and fostering youth employment.<sup>74</sup> It is hoped that participation in this JA program will translate into a higher rate of success in start-up businesses. In Europe, the success rate has been 25% higher for participants in JA programs than for those who have not taken part.<sup>75</sup>

Corroborating data on the impact of the JA program is provided by a study<sup>76</sup> carried out by the Enterprise Directorate-Generale of the European Commission that surveyed education and training for entrepreneurship in

<sup>71</sup> “Junior Achievement Bulgaria: Events and Achievements,” June 2003, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> In addition, many JA Bulgaria participants have demonstrated their business and entrepreneurial skills in national and international competitions. For example, a JA Bulgaria student won the Hewlett-Packard international essay contest in 2000; JA Bulgaria teams won 1st place in the 2001 and 2003 European Virtual Entrepreneur internet-based competitions; another team won 4th place out of 1100 international teams in the worldwide Hewlett-Packard Global Business Challenge competition in Barcelona – 2003.

<sup>73</sup> Milka Semova, e-mail communication, March 29, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> In addition, the response from parents and school officials has been very positive.

<sup>75</sup> Staff, op. cit. Data is related to a study carried out by the Enterprise Directorate-Generale of the European Commission: [www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support\\_measures/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/index.htm)

<sup>76</sup> [www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support\\_measures/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/index.htm)

16 countries.<sup>77</sup> This study, which was made public in November 2002, also identified concrete examples and models for good practices already existing in national educational systems. Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise (JA-YE) (of which JA is a member) was identified as a “best practice” in 12 of the 16 countries included in the research. JA-YE was viewed as a pioneer organization, which had successfully introduced “learning-by-doing” education at the secondary school level.

## Voices of Bulgarian Youth

As in the case of Romania, Bulgarian youth identify the lack of employment as a critical concern. The business sector is viewed as the most attractive employment option given low salaries in the public sector. One impediment to employment is seen as the potential mismatch between one’s educational background and what an employer wants. Several of these factors reinforce students’ interest in starting their own businesses. “No one wants to be an employee, we all want to be our own boss,”<sup>78</sup> says one student.

The issue of going overseas to study or work is a major topic of conversation among Bulgarian youth. “Most of us want to study abroad,” said one young man.<sup>79</sup> When asked if he would return he replied, “It depends whether I find a job there.” Another said, “You don’t have a chance to prove yourself here. We need to leave in order to prove ourselves.”<sup>80</sup> Not all agreed, however. “I don’t want to leave the country. I can make it here, if I work hard. I can find a good job here...though maybe not a lot of money.”<sup>81</sup> Still another said, “I would come back here...I like my country. I want to be here. Things will get better when we get into the European Union.”<sup>82</sup> Finally, another said, “My dream is Wall Street...study five years, work on Wall Street five years and come back. Or maybe I’ll stay longer.”<sup>83</sup>

Participants were enthusiastic in describing their favorite components of the JA Bulgaria program and their comments provide additional insight into the impact of the program. Among their comments: “With Manager for a Day we get practical experience. We learn how to make decisions in a real way.”<sup>84</sup> “We study management

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<sup>77</sup> Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>78</sup> Students from the 151st School, op. cit. Possible business opportunities mentioned included the hotel business and computer web-design.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with a group of JA participants from different schools, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, September 27, 2003. Similarly, there is a perception among some of the Alumni Business Club members that working conditions are better in the United States where—these students feel—individual merit is recognized and rewarded. Alumni Business Club, op. cit.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with a group of JA participants, Plovdiv, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Students from the 151st School, op. cit. A consultant with JA Bulgaria suggested that it might be interesting for the Manager for a Day program to also place youth with mid-level managers rather than with executive directors of organizations in order to give them a more accurate sense of the type of work they might be doing in the short- to mid-term. James F. Borger, op. cit.

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**“JA gives us a clear idea of how to operate a business in a highly competitive market. We learn this through simulation exercises.”**

and at the same time we do it. You get into real life...how things really work.”<sup>85</sup> “With Manager for a Day, I did tourism at a hotel...I saw the whole organization from behind the scenes.”<sup>86</sup> Others said, “This program is giving us a competitive advantage. That’s helpful,”<sup>87</sup> and “We are starting early.”<sup>88</sup>

One student talked about the student company component of the program saying, “In our student company, we produced 12 products. We learned how to create them and distribute them to friends and teachers. We learned how difficult it is to organize work and people. We had 37 students in our company. We had to learn how to work as a team and absorb different points of view.”<sup>89</sup> Other comments included: “With the student company we get a chance to see how big business really works. We see how hard it is to have a company. Even small decisions can be important.”<sup>90</sup> “There’s no other program like it.”<sup>91</sup> A member of the Alumni Business Club said, “We’re in transition from a planned economy to a market economy. This gives us the opportunity to...understand relationships in a company...how to be a leader, how to deal with a boss.”<sup>92</sup>

Another student commented on JA’s on-line programs. “JA gives us a clear idea of how to operate a business in a highly competitive market. We learn this through simulation exercises.”<sup>93</sup> Others commented on other aspects of the training they receive, “We learned how to produce advertising and publicity. We learned about marketing, price, and promotion and the importance of creativity and imagination. We learned how to stand out in an interview.”<sup>94</sup> “In school you get theory, but you don’t get practice.”<sup>95</sup> A member of the Alumni Business Club said, “You learn to work in a team....you have to learn to use everyone’s talents. You learn to listen to others.”<sup>96</sup>

## **Lessons Learned**

A number of interesting lessons learned emerge from the JA Bulgaria program, many of them linked to the unique aspects of the approach outlined above. These include: the importance of providing training to teachers in interactive teaching methods; the value of peer-to-peer learning; the need to provide special training to teachers for the web-level courses that require sophisticated computer skills; the

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<sup>85</sup>Group of students from different schools, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, op. cit.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Students from the 151st School, op. cit.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Group of students from different schools, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, op. cit.

<sup>92</sup>Alumni Business Club, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Group of students from different schools, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup>Alumni Business Club, op. cit.

value of an approach that emphasizes learning by doing; and the significance of expanding student expectations from “getting” a job to generating their own jobs.

The JA Bulgaria program underscores the value of an active alumni association. Staff believe they are the best volunteers, so they make good use of the time and talents of their alumni.<sup>97</sup> They are the same or close to the same age as the other participants and are effective mentors in the classroom. About half the alumni have completed their work in the program, while the other half still have at least a year to go.

Another lesson from this program is the importance of working closely with local authorities. The Ministry of Education and Science must approve all educational programs. This can slow down the process of implementation, but the ability to deliver the program during the school day makes it possible to reach a far greater number of students than would otherwise be the case. “JA Bulgaria has an impressive level of cooperation with the Ministry of Education.”<sup>98</sup>

JA Bulgaria places great emphasis on the need to combine training with advocacy in order to foster a positive enabling environment for small- and medium-sized enterprises. A virtuous circle is created if the business environment improves. Students find it easier to find or create their own jobs and their businesses have a higher probability for success. By the same token, the knowledge they gain leads them to support the sort of policies that would foster this sort of favorable business climate, thereby further cementing the role of small- and medium-sized enterprises as an engine of growth in Bulgaria. Associated with this effort are activities on the part of JA Bulgaria to educate the local business community regarding corporate social responsibility.<sup>99</sup>

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### **Where Next with JA Bulgaria?**

There are a number of areas that JA Bulgaria would like to develop further: creation of a database of JA students throughout the country (important for networking, tracking students, and, measuring program impact over time); doing more to educate the local business community on corporate social responsibility; developing new ways to utilize the volunteer capacity offered by the Alumni Business Club<sup>100</sup>; doing more to inform students about non-business career options (i.e., in the public sector and nongovernmental organizations); paying even closer attention to the need to ensure that translated materials provide examples relevant to the Bulgarian reality<sup>101</sup>; increasing the number of JA Bulgaria staff; and, continuing

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<sup>97</sup>According to JA Bulgaria staff, approximately 20 to 25 alumni are very active participants, coming by the office every week. Another ten come by every month. The Alumni Business Club includes a total of 120 alumni.

<sup>98</sup>Risto Karajkov, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup>In this context, the program makes ample use of volunteer business consultants from the local business community.

<sup>100</sup>According to staff, this might include securing a grant to expand their alumni activities. Consideration is also being given to the idea of placing a member of the Alumni Business Club on JA Bulgaria's board.

<sup>101</sup>In response to a comment from a student on this issue during the course of our discussions, program managers have decided to reinstate a book of Bulgarian case studies into the program.

to give special attention to the role of young women in the program.<sup>102</sup> Most recently, JA Bulgaria has adapted materials produced by JA International<sup>103</sup> for introduction in K-6th grade and will be piloting the program in two elementary and two middle grades in 6 schools in 3 towns with minority populations by the end of the 2004 school year.

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<sup>102</sup>JA Bulgaria is particularly mindful of the need to continue including women leaders as role models in activities such as the Manager for a Day program. Interestingly, the JA-YE study already cited seems to indicate that the JA program is increasing the share of women in top management positions in business and trade.

<sup>103</sup>Once the January 2004 merger between JA International and JA United States has been officially announced, the new legal entity will be known as JA Worldwide.





## Albania

### Gjirokastra Youth Center (GjYC)

**G**jirokastra, a town carved into a stone hillside, is located in southern Albania. The Gjirokastra Youth Center (GjYC) forms part of a national network of youth councils dedicated to improving the situation of Albanian children and youth. In addition to its work with youth, GjYC also focuses on the environment, human rights, and public participation. The organization has received funding from a number of organizations including: the Dewtchwelthungerlife (DWHH), the Soros Foundation, Unicef, OSCE, the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, and the Danish and Italian governments. GjYC also partners with a number of governmental, nongovernmental and business groups. Two key activities of GjYC are its Kinderhaus day care center for children in need and its work in the area of youth employment.

The target population for the GjYC youth employment program includes young people who reside in or have moved to Gjirokastra (population 35,000) or who live in the surrounding area (population 60-65,000). GjYC focuses on disadvantaged and vulnerable young people between 14 and 28 years of age. Special attention is placed upon: unemployed youth (especially girls and women); youth who have abandoned school; exceptionally talented young people in arts and science; youth coming from families facing severe social and economic problems (such as divorced parents, invalid parents, alcoholism, violence, unemployed parents, low incomes, etc.); young ethnic minorities; high school and university students; young public sector workers; orphans, and young divorced women.

The overarching goals of the GjYC youth employment program are: 1) to support and give assistance in education and professional training for youth in general and especially for those in need; and 2) to provide young people with the tools necessary to contribute to their communities.

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### Country Context

Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe (with 30% of the population living below the poverty line) and most young people in Albania are unemployed.<sup>104</sup> According to GjYC's Chairperson, this situation contributes to depression, violence, and crime.<sup>105</sup> "Youth in the street need orientation...they need a profession. The

<sup>104</sup>Following initial progress in the early 1990s, the economy slowed by 1995 and the collapse of the pyramid schemes and the instability that ensued damaged the economy significantly. The country's trade balance is severe and, despite government efforts, foreign investment remains low. The country also suffers from an inadequate energy and transportation infrastructure. Despite these obstacles, the economy is improving slowly. Background Notes on Albania, U.S. Department of State website, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3235.htm>, October 2003.

<sup>105</sup>Alketa Qendro, Chairperson, GjYC. September 30-October 1, 2003. This view is echoed by Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO, who says, "Young people without prospects are at greater risk of being attracted into socially and personally destructive behavior and can be vulnerable to involvement in illegal activities, drug abuse or economically dependent relationships." In Murray, Sarah. op. cit.

**Unfortunately, however, up until the establishment of the GjYC program few entities in Albania had experience with the design and implementation of youth employment programs.**

biggest problem is the lack of jobs. With jobs everything could be resolved.”<sup>106</sup>

Unfortunately, however, up until the establishment of the GjYC program few entities in Albania had experience with the design and implementation of youth employment programs. According to program staff, no such programs currently exist on the government side.<sup>107</sup> Governmental structures such as ‘Local Labor Offices’ are supposed to help and to offer assistance in finding jobs as well as training for different professional skills, but they work within a very restricted framework. There are a limited number of activities within the nongovernmental community in this arena, but they are still in their initial stages. As a result, a high percentage of young people are either living abroad or moving to the larger cities in Albania in hopes of improving their prospects.<sup>108</sup>

As a result, program staff point out, there is a tendency towards self-employment in small businesses that have adopted western modes of production. To succeed, young people require training to meet these changing conditions and GjYC plays a key role in providing youth in Gjirokastra and the surrounding areas with opportunities for informal education. The Gjirokastra Youth Council is trying to help young people either create their own micro-businesses or find employment.

Although there are some very successful businesses<sup>109</sup> (including numerous small family businesses) in Gjirokastra, the unemployment rate is still very high according to GjYC staff.<sup>110</sup> Emigration to Greece using permanent working permits or permits for seasonal work has left some of the villages almost or completely deserted (some of them are inhabited by older people only). Production levels are low (in part due to competition with lower priced imported and trafficked products from Greece) and agriculture is insufficiently developed. Local business people complain that there are few incentives offered for small businesses and little evidence of interest on the part of the government. Corruption and poor infrastructure are considered the most serious obstacles to growth by the business community.

In this context, GjYC seeks to advance the quality of life of Gjirokastra youth by providing them with job training and by building their self-esteem.

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<sup>106</sup>Esliert Tushe, 2001 graduate of the mechanics program and owner of his own business, interview, Gjirokastra, October 1, 2003.

<sup>107</sup>Program survey, GjYC.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Although some companies were totally destroyed or closed down during the financial turmoil of 1997, others have prospered. Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>One difficulty is the unreliability of official employment data. The official figure of 1000 unemployed in Gjirokastra is way off the mark according to GjYC program staff. In addition, the town has published a plan for employment which is at odds with that produced by the labor office. As the local labor office points out, part of the problem is that many unemployed youth do not register with the labor office so it is difficult to gauge the actual number of unemployed youth. Interview, Kristina Miho, Labor Office, Gjirokastra, October 1, 2003.

Says Alketa Qendro: “We help them to find their future...their future here in Albania....to fulfill their wishes and their futures here in Albania.”

## Program Description

The GjYC program began as an effort to provide social activities (entertainment, sports, etc.) for young people outside of school hours. In 2000, at the urging of GjYC’s German partner, Deutchweltungerhilfe, the program was modified to focus instead on youth employment. GjYC staff had no experience in organizing a vocational training course, but their partner helped them to design the project and plan their activities.<sup>111</sup> The goals of the project include the following:

- To provide youth with an opportunity to gain the professional knowledge and professional skills needed to find a job or open their own small business
- To educate youth in many aspects of life, providing them with a wide range of information and fostering the development of their value system
- To increase youth employment
- To reduce the number of young people emigrating<sup>112</sup>

The program contains the following key elements:

- professional training courses
- development of business management skills
- information about the job market
- networking with the business community
- advocacy around youth employment with government decision makers
- assistance to trainees in securing a job or establishing a small business

GjYC developed its curriculum through extensive discussions with local government officials, business people and NGOs. Staff spoke with experts in the field and with youth who were attending GjYC’s social events. The goal was to develop course offerings that met the needs of the town.<sup>113</sup>

Initially, courses were offered in theatre and journalism. A well-known journalist taught the journalism course and most of the graduates subsequently secured jobs with the local media. This convinced GjYC staff that the approach they had adopted was viable. Later in 2001, training courses were added in mechanics, fashion design and

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<sup>111</sup>The program takes place in a large building in downtown Gjirokastra that was renovated in 2001 and given to GjYC by local authorities for its use until 2008.

<sup>112</sup>Unlike the case of Romania and Bulgaria, the majority of young people who leave Gjirokastra head to the capital city of Tirana rather than overseas. Still, there are many young people in the country as a whole who leave Albania altogether.

<sup>113</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit. As in the case of Romania, it is interesting to note the direct involvement of youth in the design of the program.

**The courses vary in content, but they all offer elements of theory, skill training and confidence building.**

secretarial skills. GjYC also offered youth the opportunity to play soccer. Some began by playing soccer and ended up enrolling in one of the training courses.

The GjYC program pays particular attention to young people who may have completed their public schooling, but for economic or social reasons have not had the chance to continue studying at the next higher level and/or are having difficulty finding a decent job with the limited skills they have acquired.<sup>114</sup> Some program participants are attending high school or university (46%), some are already working and want additional training (10%), and some are unemployed (44%).<sup>115</sup> According to staff, the youth enrolled in the mechanics course are frequently unemployed and come from a more challenging background (lower income level, criminal activities, and social problems). The courses are offered free of charge, with the exception of the computer course.<sup>116</sup> Participants in the program are also invited to take part in other GjYC special community events (plays, concerts, etc.) and open forums.<sup>117</sup>

The courses vary in content, but they all offer elements of theory, skill training and confidence building.<sup>118</sup> In addition, participants learn how to prepare a résumé and to start their own business. Courses are offered in journalism, music, secretarial skills, fashion design, mechanics, theatre, soccer, computer skills, reporter (camera), handicrafts, and stone carving.<sup>119</sup> The courses are offered two or three times a week and last for 2-6 months.<sup>120</sup> GjYC can accommodate a total of approximately 130 participants per program cycle. All participants begin at the same level (regardless of previous experience) and no pre-assessment is required. Trainers for the courses include GjYC staff, outside experts, and individuals recruited from the local business community who have developed courses in mechanics and fashion design.

The criteria for selection vary from course to course. In general terms, participants in the training classes in journalism, theatre, computer and secretarial skills need to have finished high school.<sup>121</sup> Once a new course is announced, young people come to the GjYC center to sign up. Staff may offer them advice as to which course would suit them best, but at the end of the day the final selection is made by the youth. Participants are allowed to take another course in a different subject matter in the next cycle if they so choose. As a result, some students have received training in two or three different areas. Fashion design and mechanics are the two courses that lend

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>These figures vary from course to course. More participants in the computer training course, for example, are simultaneously enrolled in school than is the case in some of the other courses.

<sup>116</sup>The majority of the participants are in need and cannot afford to pay for these courses according to staff. The charge for the computer course is lower than the normal market price for similar instruction.

<sup>117</sup>These open forums are used in part to solicit feedback on the program from stakeholders.

<sup>118</sup>The latter received particular emphasis in the secretarial and fashion design courses.

<sup>119</sup>The stone carving, handicrafts and reporter courses were added in September 2003.

<sup>120</sup>Secretarial (4), Mechanics (4 theoretical and 2 practical), Fashion (4), Theatre (6), Computer (2), Reporter (3), Stone Carving (6), Handicrafts (3), and Music (6).

<sup>121</sup>Trainers feel the students need this minimum level of preparation in order to keep up. One exception is the mechanics course where trainees need only to have completed 8th grade.



themselves more easily to start-up businesses.

Development of the computer class was done in consultation with a vocational training school and meets the requirements established for certification in Europe. The mechanics course has been extremely popular due in part to the exponential growth in the number of privately owned cars in Albania.<sup>122</sup> The mechanics course responds directly to demands from local

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business owners for trained mechanics.<sup>123</sup> Participants do course work in mechanics for four months and then spend the next two months doing hands-on work in shops in Gjirokastra.<sup>124</sup> Participants receive a certificate upon completion of the course that aids them in securing employment. Frequently, the owners of the shops where the youth trained will hire them upon graduation.

GjYC's music courses focus on traditional Albanian music. Prior to the GjYC program, there was no other organization teaching music in Gjirokastra. "Now we have three youth bands," said Edmond Koxhioni, the music trainer for GjYC. "There was a show and two to three hundred came to watch. There's no money in heavy metal, but if you learn traditional Albanian music you can make money. Some young people work in bars and make two to three times a month what a teacher makes."

The stone carving course is taught by one of Albania's premier sculptors, Stefan Papamihali, and is designed in part to prepare youth to repair and nurture Gjirokastra's impressive stonework.<sup>125</sup> The trainees learn to draw, to make roofs and garden paths, to do decorative stone carving (like flowers in bas relief), street stones, and arch carvings.

According to staff, there is a great deal of interest in the journalism course and twelve graduates have received jobs. There are quite a few employment options in this

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<sup>122</sup>The demand for this course is so high that special selection criteria have been put in place.

<sup>123</sup>It is worth noting that in Albania the term mechanic covers a wide array of jobs ranging from auto mechanic to electrical engineer.

<sup>124</sup>The trainer for this course, Rexhep Dobi, has taught mechanics for thirty years. Since the GjYC program began, he has trained four groups of fifteen youth each.

<sup>125</sup>This is another example of the way in which GjYC tries to blend community needs with employment options. There is concern that the stonework in the town is being allowed to deteriorate. By training young people to take care of the stonework, GjYC helps to stop the deterioration, creates a job niche where none existed, and provides a model to local government that GjYC hopes will be adopted and scaled up.

**As is the case in both Romania and Bulgaria, youth find they must shift from thinking that the government is the solution to their problems to realizing that they themselves hold the answer to their future.**



field since Gjirokastra has two television stations, one radio station, and three newspapers. Graduates can also work in other businesses such as public relations. A large number of these trainees want to go to the university to study journalism and the course prepares them for this as well.<sup>126</sup>

As is the case in both Romania and Bulgaria, youth find they must shift from thinking that the government is the solution to their problems to realizing that they themselves hold the answer to their future.<sup>127</sup> When asked which sector they would like to work in they mirror their peers in Romania and Bulgaria in pointing to the private sector.<sup>128</sup>

### **Program Approach**

The GjYC program is extremely comprehensive in scope. The program combines both theory and practice and offers young people a wide array of training options. It also spends time on personal development and building the self-esteem of the

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<sup>126</sup>Interview with GjYC staff, October 1, 2003. One student comments, however, that to get into journalism at the university in Tirana they would have to pay an enormous bribe (the equivalent of \$8,000 US). Group interview with GjYC participants past and present, October 1, 2003. Another says that "Getting a job here depends not on merit but on whom you know."

<sup>127</sup>Some students choose to pursue university studies as a stopgap measure when they cannot find employment. Many study teaching and are disappointed to find that there are very few teaching jobs available when they graduate.

<sup>128</sup>Participants in this program seem better informed about the nongovernmental sector and some are interested in looking for jobs in that sector. The level of knowledge about the sector reflects the emphasis program staff have placed on this option.

participants. Practical career guidance is provided regarding the preparation of résumés and how to have a successful interview. The approach is designed: to prepare young people for the job market; to stem the tide of migration by reducing youth unemployment; and, to foster a concern for the well-being of the local community among these youth and encourage their active participation. In addition to skills development, the program also assists young people in finding a job or starting their own businesses. Finally, GjYC works with the local community to secure employment for its graduates.

GjYC has pinpointed the lack of a joint strategy among government structures, NGOs and the business sector as a critical weakness in efforts to address youth employment in the country. An additional challenge is the lack of reliable data on unemployment. As a result, project staff had to start from scratch in designing the GjYC approach. According to the GjYC program survey: “Through this program we learned and experienced new ways of approaching the target group and the community. At the same time we have established a very good relationship with the local authorities such as the municipality.”

GjYC staff have been careful to distinguish their program from the formal educational system in the area.<sup>129</sup> “The Youth Center is not and will not be substituting for the school or the formal educational system, but will focus instead on the group left outside or behind in the system. Our goal is not to compete, but to cooperate. We want to make use of underused resources – private or public, material or human – and only complement with our assets where the existing structure fails to provide the necessary services and cannot cover the needs of our target group.”<sup>130</sup> The Center pursues an explicit strategy of inter-sectoral partnership with local government officials<sup>131</sup>, educators, businesses, and other NGOs. GjYC and the local labor office, for example, collaborate in a number of areas, including the identification of some of the trainees for the program.

Another interesting aspect of the Center’s approach is its emphasis on social responsibility. Youth are provided with information about their community and are encouraged to play an active role in that community. There is a clear sense on the part of program managers that this program helps to address both community and individual needs. The head of the program, Alketa Qendro, visits the training classes and discusses civic participation, community, the role of NGOs, and the role of GjYC.

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**The approach is designed: to prepare young people for the job market; to stem the tide of migration by reducing youth unemployment; and, to foster a concern for the well-being of the local community among these youth and encourage their active participation.**

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<sup>129</sup>“We have a good relationship with the schools. We invite teachers here to the program. We have a good reputation. We are not a school, so they don’t see us as competitors...we complement them.” Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

<sup>130</sup>Program survey, GjYC.

<sup>131</sup>“The program is really good for the community.” Kristina Miho, op. cit.

**“When the child changes, the family changes and that leads to societal changes.”**

The social impact of the program is felt in another arena as well: the role of young women in Albania.<sup>132</sup> “Some girls and women spend all day at home. Now they are receiving both education and socialization. They take part in discussions with their friends and trainers. This goes well beyond professionalization.”<sup>133</sup>



Another distinguishing characteristic of the Gjrokastra program is the range of complementary activities that the program uses to further encourage social integration on the part of youth in the area. These include debates, roundtable discussions, training for youth participation (such as voting) and leadership, a democratic government group, concerts, excursions, recreational activities, and cultural and social events. The goal, according to program staff, is to contribute not only to the social formation of the program participants, but also to their “social education, emancipation, and integration.”<sup>134</sup> All of these activities are viewed as important elements in the formation and growth of the personalities of these young people. For participants who come from a more troubled background, this program “changes their lives...it even improves their family life, their social environment and their lifestyle,” explains Alketa Qendro.<sup>135</sup> “Our aim is not just employment. We’re keeping them off the street...we’re changing their lives.”

The GjYC approach has a number of interesting aspects:<sup>136</sup>

- The content of the program, in terms of the breadth and depth of the program offerings, is unique within Albania. The methodology is based on an interactive educational style (which is not typical within the Albanian educational system). The environment is pleasant with spacious, well-equipped, and clean facilities.
- It offers participants a real possibility of securing employment. In addition, it helps to raise awareness about the problem of youth unemployment and shows that proactive efforts are underway to address the issue.
- The program is based on a philosophy of social change that links improve-

<sup>132</sup>It is interesting to note that there are young women in the stone carving class and young men in the secretarial course.

<sup>133</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

<sup>134</sup>Program survey, op. cit.

<sup>135</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.




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**GjYC's ultimate indicator of success, of course, is whether or not its trainees secure jobs as a result of their participation in the program.**

ments in the quality of life of these youth to that of their families. In both economic and social terms, the program is helping youth to develop their personalities. “When the child changes, the family changes and that leads to societal changes.”<sup>137</sup>

- It provides a working model to governments and institutions in the region that addresses youth development in general and youth employment specifically, showcasing a particular style of organizational development and demonstrating that an NGO can produce significant change.
- It combines training in both professional and vocational skills, including an emphasis on traditional handicrafts such as stone carving and traditional music.<sup>138</sup>
- Local crafts people and experts are hired to do the training, which in turn creates jobs for those individuals.

## **Program Impact**

GjYC's ultimate indicator of success, of course, is whether or not its trainees secure jobs as a result of their participation in the program.<sup>139</sup> There are other interim benchmarks, however, that are equally important: completion of the course; positive changes in behavior on the part of participants (as witnessed by

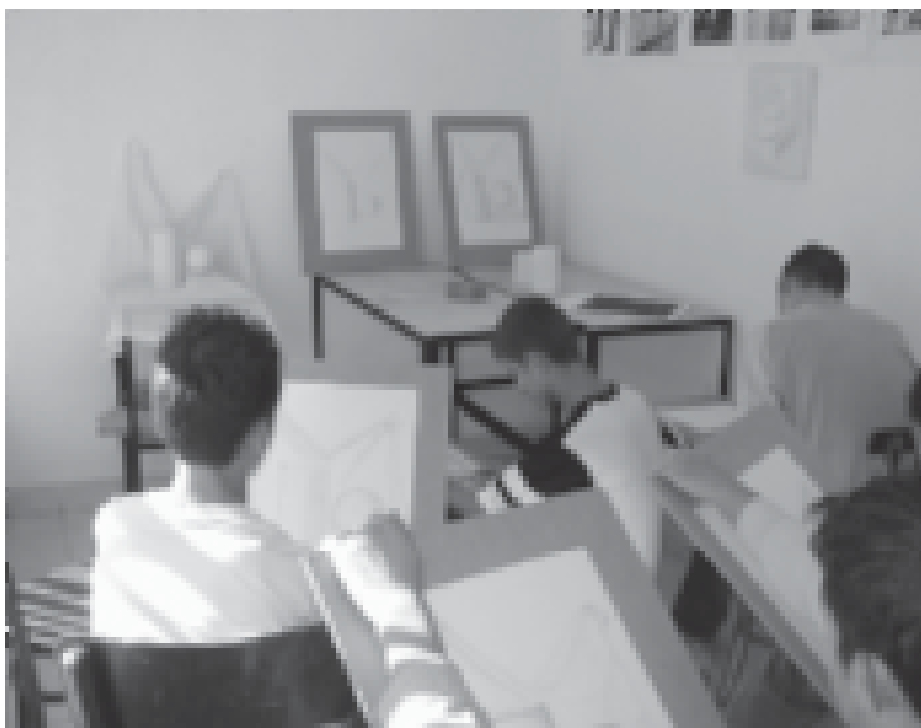
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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> One explicit objective of the GjYC program is to raise the interest of youth in “endangered” traditional crafts.

<sup>139a</sup> “I know we’ve had an impact when a student calls up and tells me they have a job.” Staff person, GjYC, October 1, 2003.

**“We believe it is important to maintain contact with the youth involved in these programs through alumni opportunities.”**



staff)<sup>140</sup>; proactive moves to determine what their future will look like; positive social interactions; and, initial steps toward personal change (which, in turn, according to program staff, produces societal changes).

GjYC data on the number of participants in the program who have completed the program and the number who have received jobs or started their own businesses in Gjirokastra and the surrounding areas is one important indicator of program impact. Explains Alketa Qendro: “We believe it is important to maintain contact with the youth involved in these programs through alumni opportunities. We ask the trainers to stay in contact with them. We want them to feel part of the Center. They come in and use the computers. They talk with us about what they’re doing. This also allows us to keep track of them over time.”

The following two tables provide demographic and impact data on GjYC’s professional and vocational training courses, as well as additional activities and events such as soccer, sex education, and first aid.

These figures are based on course activities financed by BCYF between February 1, 2003 and February 1, 2004:

<sup>140</sup>GjYC does not yet have a system set up by which to identify changes in the behavior of the trainees, thus these determinations are based on the impressions of the trainers. Program staff point out, however, that the majority of the trainers are teachers who have the appropriate pedagogical background to be able to make such a determination. Program survey, op. cit.

<i>Name of the course</i>	<i>Employed after the course</i>	<i>Total # of participants</i>	<i>Male and female in %</i>		<i>Age in %</i>			<i>Target Group in %</i>		
			Male	Female	14-18	18-24	24-on	Socio economic problems, unemployed	High- school and university students	Cultural and ethnic groups
Secretary	10	30	30	70	10	80	10	48	52	10
Mechanics	22	45	100		11	60	29	67	33	25
Soccer	10	60	100		27	64	9	78	22	35
Fashion & Design	25	40		100	28	63	9	71	29	29
Computer	17	42	29	71	39	54	7	42	58	30
Stone carving	22	9	67	33	80	20	0	25	75	21
Soccer championship		500	99	1	27	54	19	78	22	35
Handicrafts	50	20		100	20	52	28	71	29	29
Internet & Newspaper		1500	ONGOING							

These figures are based on course activities financed by DWHH and other G'YC partners between January 2003 and December 2003:

Name of the course	Employed after the course	Total # of participants	Male and female in %		Age in %			Target Group in %		
			Male	Female	14-18	18-24	24-on	Socio economic problems, unemployed	High-school and university students	Cultural and ethnic groups
Journalism	10	60	40	60	10	80	10	48	52	10
Music	50	20	100	0	50	35	15	50	15	50
Theatre	0	40	45	55	100	0	0	62	100	25
Reporters	25	30	65	35		70	30	60	100	23
Computer	17	42	29	71	39	54	7	42	58	30
Other activities and events		2,500								

GjYC enjoys a good reputation within the local community. Former trainees encourage their friends to participate and parents are pleased to find an organization that can train, inform and entertain their youngsters.<sup>141</sup> In addition to those young people who participate in the training program, GjYC also touches the lives of a much larger number of Gjirokastra youth (including project participants) who take part in the Center's events and leisure activities (sports, etc.).

GjYC places considerable emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. Process evaluations are emphasized given their value in fostering mid-course corrections.<sup>142</sup> Project staff regularly convene program participants and other stakeholders (including local government officials, educators, local business people, trainers, parents and the community at large) for town meeting discussions of the program and of the challenges faced by the community. Participants are encouraged to speak their mind about what is working and what is not. In addition, great attention is paid to tracking participants after they leave the program.<sup>143</sup>

Anecdotal evidence<sup>144</sup> from two program graduates helps to round out the picture of GjYC's contribution to local youth:

*"My name is Elvis Loloci, and I'm 18....and our band is fully employed at the moment. This was very important for me because, after graduating from the 8-year primary school, I could not continue my secondary studies, and the guitar course gave me a possibility of employment. In the Youth Center, I found myself. I was raised as a kid in the Children's Home in Durres. I can only thank the staff of the Youth Center for all these changes in my life."*

*"My name is Dritan Tushe. I'm 19. Two years ago, I happened to read a notice where I learned that the Youth Center had opened a mechanics course, free of charge for unemployed youth. After finishing my 8-year primary education, I only studied for one year at the Technical Secondary School, but after that I dropped out. Because of my lack of any profession, I found it hard to get employed anywhere, so I registered for the mechanics course with the desire to learn this profession, and after that, to live by it. With the passing of time, my desire to exercise the mechanics profession started to grow. I started to understand that the better I became in this profession, the easier it would be to find myself a job. Now I am specialized in electrical engine repair, and have started to repair my first generators."*

**GjYC places considerable emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. Process evaluations are emphasized given their value in fostering mid-course corrections.**

<sup>141</sup>GjYC staff report that parents come to major events at GjYC and to register their children for the program. Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Analysis of the secretarial course, for example, revealed that the course material did not match the modest educational background of the participants. The course was retooled to emphasize the basic skills and duties of a secretary, tools for personal development, and practical skills on how to prepare a résumé, how to apply for a job, etc.

<sup>143</sup>The trainer for the mechanics program, for example, keeps a record of whether participants have completed the training course and whether and where they have been employed. Trainees are tested before they begin the course, mid-way through and at the end of the course. All trainees in all courses offered by GjYC must pass an exam before they are allowed to graduate. The trainer in the mechanics course provides a list of the graduates with their pictures to the local Labor Office. Prospective employers will either contact the Labor Office or the head of GjYC to hire the trainees.

<sup>144</sup>This information was gathered by GjYC staff in October 2003. Program survey, op. cit.

## Voices of Albanian Youth

Interviews with youth currently enrolled in the GjYC program and with others who have graduated provide additional insight into the program.

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***Fashion Design Course:***<sup>145</sup> Three of the participants are students and four are unemployed. Five of the seven view this as a future career, while the other two see it as a hobby. There are opportunities to join an existing dress making shop or to do this sort of work out of their homes. “My Aunt was in the last course. Now she has her own business.”<sup>146</sup> One participant who completed the fashion design course is working for a Greek company doing sewing. “Three applied for the job and I got it. The course gave me the advantage.”<sup>147</sup>

***Mechanics Course:*** “A lot of my friends have done it. I tell them it’s worth it. I have three friends who are working independently who did the course.”<sup>148</sup>

***Stone Carving Course:*** This course just began in September 2003. “I saw an announcement and I see lots of houses that need repair. I am trying to save the stonework in town.”<sup>149</sup> This reinforces a point made by the sculptor who teaches the course. “I’m not pretending all of them will get jobs carving stone, but they will recognize the value of the town and they will protect it.”<sup>150</sup>

The GjYC program is attractive to Gjirokastra youth for a number of reasons. “There is a youth focus...it becomes a home for young people. It’s the only place for youth. There are clubs and bars, but that’s boring. So it provides entertainment and you learn something.”<sup>151</sup> “It offers practical skills,” said another.<sup>152</sup> “The courses are free.” Another commented: “I like the way it is taught. The teachers are different here. They really care if you learn. School is more formal and they don’t care whether we have absorbed the knowledge.”<sup>153</sup> “It opens possibilities for the future,” said one participant.<sup>154</sup> In response another said, “Not just possibilities for the future. I realized them...all

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<sup>145</sup>Interviews with participants in the fashion design course took place on September 30, 2003.

<sup>146</sup>Participant, Fashion Design course, op. cit.

<sup>147</sup>Group interview, op. cit.

<sup>148</sup>Eslirt Tushe, op. cit.

<sup>149</sup>Young woman enrolled in the stone carving class. Interview, October 1, 2003.

<sup>150</sup>Stefan Papmihali, October 1, 2003.

<sup>151</sup>Graduate of the program currently working for a radio station. Group interview, op. cit.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.

three of us are working part time.”<sup>155</sup>

The participants are divided on whether they plan to stay in Gjirokastra. “I don’t know what the future will be. I love this town and I would like to stay here.” Another says, “For me the future is not here. I can go abroad now. I’m planning on going to America. I’ll probably be there long term. There is life for young people here, but not enough.” Another disagrees saying, “I prefer to stay. It depends on the opportunities. Here I’m someone, there I’m no one.”

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## **Lessons Learned**

The Gjirokastra Youth Center’s youth employment program highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to youth employment. Its primary features include:

- A focus on both training and job placement
- An emphasis on community needs and the importance of citizen participation<sup>156</sup>
- An approach that emphasizes partnership with government, business and other NGOs
- Adoption of a strategic approach to scaling up
- Utilization of interactive teaching methods
- Recognition of the importance of matching course offerings with the needs of local employers
- Need for a thorough understanding of the linkages between the training course and the economic, social and political situation in the country
- Recognition of the linkages between individual fulfillment, family well-being and social change
- The importance of monitoring and evaluation as a tool for mid-course correction
- The significance of building a relationship with the business community in terms of securing job placements for graduates
- The value of modeling a training program that government could adopt and scale up.

## **Where Next with the Gjirokastra Youth Center**

Like any good development organization, GjYC views its program as a work

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>“They are not just learning to be a journalist...they are learning how to be a citizen.” Alketa Qendro. op. cit.

**Another aspect of collaboration with local officials is GjYC's explicit strategy to develop models that local government can adopt and make their own.**

in progress. Thanks to a serious commitment to monitoring and evaluation, its youth employment program is regularly fine-tuned. At the same time, GjYC continues to build its reputation and staff capacity.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, Chairperson Alketa Qendro says, "We consider that there is a lot more to do in order to reach our long-term objectives....It doesn't stop here. Every year we see something new we can add to complete our goal. Next month we are offering a training course on how to run a business, develop a business plan in order to set up and run a business, and get credit. We want to provide training in terms of professional orientation as well...how to be a business person."

The opportunities for increased collaboration with business seem promising.<sup>158</sup> "Our project works very well up to the end of the professional courses, but we want to do more in cooperation with the business community to increase job placement for youth."<sup>159</sup> Another option is to consider asking the business community to provide financial support for a project that helps to ensure the availability of a well-trained local workforce.<sup>160</sup>

There is also a desire to do more in collaboration with local authorities. "There is good cooperation with local authorities, but it is very formal.... it is not an interactive relationship."<sup>161</sup> GjYC staff will continue to urge local authorities to improve data collection. "We need to design our courses based on the real needs of the labor market. Local authorities do not have this data."<sup>162</sup>

Another aspect of collaboration with local officials is GjYC's explicit strategy to develop models that local government can adopt and make their own.<sup>163</sup> This approach is particularly apparent with regards to the stone carving class. "We want them to build something at the end of the class...a path, a sculpture. We want to show the town that there is an alternative...to show the municipality that local government could run a program like this...it could finance training in stone carving and in the process both create jobs and help protect the stonework in the town. We are demonstrating how this could work."<sup>164</sup>

<sup>157</sup>According to GjYC, the principles for organizational success are: good planning; development of a long-term strategy; good communication; strong teamwork; transparency; and, partnership.

<sup>158</sup>A local businessman interviewed pointed to unemployment levels and out migration by youth as a concern for business. Businessman interviewed at the graduation for the mechanics course, September 30, 2003.

<sup>159</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

<sup>160</sup>A local businessman says that he would be willing to provide financial support and employment opportunities (and that others would be willing to do so as well) if GjYC could produce the specialized workers they need. Businessman, op. cit.

<sup>161</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>The Director of the Regional Department of Cultural Monuments, Vladimir Qirjaqi speaking about the stone carving class, says that GjYC "has established a good partnership with our institution...I do not consider this course simply a way of employing a group of young people, but as a good sign that the younger generation will contribute to the long process of preserving the cultural values of Gjirokastra...the demand for such a profession becomes evident since the old stone-carving masters have already left the country and the tradition of passing this knowledge on has stopped...I find this course quite a useful one and I will try hard from my position to expand its scope..." Comment from January 2004 included in an e-mail to the author from Alketa Qendro, April 15, 2004.

<sup>164</sup>Alketa Qendro, op. cit.

Currently, GjYC offers all but one of its courses without cost to the participants. Two possible modifications are under consideration. One would require that participants pay a small fee to enroll. The other would be to require students to volunteer a specified amount of time to a community service project in exchange for the training they receive. Not only would this help to ensure that participants not take the program for granted, but many organizations that offer youth employment programs have found the incorporation of a community service dimension to be an important component of their training program. Service learning would provide participants with an opportunity to reinforce the skills they have developed in the program and to build self-esteem as they come to recognize all that they have to offer to their community. Such a step would also fit well with GjYC's strong commitment to community development.

Another modification that program staff are considering is to introduce different levels of training into the program. Currently, only the music program offers a beginning and an advanced course. The idea would be to provide advanced training for 15-20% of those who graduate from the basic classes.<sup>165</sup> Differentiated training of this sort would also enable youth who have already attained a certain skill level before beginning the program to enter at a higher level.

A final area for exploration is that of micro-credit. There are numerous challenges in this area. Credit is expensive, there is inadequate information, no policies are in place that would make it possible to provide microcredit at low interest rates, and there are no banks that offer special terms for young entrepreneurs. GjYC may explore options to establish a micro-credit lending program for youth.

GjYC's dual goals of doing something for local youth and doing something for the community are clear. Notes Alketa Quendro, "Our aim is for them to get a job here...to start or be employed in a small business here...primarily in Gjirokastra and its adjacent towns. Lots of youth are leaving. We need to retain them here and we need to find good ways to do that. Otherwise this town will be empty...only the houses will remain if nothing changes. We need to take care of this old town."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Ibid.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.



## Lessons Learned

Each of the programs profiled above offers significant lessons learned. Some of these are common to all three programs, while others are unique. This section focuses on those overarching lessons learned which are applicable at the regional and/or international level. These are, in turn, divided into three categories: those lessons that are of particular relevance to youth employment programs in the Balkans; those that are applicable both inside and outside the region; and, finally, those that refer to the programmatic components critical to a comprehensive approach to youth employment.

*1) There are a number of lessons learned of particular relevance to those designing and managing youth employment programs in the Balkans:*

### ■ *Youth exodus*

As evidenced in these three case studies, youth in the Balkans share a sense of uncertainty about the future of the region and their own personal future. This leads many to consider leaving the region to study or work abroad. Youth employment programs in the Balkans will want to pay particular attention to this issue of “youth flight” and work with others in government, business and civil society to provide youth with local options. The goal would be either to retain these talented young people in their own countries or to take steps to provide incentives for them to return home once they have completed their studies abroad.<sup>167</sup> Generally speaking, those managing youth employment programs in the Balkans will want to ensure that they are preparing youth for employment in their own country and not simply preparing them to emigrate.

### ■ *Taking personal responsibility*

Youth employment programs in the Balkans must assist young people in moving from a belief in government as the essential provider of goods and services (and employment) to greater reliance on one’s self. Programs should include elements that build self-esteem and help young people learn to make choices for themselves and take charge of their own lives.

### ■ *Youth entrepreneurship*

Given the lack of jobs for youth in the region and general economic uncertainty, young people in the Balkans must consider the option of self-employment. Programs

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**Youth employment programs in the Balkans will want to pay particular attention to this issue of “youth flight” and work with others in government, business and civil society to provide youth with local options.**

<sup>167</sup>One possibility would be to encourage businesses to sponsor scholarships abroad while at the same time offering jobs to those same young people upon completion of their studies as an incentive for them to return home.

**Nongovernmental organizations have a critical role to play in designing and implementing innovative youth employment programs that address, nurture and protect the educational and experiential needs of young people while also responding to the demands of the workplace.**

should provide youth with the tools to create and manage their own businesses in addition to offering training to prepare them for the traditional job market (interviewing skills, etc).

#### ■ *Business and beyond*

While it is critical to provide young people with entrepreneurial alternatives to the traditional employer in the region (government), it would be a mistake to focus on business to the exclusion of public service and/or employment in the nongovernmental community. Healthy societies require well-prepared professionals in all three fields. Youth employment programs should include active participation by role models<sup>168</sup> from all three sectors and offer youth in-depth information about the roles and opportunities associated with each sector.<sup>169</sup>

#### ■ *Inter-sectoral partnering*

In the short time since the fall of communism, civil society and business have grown to occupy critical roles within the Balkans. Successful youth employment programs need to build partnerships with all three sectors to contribute to a positive enabling environment for business, to foster job creation, to ensure compatibility between job training and employers' needs, and to complement where appropriate the efforts of the public school system. Nongovernmental organizations have a critical role to play in designing and implementing innovative youth employment programs that address, nurture and protect the educational and experiential needs of young people while also responding to the demands of the workplace.

#### ■ *Corporate social responsibility*

The business community is still a relatively untapped local resource in the Balkans.<sup>170</sup> Through workshops and discussions of evolving trends in corporate social responsibility, nongovernmental organizations can play an important role in encouraging the business sector in the Balkans to move from traditional models of corporate philanthropy to more hands-on involvement in community development. Business has a critical role to play in the youth employment arena. In addition to providing opportunities for internships and employment, the

<sup>168</sup>Several of those interviewed emphasized a particular need to identify successful women to serve as role models and mentors.

<sup>169</sup>Overall, there is a high level of skepticism among young people in the Balkans about work in the public sector, unrealistically high expectations about the opportunities available in the business sector, and, a lack of knowledge about the options available to them in the nonprofit sector.

<sup>170</sup>For suggestions on how to engage the corporate sector in youth employment initiatives, see: Waddell, Steve. *What Works in Engaging Business in Youth Employment and Livelihood Strategies*, part of the "What Works" Series International Youth Foundation: Baltimore, Maryland, c2001, pp. 46.

business sector can play a key role in working with educational authorities and nongovernmental organizations to ensure that programs designed to prepare youth for the workforce are in fact providing them with skills appropriate to the local job market. Further, youth employment programs benefit greatly when individuals in the business community serve as mentors to young entrepreneurs.<sup>171</sup>

### ■ *Community service*

Youth employment programs that blend the ability to earn a livelihood with a commitment to one's community will contribute to a financially healthy and engaged citizenry. Critical in any geographic setting, civic engagement in transitional societies takes on a deeper significance. Youth must learn to blend a new emphasis on individual achievement with a sense of responsibility to their community. Incorporating a service learning component into youth employment programs provides young people with an opportunity to practice some of the skills they have learned, builds their self-esteem, and reinforces the value of "giving back."<sup>172</sup>

*2) In addition to the elements listed above, which refer particularly to the special challenges associated with youth employment efforts in the Balkans, the three programs profiled also provide lessons learned which are applicable outside the region as well:*

### ■ *Interactive teaching methods and peer-to-peer learning*

Interactive teaching methods and peer-to-peer learning are relatively new innovations in the Balkan context. The young people involved in these programs point to these two techniques as ones that facilitate learning and enhance their interest in the material.

### ■ *Engaging youth in program design, implementation and evaluation*

Each of the youth employment programs profiled here have provided youth with the opportunity for significant participation in the design, implementation and/or evaluation stages of their programs. As is the case with other types of youth development initiatives, actively engaging youth in this way strengthens programs and provides youth with yet another opportunity to build their skills and self-esteem.

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**Youth employment programs that blend the ability to earn a livelihood with a commitment to one's community will contribute to a financially healthy and engaged citizenry.**

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<sup>171</sup>Mentorship programs are also a good way to initially engage local business people in youth employment programs. Over time, these businesses may be willing to provide financial support to the program as well.

<sup>172</sup>In addition, evidence shows that "...civic education had the greatest impact on participants when programs brought individuals directly into contact with local authorities or engaged in local problem-solving activities." *Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned*, Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, June 2002, p. 24.

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### ■ *Learning by doing*

Activities that allow young people to try out what they have learned (such as the student companies that are formed as part of the JA Bulgaria program or the hands-on training mechanics receive before graduation in the GjYC program in Albania) reinforce the knowledge they have gained in a more traditional classroom type setting. Experiential learning also serves to spark the interest and further develop the knowledge base of these young people regarding the real world application of what they have learned.

### ■ *In-school and out-of-school youth*

Two of the programs profiled (“A Career Dream” and JA Bulgaria) are taught primarily, though not exclusively,<sup>173</sup> within the public school system during regular school hours, while the third (GjYC) is taught entirely outside the public school system. The first two programs focus on youth currently enrolled in school, while the GjYC program includes both out-of-school youth and students. The need is great within both populations and youth employment programs can be successful in both settings.

### ■ *Contextualization*

To be successful, youth employment programs need to reflect local circumstances. Due diligence activities carried out prior to program implementation might include: needs assessments (such as the one done by “A Career Dream”); dialogue with the business community regarding the types of skills they require; analysis of available economic data on the local job market, etc. The proper mix of professional and/or vocational training will also be tied to the local context (types of jobs available, educational level of the participants, etc.). GjYC’s inclusion of traditional crafts like stone carving is notable in this regard. Finally, local demographics will dictate the need for special activities to respond to particular target populations (the presence of a minority population, disabled youth, disadvantaged young women in the community, etc.).

### ■ *Monitoring and evaluation*

Monitoring and evaluation is fundamental to the ability of program managers to know where, when and how to fine-tune their approach. This should include measurement of both short-term and longer-term program impact and will require program managers to stay in contact with youth and track their

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<sup>173</sup>“A Career Dream” includes a summer camp component and JA Bulgaria includes substantial after school activities.

progress. Tracking systems should monitor job placement, job retention and vertical mobility.

### ■ *Scaling up*

Youth employment programs lend themselves particularly well to scaling up efforts. The programs profiled are exploring options to share materials, methods and models with local educators and/or government officials in order to reach an even broader audience.

### ■ *Access to credit*

Access to credit tailored to the needs of young entrepreneurs is critical.<sup>174</sup> Without access to such funding, youth will be unable to put the skills they have learned to use in establishing their own businesses.

### ■ *Community involvement and support*

As is the case with many types of youth development initiatives, community involvement and support (particularly on the part of parents,<sup>175</sup> teachers and the business community) enhance the impact of youth employment programs. The GjYC program makes a particular effort to involve the broader community in their activities and to emphasize the linkages between individual well-being and community well being.<sup>176</sup>

*3) Most importantly, a holistic approach to youth employment is needed. Conditioned by local circumstances and the availability of funds, youth employment programs should be designed to be as comprehensive in scope as possible. A holistic approach would include all or as many of the following elements as possible and appropriate<sup>177</sup>:*

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**As is the case with many types of youth development initiatives, community involvement and support (particularly on the part of parents, teachers and the business community) enhances the impact of youth employment programs.**

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<sup>174</sup>“Access to funding is always the main challenge facing young people trying to start a business.” Karen Bellis, Global Coordinator, Shell LiveWire, in Laitner, Sarah. “Entrepreneurship: Turning a Good Idea into Reality,” *Financial Times*, Special Report, January 23, 2004. p. 1.

<sup>175</sup>Program training is enhanced when messages about self-reliance, self-esteem, and local opportunities for young people are reinforced at home and at school.

<sup>176</sup>GjYC held a large, multi-sectoral community meeting in November 2003 to develop recommendations on youth employment. The speakers included representatives from local government, business, NGOs, and academia. In addition to participants from these sectors and the media, program participants were also invited to take part in the discussion. The group identified a lack of accurate data as a key concern and pointed out that official unemployment figures are based on the number of registered unemployed and youth are not aware that they need to register with the local labor office. As a result of this meeting, an experts group was formed to draft a study of the local labor market.

<sup>177</sup>The list provided here is consistent with *entra 21*’s experience in Latin America which indicates that successful programs meet a demonstrated demand in the job market, emphasize acquisition of life skills, and link training to job placement. The elements listed above could be further complemented by other initiatives designed to foster youth employment and youth entrepreneurship in the region such as incubator services (currently used in Bulgaria to nurture small businesses through, for example, a sharing of overhead costs among several start-up companies) and career centers (based in high schools and universities).

- clear selection criteria
- training in both life skills<sup>178</sup> and work skills<sup>179</sup>
- emphasis on the development of attitudes and behaviors appropriate to the workplace (to enhance employability)
- opportunity to practice skills through student companies, internships, community service work, or similar activities
- direct contact between youth and potential employers (i.e., manager for a day, job fair)
- opportunity for service learning in order to instill civic values, strengthen skills, and build self-esteem<sup>180</sup>
- advocacy work by program staff at the local and national level to raise the visibility of the youth employment issue and to promote a positive enabling environment for youth employment (in terms of macro-economic policy, job creation, support for small- and medium-sized enterprises, corporate social responsibility, etc.)
- networking on the part of program staff with the business community, non-governmental groups and local and national government to promote job placement
- development of an active alumni network
- access to micro-credit loans especially designed for youth
- mentoring program
- tools necessary for youth to either find and excel in the traditional job market or to strike out on their own and create their own jobs<sup>181</sup>
- multifaceted job placement program that combines internships, learnerships,<sup>182</sup> and job placement.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup>This would include opportunities for young people to engage in self-exploration and self-discovery type activities. Life skills also include skills that foster life-long learning. One example would be to encourage youth to value flexibility, an ability that will serve them well as they find it necessary to adapt to a fast changing world.

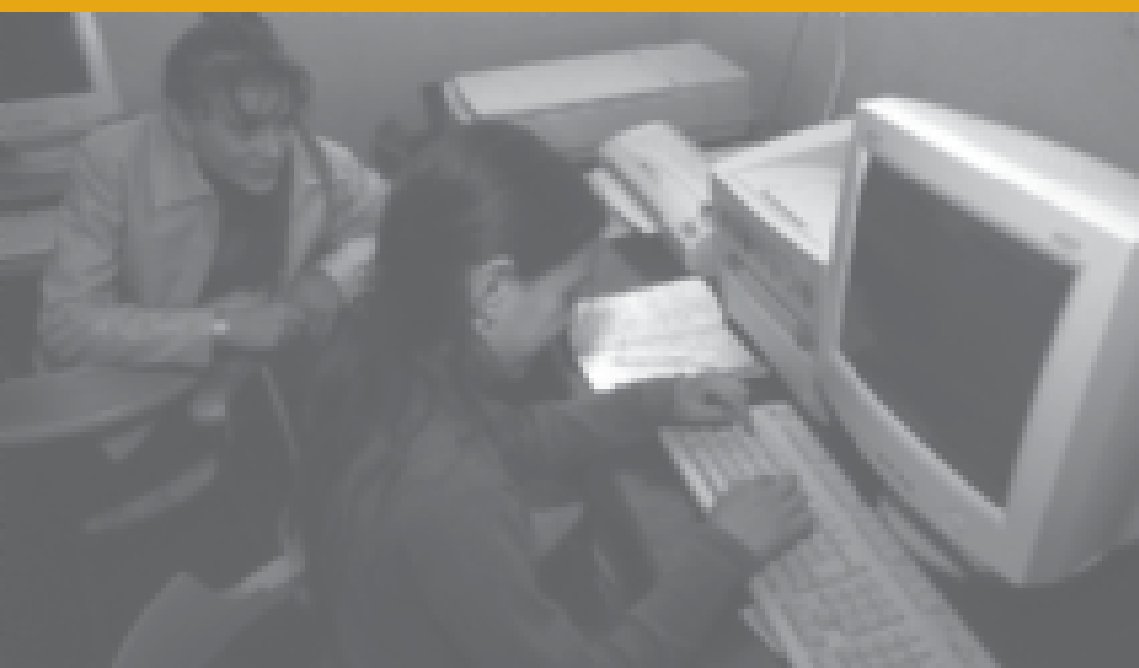
<sup>179</sup>Among other skills, this would include advice on securing and retaining employment, in addition to strategies for job advancement.

<sup>180</sup>Community service allows youth to recognize for themselves what they have to offer to others. It also helps to instill a commitment to giving back even after their training is complete and they have secured employment.

<sup>181</sup>The relative emphasis placed between the two might vary depending upon the characteristics of the labor market in a particular location. Are jobs available or are youth better off creating their own jobs?

<sup>182</sup>A "learnership" is a more in-depth and targeted training program than the typical internship. It involves a higher level of coaching and monitoring by the sponsoring institution. It prepares an individual to fill a particular role within the institution with an eye to potential full-time employment within that same organization. An internship is generally shorter in duration and provides individuals with more general hands-on work experience. Both approaches can be extremely valuable components of youth livelihood programs.

<sup>183</sup>This might include negotiated agreements with local businesses or government agencies to take on blocks of trainees for internships or jobs after the completion of each program cycle.





## Where Next?

It is clear from the analysis above that addressing the issue of youth employment and youth entrepreneurship is a collective responsibility that involves both the individual and the community at large. It is a problem so complex that no single organization or any one sector can tackle the challenge on its own. Government, business and civil society organizations must work together on an undertaking of this magnitude and this collaboration must extend from the local community to the international arena. As critical as they are, even national policies to combat unemployment are insufficient in a global economy. What is required to address youth employment and the promotion of economic expansion is a grand alliance: a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach based upon collaboration among government, business and civil society actors at the local, national, regional, and international levels.<sup>184</sup>

Daunting a challenge as this may seem, it is possible to break the task down into concrete, actionable steps at each level. To be successful, however, all of the illustrative examples below would require inter-sectoral partnerships among government, business and civil society actors.<sup>185</sup>

At the international level, one possibility would be to convene an international donors conference focused on the issue of youth employment in the Balkans. Bringing together bilateral and multilateral donors, local and international experts on the issue of youth employment, local and national governments, business, and an array of civil society actors, such a conference could explore options, make recommendations and mobilize resources behind efforts to improve the economic climate<sup>186</sup> in the region and to develop employment and entrepreneurship options for youth, such as access to micro-credit. Other options would be: to convene a business leaders conference involving international, national and local business leaders in a discussion of youth employment strategies for the region; to host an NGO-led experts meeting on youth employment in the Balkans involving specialists from government, business and civil society; and/or, to dedicate

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**Government, business and civil society organizations must work together on an undertaking of this magnitude and this collaboration must extend from the local community to the international arena.**

<sup>184</sup>Such a strategy would link top-down and bottom-up approaches to youth employment, helping to ensure that progress at one level is complementary to and reinforced by advances at the other.

<sup>185</sup>Youth employment is a particularly propitious arena for inter-sectoral partnering. It is a critical area of interest for all three sectors and each brings its own unique—and complementary—areas of expertise to bear on the challenge.

<sup>186</sup>One issue that needs to be factored into any analysis of the economic prospects for the Balkans is that of accession into the European Union. Bulgaria and Romania are scheduled to enter the EU in 2007. While Bulgaria did receive its designation of “functioning market economy” in October 2002, the EU Commission failed to grant Romania a similar designation in 2003. Analysis of the accession timetable and the anticipated impact of entrance into the EU would provide useful input into initiatives in the area of youth employment. The youth interviewed for this study are highly optimistic about the impact of such a move believing it will enable them to study in Europe at a lower cost than is the case today; to obtain work outside the Balkans more easily; and/or, improve the economic situation in their own country.

**Capacity-building initiatives at the regional level could serve a dual role of bridging social divides while strengthening the skills of youth-serving NGOs and youth themselves.**

a segment of an upcoming regional heads of state meeting to a discussion of youth employment.<sup>187</sup>

Regional initiatives to spur economic growth and job creation—while difficult in some cases due to ongoing political tensions—could take advantage of cost efficiencies and a pooling of talent and resources.<sup>188</sup> Capacity-building initiatives at the regional level could serve a dual role of bridging social divides while strengthening the skills of youth-serving NGOs and youth themselves. Such initiatives might also lead to “capacity-sharing” strategies that would be based on certain organizations sharing the expertise they have developed with regards to a particular youth employment strategy (micro-credit, internship programs, mentoring, partnering with business, etc.) with other organizations in the region through peer exchanges and technical assistance mechanisms. Finally, there is a strong need for reliable, up-to-date data on the Balkan economies and, particularly, youth employment and underemployment levels in the region.

At the national level, there is much to be done in terms of fostering an enabling environment conducive to economic growth. Macro-economic policy (including support for small- and medium-sized enterprises) is critical in this regard. National youth policies (such as the one adopted in Romania) can also help advance efforts to address youth employment in a comprehensive and proactive manner.

At the local and community level, programs like the three profiled here can help to address local needs and, in the process, generate successful models that can be scaled up at the national level and, following adaptation and retooling to respond to variations in local circumstances, replicated elsewhere in the region.

Within this overarching framework, what concrete action is already underway? As noted above, the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation (BCYF) identified youth employment as one of its key programming areas when the organization was first launched in 2000. Already the focus of a special workshop at the Balkan Youth Forum 2003,<sup>189</sup> BCYF’s work on youth employment will intensify over the next months and years. BCYF will partner with other organizations in government, business,<sup>190</sup> and civil society to help: develop a regional approach to youth employment at the conceptual level; identify a portfolio of programmatic

<sup>187</sup>These options could work in tandem. An NGO-driven event might, for example, produce a “White Paper” on youth employment in the Balkans for presentation at the regional heads of state event.

<sup>188</sup>This point is reflected in the comments of Ivan Vejvoda of the Balkan Trust for Democracy at the Balkan Youth Forum 2003, “Our countries are too small to succeed economically alone.”

<sup>189</sup>This BCYF-sponsored forum was held September 16–21, 2003 in Igalo, Montenegro. This is an annual event that brings together youth-serving NGOs from throughout the Balkans for skills development and to discuss a range of issues critical to youth development.

<sup>190</sup>For one example of BCYF’s efforts to promote corporate social responsibility see, Demjaha, Agon. “Investing in Macedonia’s Future Through its Young People,” AmCham Macedonia, October 2003, pp. 18–20.

initiatives (such as the three profiled here); build local capacity (including training in inter-sectoral partnering and mentoring);<sup>191</sup> and close the information gap.

The Balkan Youth Forum 2003's Working Group on Youth Employment recommended the development of base line data on levels of youth unemployment and underemployment in each country in the region that could be shared through a central BCYF database.<sup>192</sup> The group also recommended development of: a database of best practices in youth employment;<sup>193</sup> youth employment indicators; a database of organizations working on youth employment in the region; and, a compendium of international resources. In addition to basic data collection and analysis, BCYF and its partners will play a role in the development of models, standards and benchmarks in youth employment.

As evidenced in the programs analyzed here, youth need access to credit in order to create successful small businesses. BCYF will partner with Youth Business International (YBI)<sup>194</sup> to advance work in this area. This will enable BCYF to move from support for "effective youth employment programs to direct provision of youth enterprise development systems."<sup>195</sup> YBI forms inter-sectoral partnerships in order to provide young people with "skills, expertise and the facilities they need for access to finance, business mentoring and support during start-up and early development of youth businesses."<sup>196</sup> BCYF and YBI will work together to develop the entrepreneurial potential of Balkan youth.

"BCYF is convinced that the key to improving the conditions and prospects of young people in the region is to nurture the creation of small enterprises and family businesses that will contribute to the economic development and social fabric of these countries. Through such an approach, jobs will be created and young people will increase their chances to pursue work and entrepreneurial opportunities. As a result, youth employment figures should decrease and such

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<sup>191</sup>As part of its regional capacity-building work, BCYF held a training workshop on inter-sectoral partnering in April 2004 in Borovetz, Bulgaria. The objective was to build the capacity of youth-serving NGOs to work with the corporate sector. Future plans include a regional workshop on youth entrepreneurship that will involve government ministers, business leaders, bilateral agencies and youth from throughout the region.

<sup>192</sup>In addition to overall data on levels of youth unemployment and underemployment in the region, there is a need for disaggregated data. This would include data broken down by country, by sector of the economy, and by gender, ethnicity, educational levels, etc. It is important, for example, to know how globalization is affecting job growth on a sector-by-sector basis.

<sup>193</sup>For an example of such a database, see [www.nyec.org/pepnet/](http://www.nyec.org/pepnet/). Developed by the National Youth Employment Coalition, the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPnet), identifies and promotes initiatives that have had demonstrated success in the areas of youth employment and development in the United States.

<sup>194</sup>YBI is part of The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum. Its goal is to "mobilize the business sector to help young people in disadvantaged communities succeed as entrepreneurs." "Strategy on Business Engagement for the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, 2003-2005," op. cit. p. 2. For more information on Youth Business International, see their website at: [www.youth-business.org](http://www.youth-business.org).

<sup>195</sup>"Strategy on Business Engagement for the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, 2003-2005," op. cit. p. 2.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid. p. 2.

**In sum, what is needed is a multi-stakeholder strategy that incorporates players at the international, regional, national and local levels from all three sectors and includes the mobilization of local capital (human and financial).**

challenges [as] the emigration of talent and human trafficking will be substantially reduced.”<sup>197</sup> Shifting away from a perspective that views youth as a drain on their communities, “...young people...will become self-employed entrepreneurs and in turn the engines of the economies of the region.”<sup>198</sup>

To achieve these goals, BCYF believes a strategy is required that combines several elements: inter-sectoral partnerships (linking government, business and civil society); mentoring by business leaders; training and technical support in developing small enterprises; provision of revolving credit funds; access to a wide network of businesses; and, monitoring and follow-up.<sup>199</sup> It is necessary to “build the employability of young people as well as to generate a culture of entrepreneurship and dynamism in the local economy.”<sup>200</sup> The final element is to develop programs that are comprehensive in nature and include job placement. In sum, what is needed is a multi-stakeholder strategy that incorporates players at the international, regional, national and local levels from all three sectors and includes the mobilization of local capital (human and financial).

The future of the Balkan region rests in large measure on the ability of these societies to provide real options for their youth. Programs designed to build tolerance among Balkan youth across ethnic, national, religious and cultural divides will help to strengthen the social fabric of the region. Efforts to engage young people in active civic participation will help to stabilize the fledgling democratic infrastructure. A third critical component for enhancing the prospects for a brighter future in the region is to ensure that young people have the skills and attitudes necessary to earn a living and the opportunity to put that knowledge to use.

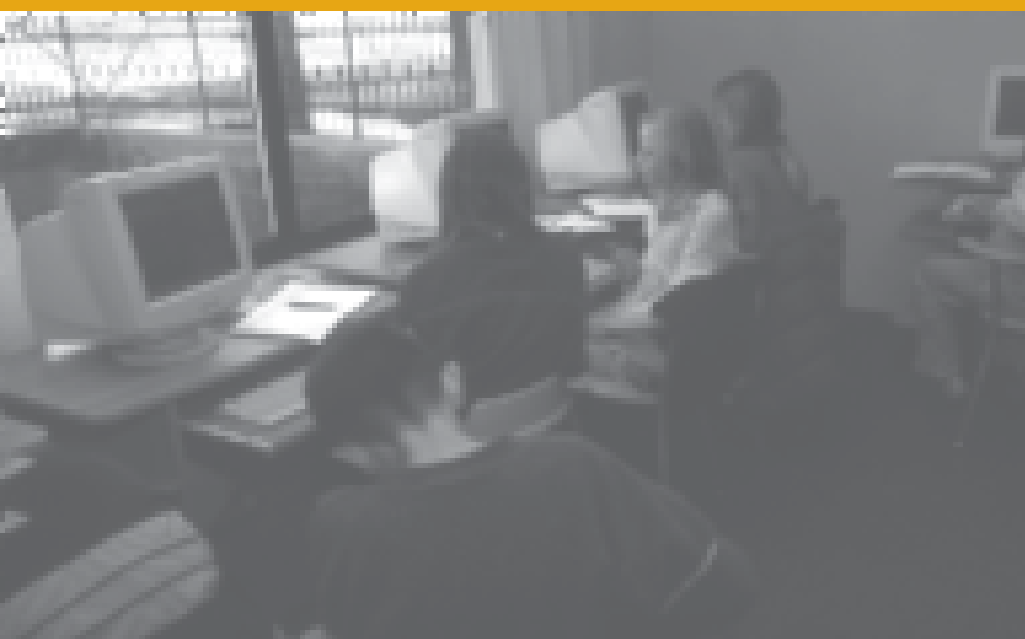
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<sup>197</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid., p. 2. This view is echoed by Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labor Organization (ILO), “In terms of employment, the expected inflow of young people into the labor market, rather than being viewed as a problem, should be recognized as presenting an enormous opportunity and potential for economic and social development.” in “Investing in Young People,” *Financial Times*, Special Report, January 23, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>199</sup>“Strategy on Business Engagement,” op. cit.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid., p. 3.





## Program Site Visits and Interviews

### *“A Career Dream,” Center Education 2000+ (CEDU)*

*Bucharest, Romania, September 22–24, 2003*

Interviews with:

Andra Daiana Andreianu, Program Coordinator, CEDU

Otilia Pacurari, Head of Training and Consulting, CEDU

Elena Salomia, Project Coordinator, “A Career Dream”

Marcela Marcinschi, Project Coordinator, “A Career Dream”

Focus group discussions with students and (in some cases) faculty at:

Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul (September 23, 2003)

Liceul Bilingv Miguel de Cervantes (September 23, 2003)

Liceul Dante Alighieri (September 23, 2003)

Grupul Scolar Industrial Octav Onicescu (September 24, 2003)

### *Junior Achievement Bulgaria*

*Sofia, Bulgaria and Plovdiv, Bulgaria, September 25–27, 2003*

Interviews with:

Milena Stoycheva, Executive Director

Milka Semova, Program Manager

James F. Borger, Consultant

Focus group discussions with students and (in some cases) faculty at:

151st School, Sofia, Bulgaria (September 26, 2003)

Alumni group, Sofia, Bulgaria (September 26, 2003)

Group of JA participants from different schools,

Plovdiv, Bulgaria, (September 27, 2003)

*Gjirokastra Youth Center*

*Gjirokastra, Albania, September 29–October 2, 2003*

Interviews with:

Alketa Qendro, Chairperson

Kristina Miho, Labor Office, Gjirokastra

Eslirt Tushe, program graduate, mechanics course

Stefan Papamihali, sculptor, stone carving trainer

Vasil Konomi, owner of the garage used for the mechanics course

Gjirokastra Youth Center Staff (group interview, October 1, 2003)

Esmeralada Janoro, Administrator

Dorian Llongo, Team Leader of GjYC

Edmond Koxhioni, Trainer of Music and Activity Coordinator

Blerin Kore, Journalism trainer, responsible for Media and Sports Departments

Isidor Kokalari, Computer trainer

Observation and/or focus groups discussions with students and (in some cases) faculty in the following courses:

Fashion Design

Journalism

Secretarial

Computer

Stone Carving

Mechanics Course (and graduation ceremony)

Group interview—GjYC participants past and present

*Program Surveys*

Romania, “Career Dream,” Center Education 2000+

Bulgaria, Junior Achievement Bulgaria

Albania, Gjirokastra Youth Center

### *Additional Sources*

Lorita Constantinescu, Program Officer, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, Interview on September 24, 2003

Agon Demjaha, Executive Director, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, various interviews between September 29-October 3, 2003

Risto Karajkov, Program Officer, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, interview on September 28, 2003

Balkan Youth Forum 2003: Building a Brighter Future, Igalo, Montenegro, September 16-21, 2003.

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"Approaches to Civic Education: Lessons Learned," Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, June 2002, p. 46.

Demjaha, Agon. "Investing in Macedonia's Future Through its Young People," in *Free Market Rules*, AmCham Macedonia, May-June 2003, pp. 18-20.

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"Investing in Young People," *Financial Times*, Special Report, January 23, 2004, p. 1.

"Junior Achievement Bulgaria: Events and Achievements," Junior Achievement Bulgaria: Sofia, Bulgaria, June 2003, p. 4.

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<sup>201</sup> Additionally, assorted background documents on the region and program documents were reviewed.

Kolev, Alexandre. "Addressing the Problem of Unemployment in SEE: Evidence and Practices," presentation at the Youth Employment Workshop, World Bank, Washington, D.C., June 2, 2003.

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Regelbrugge, Laurie. *What Works in Youth Employment: The Impact of New Information Technologies*, part of the "What Works" Series, International Youth Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland, ©2001, p. 68.

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"Strategy on Business Engagement for the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, 2003-2005," discussion paper, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, December 2003, p. 4.

"Strengthening the Youth Sector and Building Capacity in the Balkans," Annual Report of the Balkan Children and Youth Foundation, May 2002-April 2003, International Youth Foundation: Baltimore, Maryland, May 2003, p. 36.

"The Study Concerning Teenagers' Needs for Their Careers," initial needs assessment conducted by "A Career Dream," 2001, p. 21.

"3 Years of Grantmaking in the Balkans," Balkan Children and Youth Foundation and the International Youth Foundation, p. 10, March 2004.

Waddell, Steve. *What Works in Engaging Business in Youth Employment and Livelihood Strategies*, part of the "What Works" Series, International Youth Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland, ©2001, p. 46.

“Youth Employment: Discussion Group Recommendations,” presentation of the Working Group on Youth Employment, Balkan Youth Forum 2003: Building a Brighter Future, Igalo, Montenegro, September 16-21, 2003.

### ***Websites***

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[www.cedu.ru](http://www.cedu.ru)

[www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support\\_measures/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/index.htm)

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[www.jabulgaria.org](http://www.jabulgaria.org)

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[www.youthemploymentsummit.org](http://www.youthemploymentsummit.org)

[www.youth-business.org](http://www.youth-business.org)

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